sent a workshop on the spirituality of nonviolence in confronting issues of injustice and oppression.

And, we must not forget, the upcoming December delegation to El Salvador in commemoration of the four U.S. churchwomen whose lives were cut short thirty years ago by cruel forces of darkness. (For more information contact Beth Kenyon in our office at beth@paxchristiusa.org or 202-635-2741.)

I would be remiss if I did not urge you to read this newsletter in its entirety. I would not want you to miss our reports on the innovative and very impressive work being done by PCUSA’s interns.

Earlier, I listed those dark “gifts” awaiting the newborn Jesus in, what, instead, should be a time of hope. The work of our interns is an authentic sign of genuine hope that shines even in the darkest of times.

While Advent may be a period of waiting for the birth of Jesus, it is not a time for delaying the effort to bring peace and justice to the world. As we live out PCUSA’s mission here in Washington, we are ever mindful that what we do would be impossible without you and your support in its many forms. Thus, in all truth, it is you and I, who carry out PCUSA’s sacred responsibilities for our fellow sisters and brothers throughout the world. In this spirit, I ask you to prayerfully consider an additional gift to Pax Christi USA beyond your regular membership dues. Simply send your check in the enclosed Be Not Afraid Fund envelope to the national office. Or, consider joining our Sustainers program to have a regular monthly contribution deducted from your credit card or bank account. You can do this for as little as $10 a month, and you can stop it at anytime.

Thank you for all you have done in the past. May I express the hope that your support will continue as together we await the birth of the One whose life infuses the mission of Pax Christi USA.

In advance, I thank you for your support and all you do and the gifts you offer to our world in the name of Peace.

Together on the journey,
Sister Dianna Ortiz, OSU

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Here at Pax Christi, we want to encourage something more. We know our beliefs and we know what we stand for. We also know that to bring our beliefs to fruition we must go out to the highways and byways.

As but one example, members of the House and the Senate have local offices. One does not need to come to Washington to make contact. Individuals and groups taking the time to visit local offices to articulate their views certainly may have an impact, especially if these visits are made over and over again.

Even more, if, for example, you belong to a Pax Christi region, issue a formal invitation to your representative or your senators. Hold a public meeting not simply to listen but to question those who claim to represent you. And be sure to invite the media to report on what is said.

And let me propose one more very serious suggestion. Consider the un-thinkable! We are continually called upon to support OTHERS for political office, but not very often are WE invited to be candidates ourselves! So, give some thought to being a candidate yourself or to encouraging someone you know to take the plunge. It would take time and energy, of course, but being an elected voice for peace at any level of the political spectrum would be worth it!

However, important as it is, the election is not the only event of importance in November. From the 19th through 21st, thousands will gather at Fort Benning, Georgia, for the annual SOAW Watch Vigil to close the School of the Americas/Winfield Scott, USA. Once again, Pax Christi USA will be present and active, lending its voice to closing that infamous “School of Assassins.” Mark those dates on your calendar, and if at all possible, join us for this action-packed weekend. Those who support that “school” have tried to ignore us, frighten us, and even fool us, but they have failed. We are still there at the gates, and we will keep coming back until it is finally closed.

We also have a new event of importance on the November calendar, the Ignatian Family Teach-in for Justice (November 13-15 at Georgetown University). Among the many well-known participants, PCUSA’s interns will be present.

Dear Friends,
I try to look at words as Ernest Hemingway suggested, never to rest until they are signed to the ash heap of history. With that commitment, and remembering our charism, the spirituality of nonviolence, let me share some of our thinking about the next few months.

First, there is the “election season.” Although that “season” may seem to last throughout the entire year, there is no question that it will intensify during the months before November. Where does PCUSA stand in what appears to be a louder and louder, if not necessarily more rational, confrontation between political parties? It is important to remember that Pax Christi is nonpartisan. Our mission is to walk the path that Jesus charted for us so long ago—replacing hatred with love, cruelty with kindness, violence with peace, and injustice with justice.

PCUSA is an organization of peace-makers. Simply put, we work for peace and stand with those others who advocate it as well. In that connection, we press for nuclear disarmament as a pre-condition to authentic peace. And then there is immigration. We are committed to encouraging a humane immigration policy and to working in Congress and elsewhere to see such a policy developed and enacted.

That said, we have noticed that when persons of any political persuasion encourage the citizenry to become “involved,” too often they seem to mean to vote on election day and to “contribute to the candidates of your choice” and little else.

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Pax Christi USA
NATIONAL CATHOLIC PEACE MOVEMENT

OCTOBER 2010

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Visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more educational and spiritual resources for peace.

A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes... is not a bad picture of Advent. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Contact Information

Pax Christi USA
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Local, Regional, & National Updates

PAX CHRISTI METRO NEW YORK SUPPORTS THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY CENTER, PARK51

In August, Pax Christi Metro New York released the following statement to the media in support of the Islamic Community Center planned near Ground Zero in New York City.

“Pax Christi Metro New York, a regional chapter of the international Catholic peace movement, wishes to express its full support for the proposed Islamic community center, Park51, in lower Manhattan.

“As an organization with members who lost loved ones at the World Trade Center site on September 11th, 2001, we recognize the excruciating suffering endured by so many.

“As a Catholic organization, we profess the Gospel of love and embrace Catholic Social Teaching on the sanctity of life, the dignity of the human person, and solidarity with the whole human family without exceptions.

“Since 9/11/01, we have engaged in numerous interfaith events and activities to mourn the losses experienced by people of all faiths, as well as those who profess no religious faith, and to build bridges of understanding and reconciliation among us all.

“The proposed Islamic Center is a much-needed facility to further the goal of mutual learning, respect, and appreciation across human boundaries. Rather than being a desecration of sacred ground, it is a sanctification of desecrated ground. It is a testament to what is great about the United States of America, the Constitution, and all civil laws. Let it stand as a symbol of our religious freedom and atonement for the reign of God right here and right now. The retreat, July 14-15, served as a pro-conference event for Pax Christi USA’s National Catholic Conference on Peacemaking.

“Know Justice, Know Peace: Ending War at Home and Abroad.” Young adults and students who attended the retreat were given free registration for the conference.

REVREEND JOHN DEAR, SJ, ADDRESSES STUDENTS, YOUNG ADULTS AT SUMMER RETREAT

Thirty students and young adults from around the nation came together in Chicago for a special summer retreat treat with author and activist, Reverend John Dear, SJ. The focus of the retreat was “Jesus and Nonviolence.” Reverend Dear drew on his long experience working for justice and peace nonviolently and explored the nonviolence of Jesus and how we can witness to the reign of God right here and right now.

PAX CHRISTI USA’S WINTER RETREAT 2011

Pax Christi USA’s Winter Retreat 2011 is an opportunity for students and young adults between the ages of 18-35 to root themselves in that hope which sustains the work of creating a world which is good, beautiful, peaceful, just and sustainable. The retreat will feature 2 sessions with “wisdom figures” of our movement—mentors and teachers who will share their stories and lesson from a life of working for peace and justice. Student and young adult leaders within Pax Christi and from partner organizations will also offer an array of workshops focused on issues, skills development, lifestyle, organizing and more. There will also be time for prayer, reflection, networking, socializing and checking out the D.C. area.

The cost of the retreat is on a sliding scale, and scholarships for travel are available. Final preparations, including speakers, are being made for the retreat in September, so check the website for updates and the latest information.

For questions, contact Beth at beth@paxchristiusa.org or 202-635-2741.

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PAX CHRISTI USA JOINS CAPITOL HILL DEMONSTRATION ON BP OIL DISASTER

On July 20, Pax Christi USA joined a broad coalition of public interest, faith, and environmental groups—as well as Gulf Coast residents directly impacted by the Gulf oil spill—to mark the three-month anniversary of the disaster. The event took place at a rally at Capitol Hill. The coalition called on Congress to pass legislation to end the BP oil catastrophe at a rally on Capitol Hill. The coalition urged that members of Congress clean up oil spills, hold BP accountable, and invest in clean energy. The event featured speeches by leaders of diverse faith communities. Organizing groups included 350.org, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, MoveOn.org, Pax Christi USA, and Public Citizen, among others.

The energy and enthusiasm of the camp participants was tangible as I talked with and listened to different people, some TOBT (for more, see http://thinkoutside-the-bomb.org) organizers and some simply drawn by the culture being built, a counterculture to a mindset described by Liz Woodruff as “a bomb-making mentality.” This is the philosophy of permaculture, a process of turning waste into material to be reused, a system of cooperative support and community cohesion. Everyone pitched in: planting the garden, prepping for meals, taking care of camp organization, welcoming guests, planning workshops and actions, developing media materials, and maintaining the system of the camp that is keeping the whole project functioning. I left that day warmed by all the love I had received and encouraged by the joy and sacrifice that members of my own generation have found in a life working for social justice.

~ By PCUSA Staff Manuel Padilla, Washington DC Office

These experiences were part of Padilla’s first round of visits and interviews in New Mexico on the topic of uranium, a way of entering the dialogue on nuclear abolition. More will be posted on the PCUSA Website on Padilla’s interviews with some of those negatively affected by exposure to uranium in New Mexico, all of whom struggle against the uranium industry.

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On October 7th of this year, we recognize—with deep sadness—the ninth anniversary of the Afghanistan War. A CNN poll conducted in early August reveals that 62% of those asked said they are opposed to the war. This is an all-time high. Let’s continue to pray, study, and act boldly this fall to build the movement against this war.

Recent and Upcoming Events

On September 16th, Pax Christi USA held the Annual Movement Event in Washington, DC. This year’s theme was “An Evening in Solidarity with Afghanistan.” People gathered to enjoy Afghan appetizers and music before hearing the keynote address by Bishop Gabino Zavala, Pax Christi USA Bishop President. His speech on the Afghanistan War was interspersed with testimonies, readings, and video clips from Afghan civilians, U.S. veterans, and Department of Defense personnel.

On September 28th, PCUSA held an Afghanistan Telephone Teach-In with scholar, author, and activist Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies. She briefed our grassroots participants on the war and then fielded some questions. If you missed this opportunity, look for the audio recording of the call on the PCUSA Website, to be posted soon. Bennis’s book, co-authored by David Wildman, is entitled Ending the US War in Afghanistan: A Primer and is an excellent resource and full of good talking points. It can be purchased for $10 online.

Right about the time you are receiving this mailing, Pax Christi groups across the country are preparing to participate in local actions on and around the anniversary of the Afghanistan War. Leaders in the peace movement decided that October 7-10, 2010, would be an International Call to Action against the Afghanistan War. The hope is that the public demonstration of opposition during these days—both in the United States and in Europe—would be a signal to the administration and the world like the one on February 15, 2003, was against the impending war in Iraq. The idea is to have as many LOCAL, decentralized events as possible to reach more people and show the growing opposition to the war as people connect the war to the human and economic costs that we can no longer afford. Pax Christi USA joins many other peace organizations in endorsing this Call for Action! Please let us know if you participated by emailing amy@paxchristiusa.org.

Action Alert: Street Theater Action Against Drone Attacks

Appalled by the increase of the U.S. program of unmanned drone attacks in Pakistan? Looking for a creative anti-war action your Pax Christi group can do this fall? Consider joining PCUSA, the Institute for Policy Studies, Code Pink, and Voices for Creative Nonviolence in a joint effort to perform Mock Drone Attack Actions in cities all over the United States to help raise awareness about the realities of these attacks. The Mock Drone Attack Action’s goal is to utilize “impromptu” street theater in order to simulate a drone attack. This action should capture the interest of both in-person witnesses and, after, internet viewers. This interest can then be harnessed to promote educational materials on the U.S. drone attacks happening in the Afghanistan-Pakistan war and provide pathways for more citizen resistance. Please check the PCUSA Website for a How-To Guide and educational materials on drones. Contact amy@paxchristiusa.org with questions.

~ by PCUSA Staff Amy Watts, Washington, DC office

Action

Anniversary of the Afghanistan War

1. In Fiscal Year 2010, the United States committed $167.1 billion to fund the war in Afghanistan, including $33 billion in supplemental spending. $159 billion has been requested for Fiscal Year 2011 with the looming possibility of another multi-billion dollar supplemental measure. If elected, would you help bring an end to this wasteful spending on a failed military strategy in Afghanistan that adds to the U.S. deficit for little strategic gain?

2. President Obama has committed an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan; many experts believe this escalation will destabilize the region by increasing border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan while simultaneously undermining the United States’s ability for diplomatic success. Would you support efforts to push the Obama administration to develop an exit strategy from Afghanistan such as the bills recently proposed by Senator Feingold and Representative McGovern?

3. The Obama administration, the military, coalition forces, and the Karzai government have acknowledged that political reconciliation among all groups—including the Taliban now. Can you please explain your position on U.S. efforts to encourage dialogue and political reconciliation with all Afghan groups—including the Taliban?

4. In 2009, the United States invested 1% of U.S. tax dollars on diplomacy, development, and international cooperation, while upwards of 33% of tax dollars were spent on the Pentagon to pay for current and past wars. Do you favor greater investments in peacefully preventing deadly conflict so the United States can mitigate conflicts before they reach a level of irreversible “crisis”?

5. According to the Congressional Budget Office, road projects in Afghanistan that were awarded $3 million in funding are subcontracted so much that by the time the money gets to the project, there will only be $300,000 to use for actual development. This kind of development profiteering is not only a waste of taxpay-er dollars, but it is also not conducive to developing Afghanistan. If elected, what would you do to encourage the U.S. to move away from the current development model in order to allow for Afghan-led development?

6. The use of drone strikes inevitably causes civilian casualties, which is a catalyst for recruitment in fundamentalist groups in Pakistan and other places. Moreover, the use of drone strikes is likely to generate anti-American sentiment in Pakistan because it is a breach on Pakistani sovereignty. Do you view use of drones in Pakistan as a strategic error for the United States military?

7. The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is predominantly military in nature despite the fact that the Counter-Insurgency Manual, written by General David Petraeus, calls for a strategy that is 80% civilian led. If elected, would you support a Counter-Insurgency based, civilian-led strategy or support the continuation of the current military-led strategy in Afghanistan?

8. President Obama has defined the mission in Afghanistan as an effort to “disrupt, destroy, and dismantle” al-Qaeda and prevent the establishment of terrorist safe havens in the country. General Petraeus has stated there are few, if any, al-Qaeda left in Afghanistan. In addition, General McCrystal has stated that with 400,000 native-speaking military personnel, there would be areas of the country that Coalition forces still could not secure. Given these acknowledgements by two top generals in the region, do you agree that the mission outlined by President Obama seems to be an unnecessary waste of resources and lives due to a calculated political decision?