

On 9/11 anniversary, calls for education, interfaith efforts: Nation urged to work for peace and justice

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The United States commemorated the fifth anniversary of the September 2001 terrorist attacks with vigils, worship services and commemorations, as some religious and political leaders said the country must take stock of its place in the world.

Thousands gathered in New York at Ground Zero for a moment's silence September 11 at 8:46 a.m. local time, marking the moment the first plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center. After the silence, relatives began reading out the names of all those who died in the attacks. A second silence was held at 9:03 a.m., the time of the strike on the south tower of the building.

President Bush and his wife, Laura, joined firefighters to observe the silences. The previous day they attended a memorial service at St. Paul's Chapel, the historic Episcopal church that borders the site of the World Trade Center towers.

Frank T. Griswold, the outgoing presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, said in a statement that five years after the attacks, both the U.S. and the world were "beset by fear and wracked by violence of almost unimaginable proportions." He said he hoped that his nation would act as a peace-broker in the Middle East, and that it would "address the vast disparity between the wealth of nations such as our own and the extreme poverty of nearly half of the world's people."

In an opinion piece for the *New York Times*, the cochairs of a commission that investigated the 2001 attacks, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, wrote: "Too many young Muslims are without jobs or hope, are angry with their governments, and don't like the war in Iraq or American foreign policy."

Kean and Hamilton urged, “We must offer moral leadership, treating all people—including detainees—with respect for the rule of law and human decency.” They added: “And we must put forward an agenda of opportunity for the Islamic world. This includes support for pragmatic political reform, as well as education and economic empowerment.”

In Washington, D.C., several hundred people took part in a walk September 10 that highlighted participants of different religious faiths and ethnicities. A Muslim imam began the walk by chanting the call to prayer inside of the Washington Hebrew Congregation.

Rabbi Bruce Lustig, senior rabbi of the synagogue, stood next to Episcopal bishop John Chane and Akbar Ahmed, a professor of Islamic studies at American University.

The walkers stopped at the National Cathedral to join in singing “We Are Family.” At the Vatican embassy, the pope’s ambassador, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, and Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington spoke.

In front of a mosque on Embassy Row, Richard Cizik, vice president for government affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, urged more interfaith communication—something which he acknowledged has not always been present in evangelical Christianity. - *Ecumenical News International, Religion News Service*