

# Lutherans and Conscientious Objection to the Draft

## Lutheran Peace Fellowship

Lutherans have had a long history of responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers. One of the initial motivations for the formation of a Lutheran peace movement in the US was the need to support those resisting the draft through conscientious objection to military solutions to conflict.

Starting in 1940, Lutheran Social Fellowship (LSF) held meetings on "a more Christian social consciousness" and "problems for the Church in a world at war." Edgar Carlson went on to raise support for Lutheran conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service (CPS).

As the US prepared to enter World War II in 1941, LSF began outreach to seminary students at Gettysburg; Lutheran Pacifist Fellowship in Minneapolis-St. Paul; Augustana Lutheran Fellowship of Reconciliation (ALFOR); and the Pacifist Community at Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas. Joseph Sittler wrote the "Christians and War" series in the ALC Student Service Bulletin. Jimmy Claypool, Augustana Seminary student body president writes "Why I Am a Pacifist" for the student newspaper.

In 1943 Jim Bristol and Catharine Joram organized a local LSF group in Philadelphia to support Lutherans in CPS camps. ALFOR in Chicago, with a membership of 94 expanded its constitution to include education and support for COs in prison as well as those in CPS camps.

By 1944 Trevor Sandness could report that Lutherans had contributed almost half the cost of maintaining Lutheran conscientious objectors in CPS camps.

In 1958, William Zimmann and Albert Myers published LPF's first newsletter and the brochure "Not By Might . . . The Message of Lutheran Peace Fellowship."

Lutheran Peace Fellowship then initiated education efforts on military recruitment in schools in 1959. The next year, LPF purchased ads in the National Lutheran while the Lutheran Standard refused to print the ads.

Motivated by the conflict in Vietnam, Lutherans helped establish Conscientious Objector support programs at the Univ. of Minnesota, Univ. of Wisconsin, and UC Berkeley in 1970.

As the current conflicts of the world today continue to unfold, Lutherans are again being called on to support conscientious objectors in their effort to be peacemakers and supporter's of non-violent alternatives to conflict.

For more contemporary information on conscientious objection to the draft, see our resource list: [Youth and the Military](#), and search our blog for the latest postings about: [Conscientious objection](#)