

Witness to government?

Mennonites and Brethren in Christ have historically been cautious about political involvements. But both the Bible and Anabaptist history give precedents for speaking to government leaders.

Moses, Esther and the prophets called on rulers to stop oppressing people. Jesus also challenged those who ruled Palestine to stop oppressing their own people and genuinely care for them instead. (Exod. 5:1-3; I Kings 21:1-29; Esther 8:3-6; Luke 11:37-54)

16th century Anabaptist leader Menno Simons wrote to the magistrates of his day appealing for tolerance and justice. He exhorted them to take seriously their responsibilities “in the true fear of God, and not so cruelly to lord it over the children of God and his Word as alas, many of you have a way of doing, it seems.” (*Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, page 193.)

For many years, North American Mennonites have spoken to government leaders about religious freedom and peace issues, such as military conscription and payment of war taxes.

Increasingly, MCC partners in developing countries have called on North Americans to speak to our governments about policies that adversely affect the poor people in their countries.

Ten ways you can support peace and justice advocacy work

1. Reflect on biblical texts that speak of God’s desire for peace and justice. (e.g. Is. 58, Luke 4:18-19)
2. Pray for government officials and let them know you are praying for them.
3. Become as knowledgeable as you can about at least one legislative issue.
4. Develop mutual friendships with people who struggle courageously on poverty level incomes. How do political decisions affect their day-to-day lives?
5. Read the *Washington Memo* and *Thirdway Café*.
6. Sign up for *Washington Office Hotlines*. Get involved in at least one issue.
7. Write to your representative, senators or the President. Be brief, identify the bill or issue, state your position and reasons, be constructive and affirming, ask questions. Send a copy to your local newspaper.
8. Write an article for a newspaper or church magazine.
9. Spread the word in your church about the need for advocacy.
10. Send a note of encouragement to a friend who is doing peace and justice work.



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MCC is the relief, service, development and peacemaking agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America.

re030412jek5m 991016jek5m Printed in USA on recycled paper.

MCC U.S.

Washington Office



**A Mennonite
and Brethren
in Christ
witness to
the U.S.
government**



Mission Statement

MCC Washington Office is a Mennonite and Brethren in Christ presence on Capitol Hill providing and encouraging prophetic witness to the way of Christ on matters of U.S. public policy.

To fulfill this mission, the office:

1. Monitors and analyzes U.S. public policy
2. Facilitates MCC's peace and justice advocacy
3. Informs, listens to and encourages the church in its witness to government
4. Is guided by the biblical vision of being restored to right relationship with God, each other, and the whole of creation. This includes:
 - justice for all, with special concern for poor and oppressed people (Deut. 24:17-22)
 - nonviolent peacemaking (Matt. 5:9 and 38-48)
 - dismantling racism and sexism (Gal. 3:25-28; Eph. 2:11-22)
 - human rights including freedom of conscience and religious practice (Prov. 31:8-9; Luke 4:18-19; Acts 5:17-42)
 - care for the earth (Gen.1:28-30; Ps.8:5-8)

Washington Office History

Opened July 1968 upon recommendations of Mennonite denominational bodies and conference peace committees—after a decade-long process of study and discernment. The first issues the office followed included the draft, military spending, domestic poverty and racial justice.

The office soon began to provide MCC's overseas and domestic program directors with information about U.S. policies affecting their respective regions and to arrange meetings between MCC workers and government officials in Washington.

Delton Franz directed the office from 1968 to 1993. J. Daryl Byler began as director in 1994.

The Washington Office ...

... listens and analyzes. The Washington Office works with other faith-based groups on Capitol Hill to monitor and analyze legislation and policy developments likely to affect the church's justice and peacemaking ministries around the globe.

... educates and informs. Information is shared with MCC constituents in several ways:

Washington Memo, a bimonthly newsletter, interprets national legislation and policy; it includes a biennial congressional voting record.

Thirdway Café offers weekly Washington comment on current issues, from an Anabaptist perspective (www.thirdway.com).

Hotline alerts call for grassroots action on issues requiring immediate response.

Primers provide a basic introduction — including biblical reflection and action steps — on issues covered by the Washing Office.

Advocacy Handbook, a 12-page guide, assists Anabaptists in their witness to government. Available in English or Spanish.

Washington seminars provide first-hand exposure to the workings of Congress and government agencies. Participants probe the implications of peacemaking in today's world.

The Pastor-in-Residence Program offers opportunities for church leaders to spend one to three months in the Washington Office.

... advocates and encourages. The Washington Office seeks to be a voice for the voiceless. Staff meets with congressional aides to dialogue over policy concerns, arranges for MCC workers to share their experiences with U.S. government officials, and encourages the church in its witness to government.

Sign me up!

Washington Memo

- 1 year free trial subscription** available to new subscribers
 - 1 year subscription** = \$10 (\$13 Cdn.)
 - 2 year subscription** = \$18 (\$23 Cdn.)
- Add \$6 (\$8 Cdn.) for each additional year.

Washington Office Hotlines **free!**

(Check those you are willing to respond to)

- Civil Rights & Religious Freedom**
church/state issues, Peace Tax Fund, gender and racial justice
 - Criminal Justice**
death penalty, prison alternatives, victims' needs, gun violence
 - Domestic Economic Justice**
welfare, hunger, homelessness
 - Environment**
clean air, water and land, endangered species.
 - Health Care**
expanded access to uninsured, Medicaid (health care for the poor)
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U.S. policies toward immigrants and refugees
 - International Relations & Economic Justice**
development aid, debt, trade, United Nations, human rights
 - Militarism & International Peacekeeping**
military spending, economic conversion, arms reduction, NATO
 - Women's Concerns**
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- Regional issues:** U.S. policy affecting
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 - Middle East

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