Church of the Brethren
Mission and Ministry Board

Resolution against Drone Warfare

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. . . .
Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

(Romans 12:14, 17-21)

The Church of the Brethren follows the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, whose willingness to die was unaccompanied by a willingness to kill. In line with our Brethren heritage, we believe “that war or any participation in war is wrong and entirely incompatible with the spirit, example and teachings of Jesus Christ,” (1918 Statement of Special Conference of the Church of the Brethren to the Churches and the Drafted Brethren) and that all “war is sin…[and that we] cannot encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad. We cannot in the event of war, accept military service or support the military machine in any capacity,” (1934 Annual Conference Resolution on Peace and Goodwill). We seek to live this belief through working for peace in our communities and opposing violence in all forms.

The Church of the Brethren has consistently opposed the use of lethal force and has encouraged measures to support the wellbeing and security of all people. We are troubled by the quickly expanding use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones. These drones are being used for surveillance and remote killing of people.

In our opposition to all types of war, the Church of the Brethren has spoken out specifically against covert warfare (1988 Annual Conference Statement on “Covert Operations and Covert War”). Drone warfare embodies the fundamental problems that covert warfare entails. The process for determining who is targeted by drones, and why, is decided by a small group of government officials who are not accountable to Congress or the American people for their actions. The names of people who are considered targets for drone warfare have been assembled on what are described as “kill lists.”

Drones are being used as weapons in many areas where the United States is not officially at war, such as Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan. In some cases, such countries have given the U.S. their blessing to use drones, but then have concealed the fact that it is the United States carrying out these strikes. Concealment of covert activities generates confusion, results in the deaths of countless targeted people and bystanders, and undermines international law and cooperation.

The Church of the Brethren has stated that peace can be achieved only by the unity of all humanity (1991 Annual Conference statement on “Peacemaking: The Calling of God’s People in History”). Drone warfare inherently disrupts the path toward this unity for which we pray and work. To act remotely shields the American people from the horror and discord of war. Though
machines carry out the final action of these missions, U.S. citizens may not excuse or disconnect themselves from the lethal consequences of these decisions.

All killing mocks the God who creates and gives life. Jesus, as the Word incarnate, came to dwell among us (John 1:14) in order to reconcile humanity to God and bring about peace and healing. In contrast, our government’s expanding use of armed drones distances the decisions to use lethal force from the communities in which these deadly strikes take place. We find the efforts of the United States to distance the act of killing from the site of violence to be in direct conflict to the witness of Christ Jesus.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Church of the Brethren and its members shall:

1. Call our districts, congregations, and individual members to study this issue in relation to our Brethren history of peacemaking and our biblical understanding of peace, so that Brethren may continue to be dynamic and prophetic peacemakers in a world riddled with violent behavior. We covenant together to care for the victims of this violence, as well as those who are not recognizing the consequences of their participation in this form of violence.

2. Encourage our institutions, congregations, and individuals to pray and work for peace, to follow denominational practices for socially responsible investing, and to support organizations that use nonviolent means to promote stability, justice, and peace across the world. ¹

3. Call upon the President and Congress to halt the use of drones in places both foreign and domestic. As followers of Jesus we are called to be a radical witness for peace, and we must reject a deadly and destructive campaign that has killed and wounded many people and created a climate of fear. Additionally, even by the government’s standards and goals, this is failing to produce stability or progress toward peace.

4. Call upon Congress to hold the President accountable for his administration’s past use of armed drones, and to control the future use of armed drones by instituting legitimate oversight of any deployment of drones by the military or the CIA. We will no longer tolerate secretive “kill lists,” and the decision-making process in the matter of armed drones must be made public so that the lethal actions of government may be properly understood and judged.

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. . . . Do to others as you would have them do to you.


1. -Messenger 1/1/1972, page 5,
   http://archive.org/stream/messenger1972121121roye#page/n13/mode/2up
- Minutes, Church of the Brethren General Board, Executive Committee
- Minutes, Church of the Brethren General Board, March 14-17, 1972, pages 4-6, V.2.) U.S. Bonds and Cash Flow Needs, and V.3) Investments
http://archive.org/stream/messenger1972121121roye#page/n263/mode/2up
- Brethren Benefit Trust, Socially Responsible Investing (screening, Department of Defense lists, Positive Investment, Shareholder Action)
http://www.brethrenbenefittrust.org/socially-responsible-investing

Action of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board
The Mission and Ministry Board at its meeting on Sunday March 10, 2013, adopted the Resolution against Drone Warfare, and forwards it to the 2013 Annual Conference for adoption.”