

1) Meet the Brethren

Conscientious objection is a personal decision, based on religious belief and moral principle. In the end it is more concerned with faithfulness than effectiveness. But often our efforts to be faithful to the gospel are also effective in spreading Jesus' message of peace and grace to the world. Get to know Brethren who have been faithful *and* effective. (Read *The Brethren Encyclopedia* for more detail.)



- During World War II, the United States government bent the US Constitution by rounding up American citizens of Japanese descent, believing they were a threat to national security, and put them in internment camps. **Ralph and Mary Smeltzer** of the Church of the Brethren worked to free some of these American families. Ralph also served as a mediator in the Selma, Alabama, civil rights crisis.
- **M. R. Zigler**, working with government and church officials helped establish Civilian Public Service, an alternative to war for conscientious objectors. He supervised many Brethren volunteers after World War II in the work of rebuilding Europe and caring for war refugees. He also established an organization called On Earth Peace, which teaches peace to youth and adults.
- **Harold Row** was the Brethren director of Civilian Public Service during World War II. Later, President Kennedy's administration sought input from Harold Row when they began designing Peace Corps. He also helped start Church World Service, Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP), and the International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE).
- **Anna Mow** was one of the first women ordained in the Church of the Brethren. She was a teacher and a missionary in India, often working with Muslims. Once, she crossed paths with General Hershey in a train station. At that time, General Hershey was in charge of Selective Service. Anna Mow told him that she would pray for him. Her gentle approach to someone with whom she differed so widely had a big impact on Hershey.
- **Dan West** was a farmer, teacher, and youth advisor at Brethren church camps in the 1920s where he taught youth about peace. In 1937, West went to Spain to assist with a relief program after the Spanish Civil War. Touched by the suffering of Spanish children who had little food and no milk, West later developed what came to be known as Heifer Project (now Heifer International).
- **John Kline** lived in Virginia and was a leader among the Brethren in the 1800s. He served as moderator of the annual meeting four times, even crossing into the North three times during the Civil War to lead the meetings. Opposed to military service and slavery, Kline was often suspected by Southern authorities of being a spy for the North. He was ambushed and killed in 1864.



TAKE HOME

- All his life **Art Gish** was committed to living peacefully and simply, in the footsteps of Jesus. He was a farmer, a writer, and a religious peace activist. In 1972 he wrote a book called *Beyond the Rat Race*; it was a book about nonconformity to the fallen world. And once he stared down the barrel of a tank in Israel in a protest against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

2) Journal ideas

- Look at Annual Conference statements on war and peace. Many start out with a list of "whereas" statements. These are lists of reasons that prompted the Brethren to make a statement about peace. Make your own list of "whereas" statements in your journal.
- Read a book or watch a movie about war or peace and write a review.
- Read portions of *On Killing* by David Grossman. Reflect on the ways in which you have or have not become accustomed to seeing violence in films, on television, and in the newspaper. Write about Grossman's claim that we have to be taught to kill and to be violent.



3) Read

Alone or with a friend, make a commitment to read the newspaper or online news every day for a week. Talk about the news of war and peace around the world. Keep a tally of the political or civic leaders who are talking about alternatives to war, such as sending in diplomats and negotiators; addressing underlying causes of violence, such as poverty; and applying pressure on governments by using boycotts and embargoes. Once the week is over, keep reading!

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For the next session, bring:

- copies of any military recruitment advertising that you have received
- items on the CO Checklist