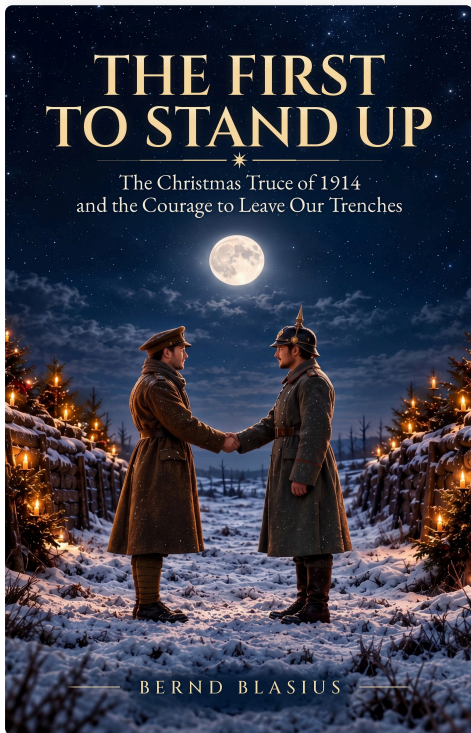


THE FIRST TO STAND UP

The Christmas Truce of 1914 and the Courage to Leave Our Trenches

BERND BLASIUS

Narrative non-fiction · published October 2026 · As of 29 October 2026



FOR EDITORS

This press kit comes without a publisher and without a press office. I wrote the book and am publishing it myself, and I would rather say so straight away than pretend to have machinery that does not exist.

So the kit is built to work without me. Everything you need to know about the book is here, every quotation is taken word for word from the book, and the obvious questions are answered in writing.

Bernd Blasius

Review copy: as an e-book or in print, on request from presse@humane-weltformel.de

Interviews: in writing. Seven authorised answers are included in this kit and may be quoted with attribution.

Free to use: all texts and quotations in this kit, the press release, the cover and the author photograph, and extracts from the book of up to 1,500 characters with title and author.

Contact: presse@humane-weltformel.de. Correspondence is handled with the help of an AI; anything sent out in my name, I approve myself.

At Christmas 1914, soldiers on the Western Front climbed out of their trenches unarmed, sang with the enemy and buried their dead together. Bernd Blasius tells the story of that night through the letters of the men who were there, sets it beside the tense silence of the Christmases of his childhood, and asks what it takes for one person to be the first to stand up.

AT A GLANCE

Title	The First to Stand Up
Subtitle	The Christmas Truce of 1914 and the Courage to Leave Our Trenches
Author	Bernd Blasius
Genre	Narrative non-fiction
Published	October 2026, independently, by the author
Editions	Paperback £9.99 / \$14.99 · Hardback £16.99 / \$22.99 · Kindle £5.99 / \$7.99
Available from	Amazon in the UK, the US and other countries
Length	about 200 pages
Inside	seven letters from the front and from home, in full · a map of the front at Christmas 1914 · three illustrations · a timeline · the people in this book · places you can visit today · 'Silent Night' with all six verses · helplines for anyone who finds the festive season hard · sources for every chapter
Also published	in German as <i>Wer zuerst aufsteht</i> and in French as <i>Le Premier à se lever</i>
Online	humane-world-formula.com/the-first-to-stand-up

HOW THE BOOK IS BUILT

- **Part I · The Night** (Chapters 1 to 5): how the Christmas Truce came about, and what happened that night and the morning after
- **Part II · The Order** (Chapters 6 to 8): how the peace ended, why it could never be allowed to happen again, and how images of the enemy are made
- **Part III · Our Trenches** (Chapters 9 to 11): the ceasefires at our own festive tables
- **Part IV · World Peace Is Possible** (Chapters 12 to 16): what it takes to be the first to stand up, and why peace between nations need not remain a miracle

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Enemies found peace for one night. Why is it so hard at our own tables?

The First to Stand Up tells the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914 through the soldiers' own letters – and follows it from the trenches of Flanders to our Christmas tables.

Christmas Eve 1914, the first winter of the First World War. In Flanders and northern France the armies face each other from their trenches; any man who puts his head above the parapet can pay for it with his life. Then men begin to sing – 'Silent Night', of all songs. The next morning many of them climb out of their trenches unarmed. They shake hands, bury their dead together and show each other photographs from home. Germans make truces like these with British, French and Belgian soldiers.

'What I am telling you now sounds scarcely believable, but it is the honest truth,' the Bavarian lance corporal Josef Wenzl wrote to his parents on 28 December 1914. In *The First to Stand Up*, Bernd Blasius draws on letters and accounts like his to tell the story of that night. British, German and French voices are heard, from Flanders to the Somme, and seven letters appear in full – Edward Hulse's in his own English. Nothing is invented; sources are given for every chapter.

The book also puts paid to a popular legend. The Christmas Truce was not a rebellion of ordinary soldiers against the war and their officers. According to the historian Terri Blom Crocker, it was set off by rain and mud, curiosity, homesickness and the absence of personal hatred for the enemy. Many officers tolerated the truces. 'For this peace, the men did not have to become different people,' Blasius writes. That, he says, is exactly what gives him courage.

Alongside that night in Flanders, the author sets the Christmases of his childhood in Germany, which were silent but not peaceful: 'In our house, people who were meant to love one another lived under a ceasefire. Out there, people who were meant to hate one another found real peace, for one night.' From there the book moves into the present – to festive tables where the rule is 'whatever you do, don't mention politics', to families with old quarrels and to nations that have become strangers to one another. It asks what makes a person the first to stand up. And it shows that peace needs boundaries that apply to everyone: 'Peace is when no one has to make themselves small and everyone can breathe freely.'

It ends on a note of hope with evidence behind it. The countries whose men faced each other on the Western Front that winter have not gone to war with one another since 1945. 'That is why I believe world peace is possible,' Blasius writes. 'It would be the peace of that night, upheld instead of forbidden.'

Bernd Blasius, born in 1969, lives in Everswinkel near Münster in Germany. *The First to Stand Up* is his first book. He plans to use the proceeds to set up a non-profit company whose particular concern will be children growing up in difficult circumstances.

Bernd Blasius: *The First to Stand Up. The Christmas Truce of 1914 and the Courage to Leave Our Trenches*. Paperback £9.99 / \$14.99, hardback £16.99 / \$22.99, Kindle £5.99 / \$7.99. Also published in German and French. Press contact: presse@humane-weltformel.de

FIVE STORY ANGLES

Each angle stands on its own and can be followed up without further questions.

1 • ‘Whatever you do, don’t mention politics’

FAMILY • SOCIETY • CHAPTERS 10 AND 11

At many festive tables there is an unspoken agreement: no arguments today. The book calls it what it is – a ceasefire. In a 2023 survey in Germany, 30 per cent said they would rather not talk about the wars in the news at Christmas; only 27 per cent avoided no subject at all. The book looks at Thanksgiving tables in the United States, too. What helps against this silence it shows through the men of 1914: they met of their own free will, as equals, and with a line both sides respected.

‘Between the plates lies a strip that no one sets foot on, narrower than any no man’s land in Flanders: barely a yard wide.’

2 • Not a mutiny, but homesickness

HISTORY • CHAPTERS 1 TO 7 AND AFTERWORD

No one counted how many men took part in the truces; the often-quoted figure of around a hundred thousand is an estimate that cannot be verified. The book separates the evidence from the legend: in the retelling, a kick-about between the trenches became an international match, and many small truces became a peace along the whole front. It also tells how the peace ended, and why it could never be allowed to happen again.

‘For this peace, the men did not have to become different people.’

3 • How enemies are made

MEDIA • POLITICS • CHAPTERS 8 AND 10

In the autumn of 1914, people in Germany greeted one another with ‘Gott strafe England’ – may God punish England – and a poem of hate found its way into school books. The book shows how images of the enemy are manufactured and why they fall apart at close quarters. It traces the line through to the bots deployed today to turn people against one another.

‘Images of the enemy only hold up at a distance. Close up they fall apart – in a night, in an hour, in the exchange of two addresses. That is why closeness had to be forbidden.’

4 • ‘Silent Night’ with all six verses

CHURCH • CULTURE • CHAPTER 2 AND APPENDIX

The carol that carried across no man’s land in 1914 was nearly a hundred years old, and it, too, was written after years of war: Joseph Mohr wrote the poem in 1816, the year without a summer. Usually only three of its six verses are sung. The book prints all of them, including the forgotten one in which a brother embraces the peoples of the world.

5 • What nations have achieved

EUROPE • PEACE • CHAPTER 16

According to data from Uppsala, analysed by peace researchers in Oslo, 2025 saw more armed conflicts than any year since records began in 1946. Against this, the book sets what Europe has achieved: the countries whose men faced each other on the Western Front in 1914 have not gone to war with one another since 1945. What once held for a single night has been taken for granted for generations.

‘That is why I believe world peace is possible. It would be the peace of that night, upheld instead of forbidden.’

QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK

Word for word, with chapter references.

'Peace begins when someone is the first to stand up.' – back cover

'There is a silence that is peace. And there is a silence that only holds its breath.' – Prologue

'In our house, people who were meant to love one another lived under a ceasefire. Out there, people who were meant to hate one another found real peace, for one night.' – Prologue

'People who do something together are not sitting opposite each other.' – Chapter 13

'Sometimes it is the other way round, and someone comes towards you. Then you are not the one who stands up. Then you are the one who does not shoot.' – Chapter 13

'Today they are often the longest seconds of a year: the ones in which it rings at the other end.'
– Chapter 13

'A trench does not stay a trench for ever, not in Flanders and not at your own table.' – Epilogue

'On that day nothing has to be right, and that is exactly why everything is.' – Epilogue

'Peace is when no one has to make themselves small and everyone can breathe freely.' – Epilogue

AUTHORISED ANSWERS

Cleared for verbatim use with attribution. They stand in for an interview where none can be held.

Why a book about the Christmas Truce?

'Because that night was the opposite of what I knew as a child on Christmas Eve. In our house it was silent, but not peaceful. In Flanders, enemies faced each other, and yet for one night they found real peace. I no longer remember when I first heard of that night. It has not let go of me since.'

How much of it is true?

'Everything the book tells about the war. One simple rule applied to this book: nothing invented is passed off as fact. Words in quotation marks were really said or written. What people felt at the time appears only where a source speaks of it, and what can no longer be established is set out in the afterword.'

Did an AI write this book?

'I told the story, and the memories in it are mine. An AI helped me prepare it: in sifting and checking the sources, with the wording, and with the English and French editions. The cover and the illustrations were also made with its help. The book says so itself, and I take responsibility for every word in it.'

Why do you write about your own family?

'Because so many people know that silence: an evening when everything looks peaceful and yet everyone is watching what they say. Without my own Christmases, the truce would be no more than a beautiful story to me. I name no names, and I have left some things out, because it is not only my story.'

Why do you give interviews only in writing?

'Because this book is not about me but about the men of 1914 and the question they put to us. I am happy to answer your questions in writing, in as much detail as you need.'

Where does the money go?

'I want to use the proceeds to set up a non-profit company. Its particular concern will be children who grow up in difficult circumstances. It has not been founded yet. This book is meant to pay for the beginning.'

What comes next?

'That night, courage was enough to begin a peace. For it to last, it needs a home. That is what my next book, The Humane World Formula, is about. It is due to appear on 22 April 2027, Earth Day, in nine languages.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bernd Blasius was born in 1969 and lives in Everswinkel, near Münster in north-west Germany. His birthday falls a few days before Christmas, and the Christmases of his childhood left their mark on him: silent, but not always peaceful. Ever since, he has been preoccupied by why peace so often falters at the first step, between nations and at our own tables.

The First to Stand Up is his first book. He is working on a larger book about a more humane world, *The Humane World Formula*, due to appear in nine languages on 22 April 2027. He plans to use the proceeds of *The First to Stand Up* to set up a non-profit company for children growing up in difficult circumstances.

MATERIAL AND CONTACT

To download: humane-world-formula.com/press: this press kit as a PDF, the cover in print resolution and the author photograph

Reproduction: cover and author photograph free of charge in connection with the book. Photo: private

Review copy: as an e-book or in print, on request

Contact: Bernd Blasius · presse@humane-weltformel.de

Online: humane-world-formula.com/the-first-to-stand-up



Peace begins when someone is the first to stand up.