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Dear Central Plains Youth,

As a teenager in a Mennonite congregation, you have been taught that reconciliation and peace are central to the Gospel. What you hear from government leaders, television, teachers and peers may be quite different!

As you move toward adulthood, you will decide for yourself whether following Christ requires a commitment to non-violence. Do Christ's disciples participate in war? If not, then why not?

Eighteen is the age our government considers you eligible to participate in war. Even now, all young men must register with the Selective Service within 30 days of their 18th birthday. If you are a conscientious objector (CO), you should begin to document your beliefs now by creating a CO File.

The purpose of keeping a CO File is to document your beliefs in case the draft is reinstated. This file would be evidence that your beliefs are long-held and sincere, not just a ploy to avoid military service. Young women should also make a file, since it is likely that women would be included in a draft.

If the draft were to be reinstated, it is quite possible that conscientious objectors would have two weeks or less from the time they are drafted to document their position and apply for CO status. This is why it is so very important to begin to document your beliefs now. Sound intimidating? Actually, putting a CO File together is no more work than most projects you do for school!

You can find instructions at www.centralplainsmc.org. Click on Youth Ministry then CO Resources to find the document *How to Create a CO File*. You'll find other helpful stuff on the CO Resources page too.

I bet you are wondering how likely a reinstatement of the draft really is. A lot of people are! This question has been debated since the beginning of the war in Iraq. Some people think it's likely, others do not. The fact is that we simply do not know. Only one thing is certain: If there is a draft, conscientious objectors who have completed a CO File will be in a better position than those who have not.

Finally, please remember that there is no need to be afraid of the draft! God is faithful to walk with you and guide you in all things. Look to your parents, pastor and congregation for support and encouragement. Take courage from these words of the Apostle Paul:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. II Cor. 5:17-18 NRSV

Since God is engaged in reconciliation and is calling us to join in, we are assured of God's presence and guidance as we obey that call.

May this peace be with you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shana Peachey Boshart".

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