

# Handouts:

## National Service Organization Training Adventists & Military Service

### Adventist Statements on Military Service

1864 Adventist Leaders to Michigan Governor

“The denomination of Christians calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists, taking the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, are unanimous in their views that its teachings are contrary to the spirit and practice of war; hence they have ever been conscientiously opposed to bearing arms. If there is any portion of the Bible which we, as a people, can point to more than another as our creed, it is the law of Ten Commandments, which we regard as the supreme law, and each precept of which we take in its most obvious and literal import. The fourth of these commandments requires cessation from labor on the seventh day of the week, the sixth prohibits the taking of life, neither of which, in our view, could be observed while doing military duty. “

1865 RH March 7, 1865

#### WHY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS CANNOT ENGAGE IN WAR

1. They could not keep the Lord’s holy Sabbath. “The *seventh day* is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it *thou* shalt not do any work.” Ex 20:10. Fighting, as military men tell us, is the hardest kind of work; and the seventh day of all days would be the least regarded in the camp and field.
2. The sixth command of God’s moral law reads, “Thou shalt not kill.” To kill is to take life. The soldier by profession is a practical violator of this precept. But if we would enter into life, we must “keep the commandments.” Matt. 19:17.
3. “God hath called us to peace;” and “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 10:4. The gospel permits us to use no weapons but “the sword of the Spirit.”
4. Our kingdom is not of this world. Said Christ to Pilate, “If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight.” John 18 :36. This is most indisputable evidence that Christians have nothing to do with carnal instruments of war.
5. We are commanded to love even our enemies. “But I say unto you,” says the Saviour, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

- you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” Matt. 5:44. Do we fulfill this command when we blow out their brains with revolvers, or sever their bodies with sabers? “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Rom. 8:9.
6. Our work is the same as our Master’s, who once said, “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Luke 9:56. If God’s Spirit sends us to save men, does not *some other* spirit send us to *destroy* them? Let us know what manner of spirit we are of.
  7. The New Testament command is, “Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Matt. 5 :39. That is, we *had better* turn the other cheek than to smite them back again. Could this scripture be obeyed on the battlefield?
  8. Christ said to Peter, as he struck the high priest’s servant, “Put up again thy sword.” Matt. 26:52. If the Saviour commanded the apostle to “put up” the sword, certainly His followers have no right to take it. Then let those who are of the world *fight*, but as for us, let us *pray*.

#### 1865 General Conference Statement

##### OUR VIEWS OF WAR.

Resolved, That we acknowledge the pamphlet entitled “Extracts from the Publications of S. D. Adventists setting forth their views of the sinfulness of war,” as a truthful representation of the views held by us from the beginning of our existence as a people, relative to bearing arms.

##### OUR DUTY TO THE GOVERNMENT.

Resolved, That we recognize civil government as ordained of God, that order, justice, and quiet may be maintained in the land; and that the people of God may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. In accordance with this fact we acknowledge the justice of rendering tribute, custom, honor and reverence to the civil power, as enjoined in the New Testament. While we thus cheerfully render to Caesar the things which the Scriptures show to be his, we are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind.

#### 1917 WW1 GC Statement

“Seventh-day Adventists in the United States are law-abiding citizens, and will never refuse to obey any civil law that does not compel them to break the law of God. They have ever been noncombatants, and have truly and faithfully adhered to this practice throughout their entire history. [QUOTES 1865 STATEMENT]

“We hereby reaffirm the foregoing declaration. We petition that our religious convictions be recognized by those in authority, and that we be required to serve our country only in such capacity as will not violate our conscientious obedience to the law of God as contained in the decalogue, interpreted in the teachings of Christ, and exemplified in his life.”

1933—SDA leaders to government of Canada

“Like the Quakers, it has been the universal faith and practice of Seventh-day Adventists from their origin to aid and sustain civil government in all its legitimate functions, but they have always held conscientiously that as Christians they cannot participate in the taking of human life, although they are willing to aid and support the government in time of war in a noncombatant capacity.”

1934 General Conference Statement

“... (N)oncombatants are willing to aid their government in every consistent way in time of warfare, except by taking human life. They will help to feed and clothe the Army; assist in caring for the sick and wounded; help to bury the dead; aid in the transportation of men, food, clothing, etc. They will build the camps; go into the fields, mines, and factories, at the direction of the government. They will help to fortify positions and otherwise protect human life. They will carry the wounded back from the front. The noncombatant is not a coward; he simply and conscientiously and courageously objects to taking human life, so far as his participation is concerned.” ...

“The church does not attempt to dictate to its members individually, but each person must stand upon his own conscientious convictions.”

1954 General Conference Statement

Genuine Christianity manifests itself in good citizenship and loyalty to civil government. The breaking out of war among men in no way alters the Christian’s supreme allegiance and responsibility to God or modifies his obligation to practice his beliefs and put God first.

“This partnership with God through Jesus Christ, who came into this world not to destroy men’s lives but to save them, causes Seventh-day Adventists to take a noncombatant position, following their Divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it. In their accepting the obligation of citizenship, as well as its benefits, their loyalty to government requires them to serve the state in any noncombatant capacity, civil or military, in war or peace, in uniform or out of it, which will contribute to saving life, asking only that they may serve in those capacities which do not violate their conscientious convictions.”

## 1972 General Conference Annual Council Statement

“Genuine Christianity manifests itself in good citizenship and loyalty to civil government. The breaking out of war among men, however, in no way alters the Christian’s supreme allegiance and responsibility to God or modifies his obligation to practice his beliefs and put God first.

“This partnership with God through Jesus Christ who came into this world not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them, causes Seventh-day Adventists to advocate a noncombatant position, following their divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it. As they accept the obligation of citizenship as well as its benefits, their loyalty to government requires them willingly to serve the state in any noncombatant capacity, civil or military, in war or peace, in uniform or out of it, which will contribute to saving life, asking only that they may serve in those capacities which do not violate their conscientious convictions.

“This statement is not a rigid position binding church members but gives guidance leaving the individual member free to assess the situation for himself.”

## Resources

1. Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, North American Division.  
<https://nadadventistchaplains.org/>
2. “Reality.” Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. <https://tinyurl.com/ACM-Reality>
3. *For God and Country*. Magazine. Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.  
<https://www.adventistchaplains.org/index.php/media/for-god-and-country/>
4. Gary R. Councell, *Seventh-day Adventists and Military Related Service*.  
[https://www.adventistchaplains.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SDA\\_Military\\_Service\\_BKLT\\_Web.pdf](https://www.adventistchaplains.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SDA_Military_Service_BKLT_Web.pdf)

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# Ten Points to Consider Before You Sign a Military Enlistment Agreement

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1

## **Do not make a quick decision by enlisting the first time you see a recruiter or when you are upset.**

A recruiter is a salesperson who will give only a positive, one-sided picture of life in the military. Don't make this important decision when you are depressed, hard up for work, confused, unsure about your future, or pressured by your family. This decision affects many years of your life; don't make it lightly.

2

## **Take a witness with you when you speak with a recruiter.**

There is a lot of information to take in. A friend can take notes and help you ask questions.

3

## **Talk to veterans.**

Veterans can give you their view of military life, good and bad.

4

## **Consider your moral feelings about going to war.**

The mission of the military is to prepare for and wage war. Are you willing to kill another person if ordered to do so? Would you be willing to fight in any war, no matter what the reason? If you would have trouble engaging in war or in killing, you should not consider enlisting. If you become opposed to war after you join, you may try to get a discharge, but it is a long, difficult, and uncertain process.

5

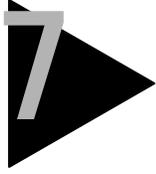
## **Get a copy of the enlistment agreement.**

Read the fine print carefully, especially the part about what the military can order you to do. You have a right to take it home, look it over, and ask others about it.

6

## **There is no "period of adjustment" during which you may request and receive an immediate honorable discharge.**

Once you have left for basic training, you must fulfill the entire number of years (usually eight, with some of these in the Reserves) on your enlistment contract. You cannot leave of your own free will. In contrast, however, the military may decide you are "unsuitable" and discharge you without your consent.



## Get all your recruiter's promises in writing,

but also remember that the military can change the terms—such as pay, job, or benefits—of your work. Though there are no guarantees, a written statement may offer you (as a service member) some protection if promises are not met. However, the enlistment agreement is more binding on you than on the military. You are ultimately responsible for information on the form, so don't tell lies, even if pressured.

## There are no job guarantees in the military.

The military is not required to keep you on a full-time or permanent basis in the job you trained for. In fact, most recruiters were assigned to recruiting jobs against their will. The kind of job you get depends mostly on what jobs the military needs to fill. Most military jobs are in areas that account for only a small percentage of civilian jobs.



## Military personnel may not exercise all of the civil liberties enjoyed by civilians.



You will not have the same constitutional rights. Your rights to free speech, assembly, petition, and exercise of individual expression, such as clothing or hairstyle, will be restricted. You will be required to follow all orders given to you, whether you agree with them and consider them right or fair.

## Many other opportunities exist for you to serve your community and enhance your skills.

Before you decide to enlist, check out other options that would help you "be all you can be." Travel, education, money for school, job training, and adventure can all be found in other ways. Your local community may even have opportunities that you haven't considered.



## Learn more

To learn more about these issues, check out our web site. It offers up-to-date information about military recruitment, what it is like inside the military, and alternatives to the military.

[www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm)



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National Youth and Militarism Program  
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# Ministry with Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families

## 1. Critical Times

- a. Considering military service
- b. Signing up
- c. Initial entry training
- d. Stationed away from home
- e. Overseas deployment

## 2. Pastoral Issues

- a. Relationships
- b. Isolation from other Adventists
- c. Religious accommodation (Sabbath)
- d. Post-deployment reintegration
- e. Wounds of war (including Moral Injury, Physical Injury, PTSD)

## 3. Understand Your Area

- a. Church members
- b. Military units (Guard/Reserve) or bases nearby
- c. Any Adventist chaplains who can assist? (Contact ACM)

## 4. Ideas

- a. Educate youth and young adults on Adventist position
- b. Accompany them when considering military service
- c. Recognize them when they go to training, or are deployed
- d. Care for family members of those deployed
- e. Retreats for service members, veterans, families
- f. Veterans Day and Memorial Day (know the difference!) – Church and community

## 5. Pastors: Consider chaplaincy!

- a. <http://nadadventistchaplains.org>
- b. M.Div., current license or credentials, two years pastoral experience, meet age requirements (varies by branch and component). Be able to work in a pluralistic environment. Meet physical fitness requirements.