

Methodist bishops urge immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq: A near-unanimous vote

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In a near-unanimous vote, the bishops of the United Methodist Church have called on the United States to begin an immediate, safe and full withdrawal of all troops from Iraq—the bishops’ strongest statement ever against the four-year-old war.

The resolution, approved by more than 60 bishops November 9 in their semiannual meeting at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, also urged that no additional troops be deployed to Iraq and that there be no permanent military bases within Iraq belonging to the U.S. or its coalition partners.

“Every day that the war continues, more soldiers and innocent civilians are killed with no end in sight to the violence, bloodshed and carnage,” the bishops said in their resolution. They cited the more than 3,800 U.S. military deaths since the U.S.-led coalition overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein but got bogged down in sectarian turmoil and violence.

At their November 2005 meeting, the council of bishops approved a resolution asking President Bush, who is United Methodist, to create a timeline for withdrawal.

The stronger resolution this month was adopted “by a near-unanimous show of hands” by active, nonretired bishops, public information director Stephen Drachler told the Century.

Directed to the White House and Congress, the resolution also called for new reconstruction plans for Iraq that emphasize humanitarian, social and educational needs. The resolution noted that more than 76,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a result of the fighting.

The bishops represent more than 11 million church members in the U.S. and abroad. They urged increased support for war veterans but asked that United Methodists

also be “peacemakers by word and deed.”