

MC USA publishes 'defund the police' curriculum

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [May 19, 2021](#) issue



Cover art for the free police abolition curriculum published by Mennonite Church USA. (Screengrab)

Mennonite Church USA, the largest Mennonite denomination in the United States, has published a free, nine-week study program aimed at helping people think creatively about what it means to defund the police.

Defund the Police? An Abolition Curriculum, which was developed by a team of abolition experts and Anabaptist thought leaders, is meant to help Christians not only frame the idea of police abolition within a biblical context but also think about practical alternatives to policing—things like raising the minimum wage and decriminalizing drug use.

“Police abolition is a process that requires communities to create alternatives to policing,” said Glen Guyton, MC USA’s executive director, in a press release—noting that this aspect of police abolition is often misunderstood.

“We hope this curriculum will educate, inform and transform our thinking concerning justice, mass incarceration and how we live in harmony as a society,” he continued.

According to the most recent Pew Research Center polling on the issue, 73 percent of Americans say they are in favor of keeping spending on policing at the current level, while 25 percent support cutting police funding either a lot or a little.

And yet, Americans are increasingly likely to say that they don't think the police do a good job of protecting people from crime or using the correct amount of force in a given situation.

In response to rising concerns over police brutality, more than 20 US cities—including Seattle, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles—cut police funding over the last year and outsourced some services formerly performed by the police. In Austin, for example, where the city council voted unanimously last summer to cut the police budget by about \$100 million, much of that money is being reallocated to services like reentry programs for people who were formerly incarcerated, a new civil rights office, and mental health first responders.

Melissa Florer-Bixler, pastor of Raleigh Mennonite Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, and one of the MC USA curriculum's authors, said in a statement that she understands that the idea of police abolition might be initially off-putting to some Christians. But that's an opportunity to grow.

"Our imaginations are so shaped by policing that it is almost impossible to imagine other ways to keep us safe," she said. "It will be uncomfortable until you get into what that really means."

The curriculum includes a facilitator's guide so that, in addition to individual use, the curriculum can be used in Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and small groups.