

# DUAL Citizen ship

**I pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ,  
and to God's kingdom for which he died—  
one Spirit-led people the world over,  
indivisible, with love and justice for all.<sup>1</sup>**

Christians living in the United States during a time of war are in a tough spot. How do we acknowledge our love for God and our gratitude for our country? Can we be both Christians and patriots? We are citizens of this land, but we also are citizens of God's kingdom. As Christians we give our primary allegiance to Jesus Christ. At the same time, we enjoy significant benefits from living in the United States. And, as Americans, we share responsibility for our nation's actions. In fact, being good citizens means that we will help hold our government accountable to the values we collectively share.

Can we be faithful to Jesus, hold our government accountable and still acknowledge gratitude for our country? As citizens of this world and of the world to come, we believe God is calling us to do just that. In response, we will:

## **Teach our congregations about our historic, faith-rooted tradition of peacemaking.**

We are disciples of Jesus who modeled the way of nonviolence for us. Jesus presents an upside-down way of encountering the world that will often leave others uncomfortable. We will train our young people to think outside the patriotic box, to understand that peacemaking is the faithful alternative, even when it is perceived as ineffective or irrelevant. We will teach the stories of Jesus in our congregations. When the winds of war blow strong, Jesus' reconciling work on the cross and teaching about peace will continue to sustain us.

## **Reinterpret the meaning of the flag.**

We will not jump on board the red, white and blue bandwagon because we recognize that God loves all people from all nations. We will affirm the values our flag can stand for including freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, the rule of law and representational government.

We will recognize our responsibility, through the taxes we pay, for the military repression our flag symbolizes to many people around the world. We will be "alternative patriots," combining our love for our country with our love for all God's children, following the example of the Hebrew prophets who witnessed to their nation and its leaders while expressing loving care and concern for the well-being of all people.

## **Maintain our humility as we share with our neighbors and speak to our national leaders.**

As people who believe in peace and who follow the Prince of Peace, we will admit that we do not have quick or easy answers for responding to world conflict. When we disagree with decisions our political leaders make, we will respond in a gracious manner. As good citizens of the United States and of God's kingdom, we will respect and pray for our country's decision-makers, even while we challenge and critique their decisions when necessary. We will engage in prayerful dialogue about Jesus' challenge to love our enemies with Christians who support our country's participation in war.

## **Listen to those who believe differently than we do.**

We will seek out ways to share with those who don't agree with us, beginning in our own congregations, and genuinely listen to their stories. We will listen to Muslims, Jews and other Christians, to peacemakers and patriots, to people in our own country and to those in other parts of the world. We will be open to learning from others, while holding firm to our conviction that Christ is the way, the truth and the life, the source of peace in our communities, our nation and our world.

## **Challenge our nation to end its reliance on violence to solve problems and call our nation to live up to its highest ideals.**

Our nation responded to the violence of September 11, 2001 with violence in kind, which resulted in even more violence and perpetuates perceptions of injustice and oppression. Jesus teaches us that retaliation on personal and national levels is not the way of the true peacemaker.

As peacemakers, we will recognize the sacrifices our neighbors and friends are making when their sons and daughters are sent to war. We will support men and women in uniform who as a matter of conscience are refusing further participation in killing and war, offer emotional and spiritual care to those who have experienced the horror and trauma of war first hand and provide accurate information and alternatives to youth facing intense pressure from military recruiters.

## **Hold our military, political and media leaders responsible for reporting the truth.**

Americans are being kept in the dark about the extent of the casualties of the war. For example, rarely do we hear that the number of Afghans and Iraqis killed in the ongoing "War on Terror" is more than fifty-fold the number of Americans killed in the September 11 tragedy. We will find alternative sources for news reports, many of which are now available online, and will discipline ourselves to move beyond partisan political commitments in articulating the Christian challenge to war and its false promises.

## **Live responsibly by reducing our consumption of the world's resources.**

We will model for our children and our communities a lifestyle that does not need defending by our military. Our standard of living that demands a disproportionate share of the world's resources increases our perceived need for a military to protect us. As Christians, we will voluntarily reduce our consumption so that our calls for justice in other parts of the world have integrity.

## Serve our brothers and sisters at home and around the world.

We will work to find contemporary moral equivalents to the sacrifices of war. We will keep our expectations high for our young people who graduate from high school or college so that they take to heart the promise they made in baptism and follow Christ in mission, voluntary service and public service involvements. As parents and church leaders, we will promote service opportunities as a responsible alternative to moving immediately into career tracks. We will model lives of service to our young people and encourage them to participate in a multi-year assignment, at home or overseas, through one of our church agencies.

We will be good citizens in a conflict-ridden world by doing what we can do best—being faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, impassioned peacemakers, and hospitable neighbors and friends to those we perceive as “the other,” whether they are our nation’s leaders, our Muslim brothers and sisters, or our strongly patriotic neighbors.

In our complex 21st century world, we will be good citizens by joyfully giving our first allegiance to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. We will live our lives in a way that is faithful to the Gospel. We will pray for grace to be a church that overcomes alienation and models reconciliation, sharing Christ’s message of peace in a violence-prone world. For as Christ’s peacemakers we believe God has called us:

**To invite others to follow Christ,  
To encourage one another to deeper commitment,  
To proclaim forgiveness of sins and hope,  
To reconcile all people to God through word and deed,  
To bear witness to the power of love over hate,  
To meet the daily tasks of life with purpose,  
To work for justice where there is oppression,  
To suffer joyfully for the cause of right,  
To the ends of the earth,  
To the end of the age  
To the praise of God’s glory.  
Amen<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> This alternative pledge of allegiance was written by J. Nelson Kraybill and June Alliman Yoder, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. 2004.

<sup>2</sup> A revised version of a section of #713 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, 1992.



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# GOOD Citizen GUIDE FOR PEACE-SEEKING CHRISTIANS ship