

Christian Peacemaker Registration Form

**Would that even today you knew the things
which make for peace.**

(Jesus, Luke 19:42.)

I will not raise my child to kill your child.

(Barbara Choo, Seeds of Peace^a)

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.**

(Jesus, Matt. 5:9)

I am an evangelist, I cannot kill a man.

(Themba Nkawu^b, Seeking Peace^c)

**If your enemies are hungry, feed them;
if they are thirsty, give them something to drink.**

(Romans 12:20)

**You can no more win a war
than you can win an earthquake.**

(Jeannette Rankin^d, Seeds of Peace)

**And goodness is the harvest that is produced
from the seeds the peacemakers plant in peace.**

(James 3:18)

All works of love are works of peace.

(Mother Teresa, Seeds of Peace)

**Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses,
but we trust in the power of the Lord our God.**

(Psalm 20:7)

**Let us take the risks of peace upon our lives,
not impose the risks of war upon the world.**

(Quaker proverb, Seeds of Peace)



Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Peace and Justice Ministries
21 South 12th Street, Box 500
Akron, PA 17501
(717) 859-3889
4/04

CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER REGISTRATION

Dear Friend:

Voices of faith. Voices of peace. The quotations on the cover page come to us from across the centuries and around the world. They are voices of courage which nurture and challenge us. With your words and your life, you can choose to add your voice to theirs.

What do you believe about the call of God and the call to arms? How does God ask you to live and make peace in our world? Can you offer clear reasons for your beliefs and convincing evidence in your life?

The CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER REGISTRATION FORM provides you with an opportunity to think through these questions. This is important for several reasons:

- (1) Jesus clearly calls all of us to be peacemakers. If we would follow Jesus, we need to discover what this means for us.
- (2) A world suffering from violence needs people who will choose peace. Whether we meet violence at home, on the street, at school, or hidden in the appeal of a military advertisement, we are confronted with a choice. Choosing peace is not automatic. It takes preparation and courage.
- (3) If the government should ever return to a military draft, a written record of your conscientious objection to war may help establish the sincerity of your convictions.
- (4) If the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill becomes law, and you want to designate your federal income taxes for peaceful purposes, a record of your conscientious objection to war may be helpful.

The Peacemaker Registration Form asks you to respond to three questions. The questions come from the Selective Service System Form 22. This form, "Record of Conscientious Objection to War," is what you would need to complete in order to claim conscientious objector status in the event of a draft.

If you are not a conscientious objector to war, please fill out the form, answering the alternate question (1A) for question one.

We urge you to keep a copy of this form. MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries will also keep a copy on file if you send it to us.

Sincerely,

Titus Peachey
MCC U.S.
Peace and Justice Ministries

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The primary purpose of the Christian Peacemaker Registration Form is to strengthen our commitment to be peacemakers in the name of Christ. Peacemaking is a spiritual journey. It includes our relationship to God, to one another, and to creation. We believe it is important to make peace in the home, in the community, and among nations.

This form focuses on one aspect of peacemaking only: conscientious objection to war.

2. We encourage everyone between the ages of 16-18 to begin a file regarding your peace convictions. Your file should contain the Peacemaker Registration Form, letters of reference from persons who know you, and a record of any actions you have taken which support your commitment to peace. Actions might include a public speech, mediation training, letters to congress, charitable contributions, participation in service projects, etc.
3. This is **not** an official claim for conscientious objector status. The legal value of the Peacemaker Registration Form is not certain. Based on past experience with the Selective Service System, it is clear that the ability to document one's convictions is important. Documenting these beliefs before you actually file a claim for Conscientious Objector status is particularly helpful.
4. Take time to study, pray, and discuss your beliefs with others before filling out the form. Talk with your family, your pastor, youth advisors, or others in your congregation. The attached list of resources may also be helpful.
5. Further evidence of your peace convictions may be submitted at any time after you originally file your Record.
6. Filling out the Peacemaker Registration Form does not necessarily imply that you intend to cooperate with any system of conscription.
7. You may file your Peacemaker Registration Form with your congregation, conference office, or with MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries.

References from First Page

- a. *Seeds of Peace*, Larson & Micheels-Cyrus, New Society Publishers, 1986.
- b. *Themba Nkawu*, first Brethren in Christ young man to refuse military service in Zimbabwe.
- c. *Seeking Peace*, Peachey & Peachey, Good Books, 1991.
- d. *Jeannette Rankin*, only member of the U.S. Congress to vote against both world wars.

REGISTRATION WITH SELECTIVE SERVICE

Under current law, all males (including U.S. non-citizens and dual nationals; see <http://www.sss.gov/FSaliens.htm>) must register for a potential draft for military service, within 30 days of their eighteenth birthday. Selective Service may send you a letter when you turn 18, indicating it is time to register. Registration forms are available at any U.S. post office. The form asks for your name, date of birth, address, phone number, and social security number.

It is also possible to register by checking a box on the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form (used for college applications).

It is not possible to officially request conscientious objector status at the time of registration. This can be done only after a draft is enacted and you receive an induction notice. Nonetheless, we encourage conscientious objectors who register to write “I am a conscientious objector to war” somewhere on the registration form. It is a good idea to make a photocopy of your completed form before sending it to Selective Service.

An act of Congress would be required before a draft could take effect. For public statements about the likelihood of a draft, see the Selective Service website at: <http://www.sss.gov/>.

WHAT IF I AM OPPOSED TO COOPERATING WITH SELECTIVE SERVICE?

Some young people do not wish to cooperate with the Selective Service System, because it supplies youth to the armed forces to be trained for war.

If you have questions about registering, be sure to discuss them with your parents and your pastor. It is important to take your conscience seriously and to be informed about your options.

Failure to register with Selective Service is punishable by fines of up to \$250,000 and up to five years in jail. However, no young men have been prosecuted or fined for failing to register since the early 1980's. Failure to register also makes one ineligible for federal student aid, job training, and employment. More than 25 states have enacted legislation restricting non-registrants' access to state education benefits or employment, and many states are now enacting legislation linking registration with the privilege of obtaining a driver's license. For more information on these developments, see: <http://www.sss.gov/FSdrivers.htm>

Several Mennonite denominations have passed statements which support non-cooperation with Selective Service as a valid expression of conscience against war. Mennonite Church USA has a fund to help replace potential government grants and loans lost by students who for reasons of Christian conscience have chosen not to register with the U.S. Selective Service System. Non-registrants wishing to apply for such an education loan or grant or persons wishing to contribute to the fund should contact Susan Mark Landis (PH: 330-683-6844, or SusanML@mennoniteusa.org Website: <http://peace.MennoLink.org>). A similar fund (FEAT: Fund for Education and Training) is held by The Center on Conscience and War (formerly NISBCO) in Washington D.C. (PH: 202 483-2220).

For stories of young men who decided not to register look for the book, *The Path of Most Resistance*, by Phil Baker Shenk, or check the following web site: <http://www.mennolink.org/books/>

WHAT IF I AM ALREADY IN THE MILITARY WHEN I DISCOVER THAT I HAVE A CONSCIENCE AGAINST KILLING?

Some youth discover that they are conscientious objectors to war only after they are already in the military. Experiences during basic training, military exercises, or actual combat awaken questions which they have not asked before. These youth often search for a path out of the military.

Many people in the military have applied for and received a conscientious objector discharge. It is not unusual, however, for persons to experience some difficulties and delays in the process, especially during times of war. While some commanders and chaplains will support a person's conscientious objector claim, others view conscientious objectors as cowards or even traitors.

Fortunately, there are experienced military counselors outside the military, who are available to provide help and guidance. If you are in the military, and want to submit a claim for conscientious objector status, we urge you to contact one of the following agencies:

Center on Conscience and War
1830 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20009-5706
PH: 202 483-2220
WEB: <http://www.nisbco.org>

G.I. Rights Hotline
1 800 394-9544
WEB: <http://girights.objector.org/>

Titus Peachey
Conrad Moore
Mennonite Central Committee, U.S.
Ph: (717) 859-3889

THE DELAYED ENLISTMENT PROGRAM

Most young people enter the military through the Delayed Enlistment Program (sometimes called the Delayed Entry Program). This program allows youth to sign up with a military recruiter for one of the service branches, but receive a report date for basic training for up to a year later. When entering the Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP), youth sign an enlistment agreement and take an oath of enlistment.

It is very common for young people to change their minds after enlistment in the DEP. Job offers, a decision to go to college, marriage, failure to graduate from high school, and other reasons may lead a young person to re-evaluate their decision. It is important to realize that up until a young person actually reports for basic training, it is possible to be released from any military obligation.

The official way to gain release, is to write a letter to the commanding officer of the recruiting station, explaining one's decision not to report to basic training. The young person may or may not receive an official response before the date to report for basic training. Military recruiters are instructed to be understanding of these changes in plans. Nonetheless, in some cases military recruiters may use intimidation or threats to persuade the young person not to withdraw their commitment to serve. However, **not reporting for basic training will result in release** from any further obligation.

Young people in this situation may wish to call the GI Rights Hotline, a non-profit agency, for further counsel. The Hotline number is: 1-800-394-9544

WHO IS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR?

A conscientious objector to war is someone who, because of deeply held beliefs, cannot participate in the killing that takes place in warfare. For many people, these beliefs are based on genuine religious experience and conviction. For others, conscientious objection to war is based on a central set of moral principles that give guidance to one's life and ethical decisions.

The U.S. government recognizes two types of conscientious objectors:

- a) those opposed to participation in war or military service in any form
- b) those opposed to participation in killing or combat, but willing to serve in the military in non-combatant roles.

There are, of course, other expressions of conscientious objection that are not recognized by the government such as:

- a) objection to the payment of taxes for war
- b) objection to specific wars only, such as wars that one determines to be unjust
- c) objection to specific types of warfare such as nuclear war
- c) objection to cooperation with the whole system of conscription (registration and the draft)

According to Selective Service guidelines, one does not need to belong to a church or religious group that supports conscientious objection in order to be classified as a conscientious objector. Neither is conscientious objector status guaranteed if one belongs to such a group. Conscientious objection is a deeply-held personal conviction which must be clearly articulated by an individual whose lifestyle gives evidence that the belief is sincere.

ALTERNATE SERVICE

Alternate service is work that conscientious objectors perform instead of military service. This work is often done in the context of a church or other non-profit agency. According to Selective Service guidelines, the work must “*make a meaningful contribution to the maintenance of the national health, safety, and interest.* (<http://www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm>)” While individual conscientious objectors may have a role in finding and determining their specific assignments, the work assignment must meet Selective Service guidelines.

Alternate service would only be required if there were a draft. Individuals would only be required to perform alternate service if they were drafted, and then classified as conscientious objectors.

FILLING OUT THE PEACEMAKER REGISTRATION FORM

The Peacemaker Registration Form is a personal tool. There are no magical words or phrases to use. The form is designed to help you explore and articulate your own beliefs and convictions about war, peace, and military service. The following suggestions may help you be better prepared in the event a draft takes place and you want to apply for conscientious objector status:

- a. Keep your statements personal. This is about **your** beliefs. You may use scripture verses or references to church statements, but always be sure to connect them to you and your life. Examples from your life will lend credibility to your statements.
- b. Keep your statements focused. This is about your objection to participation in war and military service. You don't have to resolve the problem of evil, explain the nature of God, or outline non-violent responses to World War II!

- c. Be clear about the nature and depth of your beliefs. It will be important to show that your beliefs are deeply-held and have a central role in your life.
- d. Talk about the present. It's important to convey that your beliefs are not just hand-me-downs from your parents or church that you learned as a child...but that you own these beliefs now.

Keeping your form in a personal file and with your congregation, conference, or MCC will be helpful in the event of a draft. It will give you a head start in filling out the official conscientious objector application form from Selective Service. If you are ever drafted, you can then request that your congregation, conference, or MCC write a letter to Selective Service attesting to the fact that you filed a statement of beliefs with them well in advance of being drafted. This can lend credibility to your application.

RESOURCES

The resources below may be helpful to you as you think about Christ's peace, military service, and war.

<<http://www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet>> This site allows you to have e-mail conversation with military veterans who are now conscientious objectors to war. It also provides information about conscientious objection, the nature of the military mission and the GI Rights Hotline.

Change of Command: This MCC video features the stories and faith journeys of six military veterans whose inner voice clashed with their military duties. For all, a deepening commitment to Christ's way of peace changed the course of their lives. The video includes a study guide and is available for free loan from any MCC office. You can order it by calling 717 859-1151 or E-mail <MCCResources@mcc.org>.

Blood Makes the Grass Grow: This video features the stories of Gulf War conscientious objectors. Available from MCC: 717 859-1151, or MCCResources@mcc.org

What Jesus Really Said and ***How to Fight Without Hitting:*** Two videos by Walter Wink which examine what Jesus meant when he talked about *turning the other cheek* and *overcoming evil with good*. Available from MCC: 717 859-1151, or MCCResources@mcc.org

Decide for Peace: This is a personal Bible study guide on the question of conscientious objection to war. Written by Eddy Hall, it is available from Faith and Life Press (800 743-2484) and includes such topics as: *Should a Christian go to War, What did Jesus and Paul say?, Is War Ever Just?, Should Christians Obey the Government.*

<http://peace.mennolink.org/> Website of the peace and justice ministry of the Mennonite Church USA

Does God Fight?: Six lesson Bible study by David Radcliffe, from the *Generation Why* series..Uses biblical stories to learn about God's response to violence and injustice. See: <http://www.mennolink.org/books/search.cgi?bk.gy.01.txt>

Second Mile Curriculum: includes 20 lessons related to peacemaking and care for the environment. Seven of these lessons deal specifically with war, peace and faith. Available from Faith & Life Resources, 1 800 245-7894, or online at: <<http://www.gosecondmile.org>>. Ask for Pathway A.

PEACEMAKER REGISTRATION FORM

Record of Conscientious Objection to War

[From SSS Form 22, July, 1985 DRAFT]

Prepare and attach written responses to each of the three questions below. If you wish, you may also attach letters from persons who know you or any other information you would like the local board to consider. *Question 1A is not on the official Selective Service Form. We include it here to encourage everyone to clearly describe their beliefs, whether or not they are conscientious objectors to war.*

1. Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for **your claiming conscientious objection** to combatant military training and service or to all military training and service.

OR

- 1A. Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for **your support of participation** in military service and war.

2. Describe how and when you acquired these beliefs. Your answer may include such information as the influence of family members or other persons; training, if applicable; your personal experiences; membership in organizations; books and readings which influenced you.

3. Explain what most clearly shows that your beliefs are deeply held. You may wish to include a description of how your beliefs affect the way you live.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____ Congregation _____

_____ Conference _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

For your record, complete the following. This document was placed on file with:

9 MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500

9 Conference Office _____

If you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact Titus Peachey @ MCC US, Box 500, Akron, PA 17501, PH: 717 859-3889, E-mail: tmp@mccus.org