We honor the faithful witness of those who died for Christ and whose testimonies inspire us to run our race with endurance (Heb. 12:1–2).

**Werner, Jean-Pierre and Rodé Groenewald (Nov. 29, 2014)**

The decision to move to Afghanistan in 2003 was not an easy one for Werner and Hannelie Groenewald. They discussed the possibility of dying in the war-torn country and, as loving parents, worried about how they would educate their son, Jean-Pierre, and daughter, Rodé. But they knew that obedience to Christ mattered more than their fears.

On Nov. 29, 2014, Hannelie was working her shift at a medical clinic. Jean-Pierre spent the day in his room listening to music, playing the guitar and chatting with friends online, while Rodé spent time crocheting, working on her computer and playing video games. Werner went to his office in their apartment complex to prepare for leadership-training classes he was teaching that day.

At about 3:30 in the afternoon, three Islamists broke into their compound and shot to death Werner, Jean-Pierre and Rodé. After a two-hour standoff with police, one of the attackers detonated a bomb inside the building, killing himself and others, while the other two attackers were killed in an ensuing skirmish.

The Groenewald family knew the potential cost of following God’s call to Afghanistan. “We had a clear calling,” Hannelie said. “We had a mandate with this; we counted the cost. We knew that something like this could happen. God allowed that for a reason.”

**Inspired by those who came before us.**
Paul (A.D. 69)
After Paul's confrontation with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), all the fiery intensity of his former life as a persecutor was refocused on his efforts to tell others about Christ. Paul pioneered evangelistic practices and planted several dozen churches. According to tradition, he was beheaded in about A.D. 69 on the Ostian Way just outside the gates of Rome. He fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
—Revelation 2:10

The Nagasaki Martyrs (1597)
Jesuit missionaries arrived in Japan in 1549, planting the seeds of what soon became a small church. But when the Japanese government grew suspicious of foreign influence, all priests were ordered to leave the country; 26 Christian men, including seven foreigners, were subsequently arrested. Following a month-long winter march, the men were crucified on Nishizaka Hill, praying and singing before being hung on crosses. Over the next two centuries, Christians in Japan continued to meet secretly before finally making contact with French priests who were allowed into Japan in the 1850s.

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