

Churches offer resources for outbreak of war



UMNS photo by Jay Malin

Protesters join in a candlelight vigil for peace in front of the Lincoln Memorial on the Mall in Washington. Similar vigils were held in hundreds of other locations around the globe March 16 to oppose a possible U.S.-led war against Iraq.

By United Methodist News Service

As the United States stood on the brink of war with Iraq, United Methodist churches were ready to provide spiritual support. St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City knows firsthand the importance of being prepared.

"Because of our experience with the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, we know there is great value in being prepared to help meet the community's spiritual needs during unsettling times," said Kurt Gwartney, minister of communications. The 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building killed 168 people and injured many more.

St. Luke's has prepared a special prayer service for the evening of the outbreak of hostilities.

"We will close that service with the lighting of candles," Gwartney said. "We will also provide a book for family members of military service people to sign. The book will be moved into our chapel for special prayer times through the duration of war. There will be another book that may be signed by anyone with a prayer concern surrounding the war."

The church also pre-printed worship bulletins for the Sunday traditional service for the first Sunday after war starts.

"We want to provide our congregation and the community a service that will address our fears and the diversity of our opinions about involvement in Iraq," he said.

St. Luke's has been updating its database so members of the congregation can be notified quickly about the special services.

The United Methodist Board of Discipleship's worship Web site features worship and music



resources to assist congregations planning worship and prayer services in the event of war in the Middle East. The site also includes resources in recognition and support of the deployment of U.S. forces.

Click on "Resources In a Time of War or Other National Crisis" in the left column of the board's home page at www.umcworship.org to see:

- A Service of Prayer and Meditation in Time of War.
- A Brief Service of Worship in Time of War.
- An Order of Service for Men and Women Mobilized or Deployed.
- Praying for Peace in the Face of War: Resources for Worship.
- A Prayer for Protection of Those in Military Service.
- An Order of Service for a Reserve Chaplain Called to Active Duty.
- "Behold, How Like a Monarch" (new hymn text).
- "Our Earth We Now Lament to See" (Wesley hymn text with two musical settings).
- Links to Related Resources.

The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry also lists resources on its site at www.gbhem.org.

For more information on St. Luke's approach to preparing for war, contact Gwartney at (405) 232-1371, Ext. 113, or kurt@stlukesokc.org ■