

Following Your Conscience

"Oh, I can't come to your workshop," he said. I noticed that this high school youth avoided making eye contact with me. Thinking that I knew the reason, I eagerly offered, "Are you thinking about joining the military after you graduate? Because I'd still love to have you in my workshop about conscientious objection." "No," he replied, as if it were obvious, "I'm a Republican."

I didn't know whether to laugh or be sad. Mostly, I was confused. I was leading a workshop about conscientious objection. What does that have to do with political affiliations? Oh sure, the draft is a political issue – will one party reinstate conscription? Will so-and-so vote against the draft? Everything's political.

But for us, as Christians and as Christian peacemakers, conscientious objection is not merely politics. It's about our conscience. It's about the words and example of Jesus Christ – our faith – being alive in our actions. And it's time that

we started talking openly and honestly about conscientious objection as a body of believers. Because, while there may or may not ever be a draft, issues of conscience will always be present in the life of the church.

In 1974, M. R. Zigler started On Earth Peace because he wanted youth to be ready to respond faithfully in times of war. He brought youth to New Windsor, Maryland, to talk with them about conscientious objection, to help them articulate their beliefs by facing a mock draft board. On Earth Peace is still a place that encourages people of peace and offers support for courageous faithfulness, no matter how your conscience informs you.

In 2005, when our churches are divid-



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ed over so many issues, where will the youth in your congregation find support? How will you help youth to find answers to questions of security, terrorism, war, peace, and all that we see happening in our world? Is your church a place where youth are welcome to express their thoughts and opinions – whatever they may be?

How can your congregation welcome, love, and nurture youth who choose conscientious objection or nonresistance as well as those who choose to join the military? There are many questions for all of us to answer – On Earth Peace included.

We hope this newsletter is useful to you as you discuss issues of conscience in your congregation. And we want you to know – Republican or Democrat, CO or Veteran, you are welcome at our workshops to share the ways that God is speaking to you! None of these conversations is easy, but just because it's difficult doesn't mean we shouldn't talk.

– Kim Stuckey Hissong

As shoes for your feet,
put on whatever
will make you ready
to proclaim the
gospel of peace.
– Ephesians 6:15

What's inside . . .

- Personal stories of faith and conscience
- Information from organizations working on conscientious objection
- Ready-to-use and available resources



Richard Groff and Matthew Graves

The table is blocking my way; I can't take my tray to the trash can without passing him. Why does he have to place the table strategically in the middle of the thoroughfare? I walk past him, deposit my trash; he hasn't noticed me yet. I might make it today. No confrontations, no blank stares this time. Cautiously, I make the trek back to my seat. Five steps, I am growing closer. Four steps, my palms start to sweat. Three steps, I can feel my mouth going dry . . . two steps, why am I so worried? I am in front of the table now. Passing it, time has slowed down. I glance down, as the man glances up. Our eyes connect, and I know it is coming. "Well son, have you ever thought about the Army?"

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I ring the bell. I see shapes barely visible coming to the door. I am met by the man's wife. Small, quiet, she leads me to the sitting room, and tells me he will soon join me. We shake hands. His firm grip startles me. He is old, his face wrinkled; each line is a different story. This man's life story is embedded in every crease and every fold. I glance up from my pen and pad; he glances up from the floor. "Let me ask you about conscientious objection."

Richard Groff was drafted at the end of WWII. The European theatre had silenced its scenes of bombings and its acts of death; the Japanese theatre was winding down, but the draft was still in action. He knew he could not fight. He had read scripture after scripture, and

Struggles of Conscience

nowhere could he find a plausible reason. He was pulled in front of a draft board; he called himself a conscientious objector. He told them about church, about what it means to be Brethren. He told them he couldn't, he wouldn't, take another life. They saw he was true to his word. This man wouldn't fight, but he could work; he was able. So they gave him sixteen months of Civilian Public Service.

Richard was taken to Bradford, Virginia. He worked on a base built during the depression to give young men jobs. Now it was used to house those who would not fight. He spent six months clearing the forest, making fire trails. Protecting the resources of our country. Soon he was sent to College Park, Maryland. Here he worked with livestock. Cleaning, feeding, and caring for them. The work he did wasn't enjoyable, but he was not fighting.

Richard soon was back at home. Back with his high school buddies. His friends had all fought or would fight. He knew, and they knew, the decision he made was different. Nothing was said, but he felt their underlying feelings. He knew he was no coward, but did they?

He grew up, married, served as a public official, led a clean, good life, and has not compromised his decision. He has lived through the Vietnam War, the

Gulf War, and he struggles now with the latest war in Iraq. He respects the troops and loves them as people, even though he will never support their decision, the decision they made when they were just boys like him, fresh out of high school.

I have thought about the Army. I have questioned my ethics; I have read the Bible, I have prayed. I have struggled through and through. Could I kill someone? No, I couldn't. Am I betraying my duty as a citizen? Or am I betraying my duty to God?

I will register when I turn eighteen. I will mail it in, and they will open it. They might laugh; they might be annoyed, but my card will be covered in every blank space, every square inch of that page will be covered with the words "conscientious objector." I know the road is hard, and the struggles difficult, but there have been men before me who have stood firm and strong. I will follow in their footsteps. So, whether you fight, or whether you don't fight – remember this is a difficult struggle for a boy fresh out of high school.

– Matthew Graves, an aspiring journalist and peace activist, is a high school junior. Richard Groff is a conscientious objector who served in Civilian Public Service during WWII. Both are members of the Palmyra (PA) Church of the Brethren.

. . . For me, the choice of non-cooperation with the draft was an attempt to be faithful to what I believe God was calling me to do. People often suggested I would be "more effective" if I would compromise with the government and thereby stay out of jail. As it turned out, witnessing in this way probably had more effect on more people than anything else I could have done. I have never regretted choosing that path.

The way I see it, only God can overcome violence, hate, domination, militarism, racism, and all the other evils I would like to do away with, and so the most effective thing I can do is to be faithful to what I believe God is calling me to do. Basically, it's just looking for what God is doing in the world and trying to be part of that.

– excerpt from Bob Gross' letter to youth in *Shoes of Peace: Letters to Youth from Peacemakers* published by Brethren Press

Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service

The Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service was a historical moment. On March 4-5, 2005, not only did we learn about how we would need to prepare logistically for a draft, but we also explored the wider questions of service and peace education within the churches. This Consultation brought together more than 90 people from the historic peace churches – Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, Brethren in Christ and Friends (Quakers) – and other peacemaking traditions to address the possibility of a military draft, discuss increased military recruitment, and highlight the tradition of Christian service.

Staff of the Selective Service System (SSS) was present at the Consultation, and they promised that the government is not planning a draft for our nation. They also explained how they are attempting to change the face of alternative service by making it more visible in their agency's profile, and trying to improve the public view of COs as simply serving the nation in a different way, rather than being seen as cowards or traitors.

A good balance to the SSS was provided by the Center on Conscience &

War (CCW, formerly NISBCO). The organization was formed in 1940, the last time Anabaptist leaders came together to deal with the very same problems of conscription facing their young men. J.E. McNeil, Director of CCW, discussed the recent draft legislation that failed in Congress, as well as how a CO claim should be filed with the federal government.

We looked at ways to educate youth about the tactics military recruiters use, and how to help communities subject to the economic draft become self-sustaining so that their youth will find options for a future in places other than the military. It was argued that if the church is to have any impact in this area, church service programs must be tailored to work alongside those we serve, rather than approaching service hoping only to get something out of it for ourselves.

Most participants in the Consultation agreed that members of the church should do service work in all periods of life, not only when faced with a military draft. The best way we can expect our members to choose alternative service is to start emphasizing the importance of service from the very beginning, to each person in each congregation.



Photo: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Travis Poling and Rolando Flores, who represented Mennonite Central Committee, share ideas at the consultation.

The Church of the Brethren representatives met at the end and pointed out that we're already doing a lot of these things, especially through Brethren Witness/Washington Office and On Earth Peace. Yet we need to do more. We need to

- get the word out to congregations;
- dialogue with other Brethren who might not be sympathetic;
- approach it from a discipleship angle rather than a peace issue only;
- integrate it into the way we nurture our children, youth, and adults;
- reach out to non-Brethren around us, especially to youth in schools where military recruiters come, and those approaching draft age;
- rethink our paradigm of service; and
- consider rewriting the language in our Annual Conference Statement on War to make it more accessible to youth of today (www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/70War.htm).

Overall, I had a good feeling coming away from the gathering – like something will actually happen afterward. Whether that will prove to be true is yet to be seen. At the very least, the churches are more prepared to work together than we were before.

– Travis Poling, a junior at Manchester College majoring in religion, served a year of Brethren Volunteer Service with the Center on Conscience & War.



Photo: Wally Wiltsechek

Church of the Brethren representatives, L to R, first row: Dan McFadden, Stan Noffsinger, Genelle Wine, Jim Hardenbrook, Ron Beachley, Travis Poling; second row: Dena Lee, Andrew Duffey, Carrie Eikler, Kim Bickler, Kim Stuckey Hissong, Elizabeth Waas Smith, Belita Mitchell, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford; third row: Rick Judy, Sam Bowman, Torin Eikler, Ken Shaffer, Tim McElwee, Debbie Roberts, Phil Jones, Jon Kobel

What Is Wrong With the World?



Photo: Walt Wilschek

Tim Showalter, Theo Sither (Center on Conscience & War), and Jim Hardenbrook share stories of conscience at the Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service.

A popular British journalist, G. K. Chesterton was an outspoken Christian in the early 20th century. On one occasion, the London Times posed a question to several writers, including Chesterton, asking them “What is wrong with the world?”

Chesterton’s response was the briefest, and probably the most poignant. “I am,” he wrote.

As important as teaching conscientious objection and supporting conscientious objectors is, there is something more important for Brethren to be teaching. We must teach and learn about Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Then we must come to the place where we make a thoughtful decision to apprentice ourselves to him, being willing to rearrange our thinking and living according to his teaching and example. It is out of our apprenticeship to Jesus that the Brethren find ourselves unwilling to take human life.

Beyond actions, it is such a commitment to Jesus that colors the attitudes we bring to our interaction with people. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus

taught that we must avoid treating our enemies with contempt or anger (Matthew 5:22). It is very easy for those of us who find war sinful to become sinfully contemptuous of those with whom we disagree on this issue. It is then that we begin to lose the argument, no matter how logical, because we have abandoned the high ground, disregarding the example and teaching of Jesus.

It seems to me there is no room for contempt when we speak with or about those with whom we disagree. I grow concerned when such attitudes are displayed by those who base their beliefs in Jesus whether they are on the political left or right. I need to learn how to trust and learn from Jesus, believing that his power should change me as well as those I would like to change.

How do we stand against the powers of war and destruction in a spirit of peace? How can we display gentleness, joy, and kindness in the midst of heated debate, keeping our heads while those around us are losing theirs? My simplistic answer comes back to Jesus. He will teach us how. He said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27

“Let your gentleness be evident to all, the Lord is near.”
– *Philippians 4:5*

TNIV). If we ask him, he will teach us how. As the old peace song puts it, “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin me.”

So I ask myself the question, “What is wrong with the world?,” and I find that the most honest answer I can give is, “I am.” But by God’s grace, through Jesus, that can change. And maybe the world will then change too.

– *Jim Hardenbrook, pastor of Nampa (ID) Church of the Brethren, is the 2005 Annual Conference Moderator.*

Crossing Boundaries

The Center on Conscience and War website lists a range of seven CO beliefs. The first says, “Everyone has ethical, moral, or religious objections to their participation in some form of war, violence, preparations for war. Everybody has moral standards that their conscience will forbid them to cross.”

After twenty-some years pastoring in Chicago, far from mainstream Brethrenism, I would like to see my Church of the Brethren look more carefully at what boundaries it will cross to stand against all violence. I support the church’s stance against war, including preparations for war. This category of “preparations for war,” however, needs a little more attention. Could not deliberate avoidance of part of God’s creation feed a culture of violence? Here I think of the biblical concept of “principalities and powers.”

Over the years, many blood Brethren have visited our local congregation when settling into the city to live, work, or study. Very rarely do they return. Often they find another congregation more congenial to their tastes. A congregation that looks like them.

I believe the fallen principalities and powers are at work here. Those of us shaped by the historic peace position sometimes assume our position makes little sense to “those” people. “They” are locked into impregnable positions of

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Orlando Redekopp

Filling Quotas

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Crossing Boundaries

violence. "They" are not really serious about peace. Sure, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a product of "those" people, but let's be serious.

A young man in our congregation in college registered with selective service; otherwise, government loans were unavailable for education. Committed to the church's peace position, he would dearly love to have access to resources to be a CO, even here. Several members have used the military for educational purposes. But, most painful of all, the educational, street, and prison systems have crushed many of our young men. We need all the help we can get to deepen our commitment to conscientiously object to all violence.

Could we challenge the church to be more conscientious in its objection to the fallen principalities and powers at work in our churches? These powers insidiously block so many good Brethren from crossing over the historic boundaries to the tougher parts of the city, to people who do not "look" Brethren, to people who would embrace a Kingian nonviolence, if only King were made alive again.

You would be amazed at how often God crosses these boundaries, and how blessed are they who cross with this God.

– Orlando Redekopp is pastor of Chicago (IL) First Church of the Brethren.

Rural, Hispanic, Black, and undocumented young men and women in high school are approached by military recruiters with a fervor unparalleled in U.S. history. In the classrooms and hallways of schools across America and places frequented by youth, U.S. military recruiters are fighting a battle to win the allegiance of our youthful friends. At military-sponsored dances and other events away from home and school, youth are enticed with promises of cash, adventure, college, and careers as recruiters struggle to fill quotas for an insatiable military each year that the volunteer force dwindles.

Because of a provision made by the No Child Left Behind legislation, military officials are guaranteed admittance to schools and access to the names and demographics of students who attend public and some private schools. The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), administered for free instead of better career aptitude tools, allows the same military officials to rank students according to their potential usefulness to the military. However, the most disturbing traits used to profile youth targeted for persuasion to voluntary enlistment are skin color and neighborhood.

The problem of high pressure recruitment and unimaginable access to information about students reaches beyond the Black student who is goaded to do chin-ups so he can swap the public display of strength for a prize trinket, an

exciting career, and a chance to be first in line for war. It reaches beyond the undocumented workers' son who is offered a fast track to U.S. citizenship for his

entire family if he will lay down his life in exchange. The problem of unbelievable recruitment practices reaches into the small farming towns where youth can prove their patriotism to family and neighbors by joining the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines and get money for college for their sacrifice. These small groups in terms of U.S. population are represented best in the lowest ranks of military service. Promises of a college degree are realized by less than 15% of those recruited after they have paid monthly for the privilege. In recent battles, 50% of the frontline soldiers are people of color with career training that is of no practical use once they return home.

Friends, let us seek the peace of Christ and cultivate it for youth, recruiters, minority and majority, enlisted and civilians in this world we share.

– Dena Lee, Akron (OH) Eastwood Church of the Brethren, is a member of the On Earth Peace Board of Directors.

Photo: Walt Wiltschek



Verdena Lee

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Conscientious Objection: More Than a Response to Our Fear



Photo: Walt Wiltshack

Phil Jones with Richard Flahavan of the Selective Service

Just about everywhere I go these days there is always the question, “Phil, is there going to be a draft?” The next questions usually have something to do with conscientious objection. How can my son sign up as a conscientious objector (CO)? How can my daughter get out of the military? She has discovered that she really is a conscientious objector to the killing that she sees daily. Good questions. I am so glad to see and hear that Brethren folks are aware of what their faith and heritage have been teaching them all along. We are a peace church. Our faith statement on war basically sums it up by saying, “ALL WAR IS SIN.”

When I work at answering such questions however, I try to go deeper and sweep broader with my response. Absolutely, I address the direct needs. But beyond explaining the details of how a young person can develop a file and history as a conscientious objector, if the

need should arise to go before a draft board, I also work at something more. Before reciting all of the possibilities that may or may not bring our nation into a time of conscription, and before helping a young person find his or her way out of the web woven by military recruiters, I hope to encourage these persons to consider why they struggle with the questions in the first place, and to explore their core beliefs and their places of conscience in regard to all areas of life, based on their faith convictions.

Responding as a CO in a time of war may be a necessary step, but if we do this simply out of a fear of having to serve in wartime, then we have missed some other necessary steps along the way. As we read and interpret scripture, as we grow in maturity and in wisdom on our faith journey, we should be developing our conscience of faith daily. Scripture calls us to consider the nurture and care of creation: “The land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away” (Hosea 4:3). We are challenged by God’s word and by church statements to consider our participation in war, in the serving of humankind, and in the responsibilities we have to and with God. “What does the Lord require? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). If we are to be faithful to such directives, how can we in good conscience destroy God’s

earth and environment, go to war and take the life of another, or routinely build and strengthen our own “houses” while others languish and suffer?

Starting this discernment from a young age is imperative. The church should be nurturing and developing not only strong commitments of faith in Christ, but also a strong identity within the teachings and directives of Christ that make the witness and life of God’s children so important. In that framework, decisions can be made and choices taken that seem strong and clear, rather than confused, forced, or made in panic. Whether we are facing decisions of military service, the care of our environment, the questions of abortion, or the issue of capital punishment, there will always be times when the absolute, right decision will demand further prayer, study, and reflection. Yet our initial base of response should come from the core of who we are – a place we have achieved through our own personal struggle in faith, and through the nurture and support of the church and community.

Let us all constantly search for ways to be better conscientious objectors, to search and establish that core place of belief, in regard to all matters that separate us from the truth of God’s hope for humankind.

– Phil Jones is the Director of the General Board’s Brethren Witness and Washington Office.

It Really is a Matter of Conscience, a Conviction of Faith!

– 2005 theme for Christian Citizenship seminar sponsored by Youth/Young Adult and Brethren Witness/Washington Offices

Counter-Recruiting – 10 Ways To Get Started

In response to an increase in activity by Brethren congregations seeking to counter military recruitment in high schools, On Earth Peace scheduled a conference call on April 5, 2005. Twelve people from Brethren congregations and community groups around the country (California to Maryland!) “met” with On Earth Peace staff Matt Guynn and Kim Stuckey Hissong, as well as Oskar Castro, resource person from the American Friends Service Committee. Phil Jones, Brethren Witness/Washington Office director, also provided updates about the work of his office. If you would like to be connected to other people involved in counter-recruitment work, please contact Matt Guynn (mattguynn@earthlink.net or 765-962-6234) or join the counter-recruitment listserve by visiting www.lists.riseup.net/www/info/cob-counter-recruit and clicking on “subscribe.”

The following great ideas were suggested by call participants. Let us know if you try them in your church or school!

1. Lobby your high school administrators or school board to add the “opt-out” form to the health form (or other visible paperwork) that all parents and students need to sign. (The “opt-out” provision prohibits your school from providing your child’s personal information to military recruiters which they automatically receive as part of the No Child Left Behind Act.)

– *Russ Matteson, Modesto Church of the Brethren, Modesto, CA*

2. Help youth write essays to start their own conscientious objector file. (Packets for youth are available from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Essays can also be sent to BW/WO to start an official file.)

– *Dena Lee, Akron Eastwood Church of the Brethren, Akron, OH*

3. Create a broad, local network, including church and secular peace groups, to get started with counter-recruitment work. As schools may be reluctant to allow church groups into the school (separation of church and state), a broad coalition will have more success – and help spread around the work.

– *Oskar Castro, program associate for the National Youth and Militarization Program, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA*

4. Start talking with children about peacemaking – eliminate the need for counter-recruiting at the high school level.

– *Tom Richard, Fairview Church of the Brethren, Cordova, MD*

“Work to train youth who want to educate their peers on this topic.”

5. Work to train college students and high school youth who want to educate their peers on this topic – youth have the most access in their own high schools and are most likely to listen to their peers.

– *Debbie Roberts, Campus Minister, University of La Verne, La Verne, CA*

6. Organize a workshop at your church to help people learn about conscientious objection or counter-recruitment, using the many resource groups available (On Earth Peace, Center on Conscience and War, Brethren Witness/Washington Office and many others).

– *George Eisele, Antelope Park Church of the Brethren, Lincoln, NE*

7. Develop a brochure for distribution that lists your church (or local peace group) as a contact for youth and parents that want more information about alternatives to service in the military or conscientious objection.

– *Ineke Way, Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Kalamazoo, MI*

8. Spend time with youth in your church, developing strong relationships with them and educating them about Brethren beliefs on war and nonviolence.

– *Doug Chaffin, Jackson Park Church of the Brethren, Jonesborough, TN*

9. Ask your church board to speak out against JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps) programs and the militarization of youth in your local high schools.

– *Bruce Butler, Easton Church of the Brethren, Easton, MD*

Why are there only 9 suggestions?

We’re waiting for YOU to find number 10! Let us know what your church is doing!

To gather more resources about counter-recruitment, visit www.brethren.org/oepa/Counter. Also on this page, you can read a congregation’s first-hand journey in opposing the NJROTC program in their local school. Through this journey, community relationships with the Easton (MD) Church of the Brethren changed as they stood virtually alone on this issue. However, they believe that there were some positive effects as they convinced the Board of Education to provide the public with information about the NJROTC program and its costs, educated the community about the NJROTC, and gained community respect for their nonviolent position. They learned that thorough research is needed, respect for opposing views is necessary, tenacity is useful, and prayer is essential.

– *Compiled by Kim Hissong and Matt Guynn*

“Spend time with youth in your church.”

Information . . .



Brethren Witness/ Washington Office

Church of the Brethren congregations and individuals are encouraged to use the General Board's Brethren Witness/Washington Office (BW/WO) to learn more about the issue of conscientious objection.

Church/Youth Conscientious Objector packets, available from the office or the BW/WO website, can be helpful in youth group discussions or congregational forums.

BW/WO staff have scheduled numerous workshops for regional retreats and district conferences. The April Christian Citizenship Seminar focused on Conscientious Objection, providing an opportunity for Brethren youth to make their voices known in Washington, DC. Phil Jones, director of the BW/WO, is a board member of the Center of Conscience and War (CCW), and can assist in making available materials, resources, and staff leadership. At this year's Annual Conference, Bill Galvin, Program Director with CCW, will be the featured speaker at the BW/WO Un-Luncheon. In addition, an insight session will be offered on conscientious objection and the church.

The BW/WO is organizing a pool of district support persons and legal counselors that will be available in the event of a national conscription program. Contact the office if you would like to participate.

Files are maintained by BW/WO for those who choose to document their beliefs of conscience in regards to war and violence. Forms and instructions are included in the CO packet.

– Phil Jones, Director,
Brethren Witness/Washington Office
1-800-785-3246
washington_office_gb@brethren.org
www.brethren.org/genbd/
WitnessWashOffice.html



The Central Committee for Conscientious

Objectors (CCCO) supports and promotes individual and collective resistance to war and preparations for war. CCCO has been there continuously since 1948, helping people who get caught in the military's awe.

CCCO programs are as follows:

- Military Out of Our Schools – The military and its recruiters are present in almost every school in the United States. Recruiters sell students military enlistment, using half-truths and outright deception. We believe the military's sales pitch should not go unchallenged.

- The GI Rights Hotline – 200,000 young people enlist in the military every year. Those who make a mistake don't know where to turn. We also publish "Helping Out: A Guide to Military Discharges and GI Rights," the most comprehensive reference work on military discharges in print.

- The Third World Outreach Program seeks to address the historical relationships between Third World people and militarism; establishes community-wide dialogue on issues of military recruiting, militarism of public schools, and our rich tradition of resistance to militarism; and works in coalition with other national and local groups and organizers, to organize, inform, and aid our communities in fighting the "economic conscription" of young people.

– from the CCCO website

Central Committee for
Conscientious Objectors
510-465-1617 or 215-563-8787
info@objector.org
www.objector.org

American Friends Service Committee



The National Youth & Militarism Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has been working on the issue of Conscientious Objection for many years. Lately, we have been working to illuminate the problems faced by military service members who file for conscientious objection and are treated punitively. We developed a pocket-sized fold-out resource designed to help military service members understand that they have the right to file for a voluntary discharge. We have also been working to promote the causes of service members who have gone public with their CO claims and their opposition to war.

We occasionally lead discussions with youth and youth allies about the steps one could take to validate a claim for conscientious objector status in the event of a draft. We have a "Draft Packet" that we mail upon request and often link people seeking Draft Counselor Training with the Center on Conscience & War in Washington, DC.

In an attempt to broaden our perspective on Youth & Militarism issues, we have begun working closely with Israeli Refuseniks, some of whom consider themselves to be conscientious objectors to war. AFSC has participated in a few speaking tours with representatives of the "Shministim," Israeli youth who refuse to serve in the Israeli military. We hope to widen this international bridge to include CO concerns in other countries like Colombia, Ecuador, and South Korea.

– Oskar Castro, Program Associate,
National Youth & Militarism Program,
American Friends Service Committee
215-241-7046
youthmil@afsc.org
www.youth4peace.org

Center on Conscience & War



The Center on Conscience & War (CCW), formerly the National Interreligious

Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO), was formed in 1940 by an association of religious bodies. CCW works to defend and extend the rights of conscientious objectors. The Center is committed to supporting all those who question participation in war, whether they are U.S. citizens, permanent residents, documented or undocumented immigrants – or citizens in other countries.

CCW participates in the G.I. Rights Hotline, a national referral and counseling service for military personnel. In the event of a military draft, CCW will assist in the placement of conscientious objectors in alternative service programs.

CCW programs are as follows:

- Public education and outreach activities such as speaking engagements, literature production, and urgent action alerts.
- Counseling and legal support for military service members on issues such as CO discharges, AWOL consequences, and Entry Level Separation information. The Center also assists youth with questions regarding draft registration and getting out of the Delayed Entry Program.
- Legislative updates that affect conscientious objectors everywhere.
- The Fund for Education and Training (FEAT), a loan program for individuals who are barred from receiving state or federal financial aid because of their conscientious refusal to register with the Selective Service System.

– from the CCW website
Center on Conscience & War
1-800-379-2679
nisbco@nisbco.org
www.nisbco.org

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

In relation to conscientious objection, the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. (MCC) encourages youth (men and women) to fill out Christian Peacemaker Registration forms and file them with their congregations, conference offices, and with us at MCC.

These forms present the questions that anyone wishing to be classified as a conscientious objector would need to answer in the context of a military draft.

MCC resources related to peace and conscientious objection to war include the following:

- Change of Command: video featuring the stories of military veterans now committed to peace and nonviolence.
- Second Mile: curriculum done in partnership with Mennonite Church USA, MCC Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, and the Church of the Brethren.
- Thermostat: a new DVD and study guide for youth on peace, conscientious objection to war, and nonviolence.
- A website (www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet) that provides e-mail links to military veterans who are now conscientious objectors to war, so that youth can have direct conversations with them.

MCC staff speak in numerous settings for both youth and adults on peace and conscientious objection to war (workshops/retreats). We also follow legislation related to conscientious objection and military service through our Washington Office, and through our support of the Center on Conscience & War.

– Titus Peachey,
Peace Education Office,
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
717-859-3889
tmp@mcc.org
www.mccus.org

National Campaign For A Peace Tax Fund

With the U.S. involved in two costly wars and talking about possible future “pre-emptive”



wars, a military draft looks more and more likely. But a different sort of draft has been underway for decades: over 40 cents of every federal income tax dollar we pay funds the U.S. military.

Many conscientious objectors to military participation also object to paying for war. Many of these COs face IRS-imposed penalties for their refusal to pay for war. Others impoverish themselves so as not to owe taxes. The National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund works on behalf of these people of conscience, lobbying Congress to pass legislation that would enable COs to pay their federal taxes into a fund earmarked for nonmilitary purposes. We also work internationally to promote conscientious objection to military taxation as a human right in the United Nations. Our newest focus is on local campaigns that urge city councils to pass resolutions of support for Peace Tax legislation. A hearing in the New York City Council is scheduled for this June.

The Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill will be introduced into the House of Representatives this spring. Please write to your Representative and Senators to encourage them to support this legislation. You can edit and send a pre-composed e-mail to your elected officials directly from our website.

We rely on grassroots support and action to raise the profile of this legislation.

– Timothy Godshall,
Outreach/Development Director,
National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund
1-888-PEACETAX
info@peacetaxfund.org
www.peacetaxfund.org

Teaching Conscientious Objection Strategies for Sunday School Teachers

1. Learn about the issue.

Visit the Selective Service website (www.sss.gov) and other resources mentioned in this newsletter. Call On Earth Peace or the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, if you need help or more information.

2. Do a vocabulary check.

Before you start talking about this subject, make sure everyone is on the same page. Often, we use these new terms and just expect that youth know what we mean. Provide definitions (or elicit them from your group) for conscientious objection/objector, pacifist, draft, selective service, alternative service, non-combatant, and others that come up during your discussions.

3. Use resources from your congregation.

Do you know how many conscientious objectors are in your church? Ask your pastor for help in finding them. Ask a panel of adults to share their stories. Invite some people who chose military service, some who were conscientious objectors, and others who chose non-resistance to come to a youth Sunday School class. Give each person time to share and time for the youth to ask questions. (This may take more than one Sunday!) Here are some sample questions:

- What influenced your decision [to serve in military, be a CO, etc.]?
- How did family and friends react?
- What was the hardest part of your decision?
- Where did you serve?/What did you do?
- How has this decision affected the rest of your life?
- If you faced this same decision again, what would you do?

Afterwards, do a guided meditation with the youth. Have them imagine themselves in each of the stories. Ask

them some of the same questions and allow them to imagine how it might feel to be ridiculed by peers or to be faced with a combat situation. Have them reflect on how their faith convictions support or do not support these choices. Discuss what feelings and questions arise as a result of this exercise. How has hearing these different perspectives influenced their thinking?

4. Invite honest answers from your group.

In our complicated world, conscientious objection isn't really the easiest choice to make. Add to it all the other frustrations and decisions that teenagers are facing... conscientious objection probably isn't at the top of their list of things to consider. Let youth know that this choice is complicated and difficult and that the church will support whatever decision they make. Throw out some of these statements to get the conversation started – and remember, this is a youth discussion, so try to keep your personal opinions to yourself. Those can come later!

Have youth share why they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Pacifism is a great idea, but it doesn't work in the real world.
- I would consider myself to be a conscientious objector.
- As Christians, we need to support the military.
- If I thought my family and friends would support me, I would choose conscientious objection.

Follow this discussion with a time of Bible study. What does Jesus say?

5. Pray together.

Let your youth know that you pray for them regularly (and be sure you do it!). Encourage them to support and pray for one another.

– Kim Stuckey Hissong

Resources for Conscientious Objection

Many organizations are working in support of those wanting to attain conscientious objection status, both civilians and those within the military. On the preceding pages, we heard from some of these organizations and what they are doing. Below are a few more, both faith-based and secular.

Fellowship of Reconciliation –

www.forusa.org

Information and resources, including the "Nyack Declaration of Conscience and Courage."

G.I. Rights Hotline – www.girights.org

A toll-free, nongovernmental collective for service members encountering difficulties or wanting information about discharges.

Pax Christi USA –

www.paxchristiusa.org/pc_con_object.asp

Includes pamphlets on Catholic social teaching regarding militarism and the draft, conscientious objection and delayed entry, conscientious objection for those already in the military, and other issues.

Peace-out.org – www.peace-out.com

Information on how to exit the military as a conscientious objector.

Selective Service System Website –

www.sss.gov

The official government site.

Swarthmore College Peace Collection –

www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/conscientiousobjection/co%20web-site/default1.html

This site includes primary sources for research about and history of conscientious objection.

War Resisters League Youth and Counter-Militarism Program –

www.warresisters.org/youth.htm

Includes a counter-recruitment organizing manual, "Adopt Your High School Project," and further resources.

Veterans for Peace –

www.veteransforpeace.org

Information and links drawing on veterans' experiences about costs and consequences of militarism and war.

Biblical Pacifism

On Earth Peace is giving a copy of Dale Brown's book, *Biblical Pacifism*, to each ministry student, and minister-in-training, in the Church of the Brethren. With a concern for pastoral leadership well-grounded in the scriptural basis of the teachings of the church, On Earth Peace is donating copies of the book to students at Bethany Theological Seminary, including its Susquehanna Valley Satellite, and all participants in the non-degree ministry training programs, TRIM and ACTS. In addition, the book will be available to students in district-based ministry training programs.

The organization has also offered to provide leadership for seminars or Bible studies focused on the book by Brown, a retired Bethany Seminary professor who continues to teach as adjunct faculty for the Susquehanna Valley Satellite program.

Leaders of ministry training programs were appreciative. "Let me express deep gratitude for this generous gift to the students. Dale's book is timeless and important," said Amy Gall Ritchie, director of student development at Bethany.

The gift of hundreds of books is made possible by a donation from long-time supporters of On Earth Peace. "We deeply appreciate the initiative and generosity of these donors," said Bob Gross, co-executive director. "We are always glad for this kind of partnership with other denominational institutions, and with committed individual members who care about the faithfulness and vitality of the church."

The On Earth Peace staff recently read and discussed *Biblical Pacifism* together. You can find a their discussion questions in a study guide at www.brethren.org/oepa/BiblicalPacifism.

Staff Transitions

In February, Barb Saylor and her husband, Mark Lancaster, moved to Kentucky where Mark accepted the position as Coordinator of the Presbyterian (USA) International Hunger and Development Program. Barb will continue her work with On Earth Peace working from her home office in La Grange, Kentucky. The offices at New Windsor will be maintained by Darlene Johnson, Office Manager, and Kim Stuckey Hissong, Program Coordinator for Peacemaker Formation. Bob Gross and Barb will be in New Windsor on a regular basis, in coordination with other trips to the mid-Atlantic area. Barb's new contact information is 502-222-5886; 1814 Fox Trail Drive, La Grange, KY 40031; and bsaylor_oepa@brethren.org (same as before).

Kim Stuckey Hissong, Program Coordinator for Peacemaker Formation at On Earth Peace, has announced her resignation effective August 24, 2005. Kim has worked with On Earth Peace in this position since October 2001, coordinating and leading educational retreats, training events, and volunteer opportunities for youth and young adults who are seeking to develop their faith-based

beliefs and skills as peacemakers. In the last 3½ years, she has brought a tremendous amount of creativity and energy, not only to the Peacemaker Formation program, but also to the whole of On Earth Peace. Her commitment to the youth of the denomination has been clearly evident in her innovative programs and ideas. Kim is planning to return to school in the fall to pursue her Masters in Social Work. She and her husband, Bryan, will continue living in Westminster, Maryland.

Position Announcement

On Earth Peace is seeking a Program Coordinator to oversee its peace education program. This includes planning, staffing, and leading educational events for all ages, particularly youth and young adults; coordinating peace education resources; interpreting On Earth Peace programs; and other responsibilities. Review of applications began April 30, continuing until position is filled. A full position announcement and description can be found at www.brethren.org/oepa/PeacemakerFormationCoordinator.html.

Staying-Up-To-Date

On Earth Peace now has two ways for individuals and congregations to stay up-to-date on peace news. This month, On Earth Peace announces the debut of a monthly column, "Living Peace Church News & Notes," for Church of the Brethren congregations and districts to include in their newsletters and publications. This ready-to-use column, sent via e-mail in PDF format, will have information about topics of concern for Brethren peacemakers, announcements of upcoming events, and practical guides for reconciliation and peace work. If you would like to

receive this column, e-mail Barb Saylor at bsaylor_oepa@brethren.org and you will receive the column monthly. Be sure to specify if it should be sent to an address other than your own.

A second service, the Peace Witness Action List, provides positive news about creative nonviolence in the United States and around the world. The list's 380 members receive three to ten e-mails per week which are inspiring or compelling stories of empowered action to reduce violence.

To join, contact Matt Guynn at mattguynn@earthlink.net.

Heartland Song and Story Fest: Rooted and Grounded in Love!

July 6 - July 12, 2005 • Joyfield Farm • North Manchester, Indiana

A unique Family Camp, co-sponsored by On Earth Peace, featuring Brethren musicians and storytellers in the fields of the Midwestern Heartland.

As people of faith, we are centered in the struggle for peace and justice and compassion for all people. And we are in it for the long haul, cultivating relationships, building up our capacity for caring, growing in awareness of what is needed. To do these things, we must be rooted and grounded in love, or we will blow up and burn out. This week we will live and work and sing and share together, simply and peacefully, as we root deeper and stronger into the heart land from which goodness grows!

Storytellers and Workshop Leaders

Debbie Eisenbise • Bob Gross • Kathy Guisewite • Jonathan Hunter
Cliff Kindy • Jim Lehman • Sue Overman • Barb Saylor

Campfire, Workshop, and Concert Musicians

LuAnne Harley & Brian Kruschwitz • Joseph Helfrich • Bill & Jacob Jolliff
Lee Krähenbühl & David Frantz • Peg Lehman • Jan & John Long
Mutual Kumquat: Drue Jones, Chris Good, Michael Good, Seth Hendricks, and Ben Long

For more information and to register, visit www.brethren.org/oepa/SongandStoryFest2005.html; or contact On Earth Peace at 410-635-8704 or oepa_oepa@brethren.org or Fest Director Ken Kline Smeltzer at 814-466-6491 or bksmeltz@adelphia.net.

Seeking Peace: The Courage to Be Nonviolent

Sept. 8-11, 2005 — Indianapolis, Indiana

Members and friends of the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA and The Society of Friends are warmly invited to take part in an energizing, multi-faceted, intergenerational gathering, designed to provide opportunities to build mentoring relationships and explore practical and intellectual approaches to peace and peacemaking.

Contributing organizations include the Plowshares Peace Studies Collaborative of Earlham, Goshen and Manchester Colleges; Every Church a Peace Church; Mennonite Central Committee; Great Lakes, Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA; On Earth Peace Assembly; Quaker House and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Conference goals:

- To feed the soul of the peacemaker by providing practical resources.
- To energize the peacemaker through workshops and dynamic, biblical worship
- To build up the communities of peacemakers by providing a place to share stories and to create networks.
- To help us better understand the current powers and principalities and build affinity networks in the struggle to change them.
- To address issues of peace and justice and how to maintain a healthy peace witness and community.

Topics and themes:

- Thoughts and preparation for long-term work
- History of the Peace Churches and Peace movements
- Alliances, long term assets and energy
- Healthy peacemaking communities based in knowledge, connections and relationships
- New realities and perspectives
- The work of principalities and powers
- Media
- Consumerism.

Information about the conference is available online at:
www.plowsharesproject.org/HistoricPeaceChurchConference