



ENCOUNTERING RECRUITMENT



*You reveal the path of life to me. . . ;
in Your presence is abundant joy;
in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.
Psalm 16:11*

Dear Friend,

Military recruitment has reached a level of intensity never seen before in U.S. history, and any male or female between the ages of 16 and 25 can now be reached by recruiters, facilitated by the No Child Left Behind Act and the Pentagon data base.

There is an urgent need to educate our young people about the realities of military life, war, and recruitment so they can make informed responses when contacted by recruiters and also be prepared should a draft be reinstated.

As people of Christian faith, we believe that the life of Jesus is an example of living in a nonviolent way. Jesus taught that his followers should love God completely and love their neighbors as themselves. He also instructed that we should love our enemies. The Church of the Brethren has confessed through the years that through our understanding of God in Jesus, all war is sin. This confession often brings us into tension with the society at large and provokes conflict within our communities of faith.

As a community of faith, we welcome your involvement in providing young people in your congregation or parish with an alternative understanding of the military and war. It is important that young people understand what is happening in the effort to recruit them to serve with the military.

While youth in our congregations are very important to us, let us also understand that we have a responsibility to provide information and alternative options to the youth in our communities beyond our church walls. Today, there is no legal draft, and the military is searching for young men and women to serve.

The most vulnerable youth are those in communities with lower economies. When life options are limited, youth become more vulnerable to military recruiters. This "poverty draft" disproportionately draws from poor and working class communities and communities of color.

On Earth Peace | *an agency rooted in the Church of the Brethren*

PO Box 188 • New Windsor, MD 21776 • 410-635-8704

www.onearthpeace.org/CounterRecruitment.html • peacewitness_oepa@brethren.org



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Recruiters often find youth desiring what they offer: a life of meaning and pride, discipline, and belonging. Some communities welcome recruiters and the promises they make. Some young people feel that there are no options besides the military available for job training or college education. Some seek adventure and travel.

It is important for people of faith and conviction to interrupt this pathway toward the soul- and society-crippling experience of war and to offer instead the path of life. It matters for followers of Jesus to get involved in the lives of young people to mentor and accompany, to provide spiritual formation, point out possible pitfalls, and indicate another way of living.

This packet provides an overview of entry-points and basic resources for getting started with responding to military recruiters in your community. I look forward to joining with your efforts and learning together how to expand this exciting and important work!

Yours in peace & grace,

Matt Guynn
coordinator of peace witness
On Earth Peace



On Earth Peace offers. . .

1. Organizing Packet. The Organizing and Outreach Packet is intended to be an introduction to the broad movement of counter-recruitment. It offers a selection of resources representing some of the best of what's available, as well as several key resources that On Earth Peace created for those working in a Christian-rooted context.

2. An organizing "intake interview." On Earth Peace organizers are available for telephone or face-to-face interviews in which we will together explore your interest and your hopes for a counter-recruitment ministry/program. In this conversation we hope to get to know each other a little in order to be better allies in the future, and to identify specific ways to support and encourage your local efforts. We will apply a long-term and organizing perspective to the work in your context. Together we will ask, *How does it make sense to develop this work in your setting?*

3. Kickoff event. We will support you to you conceptualize and plan a kick-off event for your counter-recruitment efforts. It could be anything from a planning event with a handful of people to an intergenerational congregational retreat. Questions that we hope to address in this kickoff include: What do we hope to accomplish in the next 12 months? Who are our allies? What are our resources? What do we need that we don't have?

4. Networking calls. Every six to eight weeks, On Earth Peace coordinates a national networking call for folks organizing around the militarization of youth, specifically intended to support those working from a Christian background. The calls are an opportunity to share lessons learned, to offer and receive spiritual support, to get practical advice and to exchange wisdom.

5. Listserv. c-r-organize is an e-mail networking list for those involved in counter-recruitment. The purpose of this low-traffic list is to share lessons learned, reflect about organizing activities, offer spiritual support and inspiration, and to provide information about monthly networking conference calls.

6. Ongoing coaching. On Earth Peace organizers will accompany you as you develop a local counter-recruitment campaign, and are available for consultation and support.

7. Connections with the broader movement. On Earth Peace can help connect you to others in your region and in the country who are doing similar kinds of work. **This is a movement, so let's get connected!**

There are several ways to connect:

Subscribe: c-r-organize-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

Call: Matt Guynn, coordinator of peace witness, 765-962-6234

E-mail: peacewitness_oepa@brethren.org



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Encountering Recruitment

An orientation to the truth-in-recruiting movement

The problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated. – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Who is involved?



Soldiers are not the enemy.

Parents are concerned about the military's unfettered access to their children's contact information, and want to identify better options than the military for a successful life for their kids.

Young people are concerned about the militarization of their schools and want a safe school and a positive future without the presence of military recruiters.

Church congregations committed to Christian peacemaking want to provide life-giving alternatives for youth drawn to the military, educate about conscientious objection, and help young people in their own spiritual formation.

People of color and white allies are both concerned about the disproportionate impact of recruitment on Black and Latino communities.

Veterans who came home from the war are speaking out about their experiences and encouraging young people to educate themselves well before joining the military. Look for supportive local vets on the Veterans for Peace website, www.veteransforpeace.org, or Iraq Veterans Against the War, www.ivaw.org.

You are.



What can I do?

“Relationship, Relationship, Relationship.” This work is not about developing a “program,” it’s about reaching out and meeting young people and accompanying them through discernment and decisions. Key goals are helping youth find their path, consider their options, and achieve success as they define it. Many peace and church groups struggle to incorporate the ideas and energy of youth. (See enclosed handout on being an ally to youth.)

“Opt Out” of information collection. The No Child Left Behind Act requires school systems to turn over student’s information to recruiters unless students or parents submit an “opt-out form.” Contact your school system to find out about local practices with regards to the opt-out form. Spread the word! A sample form is included. Visit www.leavemychildalone.org.

Limit Recruiter Access. Make a proposal to your local school board. School boards across the country have acted to limit the access of recruiters to their students. For example, the Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI, limited recruiter access to three days per year, stipulated that recruitment materials may only be placed in the Guidance Office, and specified that counselors can provide information about both military service and alternatives to military service. See insert for more examples.

Make Positive Options Available and Possible. Generate a list of regional alternative connections for internships, college education, and employment. You can find a model guide for one region at www.whatsnext.afsc.org. Many young people enter the military as an avenue for job training or college money, and the movement needs local advocates who are familiar with local, regional and national scholarship possibilities. See the enclosed flyer on national scholarship options.

Build connections with others who want to act. There are many individuals, local and regional groups, and national networks concerned about military recruitment and related issues. Don't think for a minute that you are by yourself in this – find them! A great way to start is by participating in one of On Earth Peace's regularly scheduled networking calls. Visit our website to find the next date.

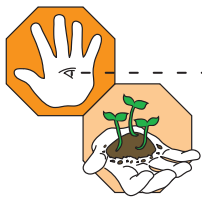
See “Ten Ways To Get Started” for more ideas.



Ten Ways to Get Started

The following ideas come from members of On Earth Peace's Encountering Recruitment network.

1. **Get oriented.** Google “counter-recruitment” and take a few minutes to get acquainted with the wide variety of resources that are available. This movement continues to grow and learn, and there are resources being created every week. Find out who is on the scene, if there are groups already in your state or region, and what kinds of resources are available for help. The best place to get news about counter-recruitment is the listserv counter-recruitment@yahoogroups.com. To sign up, send a blank e-mail to counter-recruitment-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.
2. **Find out if there are people in your area already working on this issue.** If so, join in! If not, call together a few people to form a local group to work on the issue. Some potential partners include church congregations, mosques or synagogues, youth organizations, and justice or peace action groups. As schools are often reluctant to allow church groups into the school, a broad coalition will have more success -- and will also help spread around the work. *You are not alone, even if it feels that way!* For more ideas on finding partners, contact On Earth Peace.
3. **Look to the youth who are close to home.** Build relationships with the youth in your church or community. Become involved with them in meaningful ways, and support the growth of their spiritual lives. Mentor them in Jesus' teachings and Christian peacemaking. Spiritual formation for loving God and loving enemies is a lifelong process, supported by meaningful interaction. Get to know your congregation's youth personally. Pray together and study the Bible – and also just hang out. Accompany them closely in their search for lives of value and meaning. For those who may be attracted to the military, or who might be more attractive to military recruiters, make even more of a commitment to build relationship and to help them find a future with meaning and money to live on.
4. **Opt out.** Find out what your school system's policy is on the “opt-out form.” This form, which must be turned in near the beginning of a student's sophomore year, prohibits your school from providing your child's personal information to military recruiters (required in the No Child Left Behind Act). Lobby your high school administrators or school board to add the “opt-out” form to the health form, registration packet, or other visible paperwork that all parents and students need to sign. Having an interested parent make an appointment with their child's guidance counselor to find out what's happening is a good place to start. Visit www.leavemychildalone.org to find an easy guide for walking through this process.



5. **Talk with children about peacemaking.** Eliminate the need for counter-recruiting at the high school level! You can find On Earth Peace's poster, "Passing on Your Faith and Peace Witness to Children" on the On Earth peace website, www.onearthpeace.org.
6. **Join with and support high school youth and college students who want to educate their peers.** Youth have the most access in their own high schools and are most likely to be listened to by their peers. One successful path has been supporting middle or high school youth to start peace or social justice clubs at their school. College students who are involved with high school tutoring or support groups can help get the lay of the land or make connections with students and supportive teachers.
7. **Organize a community 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). You will find links to many of these organizations on our website.
8. **Research alternative sources of educational funding in your area,** and begin to develop an education list for your region. Many groups are already starting similar project. One outstanding example is, "What's Next? A Guide for North Carolina Teens Wondering, 'What's After High School.'" You can find it online at www.whatsnext.afsc.org. One of the important roles of counter-recruitment advocates is to serve as "**alternate guidance counselors,**" helping youth find ways to achieve their goals without resorting to military service. Prepare yourself to navigate through scholarship, apprenticeship, and job training opportunities in your area. Offer free career counseling at Boys' & Girls' Clubs, youth centers, or other locations.
9. Get a copy of the American Friends Service Committee **training manual, Before You Enlist and After You Say No.** This 200+ page curriculum manual includes eight sessions you can use to educate others about issues of recruitment, to reflect strategically together, and to plan next steps. You can order a copy of the manual and the companion DVD at afsc.org/youthmil/resources/TrainingManual.htm
10. Review the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office guide to starting a counter-recruitment program promoting alternative service, "**Teaching an Alternative to War,**" which is available online at <http://www.brethren.org/genbd/witness/ConscientiousObjection>.



Dear Pastors, Youth Advisors, Lay Leaders:

Military recruiters are regularly engaging our youth, listening to their dreams, promising them a life of job opportunities and honor. Youth hear this call and respond – a life of commitment, courage, and conviction sounds wonderful! Job training and college money make it an even better deal.

We would like to enlist YOU to engage your youth and invite them to the rewards of following Jesus, the Prince of Peace. This life based on God's promises, this life of agape love for God, self, neighbor and enemy, requires courage and conviction of the highest order. It offers adventure, opportunity, and promise. But we have to encourage young people in this path. *If we do not encourage young people to engage problems of violence and injustice out of the heritage of Christian love and nonviolence, who will?* We are the ones who need to accompany our young folk to achieve lives of honor and success without joining the military.

We also have a responsibility to reach out to our communities. On Earth Peace, a peace education program based in the Church of the Brethren, supports a growing network of volunteer community organizers who provide education about the rights of young people, protect the privacy of young people and their families from recruiters, and helping identify alternative life paths for young people who feel the military is the only way to go.

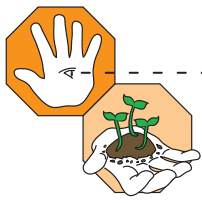
Would you join with us? Here are some specific ways to help:

- 1) **In an upcoming youth group meeting, focus on the topic of Jesus' teaching on enemies, and the themes of military participation and recruitment.** On the back of this sheet, we've provided a set of questions you may find helpful. Let us know how it goes!
- 2) Work with your youth to understand conscientious objection to war, using resources from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Visit
- 3) Military recruiters are famous for not being clear about the requirements involved or the fact that their promises don't have to be kept by the armed forces. **Join our network to get help starting a truth-in-recruiting program for your high school or community**, involving your youth in reaching out to their peers about military participation. We offer spiritual and practical support, resources, and connections to a national movement!



YOUTH GROUP SESSION: FAITH, MILITARY RECRUITMENT, AND WAR

- *Ask*, Have you seen or interacted with military recruiters in your high school or community? What have you said to them? What have they said to you?
- For this activity, you as the leader will stand in the middle of the room and invite youth to stand! Youth will *position themselves somewhere in the room* with relation to the statement you make. (If someone COMPLETELY agrees, they would join you right in the middle. If they are not sure but it seems appealing, they might choose to be in the middle and facing toward the center. If they are in complete disagreement, they might be in a corner or on their way out of the room.) Try a dry run with, “I like candy,” just to get the feel of it. Now use the following statements, allowing folks to move for each: “There are many Christians serving in the military.” “Jesus’ teachings mean we cannot participate in the military.” “If Jesus were alive today, he would be a U.S. Marine.”
- Follow-up questions: For each prompt, interview folks around the room. What are all the different perspectives within our group related to participating in the military? Invite different members to share their views based on where they are standing and the pose they took. How does each person connect their perspective to their faith?
- *Ask*, What does Jesus say, teach, and do about enemies, sinners, and those who are unclean? (Bible references: Matthew 5: 38-47; John 8: 2-11; John 4: 1-30; Luke 13: 10-17; Mark 2: 15-17, Mark 3: 1-6.) Ask youth to review these stories and passages in small groups, then return to the large group.
- *Ask*, What do these passages show about Jesus? How do you feel about them? How does this teach us to treat the unclean, the sinner, and the enemy in our own day?
- *Ask*, Who are our society’s enemies, or congregation’s “enemies,” or your personal enemies? How does Jesus’ teaching show that we ought to interact with them? What could be the possible impact of this teaching for your life – if you took it for real? In what way do you struggle as you think about living this out?
- *Ask*, In light of all this, how would you like to respond to military recruiters in the future? Would you consider starting a peace club in school that would help provide your classmates with information about what it really means to join the military, and other options for employment and an exciting future? Are there other ways you can think to respond?
- *Close with prayer*



The Paths that Lead to Life: Theological Reflection on Counter-recruitment

Matt Guynn

*“You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.”*
Acts 2:28

My friend Bob gave me this metaphor: In the woods, in fields, in cities, there are often beaten paths that go to the usual places – which keep getting deeper and stronger with use.

Right now, the paths that are more well-beaten in our society often lead toward separation from each other, toward isolation, toward self-satisfaction, toward “bigger-than” and “me” mentalities. They often lead at the social level toward resource to violence, an overweening obsession with national security as opposed to human security, toward dehumanizing each other and writing off segments of the society.

There aren't many who will be the first to try a new path -- willing to be the first to make that path. But there are many more who will at least try a path that at least has been tried before. We may also find that there are old paths that lead to life and we have to uncover.

What if counter-recruitment organizing were seen as a way to invite people off the beaten path, to incite people to another path – not just countering military recruiters and their work, but inviting people to another way of living? Counter-recruitment at its best may responding to the deep yearnings in people's soul, for lives with meaning, that contribute to the betterment of society.

Affirmations and reflections:

God's presence is a creative force the flutters over the waters, who cries out that we are beloved, who is within each of our bodies, minds, and spirits. This force, this God, this Divine is at the center of all that exists. God had a dream of all creation – that kind of shalom community – where all life was valued and known intimately -- that kind of relationship between humans and creation, and humans and God – Eden is still God's dream.



ENCOUNTERING RECRUITMENT



God's intention for human life, according to Walter Wink, is to humanize us more, make us fully human. But institutions have realities that often fall away from God's intentions – the whole set of practices, assumptions, missions, and the culture of an institution. One name that scripture gives is to call them the “powers and principalities” – those institutions that have supreme importance in our lives and how they unfold – which often become an end in themselves, or fail to help us all thrive. “Failure to thrive”: This description given to some infants is applicable to many communities as well!

The military industrial complex is a power and a principality. Security itself is a good thing – we need safety, we need to be secure – all of humanity needs to be secure – but this basic need twists and goes awry in the service of the nation. We're in thrall to militarism, to the system, to the nation. Our relationship to the military industrial complex becomes idolatry — being committed to, dependent upon, looking to for security, and worshipping that which is not God.

We can all draw on God's presence (ultimate creativity, lovingkindness, generativity, deep Spirit and possibility) to become equipped to contend with the powers and principalities.

God's dream for us includes human wholeness, worth, dignity. But this dream is at odds with the stated goals of the government or the military-industrial complex, which always fall short of God's dream of shalom. The church also falls short. Church's role, and the role of the faithful – is prophetic witness as well as peacebuilding – a gradual nurturing of slow growth, a weaving and a knitting together.

Counter-recruitment is getting the way of military recruitment – but it's also recruiting *for* something else. It's about recruiting for another way of living.

Recruiting for the paths that lead to life – creating communities with deep soul and connection, places where you just want to rest and enjoy life. For communities that engage in mutual uplift instead of a common downshift.

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For further theological reflection on counter-recruitment, please visit our website.

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