



# AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

*Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley  
General Secretary*

July 24, 2006

Dear American Baptist:

The renewed fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon is a concern for the whole world. I join with other US religious leaders, Church World Service and the National Council of Churches in asking President Bush to use the power of his office to work for an immediate ceasefire and for renewed diplomatic negotiations. The text of the appeal is as follows:

*“Dear President Bush:*

*We urge you to work with other world leaders to secure an immediate cease-fire in the violent conflict raging now between Hezbollah and Israel.*

*We are deeply concerned for the innocent victims of the attacks and reprisals between non-state parties in Lebanon and the government of Israel. This violent conflict has created a grave humanitarian crisis, and no hoped-for benefit should outweigh the cause of saving innocent lives.*

*If this conflict continues, the current humanitarian crisis could escalate toward a catastrophe. Already in the first days of attacks and reprisals, reports say that 34 Israelis have been killed, including 15 civilians, others injured, and thousands have been made to leave their homes, and, in Lebanon, at least 335 people, most of them civilians, are reported killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced or sought refuge in other countries.*

*In the face of such a humanitarian crisis, calls for the fighting parties to be restrained in their actions fall short of what is needed. Your presidential leadership and the full weight of the United States, acting in concert with the international community, must be applied now to achieve an immediate cease-fire and to launch an intensive diplomatic initiative for the cessation of hostilities. This is a necessary first step toward the diplomatic resolution of this crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the way toward a comprehensive Middle East peace.”*

American Baptists have a long tradition of advocacy for “those things which make for peace.” This was dramatically driven home to me two years ago on a visit to the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, Japan. Carolyn Predmore, an ABC missionary in Japan for many years, wanted me to see a plaque which is on the second floor of the museum. “As General Secretary of ABC, you will find this uplifting,” she said. While we stood before the plaque, she translated the Japanese characters for me: “July 1, 1948: At the Northern Baptist Annual Convention held in Milwaukee, USA, it was decided that August 6 is ‘No More Hiroshimas’ Day”. This statement so soon after the war so caught the imagination of the designers of the Peace Memorial that they enshrined the statement in the museum. There it stands today as a powerful witness to our vocation for peace.

In our time, we are called to speak and work for peace in the same way. The teachings of Jesus give us a richer imagination for the possibilities for life than does the wisdom of the world. That richer imagination prompted the “No More Hiroshimas” Day declaration, just as the cold war and the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction were gaining preeminence. That richer imagination also prompted the General Board of American Baptists in 1980 to issue a resolution supporting “a mediating role for our government in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.” The basis for peacemaking as spelled out in the resolution was both the “full recognition of the State of Israel as a sovereign state by all parties” and the “recognition by Israel that the Palestinian Arab people have the right to self-determination.”

The wounds of each side go deep. Worldly wisdom would say there is no hope for peace. The gospel of Jesus Christ offers the basis for hope in the richer imagination spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6)

Let us pray for Secretary of State Rice and others as they come together to mediate this crisis. May they seize a richer imagination for the possibilities of peace open to them.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley  
General Secretary