

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



To: Persons Inquiring about Conscientious Objector Registration
From: Registrar for Conscientious Objectors
Re: Registration Procedures

This packet includes the following items:

1. The Episcopal Church and Conscientious Objection to War
2. Military Service and the Episcopalian
3. Biblical Basis of a Peace Witness
4. What Do I Believe About War?
5. Advice to Episcopalians Facing Selective Service System Registration
6. A selected bibliography of books on non-violence theology and conscientious objection
7. Letters of Support for Conscientious Objector Claims
8. Worksheet on War Objection
9. Registration Form with instructions

Items 1-4 should help you to decide whether you are a Conscientious Objector (CO). Items 5-8 will be of assistance to you should you decide to register as a Conscientious Objector.

Please be assured that any and all correspondence or questions with this office will be handled as confidentially as possible.

Your registration as a Conscientious Objector (CO) **does not** exempt you from the Selective Service procedures, nor does it guarantee that you will be exempt from conscription or military service, or some other form of non-combatant service in the event that future legislation is enacted restoring the draft.

It has been our previous experience that many CO claims were denied because the registrant did not identify himself or herself at the beginning. Between 1970 and 1972 only 20% of those who applied to the Selective Service Board for CO status were classified as COs. One of the reasons for this is that a claim for CO status was often filed late in the process leading to induction into military service. If you have made a decision, it is important to have your statement on file as early as possible.

If you think that you might want to register as a CO or if you have decided to officially register as a CO, please read through items 1 through 7 before making any final decisions.

After you have read the material fully, if you would like to register as a Conscientious Objector, then:

1. Complete three (3) copies of the registration form (found on page 8 of this packet.) Do NOT use the Selective Service System's online form.
2. Do not sign any of the copies.
3. Take the unsigned copies to your priest or bishop.
4. With the priest or bishop, sign and date all three (3) copies, and have your priest or bishop sign and date them as well.
5. Send the first copy to:
The Rev. Twila Smith
Registrar for Conscientious Objectors
The Episcopal Church
815 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017-4503
6. Keep the second copy for your own records.
7. Hold the third copy for the Selective Service Board in the event that a draft is reinstated.
8. Note that you will also need to give the place and date of your baptism and confirmation.

This should complete the process. However, if you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact the Registrar for Conscientious Objectors for The Episcopal Church at tsmith@episcopalchurch.org.

Conscientious Military Service

A wide range of positions concerning military service are found within the Christian fellowship in general and within The Episcopal Church. The Church stands with its members as they make decisions in this area of their lives, providing pastoral support to **Conscientious Participants, Selective Conscientious Objectors, Conscientious Objectors, and Conscientious Resisters**. The decision to participate or not to participate in the armed forces and in any particular war situation that may occur while they are in the armed forces has consequences for the rest of a person's life. This document is addressed to Episcopalians so that they may think responsibly about this decision and to consider carefully their loyalties to God and country.

Conscientious Participation

Many Americans go into the armed forces without particularly considering why they should. Christian citizens, however, should be ready to give themselves and others a reason for their faith and action. Most Christians participate for reasons of conscience in the armed forces because they believe that:

1. The Christian gives allegiance to the nation under God. All citizens are dependent on the common life for security, liberty and opportunity. The state protects these rights. Duty to one's country has been understood as including the obligation to bear arms, and this duty can be overridden only by strong reasons of conscience.
2. Many Christians recognize the problem that each nation determines for itself what is right. Thus Christians have often fought one another because they believe this to be their duty. One must soberly face the fact that we do not yet have a world order that can keep peace. The Christian serves in the armed forces and, if necessary, goes into combat because he or she believes that the responsibility for maintaining world order must be shared in this way.
3. Christian theologians have maintained that war is just when all of the following conditions are fulfilled. (All seven criteria must be met for a war to be considered just).
 - a. The war must be waged by legitimate authority. In the case of the United States, that is the President and Congress.
 - b. The object must be to vindicate justice. A defensive war, or one to protect rights that have been infringed, is generally held to qualify.
 - c. The intention must be peace with justice.
 - d. The war must be waged without hatred and with love and reconciliation as the ultimate aim.
 - e. The conduct of the war must be just. The opponent has human rights that must be respected. Noncombatants must be protected and not made the object of direct attack. Discrimination must be observed in the targets selected and the weapons used.
 - f. The damages inflicted must not be out of proportion to the injuries suffered or threatened, and there must be a reasonable prospect of success.
 - g. The war must be a last resort only after every possibility of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.

In modern warfare as in earlier times, it is difficult to ensure that all these conditions are met. Nevertheless, Christians have participated in war because it seemed that the alternative of non-participation might bring evils worse than the war, and that the leaders of the nation acted as responsibly as possible within this framework.

Enlistment

Local recruiting offices of the various branches of the armed forces can provide specific information on programs and opportunities. The experience of military life sometimes provides an opportunity for clarification of personal values and objectives, but everyone should be clear that the primary purpose of the armed forces is to support national defense policy as determined by the President and Congress. Note that military recruiters have the job of encouraging people to enlist. Also, promises of special assignments are not binding on the military: the military can reassign people as it sees fit.

Conscientious Objection

Both the nation and the Church make provision for the person who believes that he or she cannot participate in war. The wording of the Military Selective Service Act of 1967, amended in 1971, concerning conscientious objection reads as follows:

Section 6 (j). Nothing contained in this title shall be construed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the armed forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form. As used in this subsection, the term "religious training and belief" does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views, or a merely personal moral code.

The Episcopal Church and other communions have recognized the conscientious objector position. Since the 1934 General Convention, The Episcopal Church has recognized "the duty of Christians to put the Cross above the flag and in any conflict of loyalties unhesitatingly to follow the Christ."

In 1940 a Registrar for Conscientious Objectors was appointed and a confidential Register established at the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church for conscientious objectors who are baptized or confirmed members of The Episcopal Church.

In 1962 the House of Bishops said: "We must not hesitate to offer a full ministry [to military personnel], realizing the political and military complexity of our national situation, and the fact that the situation for all of us, military and civilian alike, is not totally of our own making. With equal – in some cases, even greater – poignancy, we recognize the validity of the calling of the conscientious objector and the pacifist and the duty of the Church to see that we live in a society in which the dictates of conscience are respected."

In 1979 the General Convention again encouraged "young Episcopalians who consider themselves to be conscientious objectors to war to register that belief with the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church in the Register maintained for this purpose since 1940."

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Those who decide for conscientious objection today usually do so because of the following convictions:

1. To take human life, or to participate in a process which may lead to the taking of human life, is immoral and unchristian. A Christian is called to witness to God's love by refusing to participate in war through any form of military service.
2. Under the conditions of modern warfare, it is impossible to wage a just war.
3. While some Christians believe limited war both justifiable and possible, many others object to any war on the basis that the present state of military art makes it impossible to have a "limited war" within the framework of Christian moral obligations. The danger of nuclear war, which may lead to the destruction of all human life, is so great that no considerations are strong enough to justify war of any kind.
4. Although it might be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances to support military action in the service of justice, there may be other occasions when some Christians may reject a specific military action as unjustified. (This is "selective conscientious objection" and is not recognized under current national law. See subsequent heading for this option.)

Options for the Objector

Two options for the conscientious objector are allowed under the Military Selective Service Act.

1. The term "noncombatant training" refers to any training unrelated to the study, use or handling of arms or weapons. "Noncombatant service" is performed in a unit of the armed forces, usually in the medical corps or in some other assignment not requiring the bearing of arms.
2. Instead of actual enlistment into the armed forces, work may be assigned by the Federal, state or local government or by a non-profit organization working for the "maintenance of the national health, safety or interest," including related educational and scientific activities. In the past, such work has included the Peace Corps, VISTA, the teaching trades, and work in social service agencies or community development projects. Many Church-sponsored programs have qualified. Such assignments may be available if the draft is activated. The law does not protect the "selective conscientious objector" or the noncooperating resister to draft registration or induction.

Selective Conscientious Objection

The Church recognizes that some people who would be willing to fight in a just war would, in conscience, be unwilling to participate in an unjust war. There are at least two situations where this might occur:

1. A person is subject to being conscripted into the military to participate in an unjust war, or
2. A person who has volunteered or been conscripted prior to the onset of our nation's participation in an unjust war. This could include a career member of the military, whose spiritual development led to seeing a particular war situation as unjust.

While the Church respects both of these positions, neither is legal under current law. A person exercising either option would almost certainly be subject to legal consequences, including a

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substantial fine and a prison term. As noted below for Conscientious Resisters, such people should discuss in detail the proposed course of action with a qualified counselor.

Note that while some people may, prior to their joining the military, believe that the current war is unjust or is being conducted in an unjust way, others may not come to this belief until they experience the reality of that war or otherwise learn more about that war.

Conscientious Resistance

Some Christians believe that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This leads them to conclude that any form of cooperation with the Selective Service system or the military is contrary to the will of God as they understand that. This belief is most often acted out in one of two ways:

1. by refusing to register for the Selective Service System at all;
2. by registering for the Selective Service System but then refusing induction if and when the draft is reinstated.

It must be emphasized that such actions will almost certainly result in legal consequences, including a substantial fine and a prison term. Anyone considering such action is strongly urged to discuss in detail the proposed course of action with a qualified draft counselor. The Center on Conscience & War (CCW) provides this service (<http://www.centeronconscience.org>).

The House of Bishops has established guidelines for those who engage in acts of civil disobedience (House of Bishops Position Paper III on Christian Obedience, 1964; see page 25 of *Cross Before Flag*, published by the Episcopal Peace Fellowship).

Those Already in the Military

Conscientious Objection to war has, in the past, been thought of only in terms of persons who face military conscription. However, many people experience major changes in their religious beliefs as they mature while in the military. The actual experience of war itself may accelerate such changes. If the person has also directly participated in killing, the effect may even further accelerate such changes.

The situation then is one of getting an appropriate military discharge rather than one of the draft. Under current law this can be a very difficult process and the person will likely need expert assistance (e.g., CCW).

The Church's Concern

Your Church is concerned for the welfare of all its members. While the conscientious participant, the conscientious objector, the selective conscientious objector, and the conscientious resister must accept the consequences of their decision, all are the concern of the Church's pastoral ministry.

If you are in the armed forces, make worship a regular part of your life. Get to know your unit chaplain or the priest in the area where you are stationed, and keep in touch with your priest at

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home. For those in the armed forces, The Episcopal Church maintains a program under the direction of the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Services and Federal Ministries. That office can be reached at:

Armed Forces and Federal Ministries

3101 Wisconsin Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20016

www.episcopalchurch.org/armed-forces-and-federal-ministries/

If you are a conscientious objector, you should register this decision as soon as you can in the confidential register at the Episcopal Church Center. The Registrar for Conscientious Objectors at the Center will supply you with registration forms and information on the Church's position on request. The organizations listed below can counsel and support you as you make your decision and afterwards provide fellowship, printed materials and other resources that may help you to clarify your position.

Contact Information

The Rev. Twila Smith

Registrar for Conscientious Objectors

The Episcopal Church

815 Second Avenue

New York, NY 10017-4503

Center on Conscience & War (CCW)

1830 Connecticut Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20009-5732

(202) 483-2220

www.centeronconscience.org

In whatever position you find yourself, as a conscientious objector, a selective conscientious objector, a conscientious participant or a conscientious resister, try to maintain your attitude as a Christian. Act in such a way that you can respect and live with yourself. Respect the rights and consciences of others. Join with others in penitence for the evils that still make conflict possible. Finally, work as a Christian citizen for justice, mercy and love.

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SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM • PRINT ONLY IN BLACK INK
AND IN CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY
REGISTRATION FORM • YOU SHOULD RECEIVE A REGISTRATION
ACKNOWLEDGMENT WITHIN 90 DAYS

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

1 DATE OF BIRTH: (MM-DD-YYYY) - -

2 SEX: (Mark with "X") ☐ Male ☐ Female

3 SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER -

4 LAST NAME

FIRST NAME & MIDDLE NAME

SUFFIX (Mark with "X") ☐ JR ☐ III OTHER SUFFIX

Mark this box if your permanent address is the same as your current address ☐

5 CURRENT MAILING ADDRESS: STREET ADDRESS & APARTMENT NUMBER

CITY

ZIP CODE

6 PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS: STREET ADDRESS & APARTMENT NUMBER

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

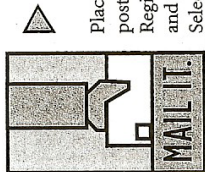
7 CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER (Area Code First) - -

8 TODAY'S DATE: (MM-DD-YYYY) - -

9 I AFFIRM THE FOREGOING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE

SIGNATURE

UPO



Place the proper postage on the Registration Card and mail back to the Selective Service System.

After You Register...

Watch Your Mail!

Within 90 days after registering, you should receive in the mail a Registration Acknowledgment from Selective Service which will provide you with a copy of your registration record. Safeguard that document since it will serve as official proof of your registration. If you do not receive a Registration Acknowledgment within 90 days after registering, it is very important that you write to the address below, or call (847) 688-6888 to verify that your registration has been received.

Selective Service System
Registration Information Office
P.O. Box 94638
Palatine, IL 60094-4638

Keep Us Informed of Changes

Once you register, the law also requires you to keep Selective Service informed of your address changes so you can be reached without delay. You can inform Selective Service of an address change by writing to the address above, or you may go to any post office for a Change-of-Information Form (SSS Form 2), fill it out and mail to Selective Service.

For more information, see back panel.

Conscientious Objector Registration Form

For Members of The Episcopal Church Who Are Conscientious Objectors to Military Service

Mail a completed copy to: The Rev. Twila Smith, Register for Conscientious Objectors, The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017-4503.

Full name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Date of birth: ____/____/____ Social Security Number: ____-____-____

Place of birth: _____

Present occupation: _____

Marital status: _____ Spouse's name (if applicable): _____

Diocese: _____

Name and Address of church: _____

Date and Place of Baptism: _____

And/or Date and Place of Confirmation: _____

Approximate date of becoming a conscientious objector: ____/____/____

Peace organization(s) of which you are a member: _____

Write a brief statement of your reasons for conscientious objection and of the types of service in which you are willing to participate: (you may use another piece of paper if necessary)

Signature of Conscientious Objector: _____

I hereby certify that _____ is a baptized member of my congregation, and that the above statements, to the best of my knowledge, are true.

Signature of Priest or Bishop: _____ Date: _____

Please print the name of Priest or Bishop: _____

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Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Suggested Bibliography for those considering Conscientious Objector Status

Cross Before Flag: Episcopal Statements on War and Peace

Publisher: Episcopal Peace Fellowship

<http://epfnational.org/>

Why I Am a Conscientious Objector

Publisher: Herald Press, 1982

Author: John M. Drescher

Handbook for Conscientious Objectors

Publisher: Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO), 1952.

[https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg073CentralComm\(CCCO\)/CCCOHandbook1952.pdf](https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg073CentralComm(CCCO)/CCCOHandbook1952.pdf)

Words of Conscience - Religious Statements on Conscientious Objection

Publisher: Center for Conscience & War, Washington DC, (2001), 11th Ed

Editor: Rachel S. Zuses

The Draft Counselors' Manual

Publisher: Center on Conscience & War, Washington, D.C (2002), 7th Ed.

Editors: Bill Galvin and J.E. McNeil

A Pacifist Way of Knowing

Publisher: Cascade Books, 2010

Author: John Howard Yoder

Peace Is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation

Publisher: Orbis Books, 2000

Editor: Walter Wink

Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam

(address given at Riverside Church, NYC, April 4, 1967)

Publisher: A.J. Muste Memorial Institute

info@ajmuste.org

Original Mother's Day Declaration

Author: Julia Ward Howe

Thomas Merton Letter to a Young Activist – The Hidden Ground of Love

Publisher: Ferrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1985

Editor: William Shannon

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Creating a Culture of Peace Manual

P.O. Box 22217

Robbinsdale, MN 55722

The Words of Peace: Selections from the Speeches of the Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize

Publisher: Newmarket Press, New York, NY, 4th edition, 2008

Editor: Irwin Abram

Movie: Soldiers of Conscience

<http://lunaproductions.com/soldiers-of-conscience-the-movie/>

"Soldiers of Conscience"

Catherine Ryan, Gary Weimberg (2008), Luna Productions

Aired on PBS, profile of 4 US Conscientious Objectors during the Iraq War.

How to Become a Conscientious Objector

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLoUn_YIV3s

Further Reading

The Unconquerable Earth: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People

Publisher: Holt Paperbacks, 2004

Author: Jonathan Schell

Non-Violence: A Brief History

Publisher: Baylor University Press, 2010

Author: John H. Yoder

Choosing Against War: A Christian View

Publisher: Good Books, 2002

Author: John D. Roth

Christian Peace and Nonviolence: A Documentary History

Publisher: Orbis Books, 2011

Editor: Michael G. Long

Links for Conscientious Objector Support Organizations:

Center on Conscience & War – formerly NISBCO - <http://www.nisbco.org>

Central Committee for Conscientious Objection – CCCO <http://www.objector.org>

Brethren Peace Witness www.brethren.org/genbd/witness/ConscientiousObjection/COindex.htm

Episcopal Peace Fellowship www.epfnational.org

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