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For Immediate Release

A Quaker Response to the Suicide Attacks of September 11, 2001

Midlothian Friends Meeting, a Quaker congregation located in Midlothian, VA, unites in grief and horror with the victims and their families of the September 11 suicide attacks in New York and Washington, and from the related crash of the American Airlines jet in Pennsylvania.

Proceeds from Thrift Store to Benefit Relief Efforts

Midlothian Friends, acting through its thrift store, The Thrifty Quaker in Midlothian VA, will donate the proceeds from sales in October 2001 to groups committed to relief efforts for the victims. The Thrifty Quaker donates each month's proceeds after expenses to charitable causes.

Since its founding in 1996, The Thrifty Quaker has given away more than \$52,000 in cash and \$750,000 in goods to charities. Donations of items to be sold to raise money for the relief efforts may be made at the thrift store in Midlothian Station Shopping Center, located in the village of Midlothian. The phone number for more information and directions is (804) 794-7158.

Support for Islam

Midlothian Friends and Quakers in general celebrate the similarities of all the world's great religions, including Islam.

"We believe that the actions of a few suicide bombers do not represent the beliefs of Islam and faithful Muslims in general", stated Michael Shank, another Midlothian friend.

Quakers believe that each human being has a divine spark or seed, called 'that of God' by the Quakers. "We encourage all Americans and citizens of the world to treat Muslims as individuals, each with 'that of God' in them", continued Shank.

Midlothian Friends joins with other Richmond area congregations in supporting our Islamic brothers and sisters.

Re-commitment to Peace Testimony

Quakers have non-violence as a central testimony of their religion. From their founding in the mid-seventeenth century, Quakers have committed themselves not to take up arms against fellow human beings.

“We are shaken, as are others, by the hatred and senseless cruelty of the attackers”, offered Dave Clark, a member of the Midlothian Friends meeting. “But we try and hold fast to our belief that non-violence and peaceful resolution of conflict is the long-term solution”, said Clark.

Violence and Justice

Midlothian Friends recognize that along with a divine seed, humans carry the capacity for committing acts of evil. Evil should be opposed, and justice supported. We celebrate our justice-keepers and guardians, including the policemen and firemen who worked heroically in New York, Washington, and elsewhere to limit the harm, and rescue those in need.

We support lawful policing actions designed to maintain a system of equal justice for all.

Terrorism is an extreme form of violence, carried out against unsuspecting human beings by fanatics of a cause. But responding to violence with more violence becomes retaliation and vengeance rather than justice, and only adds to the hatred and suffering.

Like all forms of violence, terrorism has its roots in suffering, and is nourished by fear. To eliminate violence, we need to minimize suffering, and reduce fear through education and dialog.

Proposals for Opposing Terrorism

Midlothian Friends believe that we can and should oppose terrorism and violence. There are many ideas and ways to do this; perhaps the following could be helpful:

- Recognizing that the root of violence is fear and suffering, we propose that our fellow Americans and citizens of the world respond to this recent violence through lawful means against the terrorists and those who harbor them, while being careful not to harm innocent persons. We encourage the world to go beyond this initial response with acts of compassion, aid, and kindness.

By treating ourselves and others with tenderness, compassion, and kindness, we thwart the goals of terrorists. They operate out of fear and hatred; we operate out of love and compassion. In the end, love and compassion will always prevail, just as water eventually erodes rock

- Afghanistan, a suspected haven for terrorists, is a desperately poor country. The annual income of its people is less than the American government’s monthly poverty level for a family of four.

Instead of responding with violence, Midlothian Friends supports continued aid to the Afghan people. Let’s ‘bomb them with butter’, not bombs. Let’s blitz them with food, medical supplies, and information, to the point that even the Taliban government can’t hide the truth from their own people.

Truth and a full stomach are powerful deterrents to false martyrdom.

Midlothian Friends propose that future aid could be delivered through a trusted third-party, perhaps a Muslim organization. The religious leaders in Arabic countries like Saudi Arabia

could be asked to administer this aid, given freely by all the other countries of the world and not just the United States.

- Midlothian Friends encourage Americans and all citizens of the world to consider this an opportunity to unite under a new banner of justice, freedom, and peace for all people.

While we as Americans feel pride in our constitutional system of freedoms, we also encourage Americans and all citizens of the world to think globally and act locally in the pursuit of justice, freedom, and peace.

The lesson of the 20th century is that our world is truly shrinking. Business, sports, the weather, and modern communications have all taught us that we are truly one people living on a solitary planet. Justice belongs to all people, and should be administered at a global level, and not just on an ad-hoc, regional or national level. We propose a new era for all peoples that recognizes the universality of justice, freedom, and peace, extending the work of the United Nations and its flag of union among all countries.

“Walk cheerfully among the peoples of the world, answering that of God in every person.”

- George Fox, 17th century member of the Religious Society of Friends