

More Than a Paycheck REFUSING to PAY for WAR

October/November 2016



34 Years of Resistance

Growing the WTR Movement

By Ruth Benn and Sam Koplinka-Loehr

With this issue we welcome our new Field Organizer/Outreach Consultant, Sam Koplinka-Loehr, to NWTRCC. There are probably many readers who remember numerous discussions over the years about the need for more attention to our local organizers and personal contact and presentations to the broader social change activist communities. Way back in 2004, WTR icon and Nashville Greenlands founder Karl Meyer presented a proposal for a traveling speaker to a Coordinating Committee meeting. It didn't pass, mostly due to lack of resources; he brought a similar proposal to the November 2013 meeting. Same result, despite strong arguments that an investment in this type of position could pay for itself in time.

Well, we're finally able to give it a try. The May Coordinating Committee meeting passed a proposal for a Field Organizer, funded on a temporary basis (part-time work for a year) out of grant money from the craigslist Charitable Fund. A Hiring Committee was created at that meeting and developed a job description; advertised the position in our newsletter, on craigslist and Idealist.org; read about 30 resumes; and held interviews with six great candidates in August.

Everyone on the Hiring Committee was impressed with the high quality of the applicants and the great ideas that each of them presented. We're excited to launch this new effort, so here's an introduction to Sam. Hopefully you'll talk with him or meet him in person soon.

— Ruth Benn, NWTRCC Coordinator



Sam Koplinka-Loehr speaking at a community event. Photo by Michael Dineen.

Hello war tax resisters! It is an honor for me to join the NWTRCC team at this pivotal moment. A little bit about me. I live in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a sweet and fierce group of friends and comrades. I love to laugh, cook, play games, and be in the streets. I grew up in a family of war tax resisters and community organizers in Ithaca, New York, with my first political protests against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. At a young age, I began building a file as a conscientious objector to the U.S. war machine. I have been an activist and organizer ever since.

As a young adult, resisting war taxes has been a grounding force in my life, marking time like rings on a tree, growing stronger and larger with every passing year. My roots are relationships with loved ones as well as connections with struggles against systemic oppression here in Philadelphia and throughout the region.

I am currently involved in many direct action cam-

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International News

Cheers to our friends at Conscience in Britain whose Taxes for Peace Bill was read in Parliament on July 19, 2016. Ruth Cadbury MP sponsored the bill with 11 other MP supporters. Cadbury argued, "This Bill seeks...to stop forcing people to pay for wars that they do not morally agree with and for weapons they cannot, in all conscience or reason, endorse. Let us acknowledge the rights of individuals committed to this by extending the recognition of conscience with regard to war." Renewed organizing for the bill coincided with the anniversary of Britain's Military Service Act of 1916 that made allowance for conscientious objectors. In addition Conscience organizers noted, "It was a particularly poignant time to read the Bill as the Government have just voted to spend an estimated £205 billion of the taxpayer's money on developing a new WMD system." The bill will have a second reading on December 2. See conscienceonline.org.uk for more details. •



Bill supporters outside Parliament. Photo courtesy of Conscience.

More Than a Paycheck REFUSING to PAY for WAR

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NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as integrally linked with the militarism which we abhor. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, NWTRCC members contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.

Subscriptions are \$15 per year.

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Counseling Notes

Common IRS Collection Letters

A few recent queries to the NWTRCC office have been from resisters whose mail brought them an "Intent to Levy" letter from the IRS. Perhaps the IRS has some schedule, like "this month we send 'amount due notices'; next month 'intent to levy.'" It often seems that many people in our network get the same letters at the same time.

NWTRCC consultant Erica Weiland wrote a blog post about IRS letters from personal experience covering the series of collection notices that anyone with a federal tax debt might receive. You can read it at nwtrcc.org/media/blog (scroll down to Aug. 24, 2016). As regards the "Intent to Levy" letter, she notes that it "is the final notice before the IRS may take enforcement action, such as levying bank accounts or garnishing wages. It does not mean that a levy *will* happen."

WTR and blogger David Gross has also written on his Picket Line blog about letters ("nastygrams" as he calls them) he's received over the years. There's a link at the bottom of Erica's blog, or you can go to sniggle.net/TPL, click on "Topic Outline," and do a find on the word "nasty." That will take you to his list of posts about letters.

Robo Calls Strike Fear

Have you ever gotten this or a similar recorded call:

My batch number is 9165. The nature and the purpose of this call is regarding an enforcement action which has been executed by the US Treasury Department regarding tax fraud against your name. Ignoring this will be an intentional attempt to avoid initial appearance before the magistrate judge or exempt jury for a federal criminal offense. So before this matter goes to federal claims courthouse or before you get arrested, kindly call us back on our number as soon as possible. The number is 202-601-0657. Let me repeat the number is 202-601-0657. Hope to hear from you soon before the charges are pressed against you. Thank you.

We were very glad that one of our war tax resistance friends sent us this recording from her voicemail. It's linked on our website's "Frequently Asked Questions" page. If you are a WTR counselor and are hearing from resisters who were frightened by such a call, refer them to that page first. And if you get a similar call and can record it and send us the recording, please do. We'll add it to our webpage. By typing in a bit of the text into a search engine you will also find many stories online from all kinds of people about these scam collection calls. Do a little research before you lose sleep — but call us if it really is the IRS! •

Many Thanks

It's been a bit of a slow summer as far as donations go, but we are grateful to those of you who redirected some war taxes our way, to our friend Betty who sent us proceeds from the sale of a piece of artwork, and to those of you who make quarterly donations.

Thanks also for Affiliate dues from:

War Resisters League National Office

Please consider making a donation online to help cover the costs of sending war tax resisters to the School of the Americas Watch Border Convergence in Nogales, Arizona: nwtrcc-to-soaw.causevox.com or send a check of any size made out to NWTRCC. Thank you!

Network Updates

The Network List of Affiliates, Area Contacts, Counselors, and Alternative Funds is updated and online at nwtrcc.org, or contact the NWTRCC office (nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org or 1-800-269-7464), if you would like a printed list by mail.

*Don't forget, you can find us on
Facebook • Twitter • YouTube • Pinterest
and join our discussion listserve
Click on the icons at nwtrcc.org*

Resistance and Redirection: Our First Forty Years

A memoir by John T. Schwiebert

Published by Peace House Press, Portland, Oregon
(2015, 242 pp., \$9.95)

Reviewed by H.A. Penner

"How can we pray for peace while we are also paying for war?" Those seeking an answer to this question would benefit from reading this engaging, well-written, and well-organized memoir.

The name of the book, *Resistance and Redirection*, may have emerged from the chapter about John and Pat Schwiebert's interaction with U.S. federal taxes that support militarism and warmaking. Albeit abbreviated, that chapter outlined for me the best rationale for religious resistance to war taxes since Donald D. Kaufman's 1969 book, *What Belongs to Caesar*?

Schwiebert's explanation for resisting the payment of war taxes and the unfolding story of their actions are so intriguing that one wonders whether their experience might emerge as the right case for the right court at the right time to provide the impetus for the full enforcement of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) — the 1993 law that has already been declared to uphold the conscience of persons in their free exercise of religion.

The Schwieberts' actions certainly raise questions about how RFRA might be applied on behalf of religious believers who are tax resisters. They currently receive only half of the pension income they would have received if they had not continued to answer the call to military tax resistance. Could that provide what's necessary to litigate their case in the hope of implementing RFRA on behalf of all objectors to paying taxes that underwrite war and militarism?

Schwiebert's book also recounts lively episodes of life choices from the noteworthy "first 40 years" of marriage with his wife, Pat. In addition to resisting war taxes, the Schwieberts' experiences highlighted in this book comprise living in an intentional spiritual community in Portland, Oregon; ministering in several United Methodist church congregations, including the one they helped start; practicing several forms of nonviolent resistance; offering hospice care and bereavement services to families experiencing the death of a child; and, creating Grief Watch, a publishing company of books and materials used by families and professionals who have suffered loss.

"Seeking first the kin'dom (family) of God" as followers of Jesus, Schwieberts' faithful witness to Biblical teachings — all 16 chapters begin with a brief excerpt from the Bible — rather than conventional Christian understandings, have often put them at odds with the domi-

nant culture, established practices of the church and time-honored U.S. laws. But, as they say, "it's been fun, really fun!"

Harold A. ("H.A.") Penner, Akron, Pa., is a religious conscientious objector, a life-long war tax resister, an activist with 1040forPeace.org, and involved with NWTRCC. A longer version is posted with the newsletter at nwtrcc.org.

The Half Life of a Free Radical: Growing up Irish Catholic in Jim Crow Memphis

By Clare Hanrahan

Published by Celtic WordCraft Press,
Asheville, North Carolina (2015, 302 pp.,
\$20, celticwordcraftavl.wordpress.com)

Reviewed by Mary Loehr

Clare Hanrahan, long-time war tax resister and member of the group Fools of Conscience (Asheville) has written a fine and lyrical memoir. In *The Half Life of a Free Radical* she recounts her early life in wonderful detail. Her prose flows like a river. In Irish tradition (or perhaps all indigenous cultures), she begins by acknowledging and bringing to life her ancestors whose lives created her and live on in her.

She shows us how her parents instilled in her and her siblings respect for all — despite what other white people were doing at that time in the South. This forged her and became the stirrings of conscience.

A life of poverty, beauty, simplicity, loss, parenthood, wandering, and great joy is recounted richly in these pages. Thank you, Clare, for taking the huge amount time required to pull it all together. Hearing the stories of others who have found their way on the path of peace and justice and war tax resistance is a gift.

Mary Loehr is an activist in Ithaca, New York, and served as NWTRCC Coordinator from 1999-2003.

Paying the Price for Peace: The Story of S. Brian Willson

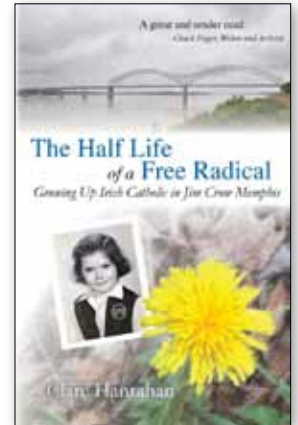
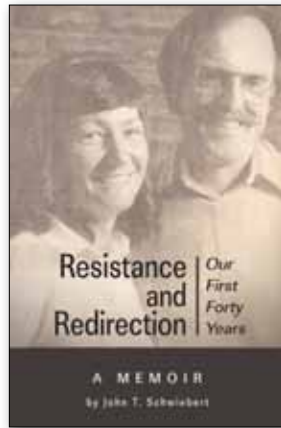
Bo Boudart Productions (DVD, 2016, 110 min., \$25;

payingthepriceforpeace.com.)

Movie review by Sarah Sunstein

This film traces Brian's life from childhood to the present. We follow him from a rural, Republican area of New York where he grew up fitting in quite well, excelling in Scouts, sports, and academics, before heading to Viet Nam where he saw firsthand the contradictions between our

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New England Gathering of War Tax Resisters and Supporters

October 14–16, 2016

Agape Community, Ware, Massachusetts

Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm:

First Congregational Church, Amherst

Saturday's program will be a "Dialog Among Resistance Movements" featuring a talk by Mandy Carter and a round table discussion about challenges and strategies we face in trying to to deepen the intersectionality of our struggles. The brochure and registration form are linked at nwtrcc.org/programs-events/gatherings-and-events/#reg. Or to register, contact: Emilie Hamilton (413) 362-5885 or emilie.hamilton@aol.com.



Joanne Sheehan, organizer for the Gathering, and Mandy Carter, who will speak on Saturday. Photo by Linda Thurston.

The People Want Justice

Activists in Cleveland, Ohio, organized a People's Justice and Peace Convention (PJPC) the weekend before the Republican National Convention (RNC), July 15 – 17. Activists from around the country attended, and the opening evening of hip hop poets, a dramatic reading, and a passionate sermon in the best form of Baptist homiletics can be watched on YouTube. The weekend revolved around drafting a People's Platform, and those attending plus international groups and small local grassroots initiatives contributed to the process. The final assembly committed that the Platform is a work in progress.

The People's Justice and Peace Convention adopted five core practices that express a commitment of a "how to live" nonviolently: Radical Amazement, Radical Hospitality, Good stewardship to create

shared abundance, A circle of compassion for every sentient being and eco-system, and, Truth, Reparations and Reconciliation. The focus is on five substantive planks: racial and social justice, political justice, environmental justice, economic justice and international justice. The planks include controversial ideas that need more dialogue, although the dialogue around racism and economic justice was transformative in building relationships and understanding.

The PJPC encourages others to use the core practices and planks as a point of departure. You can find the platform at clevelandnonviolence.org.

— Maria Smith, NWTRCC contact and Cleveland Nonviolence Network activist



Anne Barron set up the NWTRCC/war tax resistance literature table at the 31st Annual Veterans for Peace Convention in Berkeley, California. "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad; A Just and Sustainable Future for the World's Children" was the theme of the convention, which was held August 11–15.

WTRs Out and About

Anthony reports from the Seattle Anarchist Bookfair:

Yeah! It was my first time tabling for anything and it was pretty fun. I sold one pamphlet, gave away a bunch of free literature, and had a few people sign up for the email list. Had a bunch of conversations with people who were pretty interested and I directed them to all the practical info NWTRCC has online. One guy I talked to said he works on a farm and he'd asked his boss if he could get paid under the table so he wouldn't have to pay for the military. The guy who owns the farm was sympathetic but didn't want to run afoul of labor laws. Dude was pretty ecstatic when I explained W-4 resistance.

Stan explains "Why We Tabled at a Peace Church Conference":

Tax resistance tabling at a July Mennonite District Conference, a peace church, may seem like preaching to the choir. Many Mennonites already avoid taxes by heavy giving to refugee and war relief charities. Self-employed farmers have several ways to reduce unpredictable income and resist taxes. Retired people can reduce income

by giving directly to justice organizations from an IRA. Since Mennonites are just as reluctant to talk about their money as anyone else, such war tax resistance is invisible and disturbs no one.

Some Mennonites do end up being troublemakers and correspond with the IRS each year about why we are diverting taxes to people in need. Even this group may be invisible to all except curious rural post office employees and fellow church goers if they bring it up in their church groups. However, tabling at Quaker, Church of the Brethren, and Mennonite church or other justice events, is still valuable. It reminds us of the under-reported tragedies of endless Middle East wars, exposes sanitized reports of drone use, and can reveal not-known proxy wars. And we have “MINOs,” Mennonites-in-name-only, who we have to wake up at church conferences about what they are paying for. So, we keep on tabling at conferences of peace churches to remind us that, concealed by the fog of over-reported election trivia, are costly inhumane wars we are paying for in terrorist suicide bombings, PTSD, and far more terrible payments than money.

— Stan Bohn, Heartland Peace Tax Group,
North Newton, Kansas

In addition:

- Cathy Deppe and Alex Walker “had an interesting day tabling at the Westside Peace & Music Festival in Santa Monica” and collected a list of new local contacts.
- Ginny Schneider and others with the Maine WTR Resource Center tried a new community for outreach at the Cannabis Festival in Maine. “By the end of the day, all the literature was covered in a film of cannabis soot! It went well but was not the right event. It turns out that the fall event has more traffic. I need to find someone who uses cannabis because we stuck out like sore thumbs there. They let us in for free and allowed me to speak from the stage.” In other news from Maine, the group also launched a new website *mainewtr.nwtrcc.org*. Check out their site and watch their video PSA too.



Resources

A chest is a terrible thing to waste

Hooray for our friends at Alterni-Tees, *alterni-tee.com*, who celebrated their 40th anniversary this past summer with a big event in Colorado Springs. In the June 30 edition, the local *Gazette* featured an article on the occasion, “Provocative T-shirts designed by Colorado Springs peace activist intended to open minds.”

The article tells how the business got started: *Longtime peace activist Mary Lynn Sheetz started the company in 1976, after being told by military police that she couldn't hand out leaflets to protest war and militarism outside the gates of Fort Carson. That gave her the idea to use her body to get political and human rights messages across. Over the years, she's created more than 100 counter-cultural designs, initially starting on her dining room table and then branching out to a shop.*

Mary Lynn has been a great friend to NWTRCC over the years, so we'll give our resources space in this issue over to encouraging you to order a tee shirt, card or poster from Alterni-Tees. At

every war tax resistance gathering you'll find some of us in her designs, including the popular “War No More” and “Stop the War Machine.” Others include “Only You Can Prevent Truth Decay”; “Women's Work,” a feminist take on the biblical “Last Supper”; “We Found Them,” with a map pinpointing locations of WMDs on U.S. soil; “Slow is fast, Less is More – Simplify”; plus quotes from Gandhi, King, Romero, Mead, and lots more!

Most shirts are \$20 plus \$6 postage.

NWTRCC doesn't sell shirts these day, but you can find a link to Alterni-Tees on our “Store” webpage, or contact them at 806 Nichols Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO 80907, 888-822-6512.



November War Tax Resistance Gathering

"Individual Resistance and Collective Power in an Era of Endless War"

Friday, Nov. 4 – Sunday, Nov. 6, 2016

Sustainable Living Center of North Florida

Hampton, Florida, near Gainesville

Please join us for the special gathering weekend at the Sustainable Living Center, a project of the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice. Attendees will meet and talk with our new Field Organizer/Outreach Consultant, Sam Koplinka-Loehr. We'll have presentations and discussions about the militarized south and peace and justice organizing in the region; the Divest/Invest campaign; reports from the SOAW Border Convergence and the World Congress on Military and Social Spending in Berlin; and we'll be making plans for more actions in the coming year.

A flyer is enclosed with this newsletter, or see our website at nwtrcc.org/programs-events/gatherings-and-events or call the NWTRCC office for more information, 800-269-7464.



Illustration by Josh MacPhee, courtesy of justseeds.org.

Upcoming Events

Join war tax resisters or look for NWTRCC literature at these upcoming events. Please contact the NWTRCC office at (800) 269-7464, nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org, if you would like to table for NWTRCC or meet up with other resisters.

- **Shut Down School of the Americas Border Actions**, Oct. 7-10, US-Mexican Border, Nogales, Arizona, soaw.org/border. To find war tax resisters during the action call Erica, (206) 498-7735 (cell).
- **2016 Maine Peace Walk: Stop the War\$ on Mother Earth**, Oct. 11-26, (207) 443-9502, space4peace.org. •

NWTRCC Field Organizer continued from page 1

paings, including fighting police brutality, addressing environmental injustices, and supporting prisoners. I am excited to take on this new active role with NWTRCC! In particular, I am eager to support longtime resisters as well as work to build a more diverse and intersectional WTR movement in the year to come.

And what a time to be organizing! Two years ago, Black Lives Matter sparked a fierce network that has now spread internationally, highlighting police terror in cities around the globe and demanding an end to our militarized governments. As I write this, at Standing Rock Reservation, native people from hundreds of tribes along with thousands of non-native allies are putting their bodies on the line to protect the water from the proposed fracked oil Dakota Access Pipeline that would cross through sacred sites and underneath the Missouri River. On September 9, prisoners in over 20 states launched the largest prison work strike in U.S. history to demand an end to prison slavery and mass incarceration.

These movements are just a fraction of the intense and growing dissatisfaction of the American people. More and more people are aware and frustrated with the political "options" in the United States. In my mind, this means there are new and perhaps unprecedented opportunities for war tax resisters to build relationships with a growing base of people who are ready to try new tactics for change.

Are you wanting support on WTR campaigns in your local area? Or do you have ideas for organizing war tax resistance around the country? Let's connect! I am hosting a NWTRCC community conference call and webinar on Saturday, November 19 at 12 PM EST. The goal is for you to get to know me and provide your input for the coming year. Please RSVP to let me know you can make it! You can reach me by email (organizer@nwtrcc.org) or phone (607-592-7650). I am looking forward to getting to know you and to begin working together!

— Sam Koplinka-Loehr, NWTRCC Field Organizer

Remembrances

Boston-based social worker, activist, and war tax resister **Ruth Ice** died at age 87 on July 22. She was active with New England War Tax Resistance, often attending the annual New England WTR Gathering along with many other peace and justice events.

Zot Lynn Szurgot — longtime activist for many causes, war tax resister and NWTRCC friend for decades — was killed in a car crash September 7. Clare Hanrahan noted, "Zot was a fine spirit. Joyful and kind and dedicated to a just and peaceful world." Zot lived in Gainesville, Florida.

country's actions and the patriotic stories he grew up with. Radicalized, he returned to the States and has worked for peace ever since. His ideals led him to Nicaragua, to protesting weapons transport at Concord Naval Base — where he lost his legs on the tracks when a weapons train barreled over him, having been instructed to not stop for protesters. This life-threatening collision in 1987, however, didn't stop him! The film follows him at School of the Americas Watch, Veterans for Peace, travelling and speaking wide and far, inspiring the next generation of soldiers such as Camilo Mejia, Bradley/Chelsea Manning and others, and doing his best now to live sustainably without fossil fuels.

Brian shines in the movie. It clearly reveals Brian's humongous, compassionate heart, the depth of his convictions, and his need to live accordingly, regardless of the risks. Following Brian through the decades, the film also becomes an interesting chronology of the U.S.'s illegal military actions around the world since the 1960s.

What was glaringly absent, though, to us war tax resisters and those who know Brian, was any reference to Brian's war tax resistance, which he's been doing ever since he began antiwar activism. At the show I attended, we

were fortunate to have Q&A afterwards with Brian and the filmmaker. Brian was his usual authentic, loving self. When someone raised the question about WTR, Brian replied, "I wanted it in the movie! You'll have to ask the director why it wasn't included." He went on to describe making his (alleged) debt uncollectable before proceeding to resist by living simply. The producer, Bo, said there wasn't an opportunity to include it until too late in the film — which made no sense to Alice who asked the question nor to me — but a clip might be included among other "extras" in an expanded DVD.

Nonetheless, I still recommend seeing *Paying the Price for Peace*. Brian's life is simply inspiring and heart-opening.

Warning: The movie includes many scenes graphically depicting war violence in Viet Nam, police violence against demonstrators, and also the train running over Brian and his bloodied body. (I closed my eyes a lot.)

Sara Sunstein has been a phone tax resister since the Viet Nam war, a member of the WTR community since the first Gulf War. She enjoyed getting to know Brian when their Arcata sojourns overlapped and hates to mark time by which war is going on. •

A Christian Perspective continued from page 8

inability to meet these needs. I also respect the care shown for me by my supervisors, so we discussed and prayed over all of this together. It puts one in an interesting position to argue for less money.

I finally arranged for my combined compensation from the parish and diocese to not exceed the minimum taxable income level. This process was a nightmare. I am horrible at math, and paperwork overwhelms me. I contacted NWTRCC, but my situation as clergy with multiple employment positions was a bit unusual, even for them. Through the process, I often felt isolated and frustrated. I did not tell many people about my decision, because I did not want to make it out of pride. The residents of my community were impressed by my decision, but unfamiliar with this conviction. The people at my places of employment who helped me seemed to find it strange. I waited a long time to tell my parents, and they were worried.

I was, of course, asked the usual questions about all of the good things that our taxes go to, such as roads and hospitals. I was asked about how I would provide for myself or save for my future, especially if I someday had a family. My answer to the former question is that I never asked to be part of this system. I did not ask for more highways to be built, I did not ask for the government to require me to carry health insurance, and I certainly did not ask for a government to build weapons, fund the occupation of Palestine, and build military bases across the world. In regards to the latter question, Jesus promises that the Father will feed us if we follow him. Interestingly, the people I know who most faithfully live out intentional poverty are families.

It is these families to whom I turned in support. I visited Brayton and Suzanne Shanley and Dixon George at the Agape Community in Massachusetts on a personal retreat in January. They were the first people who, when I told them about my decision, looked me in the eyes and said, "we are so proud of you." I almost cried, because someone understood.

Someone else understood the conviction in my stomach that we cannot profess love of neighbor while we fund bombs that murder children. Someone else felt the agonizing tension between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar, God and Mammon, Jesus and the emperor.

The Church stands in need of conversion. We thirst for a reawakening to what it means to profess Jesus as Lord in a world that worships violence, money, and politicians. As such, the Church has much to learn from peace activists, from the environmental movement, and from those who protest racial injustice. The Church must, as Rowan Williams says, be open to the judgment of the world.

Activists also have much to learn from the Church. Because I belong to the body of Christ in the tangible form of my local parish, I am still in relationship with those who disagree with my political convictions. That helps both of us to grow. I worship and break bread with people whose lives are invested in the military, and we know that we disagree. I preach about the nonviolent kingdom of God, and people are much more willing to listen to that message because they have a relationship with me and know that I care about them. If I were to yell at them on the street, they would write that message off. At the same time, I have much to learn from those who are older and wiser than I am, even if I disagree with some of their decisions. We know that we cannot judge one another, only follow our one Judge whose rulings come from love.

As soon as we ourselves strive with all of our hearts and bodies to live nonviolently, as soon as we give away our possessions and love our neighbors, the peaceable kingdom of God is among us. Some of us here have seen it.

"Take courage, I have conquered the world." —Jesus, Matthew 16:33

If anyone has war tax resistance advice for clergy, or would like to hear more about my community or my experience, I would welcome further conversation. You can contact me at nathanbeall1@gmail.com. Thank you. •



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PROFILE

Resistance to War Tax: A Christian Perspective

By Nathan Beall

My desire to live in community and to resist war began while I was in college, studying religion and working on the campus community garden. The spiritual and intellectual seeds planted there grew during my time in seminary, after which I returned to the college and parish that I attended as an undergraduate to live and work on that same community farm in Maryland. My community and I pray together and grow food for ourselves and for the poor. After a year, I was ordained as a priest and found my way into three employment opportunities: campus minister at the college, assistant at the parish, and professor of Religious Studies. All of these represented not only promising opportunities, but various aspects of my vocation, so I accepted them. I did not, however, have any desire to enter the war machine by paying federal income taxes. Since reading the gospels more deeply, meeting the Catholic Workers, and reading about St. Francis, I had also felt a call to explore intentional poverty. I agonized over whether or not paying taxes was the right moral and spiritual choice, and whether my friends and superiors would support my decision. After much prayer and reflection I decided to inform my employers that I did not



Graphic by Ruth Corbin.

wish to receive the full salary that they were offering.

The college was the easiest with which to negotiate. I simply offered to teach for nothing. I tried to arrange diversion of my salary into a scholarship fund, but they said that I could not direct where the money went without paying taxes on it, so I simply considered it a donation to the college. I pray that it is used well. My department is incredibly supportive. They arranged to compensate me with a stack of meal tickets at the cafeteria so that I could eat with the students that I teach and serve.

The parish and diocese were a bit more complex to negotiate with because of their personal concern and investment. Even among Christians, the desire to resist war and rely on the providence of God is met with skepticism if not hostility. My supervisors repeatedly expressed their concern that I have enough to support myself, that I save for the future. Jesus does not seem to share these concerns. I did share their concern, however, for assuring fair compensation for my successors in these positions. Those who come after me may have children to support or debts to pay, and I would not want to be the cause of their

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