

PAX SERVICE

AN ALTERNATIVE TO WAR

Discussion Guide



INTRODUCTION

The 1-W program established by the U.S. government in 1951 allowed drafted conscientious objectors (COs) to work in approved government and private agencies. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers in Europe, observing the still-wretched conditions of WWII refugees, realized that the 1-W program could provide the needed manpower to work at solutions. The resulting Pax program began in April, 1951. It soon was recognized by the U.S. Selective Service as an alternative service.

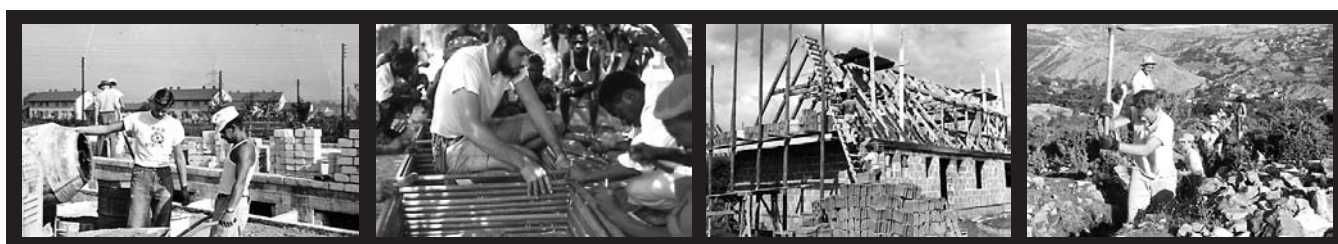
Although Pax began in Germany, volunteers eventually served in 40 countries. Their work included community and agricultural development, and refugee feeding and settlement. By the time the program ended in 1975 nearly 1200 young men had served two years of their lives in overseas assignments, as an alternative to the destruction of war. This DVD features Pax work in Germany, Austria, Greece, Paraguay and the Congo.

PREPARATION

If your group is not familiar with Pax, conscientious objection or the history of the CO position, you may wish to go to www.thirdway.com/peace and click on "Conscientious Objection." Consider printing this page and making copies for your group. If you don't have web or printer access, call 800-999-3534 and request a copy via mail or email.

The PAX SERVICE program segment is 43-minutes long. The DVD includes additional content. You may choose to show the program in its entirety and then discuss, or show it in chapters during several sessions. Always preview the sections you plan to use before showing. Use the guide for discussion with small groups, religious education classes, workshops or conferences. Choose the questions that work best for your group.

A special Discussion Section for Youth is included. We recommend using the Adult Discussion questions that seem most appropriate for a youth group along with the specific Youth Discussion questions.



DOCUMENTARY DISCUSSION - ADULTS

General Discussion

1. Rolando Santiago, director of Mennonite Central Committee, said, "Giving ourselves and receiving are both part of service. As you give you receive." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What are some examples where you have given, but in return received even more?
2. Why do you think the Pax men say they aren't sure they accomplished much when they look back at their experiences? Why did they feel like they received more than they gave?
3. Why do you think Pax men called their time of service a "foundational experience" in their lives? Their service had a profound impact on the way they lived out their lives. Are people today changed by their service experiences in ways similar to the Pax volunteers? Give examples.
4. The Pax experience in Paraguay opened the minds of the men to another culture. How did their world view change? Even if we aren't able to live or travel in other countries, how can we expand our world view? Why is it important to do so?
5. James Juhnke said he feels it is important for nonresistant followers of Jesus to do equivalent service to what people were being asked to do in the military. What do you think? Is it important for young men and women today who do not face a draft to formulate their thoughts about participating in war? Why or why not?
6. What does it mean to be a peacemaker? Would you describe the work the Pax men did as "peacemaking" work? What is the connection between peacemaking and service?
7. Do you think the young men approached their Pax service more as adventure or service?
8. Do you agree that service is at the core of Jesus' ministry? What does that mean for your life? In what ways are you serving?
9. How have technology and geo-political events changed the way service is done, and the kind of service programs that are possible today?

10. Is the Pax approach to service still appropriate today? Are you aware of other approaches that might work as well or better?
11. What does the Pax experience teach us about relating outside of our own groups here in North America?

Chapter 1 - Europe

1. What led Cal Redekop to see a need such as the refugee housing problem and find ways to respond to it? Who are the people in your community who are able to see the needs and work to find solutions? Who are the people in your church who have done this in the past, either in your home community or in other places in the world?
2. Why do you think the Pax "boys" were willing to give \$75 a month and two years of their lives to travel to a foreign country to do an unknown job?
3. Albert Keim said it was "our American assumption that we could do it better than the Germans." While this may seem like an arrogant statement, how was it helpful in this setting?
4. Pax men described their work as back-breaking, overwhelming, exhausting and lonely. Yet, they were also able to find moments of fun and joy in their work. How do you think this was possible? What can we learn from their experience?

Chapter 2 - Greece

1. The Pax volunteers went to build houses, but ended up creating food sources, teaching food preservation and developing friendships. Why was it important for them to be flexible and creative in the work that they did? What are some other examples of their creativity? How were the friendships beneficial for everyone?
2. How does living in a foreign culture change you? Why do you see things differently?
3. Why is an open mind important when visiting another country?
4. One Greek woman said that seeing the way the Pax men lived, even though they were of another religion, made an impact on her life. How does the way we live affect what others think about our religion?

Chapter 3 – Paraguay

1. Even though Pax was an alternative program to the U.S. military service, in Paraguay the Pax men worked with American military equipment and Paraguayan soldiers. What does this tell us about the interaction that can happen between government and individuals who have differing views?
2. Why did the Trans-Chaco road make such a big impact on the lives of the people living in the Chaco?

Chapter 4 – Congo

1. Why was it important for Ron Goertzen to recognize that the Pax experience for him wouldn't change Africa but it would significantly change him?
2. Why do you think the Pax men didn't want to be known as "missionaries," and why were they seen as such anyway? Was this a positive or negative and why?

DOCUMENTARY DISCUSSION – YOUTH

Here are several more suggestions to further discussion with youth in the areas of conscientious objection and service.

Conscientious Objection

1. What does it mean to be a conscientious objector? If this is a new subject for your group, the following websites will provide additional background information:
 - a. Third Way Café's Peace Blend: www.thirdway.com/peace
 - b. What is a CO?: peace.mennolink.org/youth/codefinition.html
 - c. Voices of veterans committed to peace: www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet
 - d. The Registry for Conscientious Objection www.peaceabbey.org/confcenter/coregistry.thm
 - e. Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors www.objector.org/

If you have several sessions to discuss this, you may want to assign reading of these sites as well as other information available on the web. Ask youth to bring a short report of what they learned.

2. Invite someone from your congregation who did Pax, CPS, or another 1-W service to tell their story.
3. Do you know of anyone in your community who was in military service and then decided they could no longer participate? If so, invite them to speak. If not, read the story of Dan Seifert at <http://www.thirdway.com/peace/?Page=3413|I+Couldn%27t+Carry+A+Weapon>.

Or download a video clip “Price of Conscience” in which Tim Coil and his wife tell the story of how Tim came to be a conscientious objector. A free discussion guide is available with this download. See <http://store.mennomedia.org/p-262-price-of-conscience.aspx> to order. This story is also available on the Peace DVD (see Related DVDs on the back cover).

4. Do you think it’s important for followers of Jesus to do service if they cannot in good conscience participate in the military? Why or why not?
5. Do you think it is important to know what you think about participating in war even when there is no draft? Why or why not?
6. Christian Peacemaker Registration Forms and suggestions on how to use these are available from www.mcc.org/us/co/form/. You may wish to work with your youth group to prepare their statements of beliefs about war and file them with your church office. Based on U.S. Selective Service Form 150. Also available in Spanish.

Service

1. Why do you think the Pax men were willing to go to unknown places, where the conditions were so difficult? Do you think they would have gone if they would have known what the conditions were like? Would you have volunteered to go into Pax, knowing what you know now about their work?
2. The Pax men said their experience impacted their lives profoundly. What experiences have you had serving others that have affected your life?
3. For service opportunities available to youth, visit:
 - a. www.mennonitemission.net/Work/Service/programchart.asp — Mennonite Mission Network service opportunities.
 - b. www.brethren.org/genbd/bvs — Brethren Voluntary Service
 - c. www.mcc.org/serve/ — Mennonite Central Committee service opportunities

BONUS CONTENT

Bonus material on DVD includes an extended version of the broadcast program, a Pax Reunion Tour to Europe, A Day in Pax slide show, and more.

Related books Available at mennolink.org/books

The PAX Story: Service in the Name of Christ, 1951-1976, by Calvin Redekop

The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service, by Albert Keim

Related DVDs Available from store.mennomedia.org

PEACE DVD — This two-hour DVD with 24 stories imagines what the world would be like if every person tried to make it a more peaceful place. Many of these stories include service experiences and choices about food, work, and actions young people are making to live their lives as peacemakers. Can be used in six-session study series or as individual inspirational stories. See also www.peaceDVD.com.

CLOUD OF WITNESSES DVD — While the *PAX SERVICE DVD* focuses on Anabaptists working and serving in Germany, Austria, Greece, Paraguay and Africa in the mid-1900s, Anabaptists around the world continue to impact their communities. The *Cloud of Witnesses DVD* invites viewers into thriving Anabaptist communities in England, Ghana, Benin, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Bolivia and Brazil. The DVD includes dramatic interpretations of several *Martyr's Mirror* stories.

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Mennonite Media
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1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg VA 22802-2434
800-999-3534 or 540-434-6701
mm@mennomedia.org | www.mennomedia.org

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Vision Video
P. O. Box 540
Worcester, PA 19490
610-584-3500
1-800-523-0226
Fax: 610-584-6643
E-Mail: info@visionvideo.com
Web: www.visionvideo.com