

## I. Intro.: OK ... It's Memorial Day weekend!



**A. How many of you have ever attended a Mennonite church that makes a big deal every year of observing Memorial Day? (I don't know of any ...)**

**B. This annual national holiday pays tribute to military veterans who died in battle.**

1. Other than giving most people an extra day off work, this holiday sometimes feels awkward for the historic peace churches, such as Mennonites

2. When we Mennonites don't know what to say about Memorial Day, we often say nothing at all in church

a) But ignoring this holiday is hard to do these days ... Most of society is vocal and visible in bringing the “ultimate sacrifice” of the fallen veterans to our attention

b) This is a weekend across our country when military service and war are often glorified ... and if not glorified, then certainly they are justified

c) My message today is not so much an anti-military message as it is a way to highlight people who have directly and nonviolently followed Jesus the prince of peace

**C. Before going further, let me clarify that my aim is not to denigrate veterans who died in military service**

1. Although military service does not align with Anabaptist Christian beliefs, I recognize that those veterans did make an extraordinary sacrifice for something most of them strongly believed in.

2. They were willing to commit even life and limb, in service of a greater cause. By comparison, this makes the commitments of many of us from “peace churches” seem downright flimsy!

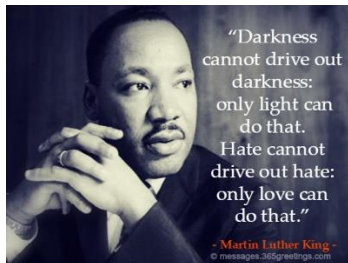


**D. Nevertheless, there is a danger that on a weekend like this, our children & grandchildren observing the messages on big screens and social media may conclude that the only real heroes are those willing to use violence.**

## **II. But fallen military veterans are not the only ones worth honoring for their sacrifice**

**A. When there are already so many voices all around praising military heroes, we in the peace churches do not need to add our voices to that anthology**

1. In the name of Jesus who refused the sword when he could have fought back ...
2. In the name of Jesus who instructed his disciples not to take up the sword when they were threatened ...
3. With as much respect and humility as I can toward those who have served in the armed forces, ... I declare today that there are many other heroes worth naming, besides the ones who took up the sword, the M16 and the F-16



**B. This morning I will highlight just a few “foot soldiers of Jesus” ... people who resisted evil in the pattern of their Lord Jesus, by refusing to use earthly weapons.**

1. Where do I start with such a remembrance day?
  - a) You already heard of the experiences of Elmer and Eldon, although for a fair comparison on Memorial Day, these 2 did come back alive from their service!
  - b) It would be easy to remind us today of some of the “big names” familiar to us among the Pantheon of Martyred Nonviolent Heroes:
  - c) There was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr 50 years ago ... and M.J. Sharp only last year
2. Instead, I want to briefly tell the stories of three less well-known heroes from the past 75 years ... people like:
  - a) Andre du Croix, a Dutch Mennonite pastor in the 1930’s and 40’s



Andre Du Croix pastored at two different Mennonite churches in the Netherlands from 1936 to 1945. When his country was occupied by the Nazi Germans, he opposed the German influence and control, instructing his congregation to trust in the Spirit of Christ and remain spiritually resilient. To those in need, he provided ration cards and secret addresses for those needing to be hidden. Along with others, he founded a secret organization to prevent or delay Dutch people from taking revenge on Germans when the time would come for them to return to their home country after the war.

In May of 1944, just after serving the Lord’s Supper and baptism, Du Croix was arrested because of his illegal resistance work. He was then shuffled around to various prisons and concentration camps in the Netherlands and Germany. His strong faith, courage and charity made him a support and an encouragement to many other prisoners. In March of 1945, he died from typhus in the unhygienic conditions of the notorious Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, the place where diarist Ann Frank also died.

[adapted from [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Croix,\\_Andr%C3%A9\\_du\\_\(1910-1945\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Croix,_Andr%C3%A9_du_(1910-1945)) , accessed May 24, 2018;  
And from <http://www.nazatendevries.nl/Artikelen%20en%20Colums/Kerken/Beerta/Overige%20kerken%20in%20Beerta.html>  
accessed May 25, 2018]

b) I want you to hear about people like Yona Kanamuzeyi, of Rwanda  
(for whom no picture is available – blank PPT)

Yona Kanamuzeyi was a Rwandan pastor in the early 1960’s who felt a call to go to another part of the country to work with refugees from the fighting between the Tutsi and Hutu tribes. There were some Tutsi refugees who were using terrorist tactics, hoping to overthrow the government of Rwanda. So by 1963 any Tutsi, such as Yona, could be suspected of being sympathizers with these insurgents. Yona continued his work with Christian refugees despite the dangers from the army and the curfew they set.

About 7:30 one evening in January 1964, a jeep stopped in front of Yona’s house. Six soldiers came in, surrounded him and said, “We want to question you.” Yona and his wife Mary knew that when the soldiers took someone at night, they were never seen again. As he left, Yona’s eight-year-old son Wesley said, “You’ll hurry back, won’t you, Papa?” And Yona said, “Yes, I’ll hurry.”

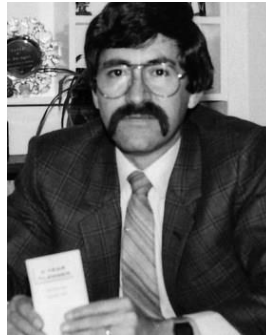
Two other prisoners were taken along in the Jeep and driven to a bridge over a river. The soldiers made the prisoners get out and put all their possessions in a pile. Before he laid down his journal, Yona wrote in it, “We’re going to heaven.” Yona prayed aloud, “Lord, you know I haven’t done anything against the government. I pray that you will help these people who don’t know what they’re doing.” As the hands of the 3 prisoners were tied behind their backs, they sang a

Christian song together.

Yona was led away first, singing a hymn as he went, and leaving the other two behind. The soldiers took Yona to the bridge, shot him and threw his body into the river. The stunned soldiers hardly knew what to do next. They had never seen anyone die singing. They released the other two men and threatened them to tell no one. One of them later shared this testimony of Yona’s last moments.

(condensed from Marian Hostetler, *They Loved Their Enemies*, ©1988 Herald Press, p. 75-78)

c) As we remember non-violent heroes of the faith, let us also bear witness to *Jose Chuquín*, of Colombia



Jose Chuquin came to faith as a student at a Mennonite school at Cachipay, Colombia. As an adult, that faith became his vocation, serving 11 years as director of the relief agency World Vision’s operations in Colombia. His responsibilities also extended to holding leadership positions in the Colombian Mennonite Church, including president.

Twenty-six years ago this month, it all cost him his life. Christian service defined Chuquin’s life and witness. The biblical directives to love God, love neighbor and make disciples of all nations propelled him to address his country’s poverty and injustice. As World Vision’s Colombia director, he oversaw some 700 staff and volunteers.

In May 1991, Chuquin was in neighboring Peru, assisting that country’s World Vision staff amid growing social and political instability, including a brutal guerrilla war led by the Maoist rebel group Shining Path. On May 17, Chuquin and Norman Tattersall, a Canadian in charge of World Vision’s Peru program, plus their driver, were traveling through the capital city of Lima on their way to the organization’s office. When they arrived, two gunmen — unidentified but presumed to be Shining Path members — blasted the vehicle with automatic weapons.

The driver somehow escaped injury. But Tattersall was killed instantly. Chuquin was rushed to a local hospital, then flown to Norfolk, Va., where he underwent seven hours of surgery. He died May 28, the day after Memorial Day, 1991. He was 45 years old, and his survivors included his wife and five children.

(adapted from <http://mennoworld.org/2016/05/23/columns/memorial-day-for-a-martyr/> accessed May 25, 2018)

### III. Conclusion

## A. Today in this sanctuary we worship God.

1. Today we give our allegiance to One who made the ultimate sacrifice for the whole world, in the most supreme battle ever fought ... the spiritual victory of Jesus that made life eternal possible for us



2. But the allegiance we declare today when we say “Jesus is Lord” ... that still needs to be practiced when we go out tomorrow, on a day when our nation asks us to pledge allegiance to itself ...
3. Tomorrow will be a day of silent mourning and reflection for me ... but not for the same reasons as most Americans
  - a) Tomorrow I as an Anabaptist Christian will mourn the incredible toll of so many military deaths over the years ... that’s a lot of deaths no matter how they died!
  - b) But it’s also a day for me to lament the millions of American lives sacrificed in the name of nationalism ... in the name of freedom ...
  - c) in the name of any other idol that wants to replace Yahweh as supreme Lord of our lives

## B. Tomorrow as you barbecue, or get together with family, or just enjoy the beginning of summer ...

1. I hope you will be respectful toward the memory of those who died as soldiers and sailors for their country, even if you don’t agree with that choice of military service ...
2. And then I hope you’ll also take a moment to remember others who made “the ultimate sacrifice” and yet never lifted a weapon.
3. I invite you to thank God for the witness of all those “foot soldiers of Jesus” who lived and died according to the example of our Lord Jesus, repaying evil with blessings

**C. The world is a better and nobler place because of the legacies of saints with names like Du Croix ... Kanamuzeyi ... and Chuquín – may their memory inspire you, even as the Spirit of Jesus empowers you!**