

Pursuing Peace

The Brethren seek a more peaceful solution to conflict than violence and war. We seek to identify our role in international conflict due to our over-use of the world's resources. We should work to help all people gain access to food and water in order to prevent conflicts from erupting, and realign our budget priorities to reflect our commitment to peace and justice over violence.



The Church of the Brethren's peace conviction is firmly rooted in the New Testament through Jesus' teaching to "love our enemies" (Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:27) and Paul's admonition that Christians seek to live peaceably with all and that they strive to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

- Luke 6:27

Church of the Brethren Peace History

Since its inception the Church of the Brethren has been committed to peace. Brethren fled Germany and Holland to escape war and persecution and in coming to America, and have resisted war efforts. After World War I the Brethren began working with Friends and Mennonites as a Historic Peace Church, and remains committed to conscientious objection to war. Brethren helped form the Eirene program in Europe, and began a volunteer service as an alternative to military service and a peace education organization called "On Earth Peace."

Seeking Peace in a World at War

Policies of war and aggression saturate our society. Militarism, or the belief that the government is best served by policies of aggressive military preparedness, controls the foreign policy of the United States. Our nation invests in military action above all other ideals of belief and justice. In the fiscal year 2010 Budget, the U.S. spent 13 times more on its military than aiding the world's poor, 1.4 billion of whom live on less than \$1.25 a day according to the World Bank.

Global Violence

Wars and violence of all forms continue to be prevalent throughout the world. According to the UN, 42 million people fled their homeland in 2009 because of conflict and persecution. An estimated 300,000 children are being used in over 30 conflicts worldwide as child soldiers. God's call is for another way. A way of living that seeks peace, and the peaceful resolution of conflict. Jesus witness is one of combating injustice with the ways of nonviolence.

Exporting Violence to Latin America

The United States Army School of the Americas (SOA), renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001, in Fort Benning, Georgia is a training base for Latin American soldiers. According to the SOA Watch website, "Over its 59 years, the

SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor." On November 16, 1989 6 Jesuit priests, a co-worker, and her daughter were killed in San Salvador, El Salvador. According to Amnesty International, of the 26 soldiers responsible for the killings 19 were trained at School of the Americas (SOA).

Since 1989 a grassroots non-violent resistance movement to the SOA, called the SOA watch has grown from a few to thousands of people across the country. They call for a closing of the SOA and an end to U.S. foreign policies that export violence.

Plan Colombia

On top of training Latin American soldiers, the U.S. is also distributing aid to Colombia through "Plan Colombia." Amnesty International reports that since 2000 the U.S. has given over \$5 billion in aid to military and police support. Very little funding goes toward social or economic assistance and despite numerous reports of human rights abuse, "Plan Colombia" continues to receive funding.

Peace in Action

The Church of the Brethren offers many ways to actively pursue peace. The Brethren council young people in conscious object of the military, and offer the Brethren Volunteer Service to allow peaceful civil service throughout the world. The Brethren Peace Travel Team visits summer camps to talk to youth about peace. "On Earth Peace" is also dedicated peace education.

*"For though we live in the world,
**we do not wage war as the
world does."***

- 2 Corinthians 10:3

"We cannot retreat from the world... We must become aware of the rampant injustice and subtle hidden violence in today's world, examine our own involvement, and identify nonviolently with the oppressed and suffering... We look toward a future that will be more peaceful, just, and respectful of God's creation."

- 1991 Statement, Peacemaking: The Calling of God's People in History

Steps You Can Take:

- Visit the On Earth Peace website: www.onearthpeace.org
- Practice and encourage conflict mediation as a way to work through conflict
- Become an advocate and mentor for conscious objection to military service
- Join Brethren Volunteer Service to peacefully serve others
- Get involved with School of Americas Watch: www.soawatch.org
- Host a prayer vigil for the International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21st annually
- Join the Youth Peace Travel Team and inspire peers to make peace.
- Participate in a peace studies program through one of the following colleges: Elizabethtown College, Juniata College, Manchester College, the University of La Verne, Bridgewater College and Bethany Seminary.

For more information on these programs and others visit www.brethren.org/peace or email Jordan Blevins at jblevins@brethren.org.