Conscientious Objection and Military Service

Community of Christ has from its beginning strongly affirmed individual free will, conscience, or what sometimes is called agency. This also applies to the question of military service. The right of individuals to be sincerely motivated conscientious objectors, and register that objection with the World Church, has existed by World Conference Resolution (WCR) since 1960. That right has been affirmed by WCR 1177 in 1982 and WCR 1249 in 1996. The church also has affirmed the conscientious right of those who choose to serve in the military. As WCR 1249 states:

A person making a decision of conscience either to participate or not to participate in military service has the respect, the support, and the ministry of the church.

Within the USA all men ages 18–25 are legally obligated to register with the Selective Service within 30 days of their 18th birthday. Although no one currently is being drafted in the USA, the Selective Service System has procedures and regulations that can be implemented by the US government. It helps a young person’s case if he or she can present evidence of a well-thought-out conscientious stand if called before a draft board. Registering a stand with the World Church is one such piece of evidence of a thought-out conscientious objector position.

A young person in the USA can register a statement of conscientious objection to military service with the World Church secretary at International Headquarters. The registration form can be obtained by contacting the World Church secretary at 1001 West Walnut St., Independence, MO 64050, or emailing the Office of the First Presidency at FP@CofChrist.org.

For nations other than the USA, field leaders will work with local church members to develop appropriate procedures where there is an option to register as a conscientious objector. Conscription in some countries is not optional. Information on conscientious objection and international human rights standards and jurisprudence can be obtained from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland.

Conscientious objectors and those serving in the military will continue to have access to the full ministry of the World Church.