

What Is Peacemakers?

Peacemakers is a movement dedicated to the transformation of society through the transformation of the individuals therein. By committing ourselves to work toward living in line with our beliefs, we can each in a small though significant way begin to change the world. Although the movement is widely scattered, individuals within it try to keep in touch with one another for mutual support and occasional collective action. Our unity better enables us to search for truly nonviolent ways of living for peace.

Peacemakers are those individuals who accept and try to practice the principles of the philosophy we state in this leaflet and who consider themselves members. There is no statement to sign, no membership fee, no national office.

In April 1948 about 250 people gathered in Chicago because of their interest in a more radical personal and collective pacifism than what they had experienced. The conference worked out a program of personal and group discipline, and this program was soon named Peacemakers, a movement which continues to change while the people within it remain constant to a positive way of living for peace. This way includes:

accepting nonviolence as a guiding principle in our lives. We start with the belief that nonviolence is not only the renunciation of violence in both method and attitudes, it is a courageous acceptance of the power of active love and goodwill with which to begin our own inner transformation, the transformation of others, and, in the process, society. We believe that love is centered in truth; that if we would seek to live nonviolent lives, we would seek to adhere to truthfulness. Recognizing the unity of all human beings, we try to relate to each other lovingly and honestly, in personal dealings and in social actions. This of course includes working to eliminate the violence of sexist, hetero-sexist, racist, classist, ageist, handicapped-excluding, and all other oppressive behavior in our relationships.

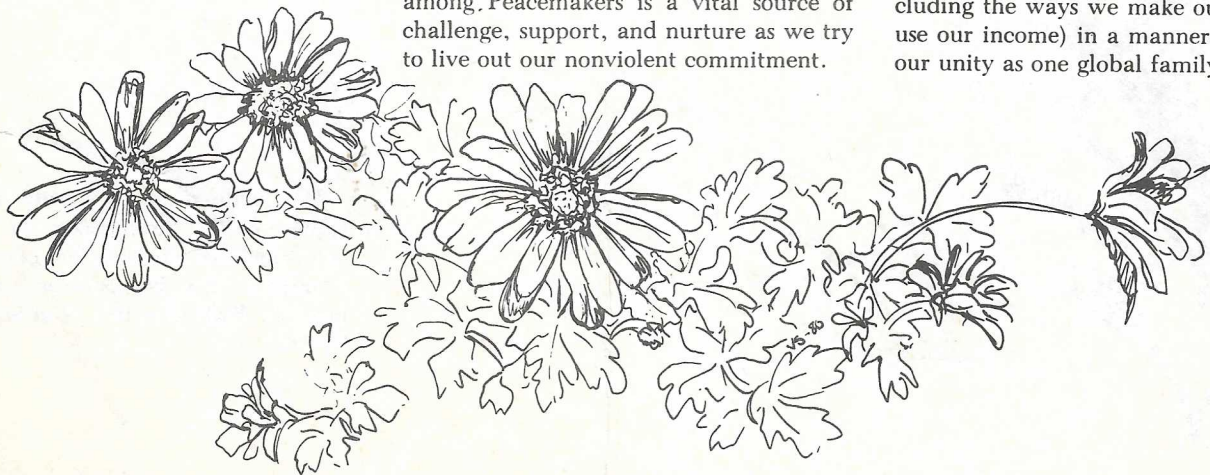
simplifying our lifestyles. We realize that whatever material goods we have and use beyond our needs take away from others; we try to have and use only those things we need. We believe that this style of living not only helps others materially but gives us joy by allowing us to live less cluttered and more peaceful lives.

forming closer knit communities. As a goal we see small units of people who know one another, working together to fulfill needs rather than depending on huge corporations for far-away goods. When we begin to grow, build, and make more of what we need for our own survival, we reduce the exploitation of some people's labor in which the profit motive plays a dominant part. Living more nearly within the bounds of our own productivity not only seems to reduce our wants but enables us to live in closer harmony with our natural environment.

believing we are a part of earth's ecosystem. We reject techniques which exploit and destroy nature and endanger the fragile ecosystem which sustains all life. Peacemakers thus recognize the interdependence of all living beings. Wherever we act on this interdependence--relating to each other lovingly and honestly, sharing goods, services and economic responsibility, living in harmony with nature--a sense of community is born. Such community among Peacemakers is a vital source of challenge, support, and nurture as we try to live out our nonviolent commitment.

using consensus. The way we relate in groups allows space for each individual's thoughts to be shared and considered. When contemplating specific action, consensus provides a decision each person can live with. This differs from a decision by vote, a process seeking agreement among only a majority in the group, while a sizeable minority may remain in strong disagreement. Although often taking longer than voting, consensus tends to evolve mature and creative decisions. It helps give each person a part in the outcome and preserves the unity of the group in carrying out a decision after it is finally made.

working for nonviolent economic and social revolution. We seek the elimination of violence, coercion, exploitation, and injustice which inevitably lead to war. Enslavement or conflict results from a social order in which presumed superiority has been institutionalized to oppress people, and from an economic order based on property monopolizing, interest collecting, rent demanding, profit making from another's work, and other exploiting of the weak by the economically strong. We feel that economic and social injustice cannot be remedied by the coercive and violent methods of government imposition. Peacemakers therefore seek the end of exploitation of one person by another, each person having an equal voice in the decisions affecting life and work. We seek to live (including the ways we make our living and use our income) in a manner that affirms our unity as one global family.



resisting governmental coercion. Believing that real service is voluntary, we advocate withdrawal of support of the government's tools for maintaining those in power, the ultimate tool being war. Conscription, whether directly for war or for some version of universal service, is one of the most blatant forms of governmental coercion. We also see military recruitment practices that exploit the economically oppressed as coercive. Peacemakers recognize the necessity not only to refuse doing military service but to dismantle the entire conscription process by noncooperation with it. This could mean refusal to register, or if registered, severing all connections with the conscription systems, and some Peacemakers have done this. We support all individuals in their attempts to deal with this issue.

Another way of non-cooperating with the system of war is to refuse to engage in work associated with it. We also attempt to withdraw our support from institutions involved in such work.

The federal income tax is the chief source of monetary support of the war system. Moreover, it is the chief link connecting each individual's daily labor with the violent and dehumanizing actions of government. Breaking this link is important as a real, personal commitment of individual responsibility. Despite the possibility of seizure of funds or prosecution, many of us withdraw totally from federal taxation to regain control of our own incomes and choose where our money goes. This means not paying taxes either directly or through the withholding system, nor turning over the taxes of workers in our employ. Ways to participate in nonpayment of federal taxes include: 1) refusing to pay income taxes legally owed; 2) living on an income low enough to be non-taxable; 3) refusing to pay excise taxes such as telephone tax.

We are also opposed to the institutionalized forms of judgment and punishment: police, courts, and jails. We support non-cooperation with these institutions as an affirmation of personal dignity, a protest against these violent responses to human problems and an attempt to speak to the humanity of officials. We believe in developing new and better ways of dealing with each other, such as community-based methods of resolving conflicts, eliminating these anti-personal institutions.

The Peacemaker movement is maintained in several ways. We receive our direction from gatherings noted in advance in the Peacemaker newsletter. At least one meeting is held each year. "The Peacemaker," our monthly newsletter, provides a means of expressing opinions about Peacemaker philosophies and reporting on Peacemakers' activities. The newsletter is available to everyone interested in the Peacemaker movement whether or not they can pay the suggested subscription rate. Contributions above this rate help finance orientation programs in nonviolence and a sharing fund. The orientation programs are one or two week sessions which provide opportunities for people attracted to nonviolence to learn more about it. They provide an experience of living in community with others interested in the same ideals. They are a time for learning about and sharing with others what it is to try to live a concerned, caring, nonviolent life. The sharing fund has helped families of imprisoned Peacemakers and others. It has assisted when difficulties arose from witness to Peacemaker principles. Currently inactive, the sharing fund could be reactivated in response to personal emergencies or renewed political repression.

We invite readers to write for sample copies of "The Peacemaker" or brochures detailing dates and locations of orientation programs. The Peacemaker mailing address is: P.O. Box 627, Garberville, CA 95440.

