

who we are to the September 11 tragedy

On Sept. 13, Judy Mills Reimer, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, addressed this letter to the denomination's membership.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." —Psa. 46:1

Like you, I feel a great sense of grief and disbelief in the wake of the terrorist attacks on our country. I join you in prayers for the victims and their families, for those responding to the needs of survivors seeking to cope, and for those within the Church of the Brethren who are providing direct care. We also pray for our nation's leaders, as they seek to bring to justice those guilty of this atrocity.

As we struggle to make sense of the senseless, let us in the Church of the Brethren remember who we are and whose we are. This is a time to stand by our belief as Christians that all war is wrong. Let us urge our government to respond in ways that do not escalate the level of violence and result in the loss of other innocent lives. Let us be instruments of healing in our neighborhoods, where people of other faiths and backgrounds are being unfairly targeted. Let us, out of our Church of the Brethren convictions, continue to

witness to Jesus' gospel of peace.

I pray for God's spirit to guide us in this day, and in the days to come.

In the name of Jesus, who taught us to love our enemies,

—Judy Mills Reimer

Our new vulnerability

The following is from a reflection written the evening of Sept. 11 by David Radcliff, director of Brethren Witness for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

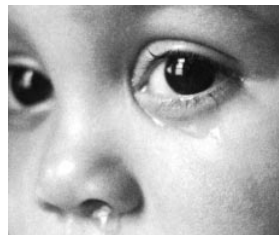
We in this nation are no longer an island of tranquility, protected by oceans, affluence, fences, from the violence that plagues so many of our global neighbors. We suddenly know ourselves to be vulnerable.

This vulnerability will likely now shadow us on what heretofore were routine outings. Those of us who fly often may never again glibly say to landlubbers that "going by air is the safest way to get there"—even if statistically it remains so. We may never again venture to the top of a skyscraper for the view without one eye on the lookout for danger on the horizon. We may not be able to assume that the pillars of American military/economic prowess are quite as invincible as they seemed even yesterday—helpless as they were in the face of determined but relatively

powerless foes.

But this vulnerability also provides opportunities, should we be able to seize them once the dust has cleared and our passions subsided. For one, we can now better empathize with vulnerable people all around the world, for whom walking to school in a hostile environment, or going about village life even while threatened by government bombers, or coming home to an abusive spouse is a daily exercise in gut-wrenching vulnerability. Perhaps we will be moved to stand more closely by them, minister more substantially to them, and take up their cause with a passion born of those who can now empathize rather than merely sympathize.

This new-found sense of vulnerability can also remind us that we are not and cannot be made secure by all the weapons we may want to place on land or sea or in space. Life is now more tenuous, and less easily secured. It becomes somehow more urgent now, as a nation but more pointedly as Christians, to name and commit ourselves to nurturing the things that make for peace.



—David Radcliff