

# Traffic Light



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An on-site account of the 2003 Iraq War

as seen through the journal

of

Neville Watson

Published by Neville Watson  
Perth, Western Australia

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# Dedication

*To all the women in my life  
to whom I owe so much*



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# Acknowledgements

It is customary on this page to acknowledge the contributions of others. This I cannot do for almost all the material in this book is consciously or unconsciously the work of others. I rarely have an original thought!

Am I then a plagiarist? No, because a plagiarist is “one who uses and presents other person’s words and ideas as his own” and I make no claim to originality. I freely and unreservedly confess to using other people’s words and ideas, and my indebtedness to a nameless host of people will quickly become apparent to the reader.

Acknowledgements are also very difficult because at my age one so easily forgets the source of one’s indebtedness. Where I can remember the source, I have stated it. To the unacknowledged thinkers, artists, and writers I tender my apologies.

One work however deserves special acknowledgement. It is a remarkable book by Jan Phillips entitled “Marry Your Muse” (Quest Books 1997) which has been the inspiration for the layout of these pages and source of many of the quotes. Beth Hanson and Jan Phillips are the artists. I am but the copyist.



# Introduction

This journal is published on the insistence of two people – my dear friend Bernadette and my daughter Leanne.

During the 2003 Iraq War, I emailed portions of my journal home as the easiest way to let my family and friends know what I was doing and where I was at. Unbeknown to me, Bern and my beloved wife Margaret arranged for the publication of some of it in a popular weekly magazine. Leanne used the article as a means of explaining what her father was doing in Baghdad during the war. Said Leanne “All one has to do is to give it to someone to read and they get a good grasp of what you are on about”.

If such be the response, who am I to be embarrassed and hesitant over the publication of my journal?

The other factor that is of relevance is my growing conviction that Peacemaking requires an engine to drive it and Spirituality is one such engine. By Spirituality I mean the bridge we take to awareness of the ultimate reality of our lives – the life force within and among us, seeking to bring love, peace and joy to us and our world. Some of us use the word “God” to describe this.

Like Albert Einstein, I believe that the universe is essentially friendly, and if the publication of my journaling can further this idea, then so be it.

Neville Wat-

son 1/6/2003

## *The Cover Photo*

The photograph originally appeared on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald. I suspect that it has been “computer enhanced” by the addition of “sad lines” at the corners of the mouth to point up the contrast between myself and the smiling Saddam in the background. I am happy with the contrast but not the portrayal of me in such grim terms. I have stood in front of the mirror and found it impossible to look like that. I enjoy life and my family too much for it to be an accurate representation. The net result is nevertheless a tribute to the photographer and his art, and I am grateful for it – as also for permission from the Sydney Morning Herald to use it.

## About the Author and the Occasion

Born in 1929 Neville Watson was in 1956 admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Six years later he was ordained as a Minister of the Methodist Church but kept his practice certificate current. After some years in parish ministry, he applied “to be left without pastoral charge with permission to engage in secular employment”.

He returned to the legal scene and was engaged in extensive pro bono work for aboriginal people and in social justice issues. In the 1960s he established and ran a lay training centre with the primary course being “The Twentieth Century Christian”.

He has had a long association with the Church of the Saviour in Washington and attributes much of his social activism to their emphasis on “Call, Gifts and Contemplation”

In 1990 he was part of the Gulf Peace Team that endeavoured to place itself between the opposing forces. His peace activism has led him to being arrested “more times than he can remember” and taken him to war zones in Palestine and Bosnia.

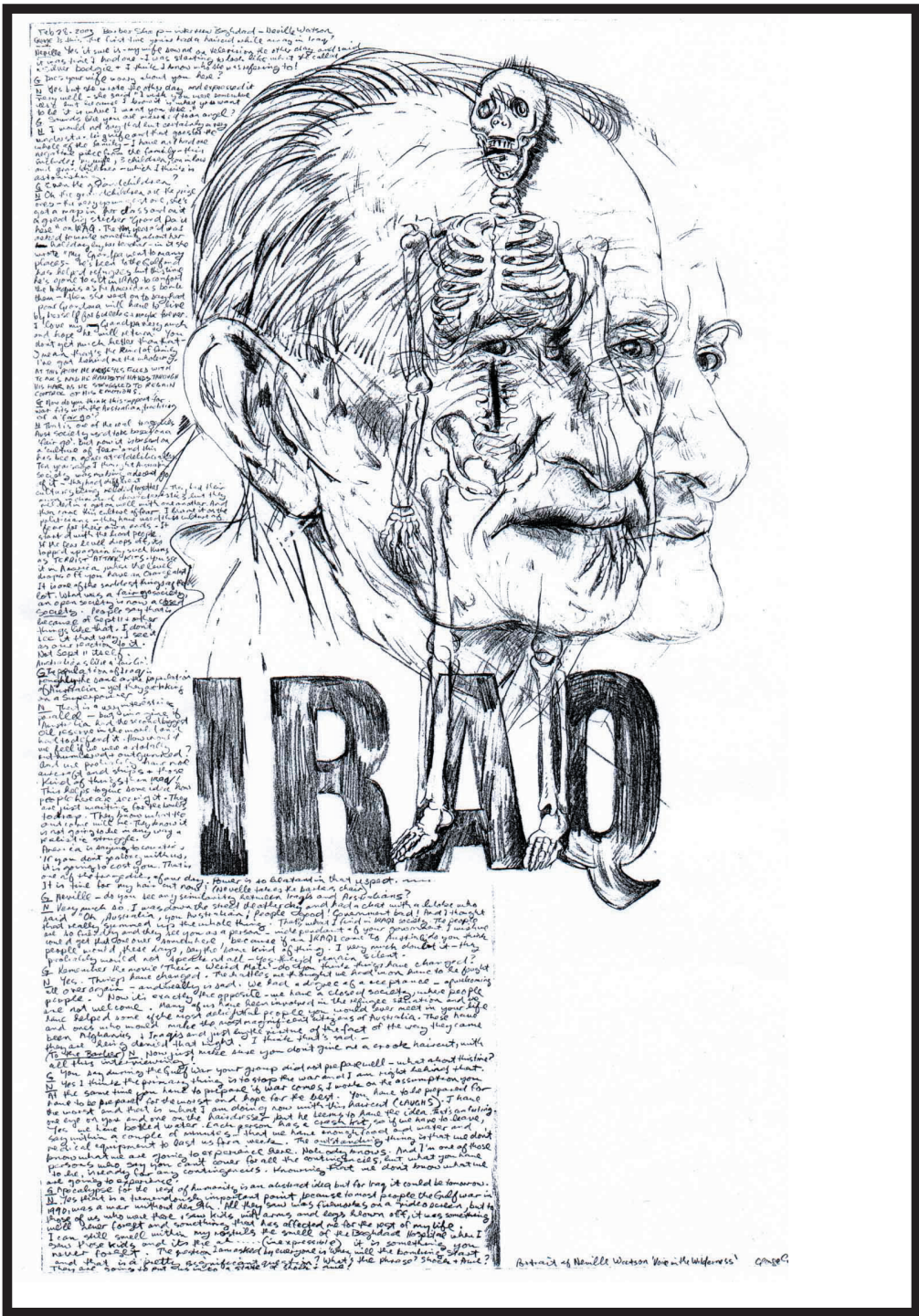
In 2002 he linked up with the Iraq Peace Team and spent four months in Iraq prior to and including the war.

He regards journaling as “therapeutic” and has engaged in it for over twenty years. The following extracts are as they tumbled out. There has been no extensive editing, and they should be taken as they are – one person’s attempt to relate to what he saw as a senseless and unnecessary war.

After the war, he returned to his beloved Wembley Downs Uniting Church where he is the Minister in Association. Congregation members referred to him as “Our man in Baghdad” – a description which he was more than happy to accept.

At seventy-three years of age, he continues to be active in the Peace Movement and social justice issues.





"A Voice in the Wilderness" - George Gittos



THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003

It is 12.30am and I sit and wait. The commencement of the war against Iraq is three and a half hours away and the big question is: "Will it come tonight – the so called Shock and Awe?" "It will be massive and it will be based on Baghdad" is how the Voice of America described it. And so I sit and wait.

And in the waiting, two things become apparent.

Firstly, it is not an anxious waiting. Patient waiting would be a better description because I can think of no place I would rather be at this time. This for me is where ET's finger points to "home".

Secondly, I am becoming so tired of rhetoric, lying and distortion. There is a sickening sameness in the speech writing industry, so much so that you almost know what the political puppets are going to say. There is a predictability about it that makes one wonder whether it is worth going through the process. Our great and glorious leader John referred in his speech to "a regime that gouges out the eyes of children to get a confession from the parents". Last time around, it was children being taken out of humidicribs – a story dreamed up by the public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton and having no basis whatsoever in fact. Pure fiction! Or, to be more precise: "im-pure" fiction. The enemy-making process is so predictable. I wonder what PR firm they used this time.

In this process of enemy-making, good people prostitute themselves in the name of power. John Howard is one such good man who has been caught up in the deceit of lying – from children overboard to children being tortured. As Montaigne said "Once let the tongue acquire the habit of lying and it is astonishing how impossible it is to give it up". It dominates political life today. Colin Powell speaks of thirty nations being in The Coalition of the Willing, a list where half wish to remain anonymous and the other half includes such heavyweights as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan – the last so well known that I am unsure of how to spell it! It also has a human rights record about the same as that of Iraq. President Bush carries on the fiction "Thirty-five nations are giving increasing support. Every race and religion is included in this coalition." What nonsense! The US and the UK are acting bilaterally. They are a law unto themselves. They have introduced us to a new world order where 'might is right' and all the Powell prevarications and the President's men cannot put democracy together again. Unable to get a UN resolution, and unable to even get a moral majority, they constitute an immoral minority. I have not included Australia – nor was it included in the Azores summit. It is obvious to all that Australia is now adequately represented by the United States. We have sold our birthright for a free trade contract. It is as Mr Howard says: "In the national interest". What nation? With another nation's flag on ours, and a cap in hand attitude dating back to "all the way with LBJ", we are no nation. We are still a colony. If it wasn't so sad it would be comical.

*It seems to me that the most integrative social power contained in words is liberated in performance.... For me, it is the activist and spoken element which follows on the contemplative act of composition which is most capable of vitalising folk.*

**- Adrienne Rich**

*Only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking.*

**- Naomi Wolf**

*How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak?*

**- Isabel Allende**

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*When you reach real ability you will be able to become one with the enemy. Entering his heart, you will see that he is not your enemy at all.*

**- Tsuji**

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us....and as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.*

**- Nelson Mandela**

But I am not laughing. There is a deep sense of sadness in my waiting. So many lives to be lost because of lying and half truths – and most of them young. Forty-six percent of the people of Iraq are below sixteen years of age. We are in effect waging war on children. And it is even worse when it is realised that the average age of the American servicemen is twenty-one years, which makes many of them teenagers. The Iraqi servicemen with whom I talk are again youngsters. What in the name of God are we doing? When will the old men of the world fight their own battles and leave the young to live their lives. Despite my belief in non-violence, I sometimes wish that we still had duelling at ten paces – a duel between President Hussein and President Bush. Whichever way the result, it would mean a net gain to the intellectual wealth of the world.

And so I wait. I wait for the ear splitting blast that will herald the coming of Shock and Awe – an obscenity that will end the lives of so many innocent men, women and children and, perhaps, my own. As far as I personally am concerned I would not have it otherwise. At my age, I could have a heart attack at any time. How much better to have a “heart attack” for the innocent victims of this war, most of them being children.

### **5am**

For the last two hours we have been on red alert. Jeremy rang to say “They are on their way!” Jeremy is an Iraq Peace Team journalist with impeccable contacts. Two hours later, ‘they’ have either become lost or it is a false alarm. Still, it was an interesting exercise and the Iraq Peace Team performed admirably. There was no panic, and plenty of cups of tea. We even broke out the emergency rations – packets of M&M Peanuts which were better than expected. Enough for now. It is time to get some sleep.

### **5.30am**

Asleep for no more than twenty minutes and I was awakened by the explosions. They were on the outskirts of Baghdad and of no great danger to us. An anti-aircraft unit nearby opened fire but the shells seem to be bursting at an extremely low level. I suspect that they were just checking their equipment without causing over anxiety in the community. From what we later gathered, this initial bombing was centred on a bunker where Saddam Hussein was thought to be. It was described as “a target of opportunity” which means I gather that you give it a go, even if it is not in the plan. The attempt (to quote) “decapitate” the enemy was apparently unsuccessful. Meanwhile in Washington Mr Bush was shooting himself in the foot with statements about increasing national support for the cause. He and the administration really are incredible – literally! Who do they think they are fooling with such statements? A quick answer to that question is “Only the American people” who, still blissfully unaware of the facts, support their President.

As is my custom, I retired to bed at 8.30pm intending to arise at my usual hour of 2am. The American military authorities had other ideas and within twenty or minutes or so I was pulling on my trousers and muttering an obscenity – not this time because of the damage and destruction that the bombing would cause but because my sleep had been rudely disturbed. I really did expect to have three or four hours sleep before it started. I missed sleeping much today – not because of the bombing but because of the telephone. It started in the morning at 3am, was intermittent until 7am and then it was constant until 11am. I told the guy working the switchboard that I was too tired to take any more calls and that I was going to get some sleep. My lack of Arabic was my undoing. I had just dozed off when the jangling telephone awoke me again with those now common words “Telephone Mr Neville”. I really shouldn’t be too critical as his facility in English exceeds my grasp of Arabic by a multiple of three. After having dealt with the phone call, I went back to bed only to find that I had lost that initial urge to sleep. That was this morning and the reason for my vocal distress as I pulled myself out of bed.

The bombing this time was very much closer and quite frightening. You could feel the building shuddering below your feet. Anti-aircraft fire punctuated the bombs but for the life of me I could not see what they were firing at and the shells seemed to burst at a couple of thousand feet. I suspect that their function is purely psychological and is designed to offer some kind of auditory moral support, either this, or some trigger happy youngsters enjoying the sound of their own firing.

The attack lasted only about ten minutes. All is quiet now and I am sorely tempted to try and get some sleep again. I have the feeling, however, that such may be precisely what they are waiting for so I have made myself a cup of tea and am looking at the surrealist scene outside my balcony doors.

The street lights are still on and in the foreground is a traffic light going through its cycle of green, amber and red in a rhythmical way. The only problem is that there are no cars for it to direct. The occasional car that does come along treats it with disdain. I feel strangely empathetic to it. It is a bit like I feel at times: sending out distinct signals about the futility of war and it being of no consequence whatsoever. And still it keeps cycling in front of my window in a Salvador Dali like scene. Now it’s red, now it’s green and now it’s amber. Keep signalling, little light, Sometime soon a car is going to come along and heed your signal and the two of you can greet each other in mutual recognition.

Actually, the scene in Australia is very different. The anti-war movement is growing every day. Eight hundred people closed down the Melbourne CBD with a sit in. Fifteen thousand took to the streets in Sydney in a spontaneous burst of anti-war sentiment, and our Prime Minister is reduced to fatuous phrases like “It is in the national interest”. What he means by this is delightfully vague, but the results in terms of free trade with

*The way to have good ideas is to have a lot of them and throw away the bad ones.*

**- Linus Pauling**

*Pay attention to what they tell you to forget.*

**- Muriel Rukeyser**

*Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.*

**- Mark Twain**



*One is never afraid of the unknown: one is afraid of the known coming to an end.*  
- **Krishnamurti**

America and lower oil prices are crystal clear. (An ambulance has just passed the light and I could have sworn I heard the words “Go little ambulance, go on your life saving mission”. What a dear little light!) “It is in the national interest!” The politicians are really pushing it at the moment. Few people believe in the rhetoric they continue to churn out, few people except those in the most insular country in the world whose press in Baghdad have been conspicuous by their absence. The politicians have gone too far in their twisting of the truth and their misuse of words. Howard’s way really is a dead end – both literally and metaphorically.

Who knows! Perhaps the day of the little light outside my window really has come. With more people opposing this war at its beginning than were opposing the Vietnam war at its end, we may have reached the critical mass necessary for the next step forward in any movement. With seventy-one percent of Australians opposed to war, it needs just a few more people and our Prime Minister will be as significant as Monty Python’s dead parrot. I relish the thought!

Incidentally, some forty minutes after the bombing, the air raid siren has sounded. I’m not sure whether it is a late warning of the previous attack, the ‘all clear’ of a warning that was never given, or the precursor of a new attack. Never mind. I doubt if in the history of humankind it is going to matter much. The signals that the establishment sends up have always been confused – and never more than now! “In the national interest?” How wet can you get?



FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup> March 2003

12.45am

“How am I?” someone will ask me today. Well I thought I was doing pretty well until a few moments ago when I was awoken by some shock jock in Brisbane who spoke of collateral damage and me being misguided. With the latter I can cope but to suggest that the death of my Iraqi friends could be described as “collateral damage”, no way! I gave him both barrels – which is hardly the way for a non-violent activist to respond. I can offer no excuses except that I had just been bombed out of my bed and I am somewhat sensitive to having death described as collateral damage. Were it not for the fact that so many non-elitist average Australian citizens listen to commercial radio, I would gladly consign it to the oblivion of non-participation. But such cannot be the case. People in Australia are being conditioned and manipulated by commercial radio. Richard Rohr’s phrase is “cultural hypnosis”. I really should have learned by now that, in the eyes of these shock jocks, personal experience is no match for what comes off the sacred wire services and out of the mouths of politicians. But there I go again, being violent in terms of language. This concept of non-violence is no easy matter – as Jesus found out so long ago. All too often with me, suffering in silence is OK providing everyone knows about it. May God have mercy upon me – because the shock jocks certainly won’t. In the studio at the time was the Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, waiting his turn. He is a pretty good guy and I would be interested to know what he thought of the exchange.

The point of relating all of this? I thought I was travelling pretty well but the tension was obviously building up when all it needed was the shock jock to push the button and I blast off with both barrels. I must not neglect my time of contemplation, notwithstanding it may be to the accompaniment of the exploding of bombs.

3.30am

I have just experienced a great time of contemplation. It was a calming, relaxing time and I feel all the better for it. There is a deep sense of peace within me, a peace that, I don’t care who says it, the world cannot give. I cannot say I am refreshed, despite the fact that I found myself remembering those great words “Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall rise up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint”. I am very tired. My eyes are droopy and I could so do with a good night’s sleep. I don’t need much but I need it uninterrupted. And the bastards won’t let me have it! Last night again I had been asleep for only about forty five minutes when it all broke loose with the bombing. And when I eventually got to lay my head down some shock jock brings me back to wakefulness through the jangling telephone. If I leave the telephone off the hook they put it through to a different room and people are chasing everywhere to tell me there is a telephone call from Australia.

*It is the creative potential in human beings that is the image of God.*

**- Mary Daly**

*After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.*

**- Aldous Huxley**

*Thank God we didn't listen to the idiots who said that force and weapons and killing was the only way the Russians would be changed. The position has changed – and not by war.*

**- Barry Jones**

I could try and get a few hours sleep now but I know what will happen. There are journos in Australia just waiting for me to nod off before they give me a ring and ask me soppy questions about whether I am afraid. Not really! All I want to do is to get some sleep!

Perhaps there will be no bombing tonight. And if there is, then let me remember that eleven year old grand daughter of mine who summed it up so beautifully. After the holidays, the class was asked to write a “holiday recount”. This is what dear Jessie wrote.

*My grandpa is a minister of the Wembley Downs Uniting Church. He has gone on many protests in his life including sitting in a small box over night outside Parliament to protest about the jail cells being too small. He sat in the middle of the Gulf and takes in refugees. But this time he is going to sit in Baghdad and comfort the Iraqi people while the Americans bomb them. You may think he is nutty but I am proud of him. He does what is right and he does it for other people not himself. On the day that he left he had every TV station apart from 7 interviewing him, even the New Idea. When he left we all were upset, poor grandma will have to live on her own for 6 weeks or maybe for ever. I love grandpa very much and I hope that he will return.*

So, no complaints about the bombing and lack of sleep. I owe it to my grand daughter and those magnificent ones back home who are continuing to protest. You only get clear lines in the early hours of the morning. Perhaps the thing to do would be to use the phones until about 8am when they start to deteriorate, then take the phone off the hook and let everyone know that I am sleeping. I'll try it tomorrow and see how I go. And in addition I'll see if I can pick up a couple of hours during the afternoon.



*Jessie*



SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2003

3.50am

Sleep, glorious sleep! I had three and a half hours of continuous sleep last night and I feel a new man because of it. If anyone wanted to torture me, they have a very simple method: sleep deprivation.

The bombing last night was very heavy. It started right on time – precisely forty five minutes after I had laid down to try and get some sleep. This has been so consistent that some of the group are now trying to keep me awake. They were bombing just across the river (about 400 metres) and you could feel the air pushing through our open doors and windows. The noise was deafening. We have ear plugs and tonight I will use them. Up to this point the explosions have been ‘almost deafening’. I wouldn’t want it to go beyond that point. Bombing of this magnitude really is terrifying, and different to anything I have experienced before. The explosions last night were more ‘contained’ and I have to revert to children’s language to describe it. They are more of a ‘pow’ than a ‘bang’. It really is frightening and I felt for the children in the basement. I felt even more for Siham, Abu Yasser and the boys. Our reinforced concrete building thankfully stood up to it. I hope theirs did. Karima and the children are now alone in their block of flats. The other families having moved out because they consider it too dangerous. We have been trying to persuade Karima and the girls to move in with us but to this point they have been both stubborn and fatalistic – and I for one appreciate their decision. This may be, of course, because I was referred to last night as “stubborn”. I used the description of myself but no one disagreed with me. I have no regrets at staying out of the basement. It gives me some small idea of what the average Iraqi is experiencing during this terrible time.

But even in these conditions there is occasion for a smile. It is at the idea of the Americans “liberating” the Iraqis. If this be the path to liberation then I’ll stick to slavery! The Iraqi people undoubtedly want change and plenty of it. But associating this with the Americans who have devastated their country through the sanctions over the last ten years is ludicrous. When 50,000 of your children die annually because of American imposed sanctions, the idea of liberation by the ones imposing the sanctions is really pushing it a bit far. Denis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Iraq, resigned in protest over the sanctions and called them a form of genocide. Such they are and such has been their effect. His successor Hans Von Sponeck also resigned saying that Iraq had the highest child mortality rate in the world and this was directly due to the sanctions. America has not only been the principal architect of the sanctions, it has been the executive arm as well. Committee 661 is a committee of the Security Council and, as such, has running with it the American veto which has been exercised ruthlessly.

“Let us then welcome them as our liberators!” Blind Freddy could see the contradiction! The reason for the US speaking of liberation is obvious. The weapons of mass destruction approach has exploded in their

*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

**- George Bernard Shaw**

*The burden of proof rests with those who say military superiority brings security.*

**- Harriet Bicksler**

*Our lives begin to end  
the day we become silent  
about things that matter*  
- **M. L. King**

*What we trust in defines  
us as a nation.*  
- **Richard Barnet**

face and they had to find something to hang their hat on. They chose the wrong peg and this is evidenced by the complete absence of flowers and cheering as they make their bloody way north to Baghdad. To speak of liberation shows just how great is our capacity to delude ourselves. I find that more frightening than the bombardment last night. That I can handle, but with the obsequious speeches of oil-hungry westerners I have much difficulty. I find myself getting very angry at the lies and distortions and wish I could have some of them up here for a couple of weeks to meet some of the parents of the fifty thousand children who die each year. One such parent comes to mind immediately. With his child dying of leukemia because of the absence of two of the five drugs needed for treatment, he came into the hospital with something clutched under his jumper. It turned out to be a sealed plastic container of blood. He presented it to the Doctor with innocent, imploring, ignorant eyes. Where he got it from is anybody's guess. The next day his child was dead. Long live the sanctions administered by the US – but not the lives of the children of Iraq! I have no doubt that when the historians look back on this period they will perceive it as a holocaust: “How could we ever have allowed this to happen?”

And in all of this the Muezzin continues to call the people to prayer. What an amazing country and people this is – a country which prays each day:-

“O God you are peace. From you is peace and unto you is peace. Let us live our lives in peace. Bring us into your peace. Unto you be honour and glory. We hear and obey. Grant us your forgiveness Lord, and unto you be our becoming”.

**5.05am**

Bloody hell! More sirens and more bombing. It never seems to let up.

**6am**

A very average time of contemplation this morning. I am evidently still very tired and I kept dropping off. I'll take a half hour nap and see how I go then.



*Mother (and Father) and child*

## SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003

Last night started with lying down at 7.15pm to try and get some sleep. I calculated the bombing should start precisely three quarters of an hour after I get to sleep. My notes after that were as follows

### 9.30pm.

Awakened by a bomb not too far away. They are one and a half hours late. This simply is not good enough. I have a reputation to uphold!

### 10.30pm.

It is half an hour since the last bomb. I am inclined to force their hand. I will retire once again and see if we can get some routine back into the show.

### 11.30pm.

A big bang and the lights are gone – but another hour's sleep. The emergency generator has fired up and we have power again. What more could one ask for?

### 2 am.

An even bigger bang and I have had enough of trying to sleep. I will make myself a cup of tea and read something.

### 3.30am

I am starting to regret my decision. There have been no bombs in the last hour and a quarter. If I go to sleep now I will miss one of the features of the week – my worshipping along with the community of faith back home. No, I'll stay awake and see how I go!

### 5.30am

It was well worth it with an almost mystical moment. At 4.30am I lit the candle the congregation had given me and settled down to worship contemporaneously with them. No sooner had I lit the candle when I thought I heard singing. I went outside on to the balcony but could hear nothing. I sat down again in front of the candle and cross, now shadowed on the wall, and again I heard very faint singing. I was almost prepared to concede that my mind was playing tricks on me. I returned to the balcony and somewhere miles away a Muezzin was calling the faithful to prayer. Why a Muezzin should call people to prayer at 4.30am is beyond me but I found it fascinating that at the same time I hear a call to worship here, someone is standing in front of the Wembley Downs congregation calling them to worship.

I then engaged in an hour of meditation and contemplation and was struck by the fact that my St Francis figure was shadowed at the foot of the cross. While I was praying a bomb dropped and it seemed to rumble through

*Eisenhower said  
"fight like hell".  
To fight like heaven  
means that even to hate  
is to be a murderer.  
- Anon*

*The contemplative life  
is the constant inward  
dimension of a struggle  
for justice, the key to  
opening up the otherwise  
impossible way of  
non-violent liberation.  
- Jim Douglas*

*My candle burns at  
both ends. It will not  
last the night.  
But, ah my foes,  
and oh, my friends,  
it gives a lovely light!*  
**- Edna Millay**

what Ken Wilber maintains, that in contemplation you really do enter a different state of consciousness.

And now I will have to go to bed and see if I can get some sleep. I am almost asleep on my feet. I will return to the scriptures and more contemplation a little later in the day.

The candle the congregation gave me is almost at an end. No matter! It has served its purpose. It has shone, in Peter Kearney's words, "in the dark of the night" and for this I am thankful, and honoured to be part of the exercise. I will never cease to give thanks for my time here. The candle is now pouring itself out over the surface on which it stands. In a few moments I expect the wick to fall over and the light be extinguished. I very much hope that it is not a foretaste of what is to come – but if it is, then let the people of God say "Amen"

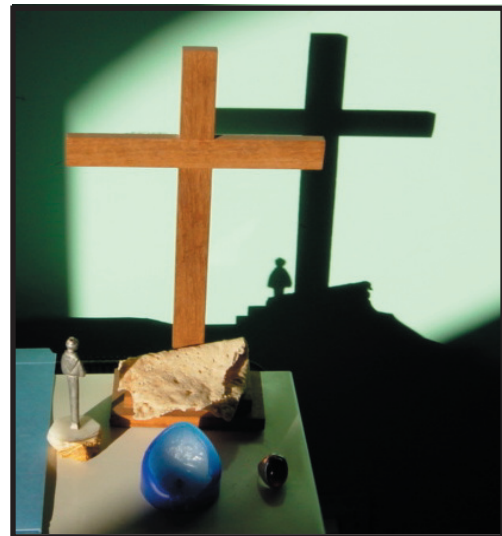
My worship service ended at 5.27am (10.27am Perth time) – a not unusual time for the Wembley Downs service to end. Now to see if I can get some sleep.

#### **8.40 am**

I have just awoken (again) after three hours of uninterrupted glorious sleep and I could stay curled up in the bed forever. But it is a new day outside and "I am aware of life living itself in me". Life is indeed good!

#### **9 am**

Sirens again but I care not. I have had a hot shower and donned clean clothes and am about to go to breakfast. Life is indeed good!



*At the foot of the cross*

MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003

3.30am

When you are being bombed, the days seem to flow into each other. Today marks the return of 'normal' patterns for me. Last night at 10 pm, I decided that I would try sleeping through the bombing. I took the telephone of the hook (the shock jocks on commercial radio have no compunction at ringing at any time during the night) and settled down for the night. Every hour or so I would be rudely awakened by a series of bombs but after about five minutes I was able to drop off to sleep again.

At 3.15 am there was an earth shaking explosion that woke me for good but my goal had been achieved. I had enjoyed five hours or so of sleep and here I was at my 'normal' rising time, bright eyed and bushy tailed. It really is staggering the way the human body and persona adapt to circumstances. Three days ago I would hunch my shoulders at every bomb blast and have sleepless nights. Now I am enjoying five hours of interrupted sleep.

Yesterday afternoon there was a great example of this adaptation. It was Amal's thirteenth birthday. Amal is the sister of two of the most beautiful twins in the world. They are three of the most adorable kids I have ever met and I took photo after photo as they described with their hands their experience of the bombing. They are the only ones left in their flats and so far it has only been blown-out windows and falling light shades and pictures. It was decided that we wouldn't let a war stop us having a birthday party for Amal. So at 1pm we had one of the most unusual birthday parties I have been to in that amongst all the hilarity and games there would be an earth shaking bombing and someone would say: "That's the loudest bang I've ever heard from a bursting balloon" whereupon there would be a burst of laughter. Some of our group were concerned for our safety because we were outdoors. Others pointed out that if we received a direct hit it wouldn't matter whether we were indoors or outdoors. Towards the end of the party, the bombing increased in intensity and we decided that discretion was the better part of valour. It was for me a superb example of the resiliency of the Iraqi people and the human spirit.

I must admit that I was glad when we went inside because concrete can stop flying shrapnel and I had seen enough of human tragedy for a day – and a lifetime. The world will soon forget the trauma of bombing and the flying shrapnel but a little six year old never will. We visited her in hospital along with seventy other victims of the bombing. Not all the missiles are of pin-point accuracy, and if they are, the surrounding area bears the effect of the huge explosion. In the hospital we met and talked with a number of people who had been hit by flying shrapnel. Were they for real? If they weren't, everyone of them should be awarded an Oscar, and the Effects Man a double Oscar for the realistic wounds.

*The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information. but to face sacred moments.*  
**- Abraham Heschel**

*Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.*  
**- Hegel**

*Democracy cannot survive without a democratic media.*  
**- Robert Chesney**

*The meaning of  
good and bad,  
of better and worse,  
is simply  
helping or hurting.  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

It was Zaha whom I will remember and who affected me the most. (Zaha Sahail of Redwaniya injured pm 21<sup>st</sup> March 2003) The woman Doctor spoke excellent English and told us that a piece of shrapnel in the back had made Zaha a bilateral paraplegic. I looked at the frail little body, the glazed eyes and the anxious mother alongside and I remembered how I had reacted to the shock jock who had spoken of “collateral damage”. At the time I regretted my somewhat violent language. Looking now at the little figure in the bed I forgave myself and thought of a question I had been asked in a radio interview: “Don’t you think the bombing is worth it to get rid of Saddam Hussein?” I wonder whether they would be prepared to offer their six year old on the altar of war?



*Zaha*

And so we come to another day having no idea what it will bring for us. The promising sign is that my day is now approximating 'normal'. The bombing has stopped for a while and I have the opportunity now to have a quiet time of contemplation, introduced by the call of the muezzin as he calls the faithful to prayer. It is a calm, crisp morning and the calls from the minarets in the area are crystal clear. The chant-like call reminds me of the universal value of human life, that the Iraqi people around me also are aware of "life living within them".

#### 4.40 – 5.20 Contemplation

A short but delightful period of contemplation. The cool breeze coming through the open door under the curtain (the open door to allow the pressure wave to go through, the curtain to diminish the threat of flying glass) reminds me of the Nicodemus passage about the wind blowing where it wills. "So it is with the everyone who is born of the Spirit". How true that is, that real life consists of responding to the Spirit, the Spirit of life, and it is when we try and control the Spirit that we come undone. It was what Jesus was on about when he spoke of 'following'. 'Responding' is perhaps a more contemporary word. It was a beautiful time this morning with no need of a mantra. The cool breeze enabled me to slip into it very quickly. It was, however, somewhat dampened by the noise of a B52 overhead and then the succession of explosions so typical of carpet bombing. Somewhere nearby the gentle breeze had turned into a soul and body blast of terror. I thought of the effect of those explosions on the lives of the Zahas and Amals of this world, and I shuddered. The wind had suddenly become chilly but the reality of my contemplation continued, and now I am set up for the day. What it will bring, I do not know and, as far as I personally am concerned, I have no anxiety. It is enough for me that I am here responding to what I see as the moving of the Spirit.

I am reminded of what I wrote as an introduction to one of our discussions.

*Contemplative prayer for me is about awareness; experiencing awareness, enjoying awareness and deepening the awareness of what we sometimes call 'ultimate reality' – that which really counts. Prayer isn't a matter of earning or achieving. It is about 'seeing', and from that seeing everything else proceeds. And we must never presume that we see. We must always be ready to see anew, to see beyond the cultural hypnotic trance in which most of us live and move and have our being: the culture of fear, the culture of producing and consuming. If these are the only games we play, they harden and become our reality. What we aim to do in contemplative prayer is to break free of that reality and become aware of a greater reality. Einstein pointed it up in his words "No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that caused it". Contemplation is the cleansing of the lens of perception so that we can see things as they really are.*

I make no claims to having achieved such awareness but I at least know where it is to be found – and for this I am extremely grateful.

*Religion is a bridge  
to the spiritual.  
Unfortunately, in  
seeking the spiritual,  
we may become  
attached to the bridge  
rather than crossing  
over it.*

**- Rachel Remen**

*You have to be the change  
you want to see in the  
world.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**



**TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

*Things are happening  
more or less as we're  
being told, but what we  
are being told is only  
a fraction of what is  
happening.*

**- Robin Prior**

*Another world is not  
only possible, but it is  
already here. You can  
already hear it  
breathing.*

**- Arundathy Roy**

The bewitching hour of midnight turned out to be that of the heaviest bombing. For ten minutes either side there were shattering explosions and I thought the heavily masked window was going to shatter. Normally I have the sliding door open to allow the blast of air to pass though but it was too chilly and windy to permit this last night.

But it was not the bombing itself that impressed me. After five days of it, I bear tribute to the adaptability of the human body and personality. Five days ago it terrified me. Now it has become part and parcel of my day.

What impressed me today was that immediately it was over, there came from one of the mosques the chant "God is Great". Every time there is extensive bombing it is the same. From the minaret comes the call of reassurance. It is a motivating force not to be underestimated and if I were Tommy Franks I would be considering the use of the Electronic Bomb – the one that is alleged to knock out all electronic equipment. It is the reason why each evening I place my laptop in the refrigerator. The use of such a bomb is highly problematic, not only so far as whether it works but also from the aspect that it may work in unexpected ways. The gas used in the Russian theatre hostage crisis was an example of the danger of new technology. The problem was that it killed those whom it was intended to free.

(I must pause for a while. There is a howling dust-storm outside and inside, and I am afraid it will get into the works of the laptop. Here's hoping it gets into the computers of the war machine. On the other hand, this might not be such a good thing as the idiots are still bombing even in these conditions)

All of this makes me wonder how long we will be here. If the present pattern is extrapolated we could be here for months. The tactics employed by the Iraqis were predictable. Offer little resistance in the towns, let the enemy think they have secured it, then deploy their snipers. It is one of the oldest tactics in the history of warfare. If you can disrupt the enemy's supply line, so much the better. It is the equivalent of the cardboard cutters of September 11 where the most powerful army in the world was helpless against people with the most simple of weapons. As I drove around Baghdad today and saw so many plain clothes people with guns I found myself saying "Good morning Vietnam". I could die of old age in this place!

On the other hand I may end up in Guantanamo Bay which I must admit I would see as a great privilege. It is to me one of the most blatant violations of the Geneva Convention of the century and based on the fiction that it is on Cuban and not American soil – as if it was somehow established there by chance. The occupants there are now killing themselves as they recognise that they are the forgotten people with neither military nor civilian rights. They literally are nobodies.

What makes it even worse is the massive hypocrisy of Rumsfeld and Co who assert that the parading of Prisoners of War on Iraqi television is



contrary to the Geneva Convention because it is embarrassing. I agree that it is distasteful and improper but it's nothing in comparison to Guantanamo Bay!

It is difficult to find the right word for the Rumsfeld approach but it is everywhere evidenced. The Administration speaks of the importance of occupying UmQsar as a point from which to distribute humanitarian aid. Terrific! This is the self-same Administration that denied humanitarian aid to Iraq for ten years and was directly responsible for the deaths of fifty thousand children a year through its sanctions policy. The Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, was asked whether it was worth it. She didn't dispute the figures. She simply said it was a difficult decision to make but she thought it was worth it – and a collective gasp went around the world. We have in our group a person who was fined \$10,000 for taking medicine to Iraq. The mind boggles at the logic involved in their statements and the only word I can find is 'hypocrisy' – the root meaning of which is 'play acting'. These statements are hypocrisy of the highest order. They may be accepted in the media-starved U.S.A. but please give the rest of us a break and credit us with a bit of intelligence and discernment.

Enough for now, it is time to centre myself on more important things and let the Spirit "bring to mind all that I have spoken to you". Despite the assertions by the war-mongers that God is blessing them, the non-violent Christ is crucified again this Lenten period. To say "God bless America" as it goes to war is blasphemy of the worst kind. The non-violence of Christ is indisputable – despite the pathetic attempts to paint the cleansing of the Temple as violence. He remains "the non violent one" and the church of the establishment is caught in the bind of having a non-violent Christ and a violent God, which is by their own belief a *non sequiter* – an invalid position.

I used to think of the U.S. as a peace loving country but the picture we have today is of a belligerent sheriff deciding which regimes will be changed. "Do what I say, think as I think, or I'll fill you full of depleted uranium". I continue to be concerned at how easily the hand over the heart drops to the holster.



*\$10,000 Kathy*

*Be still within yourself  
and know that the trail  
is beautiful. May the  
winds be gentle upon your  
face, and your direction be  
straight and true as the  
flight of the eagle.  
Walk in beauty and  
harmony with God  
and all people.  
- Navajo Blessing*

**WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

*Never doubt that a  
small group of  
thoughtful committed  
citizens can change  
the world. Indeed, it's  
the only thing that  
ever has.*  
**- Margaret Mead**

*No self respecting fish  
would be wrapped in  
a Murdoch newspaper.*  
**- M.Royco**

Arose at 2.30am after a reasonable night's sleep – about four and a half hours with an interlude of heavy bombing around midnight. It was, in my book, some of the most dangerous we have encountered because they kept operating throughout a ferocious dust storm and the bombs could have, and probably did, land anywhere. The dust storms here have to be experienced to be believed. The post dust storm scene in front of me can be described as a snow scene in dust. The cars are covered with so much dust that the windows and body merge together to make a shape rather than a vehicle. The closest parallel is the after effects of a volcanic eruption. The difference is that these storms occur with monotonous regularity at this time of the year. They are whipped up by a screaming wind off the desert and at times visibility is reduced to a few metres. At other times the sun reflects off the dust particles and it results in a surrealist type landscape. Yesterday as we drove through the eerie lighting to see a farmhouse that had been demolished by a rocket, I commented that it would make good footage for a film entitled "The Last Days". Along with the dust was mixed a thick black smoke from deliberately lit oil fires around the perimeter of Baghdad. The theory is that the carbon molecules affect the passage of laser beams and so affect the accuracy of laser guided rockets – which is cold comfort for those among whom the rocket lands!

This to me highlights the rational irrationality of war. Stupidity is after all a rational process. The demolished farmhouse we visited, whose fault was it? Was it those who fired the rocket or those who lit the oil fires? Neither as far as I am concerned. The fault for me lies fairly and squarely with the mythmakers in the Administration – the group of old men whose collective perspicacity wouldn't cover a pinhead and who never have experienced the horrors of war. Where you stand does determine what you see. Every viewpoint is from a point of view, and this is the advantage of being here. You don't see it on a television screen, a medium which you can turn off when it causes concern. And even if you leave it on, viewing the carnage night after night tends to desensitise one to the horror of war. Here it is for real. You see it with your own eyes and the smell lingers in your nostrils.

It must not be thought, however, that the Peace Team is simply about on-site reporting. There are all too many of those kind of reporters around. Their task is to report what they see so that their corporate masters can decide what others should see. With a few exceptions (and I would include the Australian Broadcasting Commission in this category) they are interested only in sound bites and superficial selective reporting. It is left to the 'little ones' like Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team to report it as it is. And we make no claim to be impartial and objective. War remains for us the prime cause of human suffering, not only in acts done but in budgets spent. The initial cost of waging this war was set yesterday at

seventy four billion dollars – and this is the down payment. We see war as stupid. There is nothing on this planet that does more to create human misery than war.

But back to yesterday! We learned of the bombing of the farmhouse from a hospital visit. Our aim in going to the hospital was not to get some quick pictures and a few details. It was to offer comfort and to apologise on behalf of the compassionate ones within our aggressive society back home. The father of one child remonstrated with us: “In the name of democracy you kill and injure our children!” All we could say, all anyone could say, was “I am sorry. I am so sorry” and hope that in our eyes there would be the hope of reconciliation. In the casualty department, as the medico in our team observed the carnage, the staff vented their anger against her – and understandably so. “See what your country is doing to our people!”

Through the visit we learned that three families had been decimated in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Baghdad. Two families (one of them seven day newly weds) left Baghdad to seek safety with the household of Ajmi Abdullah Ahmed. On the eighth day of her marriage, the newly wed wife was dead along with two others. Another eight were severely injured. The destroyed house was located in an idyllic farmyard setting. I took some photos of the ghastly damage. They show a hole punched through eight inches of reinforced concrete, the reinforcing bars snaking into a twisted scene of anguish. The second story concrete roof was sandwiched on the floor below and out of the edge protruded a piece of carpet.

*You can judge politicians by how they treat refugees; they do to them what they would like to do to everyone if they could get away with it.*  
**- K. Livingstone**



*Sandwiched*

*If you think you are  
too small to make a  
difference, try sleeping  
with a mosquito.  
- Dalai Lama*

While others of the team talked to the locals and absorbed their anger, I scoured the ruins for what I was after. Eventually, I found it under some rubble – a piece of the offending rocket which when analysed would identify its origin. As a lawyer, I am well aware that one piece of hard evidence is worth all the words in the world.

That afternoon I was interviewed by a commercial radio station back in Perth. I mentioned the visits to the hospital and farm house and the presenter asked “ How can you be sure that the injuries were caused by the bombing?” I sighed and patiently tried to state the facts again, but in my heart of hearts I know that “there are none so blind as those who will not see”. This was the same guy who at the end of a previous interview asked his talk-back audience: “Is this guy for real or is he a traitor”. Sometimes I wonder whether the effort is worth it. At other times I recognise that our society is manipulated and massaged by commercial radio and hope springs eternal once again.

It is now 4.55am and bombs are dropping in the vicinity. They are probably making the most of a relatively clear sky. My reaction to the last one was simply “That’s a big one.” No great surprise or anxiety – just a judgment as to size. As I have said so many times before, the ability of the human body and persona to adapt is really amazing. The fact that B52s are overhead does, however, cause me concern as I think of the thousands of Iraqi soldiers being carpet bombed into oblivion.

The candle I use for my time of contemplation slowly burned itself out this morning. Not an omen, I hope!



**THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

Arose at 4am after eight hours sleep – which balances off nicely the four and a half the night before. Am I getting neurotic about sleep? I don't think so. I have never subscribed to any appropriate length of time. Sleep is only important when you don't have it! The bombing last night was just background noise, although I was awakened during the night by an anxious Cathy concerned about the last explosion. She said "It seemed to come from underneath". It was the one that woke me up so I wasn't too cognisant of its nature, and I felt a bit like Eli telling Samuel to go back to bed. It was only as I was dozing off again that the possibility of an explosion in the basement occurred to me. I convinced myself that I would have smelled something if such was the case and went off to sleep again after making a mental note that I may be becoming too casual about the bombing. Later I discovered that Cathy was right and that in the basement shovels leaning against the wall fell over and tables moved across the floor. It was probably one of their bunker busting bombs.

The feature of yesterday was that Mike was able to get through on the phone and, through his conferencing technology, I was able to speak to Marg on the mobile and Natalie at school. It was great! The consequence, however, is that I am quite homesick today, especially in light of the fact that at this precise time my booked flight is winging its way home. Marg and the family have worked their hearts out back there. Is it time for me to return? The question, of course, is purely academic. At the moment, nobody is going anywhere. The Green Berets are evidently operating on the Amman road and both it and the Syrian road are being strafed and bombed. Refugees? Heaven only knows but I fear they would have to be classified among the quick and the dead.

My overwhelming sense at this time is that this war is going nowhere. At one point I was almost convinced by the "all over in two days" theorists. This was, however, balanced by a feeling of Vietnam revisited. What tomorrow will bring, nobody really knows.

As a military tactician I have been fairly accurate to date and I would at this point offer two scenarios. I offer these now so that my ability to read the military mind may be either lauded or ridiculed at some point in the future. I hasten to add that I am in favour of neither.

The first scenario is that Baghdad is occupied either by its gates being forced open or opened from within. The Iraqi militants then melt into the streetscape to reappear as snipers to pick off the occupying military. Good morning Vietnam! Good evening West Bank – suicide bombers and all!

The second scenario is to forget about Baghdad and draw a line from east to west at say Nasariya. The area south of that line becomes the New Democratic Iraq. Such a scenario has for the invading army many benefits:-

- (1) Surprise! Surprise! It has within it Iraq's principal oil fields.
- (2) Having a largely Shia population, it is a homogenous area.

*If you want to say something radical, you should dress conservative.*

**- Steve Biko**

*Nationalism is an infantile sickness. It is the measles of the human race.*

**- Albert Einstein**

*A little rebellion now and then is a good thing.*

**- Thomas Jefferson**

*Our civilisation is  
locked in the grip  
of an ideology -  
corporatism. This  
ideology leads to a  
worship of self  
interest and a denial  
of the public good.  
- John Ralston Saul*

(3) It is achievable. The West has a penchant for drawing lines in the sand and creating new nations

The only negative of such a scenario is that George Bush loses face. This is of little consequence to anyone but George himself. CNN simply increases the output of the spin machine to convince the media-starved U.S. society that theirs was a great and glorious victory – a kind of a reverse mirror image of Saddam’s great and glorious victory in 1991.

As for me personally, I feel like throwing up at the cant, the hypocrisy and the delusions entailed. “O Washington, O Baghdad! If only you knew the things that make for peace, but you do not!” (Luke 19:41) The non-violent one is crucified again and Leonard Cohen sings softly in the background:

*The wars they will  
be fought again  
The holy dove  
be caught again  
bought and sold  
and bought again  
The dove is never free!*

And when he comes to the following words, I will join in

*Can't run no more  
with the lawless crowd  
while the killers in high places  
say their prayers out loud.  
But they've summoned up  
a thunder cloud  
and they'll hear from me!*

As long as I live – so be it!



*A Seasoned Campaigner*



**FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

Did I say I had become accustomed to the bombing? Forget it! The BBC this morning referred to “a heavy bombardment of Baghdad overnight” and they were one hundred per cent right. It started about 11.05pm and lasted for about fifteen minutes, during which time the earth literally shook beneath our feet. Forget about smart bombs and guided missiles. These were just old fashioned ones dropped from B52s in their rhythmical pattern. Any one of them could have made us a part of history – a history of lies, deception and distortion as to the types of bombs used in the bombardment. Precision be damned! I’ve seen enough civilian bomb damage in the last few days to convince me that neither the military or their bombs are smart.

Correction! The last one was a brand new one! It was bunker buster, the type drives deep into the earth and “comes up from underneath”. Whether it was the proposed RNB (Robust Nuclear Bunker Penetration) I do not know, but it really did make the earth writhe in agony and send shudders up and down my spine. After the attack came the Muezzin with his chant reminding the people that God is great. It really is very striking, as is the growing resistance of these people. The growing number of their dead and injured is fuelling their resentment. It is their injured who are fired up and in the hospital day after day we meet the future guerrilla fighters and suicide bombers. I hate to think what the future will be in places like Baghdad. Replace the dense jungle of Vietnam with the outstanding architecture of this city and it is very much a case of Vietnam revisited. On the BBC news this morning it was stated that the U.S. military machine had not expected the guerilla tactics and they had underestimated the strength of the Fedayin (‘civilians committed to a cause’). It really does make you wonder how much intelligence they have of Iraq and its people.

A second round of bombing came at 12.15am and a third at 5.40am, the latter being some really big stuff that sent a deep rumbling reverberating into the night. It may well have been the telephone exchange down the road which was taken out last night.

What really beats me is the purpose of all this “Shock and Awe”. Do Rumsfeld and Co believe that they will cower the people into waving flags and giving flowers to the conquering troops as they ride into town on their chargers. Or is it directed towards the Iraq military? If the latter is the case, then it is ill-conceived because their military, like our own, are imbued with all the nonsense of doing what they are ordered to do by their President, and if they die then martyrdom/herodom is theirs.

*An individual who breaks  
a law that conscience  
tells him is unjust, and  
willingly accepts the  
penalty, is expressing the  
very highest respect for  
law.*

**- Martin Luther King**

*The more corrupt the  
State, the more  
numerous the laws.*

**- Tacitus**

**SATURDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> March 2003**

*There are causes  
worth dying for, but  
none worth killing for.  
- Albert Camus*

Arose at 4.30am after a good night's sleep. Things are pretty chaotic here. Some of our group walking to our hotel (Al Fanar) for a meeting were picked up by the Secret Police, held in custody for a couple of hours and then returned to the the hotel with a next day exit order. The morning was spent getting an email and a Letter to the Congregation together in a hurry so that they can take it through to Amman where they can send it by email. My dear wife should know that we are about to go into one of those dreaded "silent" periods where there is no contact and you can only guess what is going on.

(\* The Letters to the Congregation consisted of an updating of the situation and some extracts from this journal. They are found in Appendix A)

With that out of the way and given to the crew who were leaving, we found out that two more were destined for a quick exit. This was later changed and then reinstated. The whole scene is going crazy and we need to get our act together quickly or there will be no Iraq Peace Team. It raises for me the question of whether it is time for us to go. There is talk of us being directed to a site which would, in effect, make us Human Shields. I have already stated my position as far as being a Human Shield is concerned. I am not prepared to be such.

*Bush and Hussein are much the same  
And to their tyranny  
I will not put my name.*



*The Face of the Enemy*



**SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

Awoke at 3am after a late night of meetings. Things are really starting to come to a head here and the next few days are going to be crucial. I need to get my thoughts together fairly quickly. Is it time for us to withdraw from Iraq? Has the Iraq Peace Team fulfilled its role in the present situation?

The issues as I see them are:-

(1) There is a time and a place to conclude. "For everything its season and for every activity under heaven its time". My father used to say "Whenever you build something, build an exit door into it". The candle that my congregation gave me to bring up here has burned itself out. The brave little traffic light outside my window is no longer shining. Death is not the denial of life, it is part of life.

(2) The rules of the game we have been playing so successfully have changed in that

- (a) Contact with Iraqi people is now
  - i. Discouraged
  - ii, Investigated
  - iii, Limited

(b) Communication with the outside world is denied. We are dependent on, and ranked less, than a journalist. We are unable to be a voice of the Iraqi people if we have no voice.

- (c) Our independence is compromised.
  - i. We hear, see and do what we are permitted to hear, see and do.
  - ii. Communication with the outside world is almost non-existent and what we can say will be controlled and monitored.
  - iii, We will in a short space of time be financially dependent on the government. This is unacceptable.

Conclusion: However one defines the role of IPT, we are now unable to fulfill it.

The bombing? It continued during the night with some very heavy explosions around midnight. But what is a little bombing when people are involved in significant decision making? I worshipped with the congregation at 4.30 am and found it very meaningful. Distance really is unaffected by the bonds of the Spirit..

*Nothing is easier than to condemn the evildoer, nothing is harder than to understand him.*

**- F. Dostoyevsky**

*My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest shall have the same opportunities as the strongest.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

*The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.*

**- Steve Biko**

*I spent 33 years in the Marines. I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.*  
**- Major General Smedley Butler**

*If voting could change the system, it would be illegal.*  
**- Thomas Adorno**

## **MONDAY 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003**

What a day yesterday was! High drama all day with a magnificent group of people. I do not think I have ever been so impressed with such a diverse group working through a situation. At the outset, I suggested that the activities planned for the day be deferred, that we use the Aboriginal technique of meeting-discernment-meeting, and that we regard the day as a day of discernment. Our minder followed this by saying that we were required to go to the Water Treatment Plant with only 3 or 4 being left at the Al Fanar. This was the direction which I had been expecting, that which would constitute me as a Human Shield and which I could not accept. The cat at long last was among the pigeons! I presented my ideas as a starter and every one else contributed their reaction and ideas. The group then disbanded for a period of discernment that resulted for me in the conclusion that the situation had radically changed and we had better face up to it.

There were, as I saw it, two possibilities.

(1) For the Iraq Peace Team to withdraw from Iraq on the ground that it had fulfilled/was unable to fulfil its role. I must admit I found this possibility somewhat attractive: to return to my loving family who I miss so much. As Mike says "We are a close family." We live close to each other and see a lot of each other. Many of the folk up here have no close family ties. If I went home, I could be used to further the anti-war movement in Australia which has been strengthened by my presence in Iraq far beyond my wildest dreams. But that could also be advanced as an argument for my staying here! Going home remains a very attractive possibility.

(2) For the Iraq Peace Team to reconstitute itself into a 'non-violent presence'. For me, this would have to be a small coherent group centred around Kathy and her extensive experience and deep understanding. I would find it very difficult to be with people who had been in Baghdad less than a month – the period I needed to get the feel of the situation and cease to be a 'boy in a man's world'. I would only be prepared to stay with a group of experienced and expendable people who had said their goodbyes.

The group met and shared again. It was decided to adjourn for three hours and to meet again in two groups: one for those going, one for those staying. I met with those staying and, in a tortuous and difficult process, Kathy nominated a small group she thought would be able to maintain with her a presence of peace and non-violence in Iraq. I was gratified to find that I was one of the nominees. Then began the difficult process of handling the disappointment of the others. What a crazy situation – people being so disappointed at not being able to go into a very, very dangerous situation. We adjourned with the feelings still running pretty high.

This morning I knocked up the following statement. How it will be received I have no idea. It is pretty rough but for me it does set out the situation fairly clearly.

*Over the past few days we have been engaged in a process to answer the question: "How do we maintain the Iraq Peace Team as a non-violent presence in Iraq?"*

*The situation in Iraq, of which we are a part, has changed yet again, and the ways in which we have operated in the past are no longer available to us. We now have to cope with a new situation and the question is "How is this to be done?"*

*The process has been a heartbreaking one, with the dreams of so many of us being shattered. Everyone of us here believes passionately in peace and non-violence and would be prepared to give our lives for it.*

*There have been many proposals advanced. They have ranged from attempting to carry on as before, to complete withdrawal.*

*It appears now that the only feasible way is for a small group to remain as a non-violent peace presence in a very violent situation.*

*The process of selecting such a group has been extremely difficult. Not many options were open to us. In the end we decided to pivot the group around Kathy Kelly whose work as the leader of Voices in the Wilderness has gained her unquestioned credibility. Kathy was asked to choose five people to maintain a presence in Iraq committed to the principles of peace and non-violence. The ones she chose are senior in age and experience in Iraq. They are Cathy Breen, Cynthia Banas, Ed Kinane, and Neville Watson.*

*Consistent with the principles of the Iraq Peace Team, the group will continue to be independent of both government policy and government financing. It will be known as the Iraq Peace Team Presence and it is hoped that it will be a small light in a very dark scene.*

*It is not known at this stage whether such a group will be acceptable to the government authorities. If it is not, then the Iraq Peace Team will have no option but to withdraw from Iraq and locate itself elsewhere. Our concern for Iraq, its people and the principles of non-violence will remain unaffected.*

*It will be interesting to see both the reaction of the group, and the reaction of the government authorities.*

*I may yet be on my way home!*

*It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society.*

**- J. Krishnamurti**

*First they ignore you.  
Then they laugh at you.  
Then they fight you.  
Then you win.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

**TUESDAY 1st April 2003**

*So long as the water  
is troubled it cannot  
become stagnant.*  
- **James Baldwin**

*I am an optimist  
with no time scale.*  
- **Amos Oz**

*When the rich wage  
war, it is the poor who  
die.*  
- **Jean-Paul Sartre**

A couple of bombs last night of a different nature. They seemed to explode in the air just outside and I wouldn't be at all surprised to find we lost some windows. Mine are still intact – perhaps because of the fancy design of my tape! I turned on my computer to see if they may have been the dreaded 'Electronic Bomb' but the computer works OK.

Yesterday's assessment of the situation did not make the light of day. Kathy pre-empted it by saying the thought she had been "directive" and that she did not feel the blessing of the group. For that reason she was putting it back into the ring. I can really appreciate her feelings at this point and she may well be right. Kathy too felt uncomfortable at the feeling tone of the group as Kathy expressed her proposal. Me? Well, it's the age old thing – feelings are important but sometimes there are more important issues and I think this is one of them.

I have a heavy heart this morning for two reasons:-

(1) Situations like this require hard decisions and yesterday we pulled back from it. Ramzi was right. The group should know what Kathy's feelings were. The thing he didn't take into account was the frailty of human nature. Kathy expressed her idea of a small group of compatible people who would constitute a 'Non Violent Presence' but the group saw this as 'direction', as did Kathy after reflection. She re-submitted the question to the next meeting and surprise, surprise, the group went along its individual lines of self selection. The overwhelming approach was . "I want to stay therefore I should stay". This is commendable in one sense. – so many people who, knowing the possibilities, are prepared to stay. I give them full credit for that. But it was still the wrong decision! Had Kathy's insight been acknowledged, we would now have a new being: a 'Non Violent Presence'. What we have now is more of the same.

(2) I did not express myself at all well. I was loathe to lay it on the line and talked of the first Gulf Peace Team being dysfunctional and how the decision really was a hard one for Kathy who is perhaps the one person who should be in the States on the hustings. I could probably lay claim to second place given the precarious balance in Australia at the moment. The contribution was misunderstood and I certainly have to bear the blame for that. It was seen by many as me forecasting another dysfunctional peace gathering with consequent loading of blame on those deciding to stay. The second point about Kathy and the Peace movement making a huge sacrifice in her staying here, and that that decision should be honoured by going along with her assessment of the situation, wasn't understood at all. The only criterion operating was that of self selection. And I would agree with that in normal circumstances. With my belief in Call and Gifts could it be otherwise? But these are not normal circumstances and hard decisions have to be made. We did not make such a decision. We made a soft one based on personal preference and self selection. It is a classic example of why I was so keen to

institute the leadership model of decision making. It is why the army has Generals. It is why countries have Presidents. I do not like it and would prefer it to be otherwise but it really is how the cookie crumbles.

So where are we now? We are thirteen people instead of five. And that may be OK. I have no crystal ball and any claim to prophecy does not bring with it inerrancy. I now have to reckon with this decision and will endeavour to do so – and I think I can. At the very least I will try. So from here on in, insight takes second place to utility!

The question of “to be or not to be a Human Shield” still has to be resolved. I know where I stand on this but it would break my heart to leave Kathy here. My eyes are filling with tears as I type. Should I then forget about moral principles and become a Human Shield. I don’t know. It is something I will have to think about – but it is a very slippery slope when you put on one side what you believe, even though it be for high motives. I will have to contemplate the question.

And there it is. Back to square five after having been up to square eight. It is a pity but that’s the way it is, Neville, and it’s the only present you have to be in.

I repair now, however, to another reality that I find far more amenable – that of contemplation. Perhaps the whole thing is an April Fool’s day joke!

Not much further on the Human Shield issue after forty minutes of “awareness” seeking. I did have a few ‘insights’:-

- “If to thine own self you are true, thou then canst not be false to any man” (woman!)
- Human loyalty vis-a-vis divine calling. Is there a difference?
- I really never have got the gist of “Whither thou dost go. I will go .....” All it did was to get Ruth into bed with the boss - something that is completely irrelevant here.

I will give a copy of this to Ramzi with the heading. “For the sake of the record and a possible event – the event being that, if we do not make it out of here, on the banks of the Tigris lay a wreath of flowers with a card ‘St Katherine’ and alongside it a wooden cross with an inscription ‘Brother Neville. The old bugger was right after all’”. I hope you appreciate the subtle nuance drawn from the story of St Francis and Sister Clare. Who was Sister

*You don't get to choose  
how you're going to die,  
or when. You can only  
decide how you are going  
to live. Now!*

**- Joan Baez**

*The most radical  
revolutionary will  
become a conservative  
the day after the  
revolution.*

**- Hannah Arendt**

**WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2003**

*How despicable and ignoble is war. It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is no different than murder.*  
**- Albert Einstein**

*Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing themselves.*  
**- Tolstoy**

*Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.*  
**- Pascal**

A new phase in our time here started yesterday. From the viewpoint of our personal freedom it could be described as the 'lock down' stage. We can no longer freely wander the streets of Baghdad and need a minder to go anywhere. It is in effect being placed under 'house arrest'. From the viewpoint of our activities it means moving to a lower gear. There will be some opportunities for us to view bombing sites and visit hospitals but from here on in those opportunities will become less and less. In Vanstone's terms we now enter a stage of being done to rather than doing; the worst part of which is the loss of communication with the outside world. The pent-up anger within me can no longer be sublimated by interviews and the like. I am cut off from my loved ones and their worry must have increased threefold. From the viewpoint of the Iraq Peace Team we have now become a 'presence' and this, contrary to all my doom and gloom of yesterday, may yet work out. I was most impressed at our meeting yesterday, after we said goodbye to fourteen of our number, with the way that Kathy kept dropping into the conversation comments about how we had entered into a new stage. It was most impressive and certainly set the scene for the future. In essence, we are now identifying with the Iraqi people in a new and different way. It can of course be only symbolic as we come at the isolation and inactivity from a background of strength rather than weakness.

As if to recognise this new phase there was no bombing last night – until 3am! And then it came in all its terror. My wake up call consisted of two very large bombs dropping nearby. The glass in the sliding doors shook but held together thanks to an open door and tape crisscrossing it at 300mm centres. This morning I found the bombing quite disappointing. The quietness of the night set me wondering whether the stupidity of it all had at last been recognised. Perhaps the Americans have seen the impossibility of trying to win the hearts and minds of the people by bombing them,

I have never been able to understand the rationale of the so-called "shock and awe". I have first an abhorrence at using an essentially religious term for death and destruction. Awe is a word that belongs in the hymn book not in a war manual and its use illustrates yet again how secular society takes over the religious for its own purposes. Business, for example, now has mission statements and promotes meditation as a way of dealing with the stress of its life. Saddam Hussein is doing the same thing. This morning he called for Muslims to seek the immortality of a martyr by fighting a jihad. Iraq purports to be a secular state but anything goes in war. It is not, however, the terminology that most disturbs me. It is the senselessness of it all!

An extended time of contemplation this morning concluding with holding each of the group in prayer. With it now being down to fourteen, this is not only practicable but also essential. I will continue to do so over the days that lie ahead.

This morning I will investigate the possibilities of outside satellite



feeds. It disturbs me that so little of the agony of war is reaching the outside world – but then perhaps it is and I am just not aware of it. I must also get Wade to show me the hospital photos that the Iraqi doctor released to April. Being a doctor herself, she has quite a bit of rapport with him which may stand her in good stead in the future. The news this morning said nothing about bomb damage at Hilla. I must check it again with Joneed – whom I forgot to include in my prayers.

*A faith that supports itself  
by condemning others is  
itself condemned  
by the Gospel.*  
**- Thomas Merton**



*The Valley of the Shadow*

**THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003**

*Many people fear  
nothing more  
terribly than to  
take a position  
which stands out  
sharply and clearly  
from the prevailing  
opinion.  
- Martin Luther King*

*Sometimes I wake up  
grumpy; other times  
I let him sleep.  
- Margaret*

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Arose at 2.45am after a good night's sleep without, to my knowledge, any bombs. A few of them punctuated my reading of Jeremiah to which I have returned. With the new phase of ITP now in operation I have decided to get myself more organised and disciplined. Yesterday was very pleasant and relaxing but really needed a little more direction – without destroying the benefits and the newness of this new approach.

The 'New Era' started off much as expected with two of the newcomers coming to the Reflection time and holding forth on books they had read. I was almost to a point of despair but Kathy as usual took control of the situation and told them that this was not what we were on about. They responded well and it will be interesting to see how they perform this morning.

The rest of the day was spent doing odd things like vetting a "War Crimes" report, attending a Press conference and trying to work out how I can get back on the airwaves back home. I am still checking this out. If I could get me speaking on a floppy and get that floppy to Amman it could be a great way of doing it. I would ask myself questions. When it comes to being broadcast, the presenter could ask the questions and my recorded answer come in. The problem of course is to get it on the floppy in the first place. Even if it is possible, it will take a lot of work – but it could be the lifesaver I am after. I didn't realise how therapeutic the telephone interviews were for me. They got everything off my chest. At the moment, the events and feelings are still there and need to get out somehow.

The one exciting thing is that I am starting to get used to using the lap top for my journal. It will take a little longer before I am proficient at thinking and typing at the same time – but it will come

**5am**

A 'good' time of contemplation this morning. It was both fulfilling and disturbing. I used my usual mantra of "I am aware of life.... living itself in me" and had that delightful sense of deepened awareness. One of the extraneous thoughts was how much I miss my library. I think of something, like Bonhoeffer's poem at the beginning of his "Cost of Discipleship" and I cannot follow it up. I have the general gist of it, of course, but it would be nice to be able to ponder all the different nuances in it. I will probably use it for my next letter home to the congregation. But, as I was using the mantra "I am aware of life living itself in me", I became aware of B52s flying over me and dropping their hideous payload over Iraqi troops to the south of Baghdad. You can hear the noise of the bombs in the distance – the rhythmical boom, boom of carpet bombing. My mantra suddenly changed to "I am aware of death flying over me" and a sense of concern, anger, and despair descended on me. For a while the two mantras ran parallel, and then the awareness of light in the presence of darkness took over and I was once again in the depths – without in any way diminishing the importance and presence of death in



our midst. I came out of it remembering Bonhoeffer's poem and those beautiful last lines:

*Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine!"*

*Contemplation is a  
country whose centre  
is everywhere and whose  
circumference is nowhere.  
You do not find it by  
travelling but by standing  
still.*  
**- Thomas Merton**



*The Shadow of the Cross over Iraq*

**FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

*We cannot remain  
silent as our nation  
engages in one of  
history's most cruel  
and senseless wars.  
- Martin Luther King*

*Patriotism is a  
double-edged sword.  
It both emboldens the  
blood, just as it narrows  
the mind.  
- Anon*

Baghdad is without power. Why this is so is a matter of conjecture. There was once again some heavy bombing last night but the Americans deny bombing any power stations. It could be that it is easier to move military equipment around in the dark without being seen by U2 spy planes. We do not know but when I awoke this morning there was no power and it was pitch black. I lit the candle I use to express the worship of God and the darkness of the night was broken. Thus began a morning to be remembered.

It started with recriminations and a sense of injustice that those who stay up late into the night had the benefit of the hotel's auxiliary generator whilst those of us who rise early did not. It is a clear case of discrimination! Why should they get what all of us are surely entitled to? (I subsequently learned that they had not had electricity last night!)

Then I realised how deprived they were, those who did not have the experience I was enjoying: a single candle breaking the darkness of the night. The candle itself is quite significant. When I left home the congregation took the candle off the altar, extinguished it and handed it to me with the words "Relight it in Iraq. Go and be our man in Baghdad". This I did, and each day I lit it as I engaged in contemplation. As the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, the candle burned until it burned itself out. What to do? It was obvious. I placed a new and thinner candle on the base of the old and behold, a resurrected light! The new one is from a Storm Lantern Kit and the net result is quite appropriate – the light of the present has as its base the light of the community of faith back home. The two do really go together. It now carries on its task of breaking the darkness, firmly based on the original candle. It will make a good Easter day illustration, if I am back to take the service, for that surely is what it is all about: the light of Jesus breaking the darkness, the establishment trying to extinguish the light, and failing. Today it still stands over and against the darkness of violence and egocentricity – and my little candle reminds me of this whenever I light it. So much was the case today that I launched into a piece of purple prose entitled "Terrorists Attack Iraq". This was followed by remembering Peter Kearney's words about George Zabelka:-

*I go to light a candle that can shine in the night  
For my brother I have wronged, my sister I have killed;  
Come light a million candles in the tomb of the night  
and we'll see the light of morning rise again.*

I then had a time of contemplation and when I came to, "the light of morning had arisen again". I then moved out on to the balcony and looked over a city about to, and having been, subjected to great violence and I thought of Jesus looking over another city. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! If only you knew the things that make for peace – but you do not!".

I didn't actually weep, but I certainly felt like it.

SATURDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> April 2003

A most unusual morning. I arose at 3am and, because there is no power, lit a candle to give me enough light to move around. It seemed to throw everything out of kilter – the candle as a part of everyday existence rather than the special act of worship. It upset my routine in a way that I wouldn't have imagined. The candle isn't enough to read or write by (not at least with my cataractic eyes!) so I went straight into a time of contemplation for about 45 minutes. It wasn't the best time of contemplation I have had and when I came out of it there was the question "What do I do now?" In the end I decided to go out on the balcony and pray over the city. There was some bombing going on at the time and far away on the southern horizon it looked as if there was a large fire behind the trees. It was in the direction of the refinery and I assumed that it had been hit by bombing. I watched the pulsating glow behind the trees for some time and then realised that the refinery was one of the sites occupied by the Human Shields. This immediately resulted in a wave of sadness sweeping over me and I remembered again those words of Jesus over Jerusalem.

My mind then went to the meeting we had yesterday when we looked at the options open to us – which were essentially zilch! The morale within the group is good – the only tension being between those who want to consider every scenario and those who want to consider none. The truth, as usual, lies somewhere between the two. I remembered then the words of the Iraqi Information Minister that they were about to combat the forces at the airport with "unconventional acts of martyrdom" and wondered what on earth that might mean. I wondered if, for example, he was thinking of a small group of people staying at the Al Fanar as potential martyrs. From there I started thinking about what would be positive action in the face of such a scenario – and the mind went wild. I saw us dancing, I saw us stripping (St Francis you remember did this at the end!). I thought of a thousand things but none of them really gelled. The closest I came was shouting in a loud voice "Bismullah Al Raackman Al Rarheem, La!" ("In the name of Allah the merciful – NO!") My Arabic, however, is so poor that I probably would end up saying the reverse! The problem still remains: how do you gain the initiative in such a situation? Perhaps you do something as simple as just sitting. I don't know! The one positive thing of the morning is that I got Kathy to teach us the 'courage song' that they used to sing in the apartheid days when one of them was led away.

*Courage, Neville, you do not walk alone,  
We will walk with you,  
And sing your Spirit home.*

Now that's what I really see as grasping the initiative!

*It is not speaking that  
breaks our silence, but  
the anxiety to be heard.  
- Thomas Merton*

*We must not expect to  
find it easy; we shall not  
walk on roses; people  
will not throng to hear  
us and applaud. If we  
are to be pilgrims for  
peace we must expect  
the desert.  
- Helder Camara*

*We are engaged in a war that seeks to turn the clock of history back and perpetuate white colonialism.*  
**- Martin Luther King**

*How despicable and ignoble war is. I would rather be torn to shreds than be a part of so base an action.*  
**- Albert Einstein**

**SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

Yesterday was quite a day. After a night of heavy bombing and having reflected on things as they are and could be, I tuned into the BBC and heard that American tanks had entered the suburbs of Baghdad and were proceeding to the city centre – where we are! I hastily told others and commenced to put into operation the plan we had discussed many moons ago. I constructed a large sign saying “Yankees go home” – a sign that only an Australian could hold. Some of the others selected a banner which was appropriate. The plan was that we would do a Tiennamen Square. We would stand out on the road in front of the coming troops – leaving enough room for them to alter course slightly and get by. The information we had received was that when the troops come in, they come in at about 50 mph and it would be suicide to stand right in front. I wasn’t completely convinced but was prepared to go along with the idea of leaving them room to pass. As it happened, nothing happened! The troops diverted before they got to us and cut off to the airport in the West. It was probably a good thing because some of the newcomers were upset about my banner saying that it would provoke a scene. I heard what they said and changed it to “War = Terror” which is in line with my bit about “Terrorists Attack Iraq”. But then I found out that the newcomers did not want provocation because they wanted to be able to stay here and carry on under the occupation – something that the Iraq Peace Team had not envisaged. A meeting was quickly called and the matter discussed in an amicable but pretty forthright way. The problem, is and always has been, that the newcomers have no idea of what IPT is about and heard of it only a few days before coming. If they had known everything about it, it would have been difficult enough to slot them at the last minute into six months of preparation. Knowing virtually nothing it was almost impossible. Kathy laid it on the line firmly but gently and we considered the possibility of leaving them as a separate unit (but not in the name of the Iraq Peace Team) when we pulled out. I suggested that we engage in some aboriginal discernment and adjourn to think about it and consider the issues. We meet later this morning and it will be fascinating to see what happens.

This morning’s worship time in conjunction with the Wembley Downs Congregation was delightful. I felt completely at peace and immensely grateful to a congregation where three generations of Watsons are at present finding significance and meaning. At the same time as that I became very much aware that this is where I want to be at this time – and it became another cause for thankfulness.

The bombing last night was very bad. All sorts and conditions of bombs were used, some of them were long low rumbling ones, some cracking like a whip. One of the latter seemed just outside my window and I thought the glass was going to go. The tape has done wonders so far and the windows are still together. My understanding is that Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers will be making forays into the city accompanied by low flying

planes to bomb out artillery etc in the way. Nothing is uninteresting here.

My heart, however, grieves for the families who are being devastated by the bombing. I was with Siham and the boys last night. They are still OK but are going to move out to an uncle's place out of Baghdad today as there is trouble in their neighbourhood. I am rather anxious about them getting there safely. Siham is as lovely as ever and at last I have a good photo of her. Yesterday she referred to me as her brother which I thought was very touching. She is full of life, as are the kids, and I really would be overcome if anything happened to them. Enough is happening to people I don't know that makes me grieve. For something to happen to them would have me in front of the bloody tanks without giving them a way to get around me!

*I shall say what I  
feel and talk about  
myself unto the last  
page, and I shall make  
no apologies.  
- Elizabeth Smart*



*Siham the Beautiful*

**MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

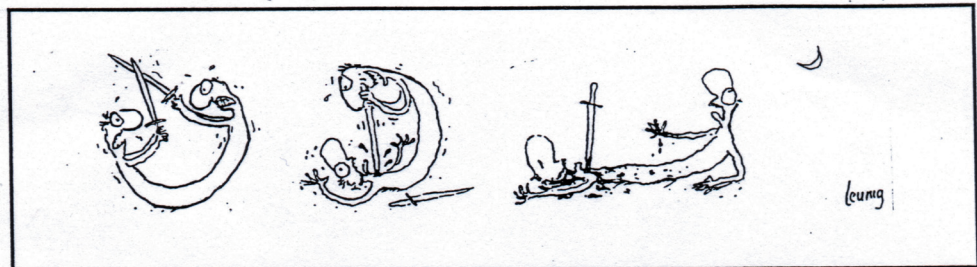
Arose at 3am. It looks as if the power has now gone for good, which is a great pity because with it goes the use of the faithful lap top. It is another example of not really appreciating something until you do not have it. Also with the power go my cups of tea in the morning – and the same applies!

After I had finished my time of contemplation this morning (very average), I went out on to the balcony to pray over the city. There was a cool breeze blowing and in the half light it really was beautiful – the city lying there in all its quiet beauty and my prayers hovering over it like a soft mist. Baghdad the beautiful. And as I sat there, it started again all around me, the bombs dropping and the noise of AA fire. And my reaction? It wasn't one of despair or fatigue or sorrow, all experiences that I have felt so often in these last three weeks. No, my reaction was in the imperative and with great feeling; "Oh, shut up!"

They were not my most profound words but there was more to it than simple exasperation. There was with it a sense of reprimand – almost a sense of commanding the devil to be quiet as Jesus did so often in the scriptures. The so called "devils" of those days were mental disorders which affected the person to the point where they could not operate properly and affected the person's potential. War is such an attitude today and surely needs reprimanding. As Leonard Cohen says "They've summoned up a thunder cloud and they'll hear from me."

The mood of meditation and prayer went with the bombing. And so did I from the balcony. It was five thirty. I lay on the bed and went to sleep for a couple of hours. Sleep has always been therapeutic for me and never more than now. I awoke again at 7.30 and penned a few thoughts for the morning meditation.

*When we extend our  
hand to the enemy,  
God reaches out for  
both of us.*  
**- Thomas Merton**



**TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

Awoke at 2 and did some journaling. I then enjoyed about forty five minutes of contemplation and then went back to bed. With my eyes and cataracts, I have great difficulty reading and writing by candle light. A sixty candlelight globe is about the minimum for me!

Yesterday was quite a day. We still have not confronted the troops but yesterday we confronted each other, the question this time being "What do we do when Iraq is occupied by the Americans?" My understanding was that we would withdraw. Our personal options as I see them are: (a) to leave when the Iraq Peace Team does. (b) To withdraw from the Iraq Peace Team and leave at will (c) To withdraw from the Iraq Peace Team and stay on indefinitely.

There was spirited discussion as some of the newcomers had no intention of leaving and advanced some good reasons for staying. The meeting was then disturbed by the arrival of an American Iraqi who is involved in humanitarian work. He is probably the most reliable source of information I have come across. His prognosis was grim. Civil war, he said, would soon break out. This simply confirmed what some of us had been aware of for some time. To my question of "For how long?" he replied "A very long time; months, perhaps years". This to me was somewhat discouraging. I had thought of it in terms of days and weeks. Others hadn't thought of it at all!

I finished the day sorting out what I would take and what I would leave when the troops occupied Iraq. Reports from the roads are not good and I would rate our chances of getting through at only fifty per cent – probably less if we go tomorrow which was suggested. My feeling is that we should bide our time but be ready to move when appropriate.

As far as the background music is concerned, the bombing resumed this morning at 5am. It has been so consistent of late that the precise time is of no particular importance any more. The target was a mile away but the reverberating noise made it sound as if it was 200 metres away. I would hate to be that distance away from it in reality. There was some small cannon fire much closer (about 200 metres away) and I expect to hear on the news today that the American SAS made a pre-dawn raid down by the riverside. The operation started in classic style with a flare being fired into the air. It will put me off fireworks for the rest of my life.

**7.00am**

What a crazy world it is! Here I am sitting on the balcony, bombs dropping everywhere, and I am enjoying a plate of my favourite Australian muesli. In between the bombs, the birds are singing and a cool breeze is gently swaying the trees. Quite idyllic really – and the poor family thinks I am roughing it in a war zone! About the only thing I am missing at the moment is my morning cup of tea – and, of course, my dear family, who must be very worried about me.

*By neglecting the Kingdom of God in our preaching, we have lost the central core of the gospel. The disastrous result is "saved" individuals who comfortably fit into the old order while the new goes unannounced.*  
**- Jim Wallis**

*It is not enough to say "We must not wage war". It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it.*  
**- Martin Luther King**



3pm

There was a chance of getting an email out this afternoon. I quickly typed out an email, and was horrified to find that the Spanish journo who was going to send it was the one that was killed in the shelling of the Palestine Hotel. For the record I include the email that was never sent:-

*My dear Maggie,*

*It's a pretty dismal day around here. The only good thing is that I am still here, and fit and healthy. There has been heavy fighting over the last two days with the deliberate bombing of a residential area because it was thought that Saddam Hussein and his sons might be there. It left a crater 35m wide and killed many civilians. Thousands of teenage Iraqi soldiers have been slaughtered, the hospitals are full of maimed and injured children – and Bush is saying the most outrageous things and getting away with it. It really is a very sick world. Siham and the boys have now left Baghdad and I don't think I will ever be able to get out of my mind the look on her face as she said "Why Neville? Why all this killing and suffering and bombing? Why?" And I, "her brother", had no answer for her.*

*I really have had enough of this bloody war, and I'm coming home. But don't celebrate too soon. It will be very dangerous and we will have to wait our time to make the run. There are many stories of cars being shot up by trigger-happy pilots and ground troops. The bombing over the last couple of days has been pretty bad also. The building next to us, the Palestine, was hit this morning with one journo being killed and one injured. There are snipers everywhere and this war will not be over for years. The Yanks have no idea about Iraq and its history and culture. The troops down south were handing out girlie magazines and wondering why the locals were getting upset.*

*My reading of the situation is that the Yanks may well appear on the scene tomorrow. They crossed the bridge half a mile up the road this morning and I am guessing that they will make it post haste to the Palestine Hotel which is the press centre, and there they will proceed to toss out 80% of the journos and install their own tame ones which they have had travelling with them. What I would hope is that we can hitch a ride with them. I say we because Kathy is keen also to wrap it up and get back into the anti-war movement. Some of the recent arrivals have ideas about staying but they really haven't a clue about the situation and I hope they decide to come with us.*

*And that's it for now my love. I have no idea whether you will get this email. If you do, then you will know that I love you all very much and am looking forward to being home. And (like the oranges at the shop) if you don't get this, then don't worry. I hope to see you soon. NED*

*For me, to be a saint  
means to be myself.  
- Thomas Merton*

*Violence is  
immoral because  
it thrives on hatred  
rather than love.  
- Martin Luther King*



**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

Arose at 1am and had a reasonable time of contemplation. I am quite sure it would have been better with a cup of tea preceding it. I then went back to bed again and re-awoke at 4.30 at which time I am now writing with comparative comfort. I have the candle and the pad in close proximity – and once again the amazing adaptability of the human organism is demonstrated. Had I adopted this position earlier I could have had a book written by now.

I have the feeling that this may be the last day of the war. The American forces have the Jumhuriyah Bridge under their control and I would expect to see them sometime this morning. Zaid, our minder, has left. Some heavy artillery has started up down the road. It is probably the one we saw being towed into position. If it is, then we should be prepared for a bomb in the near future as the technique they have been using is to use planes to take out the targets in front of the troops. This gun is much too close for comfort and every time I hear a plane I retreat to the bathroom. In fact, now may be a good time to conduct my ablutions, a delightfully vague phrase to cover the splashing of water here and there.

*A nation that continues  
year after year to spend  
more money on military  
defense than on programs  
of social uplift is  
approaching spiritual  
death.*

**- Martin Luther King**



Rocket's point of entry

**THURSDAY 10<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

*This world in arms  
is not spending  
money alone. It is  
spending the sweat  
of its laborers, the  
genius of its scientists,  
the hope of its children.  
- Dwight Eisenhower*

*In olden times.. the  
victor in battle  
would see the blood  
and suffering of the  
defeated enemy. The  
mechanisation of war  
poses an increasing  
threat to peace.  
- Dalai lama*

Well, the pilgrimage to Iraq is over for me. Yesterday at about 3 pm the American Forces rolled up in their tanks, we confronted each other - albeit in a pitifully small way – and I will now look around for a ride to Amman.

It was quite a day! It started in the morning reflection when I shared with the group how my feeble but emotion filled “Oh, shut up!” was for me an attempt to silence the devil within the system. I went on to say that I did not feel at all discouraged. Saddened, yes! The terror and loss of life and the suffering of so many (civilians and military personnel) sickens me to the depths of my being. I have witnessed in my time here a terrorist attack on Iraq. It has been 21 days of destruction that will be indelibly imprinted on my memory. But I am not discouraged! When you hold to the truth of non-violent love there is only hope for the future. I shared with them that here on in I would play in my turn at the reflection time, music of hope and encouragement for the future. I then tried to play Leonard Cohen’s “Anthem” with the highly symbolic words about the dove never being free and how the killers in high places have summoned up a thunder cloud and they’ll hear from me! I put the small tape recorder on and the batteries were flat. I put the large tape recorder on and the batteries were flat, The war and the lack of electricity had delivered yet another blow to my attempt to portray the truth as I see it. It is just as well I do not discourage easily. I will see if I can find some batteries somewhere and play it today.

After a meagre breakfast Kathy and I and Wade (the philosopher cabbie!) went over to the Palestine to deliver a floppy for dispatch. There were some jimseys (GMC Station Wagons) there that had just brought some journalists from Amman and were backloading at \$US 2000 a vehicle for 5 passengers. Wade was inclined to take off then and there but went along with Kathy and my feeling that it would be better to go tomorrow as a group. Kathy did an interview (brilliant as usual!) and we retired to the Al Fanar to yet another meeting where we tried to get some finality into who was going and who was staying. We eventually arrived at the point where it looked as if we would need three vehicles and, after a final attempt to persuade some of those staying to come with us, we each returned to our rooms to both pack and have a nap. I listened to the BBC and learned that there was looting down the road from us and that cars were being stopped and ransacked. Perhaps tomorrow might not be such a good day to make the run to Amman.

It was then that Eunha ran in and said “They are in the street outside” at the same time as the thunder of tanks reverberated throughout the building. The next ten minutes were utter confusion as we wandered about with our signs and the hotel management begged us not to go out into the street for fear of the repercussions on them and us. The “us” we were prepared for, the “them” was a different matter! In my Walter Mitty dreaming I had envisaged a Tiennamen Square but the opportunity for such just wasn’t

there. The tanks weren't going anywhere. In the end we settled for the second floor balcony overlooking the scene. I stood with my sign in bold clear lettering "War = Terror". The sign expressed what I wanted to say. Some of the group felt sorry for the troops and took water to them. Within a short time the rest of the group were among the troops, shaking hands, taking photos, and engaging in conversation – all except one lonely figure holding his sign. I had no problems with the others going to talk with the troops but felt that for me it was the time for a lonely prophetic stance. The others returned from the streets and still the sign proclaimed its unwelcome truth. One of the troops tried to eyeball me out but I had gravity on my side and he soon gave out. The hours passed. The guy below me in the Armoured Personnel Carrier started to read a novel, with a glance every now and again to see if I was still there. One of the guys walked over and called out something. I was too far away to hear what he said, so I sent down with April a copy of the article "Iraq Attacked by Terrorists". April returned after a long time with the guy who said that he hadn't killed anyone and had offered the excuse that his gun kept jamming. He was a Methodist too and admired my stand. Admiration was not what I wanted. I would rather have settled for a chair because it was now about three hours I had been standing there and my legs and arms were aching greatly. But, as my beloved wife will testify, I really can be a stubborn old coot! One of the soldiers across the road took a photo of me standing there. Kathy brought me a cup of tea and held a corner of the sign while I drank the tea. She was lovely and gave me an affectionate hug to show that she knew what I was on about – or perhaps just an affectionate hug! The confrontation continued with press photographers taking photos of the tanks and disregarding the old git on the balcony holding his "War = Terror" sign. It was not what his readers would want to see – and I could appreciate that. The reaction of the media no longer concerns me. Sure it would be a means of megaphoning and maximising the message but characters like John the Baptist didn't have the advantages of modern technology and they got their message across. Bring on Salome! My stubbornness had really kicked in and I was determined to stand there until the sun went down. It did, and Ed gently informed me that my sign was no longer able to be seen. It was about five hours that I had been standing there and as I stumbled and staggered off the balcony, my Methodist soldier and some of his mates wandered over to engage in conversation – at least that is what I assumed because my 73 year old frame had really collapsed by then and I could hardly find enough energy to move let alone engage someone in conversation. They would have to be content with what I had written. I collapsed on the bed physically exhausted but spiritually content in that I had been faithful to the truth, as I perceive it. The Armed Forces of America had been confronted.

I hasten to add that this in no way negatives or diminishes the witness and work of the other members of IPT. Wade told me of his

*A faith that is afraid  
of other people is no  
faith at all.*

**-Thomas Merton**

*In peace, the sons bury  
their fathers, and in war,  
the fathers bury their  
sons.*

**- Francis Bacon**

*Think of what a world  
we could build if the  
power unleashed in war  
were applied to  
constructive tasks.  
- Albert Einstein*

*I don't believe that  
one should talk about  
hope unless one is  
working towards  
something. We only  
have the right to hope  
if we are struggling.  
- Aung San Suuu Kyi*

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conversation with the C.O. of the Tank Unit. He had experienced sleepless nights as in the quick decisions of battle he had made some wrong decisions and civilians had been killed. He pointed to the others under his command and said "Don't blame them. They just do what I tell them." He finished by asking the NZ reporter to give as much time to Cynthia, one of our team, as he had given to him. It pointed up for me that it is the killers in high places who bear the ultimate responsibility. But then again, let's not concentrate on the easily demonised "Ronald Dumsfeld". That also is too easy a target. As dear Dorothy Day would say "It's the system. It's the dirty rotten system that is the trouble" – the same system that crucified my Lord.

I wonder whether I will be home to take the Good Friday service. I would dearly love so to do. I packed my cross for the trip home. I will take it out again and let it direct what may be my final time of contemplation in this place.

### **5.30am**

A deep and rich time of contemplation. It is enough. It is time to return from whence I came – hopefully to be faithful there.

### **12 noon**

Time for some therapeutic journaling to show just how easily it is to misread a situation. Since I wrote this morning we have had another reflection in which people shared their impressions of yesterday's encounter with the American forces. I would have liked to use the "confrontation" but it would be singularly inappropriate. There was no confrontation. If the Iraq Peace Team is a threat to the American Forces then they have nothing to worry about. With the Stars and Stripes fluttering in the background there were handshakes all round.

To be sure, there was no question of where the members of the team stood. Emblazoned on their tee shirts were the words "War is not the Answer" and those speaking to the American Forces made it quite clear how they were approaching the situation. Interviews with the press were given and the disc of photos from Al Kindi hospital distributed by April ended up in all the world's newspapers this morning. The members of the American Forces were treated respectfully and seen as acting under orders. The Commanding Officer said precisely that to one of our members who acted in an almost Chaplain-like role towards the officer.

With all of this I have no great complaint. My complaint is that the military machine was not confronted. It was almost as if Tienamen Square had ended up with the young chap jumping up on the tank and shaking the hand of the driver and giving him a drink

Again, I am in no way suggesting that I was right and others were wrong in how they reacted. I do not mind being a minority of one and I have no desire to convince others of the veracity of my ideas. What disturbed me greatly, distressed would be a better word, is that few of the others had any

idea of the 'prophetic' angle from which I operate. I have in fact been fooling myself for some considerable time – probably in the hope of ameliorating the loneliness of the prophetic role. Who knows I could even be deluding myself in this respect also – although there is pretty good precedent within the prophetic stories for misunderstanding on the part of ones fellows.

*Conflict resolution is one of the crucial areas of theological investigation in our time.*  
**- Thomas Merton**



*In position*



*First watch*

*If you want peace,  
work for justice.*  
**- Pope Paul VI**

*Everybody can be  
great because  
everybody can  
serve.*  
**- Martin Luther King**

## **FRIDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> April 2003**

Arose at 2.30 am and gave some thought to the question of whether or not the IPT should continue. The question of my going is not in question. I am simply waiting for a relatively safe trip – and disciplining myself in this respect. In my desire to end it here and get back home I may become careless – and I promised my dear ones that this would not be the case.

After this I looked at the question of why I was so upset yesterday and so close to breaking down. Twenty four hours later I can still feel the impact. My thoughts today on this are that there were two reasons:

(1)When at the reflection I said that I was going, Kathy looked at me with those penetrating eyes and said something like “You are really going?” I choked up as I saw the pain in her eyes and I couldn’t speak. My eyes blinked back the tears and I nodded my head. I left hurriedly before I broke down completely. There is a mutuality between us that I really cherish and which runs very deep.

(2)There was also the very strong impression that we did not confront the war machine. We collaborated with it. The breaking out of the American flag was for me the pits and to see Kathy gracefully moving about the soldiers offering them dates meant that I was alone once again – a stubborn, prophetic like figure standing on a balcony holding a sign saying “War = Terror” – which is what I so passionately believe. I do not for a moment deny or question the right of every member of the team to react in their own particular way to the coming of the American war machine. Nor have I forgotten that the soldiers bear little of the ultimate responsibility. I am simply saying that I find little comfort in “doing a Jeremiah”. I must read some more of the old git and see if he too had thoughts that he might be deluded. At the time I handled it fairly well, thanks to the graciousness of Kathy, but the next morning at the reflection I was close to breaking down as I realised that my mates of the day were two of the team with whom I would not choose to live with on a desert island. My desolation again had a nice Jeremiah touch to it but it offered little consolation. I wondered what the opposite was to “Thanks be to God!” Kathy and Ed were lovely, but it needed much more than words to get me going again. That only occurred as I retired to the place from which all ‘call’ comes – the depths of our own being – and engaged in some therapeutic journaling. From this I emerged fragile but stable, which is much the same as it is today, Thanks be to God!



**SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

No devotions this morning due to the fact that I had an Iraqi driver sleeping in my room. But no great cause for concern as last night's "worship farewell" will last me for a long time. Cathy organised it on Eunho's mural right in front of the tanks. I wore my stole. The candles were lit, we broke the bread and passed the bottle of water around. We played Dame Kiri's "Sanctus" as loud as we could and I held forth about the bodies that were being broken today and the blood that is being shed. Kathy read out her letter to the church, family and friends at home. It was a magical time!

I met the driver late yesterday afternoon when he brought Thorne and some other journos from Baghdad. I had been over to the Palestine trying to get a ride but it was pretty unsatisfactory, and right out of the blue comes this guy. The lowest figure I had been able to get over there was \$US300 and that was uncertain. This guy would carry me for \$US200 and I had the front seat. He wanted to go straight away but we talked him out of that and next morning at six we turned up at the Palestine, found some extra passengers and off we went on an incident free 15 hour trip to Amman. We ended up in a convoy of about 40 'Jimseys' (GMCs) which was chaotic at times with drivers juggling for places through the chicanes placed on the road. Their driving was the most dangerous part of the journey. We were stopped at one point by some Australian SAS who paused briefly to answer my "G'day" before they assumed their grim faced role. Some of the damaged bridges were a sight to behold and must have been blasted by some huge bombs. The road out of Baghdad showed the extent of the bombing and it was not a pretty sight to behold. It was, of course, the air power that made the war so one-sided. Without any air power, the Iraqis didn't have a chance. It was clear from the beginning so why all the needless Shock and Awe?

We arrived in Amman at 9.30pm and I gave Marg a ring to let her know that I had arrived safely. I thought this time she would appreciate being awoken at 3.30am! After talking to Ramzi for a while, fell into bed. I didn't sleep well and was woken at 5.30 by a phone call from Bitia in Chicago about the future of Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team.

*If the friends of peace  
are to be politically  
effective, they must be  
unwilling to listen to  
arguments that this  
war is unlike all other  
wars.*

**- Bertrand Russell**

Peace is love  
transposed into  
social terms.

**- John MacQuarrie**

**SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

*The powerful have  
always been willing  
to baptise the status  
quo and name it  
"peace".*

**- Sam Keen**

*Peace means  
valuing other  
children as  
much as our own.*  
**- Mary Hunt**

It is a huge question: What to do with Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team?

The situation as I see it is that Voices in the Wilderness was a movement to highlight the sanctions and to work for their removal. It did this by (a) Awareness raising through delegations (b) A charismatic Kathy Kelly. When Iraq was targeted for war, Voices in the Wilderness gave birth to the Iraq Peace Team, the purpose of which was to oppose the escalation of war against Iraq, that is, the Iraq Peace Team is an anti-war body. Its work centred on (a) On-site identification with Iraqi people (b) Utilising this to deepen the anti war movement.

The Iraq war occurred. This could mean "exit Iraq Peace Team", that is, you cut your losses and move on to the next phase of the anti-war movement.

Sanctions are no longer relevant. This likewise could mean (a) Exit Voices in the Wilderness (b) Utilise and re-organise to become an Iraqi People Welfare Movement.

Chicago at the moment is basking in the success of awareness raising of recent weeks and wants the party to continue. For years they have been throwing words into the wind. Now those words are being heard – and I certainly wouldn't want to be a party pooper. Let's party, but don't let it be the determining factor. Faithfulness to the vision is what it is about. We are not called to be successful. We are called to be faithful.

And this really is the heart of the issue. Others can do other things (e.g. the Red Cross provides info on missing relatives) but Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team have to follow their dream, whatever that dream may be.

And this brings me to the point of stating the obvious! For better for worse, it has to be recognised that Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team to a very large extent have centred around the charisma of Kathy. The biggest mistake the Christians made in the second century was to institutionalise around a guy called Peter. Chicago can try it if it wants to but if such be the case I would see it as downhill from here on in (Vide the RC Church). Faithfulness, not institutionalisation, is what it is about – and Kathy has the difficult task of determining to what she is now being "called". Ed would describe it in secular terms as "what works for her". It is much the same thing as I am on about in the last analysis and is what Gordon is on about when he says "A person has to find out what he/she really wants to do and do it, for nothing else is worth doing". Perkins says much the same when he writes about the saddest thing he has ever seen is people in a retirement village who have not done what they really wanted to do.

One could compare the situation of Jesus in Galilee. He was very successful, and his disciples wanted him to carry on there but he decided to go to Jerusalem and confront the authorities. Thank God he did! We would probably never have heard of him had he stayed in Galilee.



**MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

(En route to Bangkok)

I awoke, yes awoke, at a completely irrelevant time. When you are at an altitude of 41,000 feet between two continents the artificiality of time lines drawn on a map becomes very clear. The reason for commenting on the “awakening” is that I do not usually sleep on planes. This time, however, when the doors were shut I spotted a row of empty seats. I moved quickly to substantiate my claim to be a seasoned traveller and before long was stretched out on five seats with the cushions of same appropriately placed for maximum comfort. It enabled me to sleep for half the eight hour journey. It would be an exaggeration to say that I awoke refreshed but I was refreshed enough to remember some events of the last twenty four hours.

Ed came through from Baghdad the day after me because, as he put it, the Al Fanar had “become like a zoo”. The huge influx of journalists (700 in the last few days and more to come) had pushed prices sky high, created food shortages and changed the atmosphere of the place completely. Seventy dollars a day is now the going rate. We had it down to ten. But that was not what interested me. It was the comment that he had come across Kathy having a quiet weep. He hadn’t asked why, because he, like me, regards tears as a necessary and valuable release of emotion. His impression, however, was that she was grieving the loss of her soul mate. If it were for something totally different, then that’s OK but I appreciated hearing of it because I certainly grieved her loss and remembered how we had said goodbye four times. Ed, who is a guy of deep sensitivity, commented that he wouldn’t be surprised to see her in some type of ploughshares action with resultant years in prison. I have no doubts that Kathy could handle that but the question arises for me “Is this is what is required at this point of time?” As much admiration as I have for those engaging in such action, I cannot help wondering whether something new and different (and just as radical) is what is required at this time – something which could utilise in a new way the depth of concern and commitment for peace that is demonstrated in such actions. Is there a new way of “responding to the Spirit? Is there something that would strike at the heart of the system?

What might its equivalent look like? I have no idea at this point of time but have the feeling that a little (or a lot!) of contemplation may turn up something. As Marg said in a recent email “Meditation is a very dangerous thing!” I must give it, not some thought, but some meditation. And now as the plane descends into Bangkok I am feeling the effects of reliving the past few days. I am all choked up and my ears are hurting as if I had a heavy cold.

*The non-violent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it.*

**- Martin Luther King**

*Non co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

**TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> April 2003**

*A patriotism for today will distance itself from the increasing identification of patriotism with militarism.*

**- K.W. Clements**

The best laid plans ..... There was no flight to Perth yesterday and I have had to stay in Bangkok overnight. No great problem! I can get my journal up to date. From previous experience I know how difficult it is when you arrive home to retrace and relive oneself into what is gone. I have so far religiously kept up-to-date computer-wise and it would be a pity to neglect it at this point. I have sent some of it off by email to let those at home know what I am doing and I believe they have been using some of it for different purposes. It will be interesting to see how! It will mean, however, that I am going to be pretty tired at any press conference. I am looking forward immensely to being home again. Eleven weeks really is too long to be apart from the family, but it has been worth it. I have tried to follow the "call" as I have heard it and God has been faithful. As Brueggeman would say "God always keeps promises".

How then to sum up? In the last days in Baghdad I received an email from dear Leanne (by courier from Amman). She has a depth of understanding that continues to impress me and I reproduce it here for the sake of the record.

*Dear Dad in Baghdad,*

*Can you feel the stillness with each wave of bombing as everyone holds their breath for you and the people of Iraq? Can you hear the sighs of relief as we find out that you have been contacted after each round of bombing?*

*We have just returned from the church camp. I left it briefly to attend the peace march with Mike. We walked with 10,000 people, and you were quoted by Dee Margets as saying "History will not call this a war. History will call it a slaughter!" There are so many marches and demonstrations occurring now. Today 60,000 marched in Sydney, 50,000 in Adelaide, 6,000 outside Federal Parliament, and more are planned.*

*When I think back to when you left and how we said it was so hard to put into words why you must go, I am amazed at how clear it is right now and how the reasons flow easily. Your phone calls to journalists have become the voice of those who cannot be heard. You are drawing the attention of everyone who hears you to that little spot in Baghdad. You are peace and you are present. You are sharing the suffering and want to share in the healing.*

*The quote you were after is that of Dwight Eisenhower: "People want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of the way and let them have it".*

*Mum continues to amaze everyone as she takes on the media by storm in her own gentle way. You are a good team! She has her own special charm on radio and TV in that she makes people relate to the problem of loved ones caught up in war.*

*When we returned to the camp after the march, the children were making T-shirts that they had decorated with peace slogans. Natalie's read*

*There is no way to peace; peace is the way.*

**- A.J. Muste**

*“Make chocolate not war”. I thought this was rather appropriate, considering your love of chocolate and that you are probably craving for it right now. Send chocolate not bombs!*

*Remember the story of the butterfly? It flapped its wings and sent a tiny puff of air away which gained strength when it met another wind and so it went on until there was a tornado and an awesome power on the other side of the world. Voices in the Wilderness and the Iraq Peace Team are the butterflies (keep flapping!) and the peace movement is the awesome power.*

*Keep that grey head down and we’ll see you soon.*

*Love, Leanne.*

The relationships that were forged in Baghdad will last a lifetime. When you are all liable to be “collateral damage”, you tend to develop depth relationships. When you say Goodnight to each other and do not know whether you are going to be around to say Good Morning, you do come rather close to each other.

And finally, to wrap it all up, a letter which Kathy wrote to my community of faith, family and dear friends who were such an integral part of the whole process. Their part can never be over-estimated. I really did see myself as “their man in Baghdad” and whatever I did was, in a very deep sense, in a representative capacity. I will not blame them for the many mistakes and wrong assessments that I made but I do attribute to them and to God anything that I may have been able to accomplish in Baghdad.

Kathy sensed this and sent a personal note to the large number of people whom I represented there. She goes overboard in describing my input in Baghdad, but everybody has their delusions. Treat it as poetic license!

*To Neville’s family and friends,*

*We’ve felt linked to you, during our time here, because with you we’ve deeply loved “your man in Baghdad.” Now, readying ourselves to farewell Neville, we especially want to thank you for your ‘send off’ and your abiding presence here.*

*As dusk falls tonight, we’ll gather in front of US tanks, APCs, humvees, and soldiers. Our ‘church’ space is a huge canvas artwork unfurled on the pavement in front of a giant armoured vehicle. A South Korean artist gave us the art piece with a request that it only be used for demonstrations. Nev will describe it for you. We’re fortunate to celebrate a last supper together, wordless and yet overwhelmed with Jesus’s call.*

*Neville’s courage, wisdom and love burned brightly, daily, beautifully through our time together. In the last three weeks the war machine churned on, grinding down any hopes to prevent war. But our hopes persist, in no small part because of feeling that we’re connected to Neville and you.*

*We lack words for how much we will miss him. The tiny figure of St Francis that stood beside the cross in Nev’s room, and the large story of*

*Nothing in Jesus life or teachings can be twisted in support of killing or warfare.*

**- R. MacAfee Brown**

*The biblical idea of peace is not just an absence of war, but wholeness and health, of the individual, of the community and of the universe.*

**- Joan Irvine**

*Francis' journey to meet the Sultan, remain in our hearts and minds. Francis' companions have their counterparts in you and, we hope, in our little band that remains here. We'll join you in trying to help realise Neville's visions. We close with warm affection for the Uniting Church in Perth, for Nev's beloved family and for the many friends who'll gather to welcome him.*

*May the Lord bless you and keep you.*

*Iraq Peace Team members in Baghdad.*

To the last sentence I can only say "Amen". May the movement of peace continue until tanks are turned into ploughshares and humankind seeks war no more!



*Yasser*

*Samair*



*Emma*

*Jessie*

*Natalie*

# Appendix A

Letters to the Congregation



## SUNDAY 9th February 2003

From Baghdad/Babylon to the Saints in Wembley Downs – greetings!  
The Strength of the Scriptures - A Reflection on Isaiah 40:21-31

Many of you have evidently been asking “How goes it over there?” The quick answer is “It has its ups and its downs”. But of one thing there is no question: I really do have an intense longing to be with you. Loneliness abounds over here.

I have just read my journal of a few days ago and can hardly believe I wrote it. It spoke of a rich and rewarding time of prayer and meditation. “I am aware of life living itself in me. This is what it is all about. The finger points to this as ‘home’, this is the belfry stairs of Merton, this is enjoyment to the nth degree, where nothing else matters except the awareness of ultimate reality.” It certainly is not how I have felt the past twenty four hours, and I have had to consciously remind myself of Gordon’s words “No mountains without valleys”.

The reason for my loneliness? There are two parts to it,

(1) The first is the situation here. People come and go here – wonderful people, committed to the cause of peace – but the reality of the situation seems to get lost along the way. At the moment we have with us a group called ‘Women for Peace’ who are demonstrating in many places in their ‘shocking pink’ outfits. And that’s OK I guess. But they will be off in a few days time. Amongst those who will be staying during the war (15 at today’s date) there are some whom I have not yet met and some whom I seldom see. Everyone is so busy trying to prevent the war that they have lost sight of it. There are few like myself who see the redness now tinging the horizon. Some see George Bush’s threats as posturing. I do not. In addition, I have the feeling that we may have been outfoxed by him. We have concentrated on the evil of unilateral action rather than war itself. I think that he will get his UN resolution and that countries like France will come on board on the grounds of “the national interest”. When push comes to shove, what leader is going to prejudice “the national interest”? Like Australia, they dare not anger the all powerful giant which can control their destiny. With or without a UN resolution, George Bush will declare war when he is ready. And the point is that we in Baghdad will not be ready! We have set up a number of affinity groups. One is entitled “War Planning”. On it there is just one lonely name – mine!

(2) The other part of my loneliness is my lack of any real depth relationship apart from Kathy – and she is up to her neck in running the show. I blame no-one for this, except perhaps myself. I do take a long time to get to any kind of relationship with people – and this is accentuated by the situation as it is at the moment. But no great problems! I can handle it and the fact that I recognise it and can write about it is half the battle won.

Such was my feeling up to this morning when I read the Old Testament lesson set for Sunday: Isaiah 40:31-41. What a passage it is! And what a

*The most important  
precept of all is to live  
in awareness, to know  
what is going on.*

**- Thich Nhat Hanh**

*Be mutually careful  
for one another.*

**- Dorothy Day**

*To sit alone in silence  
is to rise above  
ourselves.*  
**- Guigo II**

transformation! If anyone tells you the scriptures are outdated and irrelevant, don't you believe it! What could be more relevant? "Have you not heard, have you forgotten that God gives vigour to the weary and new strength to the exhausted". Just how relevant can a passage of scripture be? I must learn it off by heart. But that in itself isn't enough. The real response is to "wait upon God". That is after all what the passage is about. The 'With Love to the World' commentary got it right: "*Isaiah's words are a great source of courage and hope to many people in situations of terror or quiet desperation.*" Quiet desperation! An interesting way of describing my feelings of late.

But such is no longer the case! After an extended period of contemplation ('waiting upon God') I am flying again – more like a small dove than an eagle, but flying nonetheless.

As I said, never let anyone tell you the scriptures are irrelevant. They are for many of us the very word of life.

Listen to it now, and hear within it the word of God for you. I look forward to worshipping with you on Sunday – 4.30am Iraq time. The candle will be alight and I will be with you in Spirit. May the God of Peace, and the Peace of God, be with us all.

Your man in Baghdad





**SUNDAY 9th March 2003**

To the Saints in Wembley Downs – greetings!

In terms of Gordon Cosby's saying of "No mountains without valleys", my first letter to you was from the valley. This time it is from the mountain top – neither of which probably bear much relevance to the everyday plains of the present. On the other hand it is the topography of mountain and valley that makes the scenery so breathtaking, and draws out of oneself the issues of ultimate awareness.

I awoke on Tuesday with the quite unusual feeling that there might not be a war, that this could be a turning point in the history of civilisation, that, no matter how powerful a nation might be, it would not dare to go to war against world opinion, and, with all that money now available, a new world might start to emerge out of the ashes of the old. Do you remember the old song? "And everyone neath their vine and fig tree, shall live in peace and unafraid". The awareness was so powerful that I felt like pinching myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. Is it a case of wishful thinking? I have no idea – but if it is only a fleeting moment of blue sky before the storm, then I am going to enjoy it while it lasts.

My time of prayer this morning was delightful. I started by reading some Brueggemann on the call of Jeremiah. It was precisely on the same line as my awakening awareness. "*The text invites one to reckon with the reality of discontinuity in the historical process out of which God can work a powerful newness.*" There then followed a timely reminder about prophets. "*The message requires a messenger (but)... we must not be unduly preoccupied with the person of the prophet*". Terrific stuff!

There then followed a time of contemplation/meditation. I add the word 'meditation' because so many thoughts kept flooding in. As is my usual custom, I lit the candle you gave me and turned out the lights. And, as is always the case, the shadow of the cross appeared on the wall in bold relief. But this time the 'awareness' was different. It was not the shadow of the cross over Baghdad in terms of a coming conflagration, but a bold delineation of the way from old to new. "Surely you can see it" it seemed to say. "This is the mid point between death and resurrection, between the decrepit past and the vivacious future."

I then started thinking of the one who hung there, described so often in terms of "The Word made flesh". And it is a good description in terms of Brueggemann's discontinuity of the historical process. The problem is that it is often thought of in a trans-substantive manner and I admit that at the two hour Syrian Catholic service yesterday I found myself wondering whether Jesus had any idea of what he was starting when he took a piece of bread and said "This is my body".

But all this be as it may, the overwhelming impression this morning was positive with the cross for me constituting a way through (a door if you like) from the past to the future. The disciples looked at the Temple and were

*Without wisdom  
there is no wonder.  
Without wonder  
there is no wisdom.  
- Eleazar Ben Azariah*

*The burden of proof  
is always on those  
who wage war.  
- Robert MacAfee Brown*

*Loyalty demands  
dissent.*  
**- R. MacAfee Brown**

*If we do not  
understand each other  
in speech, we can  
make ourselves  
understood by love.*  
**- Ramon Lull**

wrapped with its size and splendour. Jesus said: "It is of no permanent value. The whole thing will come tumbling down". For "Temple" read "Pentagon" and his voice is still heard today. Brueggemann is right on when he says that with both Jeremiah and Jesus we have to reckon with the reality of discontinuity in the historical process out of which a powerful newness can come.

How to conclude? My dear Leanne wrote the other day saying:  
"When I think of you "sitting in Baghdad" I am able to accept it because I know you really want to be there, and I remember all those benedictions you gave:-

*"Go forth into the world in peace.  
Be of good courage.  
Hold fast to that which is right.  
Render to no person evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted.  
Support the weak.  
Help the afflicted.  
Honour all people.  
Love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit"*

She finished her letter with the words "I think it's time we heard that benediction again".

The odd thing is that it is how I would like to be remembered – standing in front of the community of faith for which I have so much love and respect and saying that benediction, with the additional words that always follow it: "knowing that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit is with us now, and shall be forever more"

Love and peace to you all.

Your man in Baghdad



*Minaret & cross together*

**SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003**

To the Saints in Wembley Downs – greetings!

I write this time with a heavy but thankful heart – heavy because war has been declared against innocent men, women and children, and thankful because I am here. Being here is so important to me.

It is an odd mixture of feelings that I experience today. I thought I would be more angry at the vicious injustice of this war (and there certainly is anger within me) but I really can't be bothered with the posturing prevarications of politicians. I confess that my automatic reaction upon hearing George Bush's speech was a very irreverent "Oh, shut up!" Our politicians are so pathetically insignificant when placed alongside Iraqi families like Siham and the boys. I had dinner with them last night. Siham had prepared a 'special' meal, and such it was! There was a piece of chicken with our rice and we had 'keema' as the soupy substance to flavour the rice. It was a great time and I was touched by Samair's concern that I should leave Iraq because I might get injured. He was really concerned. I said to him: "But what about you?" With a shrug of his shoulders he said. "We are used to it". Samair is only fourteen years old and it struck me that it may well be our last supper. The next time I see them it may be a case of broken bodies and shed blood, and Christ will have been crucified again.

Paul, a journalist with the Sydney Morning Herald dropped around last night to see how I was going. He is a mature guy, and in the course of the conversation asked me an atypical question: "What is it doing to your faith?" "It has deepened it!" was my immediate reply. I mumbled something about the way of the cross and Jesus confronting the authorities. "And the authorities?" he asked - and we laughed at the idea of Bush, Blair and Howard being the crucifying authorities of our day. I hope I didn't sound too pious. I'm not used to being asked that kind of question by reporters. They usually ask some sappy question like "Aren't you afraid of being killed?" I try and point out that I am being exposed to no greater risk than the average Iraqi but they don't seem to get the message.

My journal entry of a few days ago gives some indication of where I am at – and it's a good place to be.

*"Very close to it all today. Is there anything more beautiful than the tapered shape of the candle flame as it glows in bright incandescence? You look into it and you look beyond it into ultimate reality. The candle is getting very small now, and I hope it lasts the distance. It is hugely symbolic for me as representing the*

*Nonviolence is not primarily a tactic. It is a way of living and being and expressing the truth of your soul in the world.*

**- Dan Berrigan**

*One can only tell the truth and say one's prayers.*

**- Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

*Lies and evasions,  
not bombs and bullets,  
in the first instance, are  
killing those whose  
blood now drenches  
the earth.*

**- A.J. Muste**

*Not till the spirit  
is changed can the  
form be altered. The  
form is merely an  
expression of the  
spirit within.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

*community of faith of which I am a part and from which I am apart. It never ceases to amaze me how the light of a single candle can break the darkness. Beside the candle is dear old St. Francis, now symbolically turned towards the cross - not by design but by the irrational decision and circumstances of changing the location of the worship centre. On the right is my 'Bishop's ring' - the ring given to me by Abu Yasser, so representative of the poor of the world, the ones who bear our sinfulness. And at the back, the cross which really does tower over the wrecks of time. At its base the sculptured, broken and folded piece of Lebanese bread - so beautiful, exquisitely simple, and yet so real. All of it fits together in a way that surpasses the beauty of any Cathedral I have ever seen. I soak it in, in deep levels of gratitude - and I realise that it will never mean as much to anyone else as it does to me right now. Heaven and earth combine in this simple worship centre. The Spirit brings to mind all that Jesus said and did, the faithfulness of those who brought me to this point, and the essence of it all: broken bread and a broken body for the poor of the world - who would appear, at this moment in history, as once again having to endure the heresy of the powers that be.*

*It all combines in a beautiful wholeness of simplicity that draws me like a moth to the candle. And if such is the outcome, then so be it - and let the people of God say "Amen."*

*Today is Sunday and at this precise moment the community of faith at Wembley Downs is worshipping before a candle and a cross and may be breaking bread together. It is yet another instance of how we are gathered up together in a timeless warp centred upon the ultimate reality revealed in Jesus, living in, abiding in, the oneness and the unity of life. Is this what Evelyn Underhill is on about - practical mysticism? If the pleasure of a Sunday afternoon is mine today I will re-read her with pleasure.*

By the time you read this letter the bombing will have started and it may be some time before you hear from me again, and, as Jessie would say, "maybe forever". They threaten to unleash "Shock and Awe" on these people. What an obscene phrase! The word, which is traditionally associated with the bending of the knee in worship, is now used to denote brutal, overwhelming violence and destruction. I object so strongly to the use of the word 'awe' in this context. It is blasphemy, as is the whole bloody war.

I do not ask for your prayers in these coming days. I ask your prayers for the forty-six percent of this country who are below sixteen years of age. We are in effect waging war on children. And

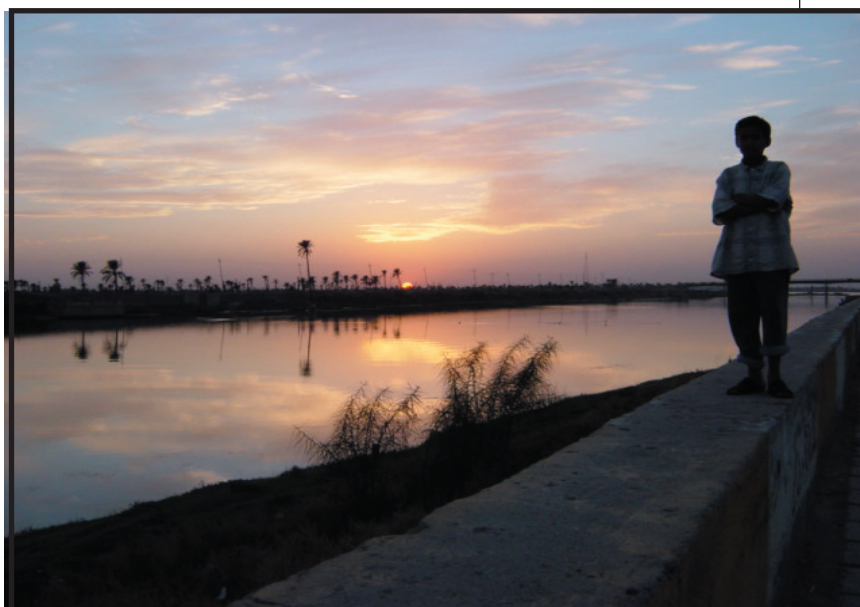
it is even worse when it is realised that the average age of the American servicemen is twenty-one years, which makes many of them teenagers. The Iraqi servicemen with whom I talk are again youngsters. What in the name of God are we doing? When will the old men of the world fight their own battles and leave the young to live their lives. May God have mercy on humankind – for we know precisely what we are doing!

As for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, you know only too well what I would desire for you. I never tire of saying the words, and they really do wrap it all up – the words we use as we close down the drama of the community of faith for another week. Wait for them at the end of today’s service and let them become part of you.

May the peace of God be with you and the world.

Your man in Baghdad

*War is where a yes  
to Jesus becomes a  
no to our government.  
- R. MacAfee Brown*



*Adam and Eden*

**SUNDAY 6th April 2003**

To the Saints in Wembley Downs – greetings!

*We have been  
silent witnesses  
to evil deeds.  
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

This may be the last letter for some time as we are now entering a ‘lock down’ situation where our activities and our communications will be strictly limited, if allowed at all. It may be some time before the guy at the desk calls out “Telephone Mr Neville”. We had a good run with the email but it looks as if that has now closed down. I am not even sure that this letter will reach you.

Some of you will remember Geoff Mortlock’s poem on the wall at Gidgie. Our situation now is strangely reminiscent of it, and I hope the outcome will be just as joyous. It cannot be, however, for the people of Baghdad. They are now locked in to a future of bombing and street fighting, and weeping over the bodies of their children and, as Colleen Fulmer says, “no garlands of lovely flowers are going to dispel the ancient grief, or silence the anguished voices that abhor the war machine.”

What then is it important to say? Nothing really! We have come to know each other so well over the past thirty-five years that you know what I am going to say even before I say it.

I think of you continually and I remember the words of Robert Miller: “Never before in the history of the world has there been a global, visible, public viable, open dialogue and conversation about the very legitimacy of war. Can it be that, even in these difficult times, we are in the midst of a world-wide transformation in which more and more people are actually withdrawing their belief in war. Now there are two superpowers: the United States and the merging, surging voice of the people of the world, waging peace”

*My business is to  
think about God.  
It is for God to think  
about me.  
- Simone Weil*

Perhaps the day of the little light outside my window really has come. With more people opposing this war at its beginning than were opposing the Vietnam war at its end, we may have reached the critical mass necessary for the next step forward in any movement. With seventy-one percent of Australians opposed to war, it needs just a few more people and the war-like approach of our Prime Minister will be as relevant as Monty Python’s dead parrot. Incidentally, some forty minutes after the bombing, the air raid siren has sounded. I’m not sure whether it is a late warning of the previous attack, the ‘all clear’ of a warning that was never given, or the precursor of a new attack. Never mind. I doubt if in the history of humankind it is going to matter much. The signals



that the establishment sends have always been confused – and never more than now! “In the national interest!” How immoral can you get? Slaughtering tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children – in the national interest!

How then to finish this letter to you, my companions in Christ. I find myself drawn to my favourite letter in the scriptures, Ephesians. To be sure it has many dated statements but the opening verses of Chapter Four still ring like a clarion call for me. If we could fulfil a fraction of those verses, the world would change forever. I leave them with you, and I will read them as I join you in worship tomorrow at 4.30am Baghdad time. In all honesty, I think I should tell you that the little red traffic light is no longer blinking outside my window, and the candle you gave me will not last the distance tomorrow. Let’s remember, however, that they are symbols. The Light still shines and the darkness cannot overcome it. The Spirit still moves and binds us together – and I hope to be with you again in the flesh in the near future.

Love and Peace to you all.

Your man in Baghdad

*I implore you then,  
live up to your  
calling.... Spare  
no effort to make fast  
with bonds of peace  
the unity which the  
Spirit gives.  
- **Epesians 4:1-3***



*Love and peace to you all*

# A COMMON PRAYER

BY MICHAEL LEUNIG

*Let us pray for the victims of war; for those who mourn and are afflicted.  
For the earth and its innocent creatures now mutilated and in disarray.  
For the aggrieved and suffering souls now bombed into submission and  
tormented silence.*

*For the scales of justice now locked in false balance.*

*For the dove, now mocked by the metal wings of cruelty and greed.*

*For the yearnings and labours of peacemakers, healers and teachers, now  
degraded by the cunning and cowardice of military minds.*

*For the needy whose precious resources are now wasted and spent.*

*For the beautiful treasures, icons and holy places, now defiled by a crass sci-  
ence, now smashed by vulgar and heartless economies.*

*For those who seek to know and understand what has befallen their world,  
now deceived and bewildered by the dictatorships of information.*

*We lament this poisoned and sorrowful state, this brutal claim on the future  
of the spirit and soul.*

*And let us pray for the liberation of the American and the Australian  
people.*

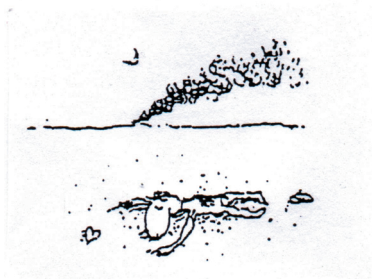
*May they be freed from their illusions of victory and righteousness.*

*May they be liberated from the compulsions of their violent dreams and the  
oppression of their lusts for power and material wealth.*

*May that which is tender and loving in America and Australia, that which  
is compassionate and merciful, hold to its difficult task and be brought to  
bear on the affairs of our troubled nations.*

*We pray for peace.*

*Amen*





# Appendix B

Iraq Peace Team



# The Iraq Peace Team

The 'Iraq Peace Team' was the progeny of 'Voices in the Wilderness', a group established in 1996 to oppose and break the sanctions. UNICEF calculates that 50,000 children a year died because of the sanctions – most of the deaths were from water borne diseases and lack of simple medicines. Denis Halliday, the Humanitarian Director for the UN in Iraq resigned saying the sanctions were tantamount to genocide. The Director who followed him, Hans Von Sponeck, also resigned saying that he wasn't going to preside over the highest child mortality rate in the world. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, was asked whether, in the light of 50,000 child deaths a year, the sanctions were worth it. She did not question the figures. She simply said: "It is a hard decision but I, we think it is worth it". The sanctions constitute the horror story of the last 15 years and are essential to the understanding of both the situation of the Iraqi people and their attitude to the US which in effect administered the sanctions.

Voices in the Wilderness in no way defends the regime of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi people suffered greatly under him and his family. But we must also recognise our culpability in the suffering of the Iraqi people. To do otherwise is to close our eyes to the truth. Saddam was a brutal, cruel, vicious tyrant, and so were we through the sanctions.

When in 2002 it became apparent that George Bush was bent on war, Voices formed the Iraq Peace Team to oppose the escalation of war. It operated on the same basis as Voices – a small core group and delegations of people who would visit Iraq, meet with Iraqi people, and return to their own country to be the voice of the people of Iraq.

Fourteen of these people decided to stay indefinitely and try to be **a voice in the wilderness of war.**

Members of Iraq Peace Team in Baghdad  
20th March to the 10th April 2003

Kathy (USA)  
Cynthia (USA)  
Cathy (USA)  
Ed (USA)  
Neville (Australia)  
Martin (USA)  
Joneed (Canada)

April (USA)  
Bettejo (USA)  
Wade (USA)  
Robert (Canada)  
Charlie (USA)  
Oonha (Korea)

*It is not enough to  
experience the divine;  
the experience must  
then be incarnated in  
our behaviour towards  
others.*

**- Helen Armstrong**

*Better something  
overbold and  
therefore in need of  
forgiveness, than  
nothing at all.*

**- Karl Barth**

*The transformation from objective journalism to propaganda begins with the addition of adjectives when referring to the other side.*  
**- J. Teodosijevic-Ryan**

*The line separating good from evil passes right through the human heart.*  
**- A.Solzhenitzyn**

One of the main activities of members of the Iraq Peace Team was keeping in touch with their support groups and attending to media interviews. The Iraq Peace Team also had a web site which gave us a world wide coverage and to which we were urged to contribute. One of my contributions, referred to in the foregoing pages, was the following.

### **TERRORISTS ATTACK IRAQ**

*For the last two weeks Iraq has been bombed. The bombing has been designed to create fear by the use of violence – the avowed and stated aim of every terrorist. The operation has been named “Shock and Awe” and the description points up the two essential characteristics of the action: that it is shocking and it is religious in nature.*

*The fact that it is shocking is self evident. Corpses, horribly mutilated by blast and fire, litter the hospital corridors, while dismembered and badly injured children lie in its beds. Distraught mothers identify their children in the morgue, and death and destruction are everywhere to be found. The aim of the bombing has been accomplished. The people are in a state of shock and in fear of their lives.*

*The second aspect of the stated aim concerns the religion of those bombing Iraq. The word “awe” is one used by all the major religions and is dictionary defined as “a feeling of respect”. Their religion is based on violence, with their theologians referring to it as “redemptive violence”. Violence is regarded as the way, the truth and the life. It is believed that peace comes through violence, and violence is the ultimate solution. From their earliest days children are indoctrinated in this belief. It is the dominant motif of their cartoons, comics, film and television. The USA is the world headquarters of those who hold violence in awe. It possesses the greatest number of weapons of mass destruction, and it has used them more often and with more deadly effect than any other nation on earth.*

*The interesting thing about this terrorist attack is that it is readily acknowledged. The term “Shock and Awe” is not a name given to the action by its opponents. It is the name chosen by the USA to describe its present bombing campaign. It is to my knowledge the first time the USA has acknowledged that it is engaging in terrorist activities.*

The reaction to the above was quite strange. Normally, what I say is strongly contested by someone, if not a host of people. This piece hit the airways without such a reaction. The only conclusions I can draw are

- (a) It wasn't understood.
- (b) It was understood.

I remain convinced that one of the very real dangers we face, both as individuals and as a community, is that so often we become what we oppose.

# Appendix C

Photographs & Artwork



Unless otherwise indicated in italics the photographs are by the author

**Page xii**

*George Gittoes* is a well known Australian artist. When in Baghdad he interviewed the author. In the original, the interview can be read on the left hand side.

**Page 4**

*Michael Rogerson*  
The family protesting

**Page 6**

*Leanne Rogerson*  
Jessie

**Page 8**

Child dying of cancer

**Page 10**

Worship centre at 7am

**Page 12**

Zahar - Paraplegic by shrapnel

**Page 15**

Kathy Kelly - founder of  
Voices in the Wilderness

**Page 17**

First floor (?) of bombed  
farmhouse

**Page 18**

Cathy & Cynthia - two of the  
long term IPT members

**Page 20**

Charlie Litekey - a Vietnam  
veteran who handed back  
his Congressional Medal of  
Honour (V.C.)

**Front Cover**

*Jason South*

**Page 22**

*IPT web photo*

**Page 29**

*Thorne Anderson*  
Depleted uranium vehicle graveyard

**Page 31**

Worship centre at 3am

**Page 35**

Siham

**Page 36 & Page 62**

*Michael Leunig*

**Page 39**

Entry point of missile into  
farmhouse

**Page 41**

US military outside hotel

**Page 50**

Siham's sons  
Author's grandchildren

**Page 54**

*Joel Preston Smith*  
Woman and child

**Page 56**

The traditional site of the Garden of  
Eden.

**Page 59**

Symbols of the one God

**Page 61**

One of the twins

**Back Cover**

The Traffic Light

# A Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths and superficial relationships  
so that you will live deep in your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people and the earth  
so that you will work for justice, equity and peace

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer  
so that you will reach out with your hands to comfort them  
and change their pain into joy

And may God bless you with the foolishness  
to think that you can make a difference in the world  
so that you will do the things which others say cannot be done.

## *Post Script*

Up-dated information may be found on [www.nonviolence.org/vitw](http://www.nonviolence.org/vitw)

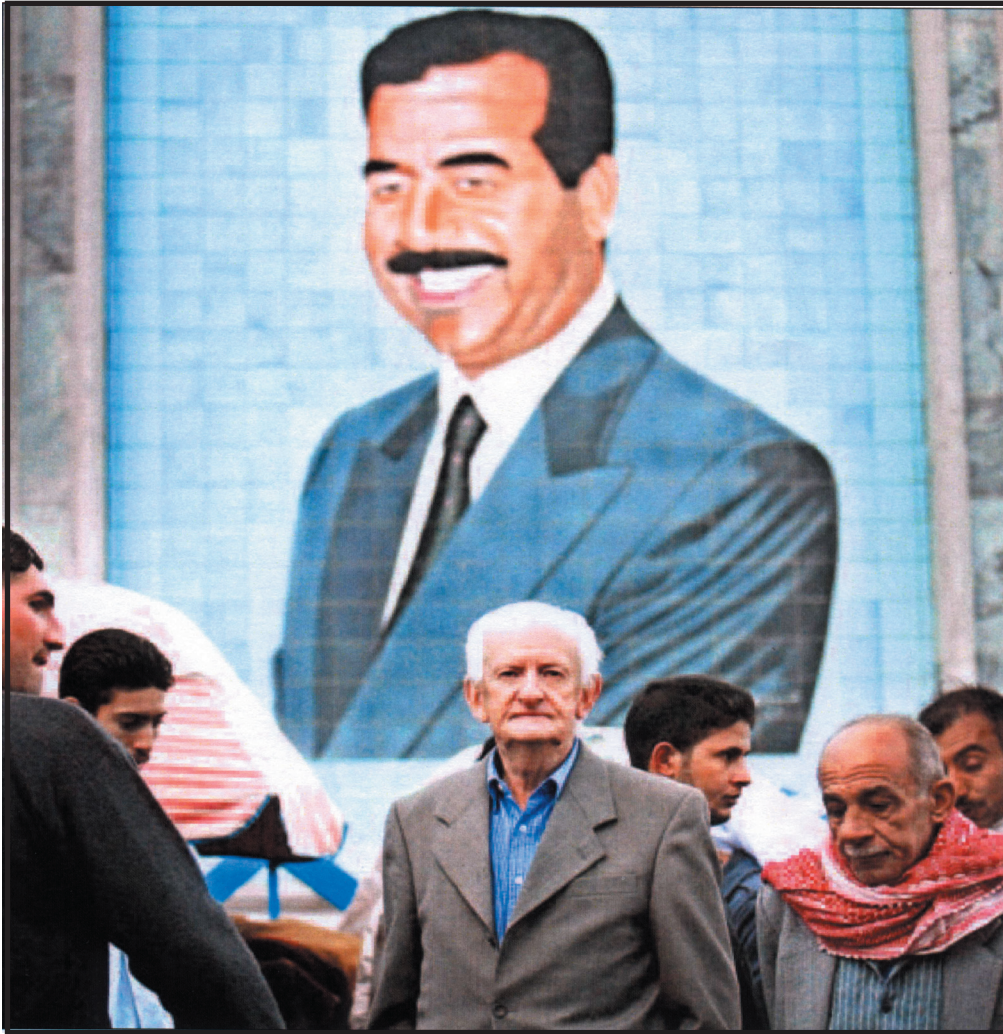


## *Post Script*

Up-dated information may be found on [www.nonviolence.org/vitw](http://www.nonviolence.org/vitw)



# Traffic Light



An on-site account of the 2003 Iraq War  
as seen through the journal  
of  
**Neville Watson**

# Where you stand determines what you see

---

**Neville Watson**, Lawyer, Uniting Church Minister and Peace Activist was in Baghdad during the 2003 Iraq War. Twenty years ago he adopted 'journaling' as a part of his spiritual discipline. This booklet contains his journaling for that period. It has been cursorily edited to remove personal embarrassment but is largely as it was written - warts and all!



*“The bombing is over for the time being. All is quiet now and I am sorely tempted to try and get some sleep. I have the feeling, however, that such may be precisely what they are waiting for, so I have made myself a cup of tea and am looking at the surrealist scene outside my balcony doors. The street lights are still on and in the foreground is a traffic light going through its cycle of green, amber and red in a rhythmical way. The only problem is that there are no cars for it to direct. The occasional car that does come along treats it with disdain. I feel strangely empathetic to it. It is a bit like I feel at times: sending out distinct signals about the futility of war and it being of no consequence whatsoever. And still it keeps cycling in front of my window in a Salvador Dali like scene. Now it's red, now it's green and now it's amber. Keep signalling, little light. Sometime soon a car is going to come along and heed your signal and the two of you can greet each other in mutual recognition.”*

*Funds raised by the sale of this book will be applied to humanitarian work in Iraq*

















face and they had to find something to hang their hat on. They chose the wrong peg and this is evidenced by the complete absence of flowers and cheering as they make their bloody way north to Baghdad. To speak of liberation shows just how great is our capacity to delude ourselves. I find that more frightening than the bombardment last night. That I can handle but with the obsequious speeches of oil hungry westerners I have much difficulty. I find myself getting very angry at the lies and distortions and wish I could have some of them up here for a couple of weeks to meet some of the parents of the fifty thousand children who die each year. One such parent comes to mind immediately. With his child dying of leukemia because of the absence of two of the five drugs needed for treatment, he came into the hospital with something clutched under his jumper. It turned out to be a sealed plastic container of blood. He presented it to the Doctor with innocent, imploring, ignorant eyes. Where he got it from is anybody's guess. The next day his child was dead. Long live the sanctions administered by the US – but not the lives of the children of Iraq! I have no doubt that when the historians look back on this period they will perceive it as a holocaust: “How could we ever have allowed this to happen?”

And in all of this the Muezzin continues to call the people to prayer. What an amazing country and people this is – a country which prays each day:

*“O God you are peace. From you is peace and unto you is peace. Let us live our lives in peace. Bring us into your peace. Unto you be honour and glory. We hear and obey. Grant us your forgiveness, Lord, and unto you be our becoming”.*

#### **5.05am**

Bloody hell! More sirens and more bombing. It never seems to let up.

#### **6 am**

A very average time of contemplation this morning. I am evidently still very tired and I kept dropping off. I'll take a half hour nap and see how I go then.



