

**Resolution on First Use of Nuclear Weapons**  
**Proposed by the Western New York Chapter of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship**  
**To the 170<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York, October 2007**  
*Adopted at Convention on October 26, 2007*

*Adopted at the Chapter meeting on June 19, 2007, with all present subscribing their names as submitters. These are: St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo: Gregory Kay, Paul Lillie (clergy), Catherine Dempsey, Joseph Nardiello; Trinity, Buffalo: John Ramsey; Good Shepherd, Buffalo: Robert Martinson, Stephen Hart, David Selzer (clergy); St. Peter's, Eggertsville, Thomas Tripp; St. Simon's, Buffalo: Ralph Strohm (clergy); Ephphatha, Buffalo: Sarah Hardy.*

- 1 *Resolved*, that this Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York calls upon  
2 the U.S. Representatives and Senators representing the people and parishes of the Diocese  
3 to propose or support legislation that:
- 4 1. States as national policy that the U.S. disavows first use of nuclear weapons;
  - 5 2. Prohibits by law the use of nuclear weapons of any sort or size by the U.S. Armed  
6 Forces or any agency or contractor of the U.S. government, in all circumstances except  
7 an actual nuclear attack on the U.S. or an ally, and then only against the attacker; and
- 8 *Resolved*, that the Convention requests the Bishop of the Diocese to communicate this call  
9 to these Representatives and Senators.

***Explanation***

In 1982, General Convention adopted (in both houses) Resolution 1982-D031: "Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That this 67th General Convention urges the governments of both the United States and the Soviet Union to adopt a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons; and directs the Secretary of this Convention to communicate this to the President of the United States, members of Congress, and the President of the USSR."

Despite the end of the Cold War, this issue is if anything more urgent today. Actually using nuclear weapons, as opposed to possessing them in order to deter attack, is under active consideration. The weapons that might be used are called tactical, but they are more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The administration has repeatedly refused to rule out using nuclear weapons against Iran, and many of the 2008 presidential candidates take the same position. In addition, recent official statements of U.S. nuclear policy envisage nuclear weapons being used for "rapid and favorable war termination on US terms," to "defeat," not just to "deter," an enemy.<sup>1</sup>

All Christian traditions dealing with war place limits on the ways in which even a just war can be fought. Christians are not permitted to use the most militarily effective or efficient means, if these violate fundamental principles. The use of nuclear weapons, which have devastating, far-reaching, and hard to predict effects, not only on combatants but also on civilians, countries downwind, future generations, international stability, and the natural environment, can be condoned by a Christian, if at all, only in the most extreme situations. The moral consensus of humankind since 1945 has been that nuclear weapons must never be used again, and are to be possessed only for deterrence. This resolution asks that the U.S. government join the consensus.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Army and Navy, *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, published 15 Mar 2005, p. III-2. U.S. *Nuclear Posture Review*, submitted to Congress on 31 Dec 2001, pp. 12-13. Full texts of these documents are available on the EPF-WNY web site <http://epfwny.org>