Dear Companions on the Journey,

I welcome you to our Peace Current dedicated to the theme ‘Spirituality of Non-Violence and Peace-Making.’

In reflecting on this theme, it occurred to me that we have become so desensitized to the use of military and violent language in our speech patterns today, that we do not realize how that impacts how we perceive and act towards others. We cannot begin to be authentic peace-builders until we increase our awareness of the words we use that do not match the non-violence we strive for.

I offer a few examples as well as alternative suggestions:

- Instead of the words battling and fighting cancer, what about struggling against cancer?
- Instead of targeting certain issues, what about focusing on certain issues?
- Instead of referring to the bullets used to separate these ideas, why not use section marks?
- Instead of shoot me an e-mail, why not send me an e-mail?
- Instead of being armed with evidence to disprove a certain point, what about providing evidence?

Other violent and military language examples are: ‘shot in the dark’, ‘kicking around an idea’, ‘bite the bullet’, ‘moving target’, ‘shoot from the hip’, ‘under the gun’, ‘under the radar’, etc. One only has to listen to sports terminology to hear violent expressions: crushed, clobbered, beat, annihilated, whipped, toppled, smothered, smashed, slaughtered, smoked, etc.

The language we use in daily life does contribute to our attitudes and the behaviors out of which we act. We too often encounter intolerance, revenge, impatience, negativity, and paranoia in ourselves and others that lead to bullying, screaming, high-risk behaviors, being out-of-control, slamming things and road rage, and we wonder where all this violence in ourselves and others come from.

Because we are called to develop a spirituality that is a reflection of the heart of God, I invite us to examine our use of language and to work on clearing the way to receive the peace that is a gift left to us by Jesus. Our challenge is to synchronize what and how we speak with the vision of who we aspire to be … a beacon of hope and justice.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA
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Pax Christi USA - Spring 2015
Pax Christi USA Unveils Revised Vision Statement

By Sr. Patty Chappell, SNDdeN, Exec. Director & Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, National Chair

Over the last two years members of the staff, Pax Christi USA National Council and the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team (PCART) visited a number of the regions. At many of these gatherings, we held a conversation about the mission of Pax Christi USA, our priorities, the PCART vision statement, and how all of these worked together to create the actuality of PCUSA. Then this past June, regional leaders, PCART members, National Council and staff were able to gather together to meet and have a conversation about how all of these groups support the mission of PCUSA, as well as how together we can plan for the future.

One of the outgrowths of that gathering was the formation of a committee to work on the creation of a statement that would reflect the many parts of Pax Christi, encompassing our statement of purpose, our priorities & the PCART vision statement. Members of this ad-hoc committee were:

- Ed Martinez (National Council member)
- Stephen Jackson (Pax Christi Illinois regional representative)
- Kathleen Crayton (Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team member)
- Carol Ann Breyer (Pax Christi Florida regional representative)
- Liz Bailey (Pax Christi Long Island regional representative)
- Rose Marie Tresp, RSM (National Council member)

This committee took into consideration all of the input from the regional gatherings and the meetings this past June and produced a revised vision statement (see below) for our organization which we believe reflects all of the pieces of Pax Christi USA in a clear and simple way.

If you have questions about the process or need clarity about the vision statement, please feel free to contact PCUSA Executive Director Sr. Patty Chappell, SNDdeN, pchappell@paxchristiusa.org or Pax Christi USA National Council Chair Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, josiec@en.com.

PAX CHRISTI USA VISION STATEMENT*

WHO WE ARE

Grounded in the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, Pax Christi USA (PCUSA) is a membership organization that rejects war, preparation for war, every form of violence and domination, and personal and systemic racism. As PCUSA, a section of Pax Christi International, we are a Catholic peace and justice movement that seeks to model the Peace of Christ in our witness to the mandate of the nonviolence of the Cross.

WHAT WE DO

Guided by the spirituality of nonviolence, we advocate & provide leadership for disarmament, demilitarization & reconciliation with justice, inclusiveness, economic and Interracial justice, human rights & care of creation.

We strive through prayer, study and action to be attentive to the interrelatedness of the key issues stated above and, in our response, to be conscious of their impact on the world community.

We work to align our organizational structures, policies, and practices with our intent to be an anti-racist, multicultural Catholic movement for peace with justice.

OUR VISION

A more peaceful, just and sustainable world through the efforts of our members and in collaboration with other groups.

* Affirmed December 2014 by the Pax Christi USA National Council
In the face of the utterly inhuman brutality of murders attributed to ISIS over the past few months, the internal strife in Nigeria, the bloodshed in the Ukraine, the violence and death on our own streets in the United States, it seems as if anyone who has chosen the path of nonviolence must wonder: In the face of such violence and destruction, is nonviolence a foolhardy concept, a naïve way to imagine how we might live together on this earth? How is nonviolence possible in the face of such violence? These are the questions Nancy Small entertains in her new book, *Seizing the Nonviolent Moments: Reflections on the Spirituality of Nonviolence through the Lens of Scripture* (Cascade Books, 2014).

Small, former National Coordinator of Pax Christi USA, invites the reader to consider nonviolence as an intentional choice lived out not by huge, brave, public actions in the world, but rather by seizing upon those daily opportunities to speak and be peace in our lives where we live them. Her personal stories of such activities in daily life give witness to choices made not from a comfortable or easy space, but from confrontation with evil and conflict – at Ground Zero, in nonprofit organizations, in the work of peace itself.

The book is organized into ten chapters, each based on a Biblical passage, each with contemporary applications of that passage for nonviolence, and each with guiding reflection questions at the end. Such organization is ideal for parish book clubs, Lenten reflection groups, local Pax Christi groups, campus ministry reflection, the high school or undergraduate classroom, or as part of spiritual direction ministry. Small’s sound theological reflection on nonviolence and the scriptures, combined with her gentle spirit, make this a book to read and to gift. Her call and challenge throughout the book is that in order to respond nonviolently in the moments of greatest violence, we need to practice nonviolence in small ways when the choices are not so difficult. It’s a kind of virtue theory for nonviolence: practice nonviolence in daily life so that when tested by the violence of life, we might be in the habitus of nonviolence, predisposed to choose/seize nonviolence in the most distressing of circumstances.

This is an exquisite invitation to taste nonviolence for the first time or to reflect on the complexity and grace of nonviolence for the active practitioner. As Small writes in her introduction, we are invited to “take off our shoes as we approach the holy ground of a love strong enough to break down hatred and hostility”. Small’s exegesis of the scriptures is brilliant and compelling, asking the reader to return to the “breadbasket of our soul” to see what resources each brings to a world blessed, broken, and hungry for peace. Sr. Mary Lou Kownacki’s forward ends with the strongest recommendation one might imagine: “If the institutional church ever decides to promote the nonviolence of Jesus with the power that they mandate areas of sexuality, a library of theological, spiritual and strategic books written by the faithful nonviolent remnant will be available. One of the first that church authorities should reach for is (this book).” Read. This. Book.

**Pax Christi Massachusetts local group partners with inmates to form unique chapter**

by Brian Ashmanksas, Pax Christi Central Massachusetts

Two years ago, PC Central Massachusetts was contacted by a group of parishioners from Our Lady of Guadalupe Community in Shirley, MA who wanted to know more about Pax Christi and its vision. After an initial introduction about Pax Christi and our small group efforts, they eagerly encouraged us to come back so they might learn more and become a part of our group. This past August we began meeting regularly with them and have officially integrated them as Pax Christi Central MA/Our Lady of Guadalupe. What took so long? Our Lady of Guadalupe is located inside of the medium security prison at MCI Shirley and its members are all inmates.

Pax Christi was born inside a prison of French resistors during WWII when Bishop Theas called on them to love their enemies – Germany. Now we are bringing Pax Christi full circle with (as far as we can find) the first chapter located inside a prison, precisely where the ideals of justice, peace and nonviolence are needed most (& often the most difficult to follow).

The three of us who visit our new Pax Christi members in the prison agree that this has been a very rewarding experience. When we signed up for the task, we expected it to be a ministry TO the inmates; now we realize it is a ministry WITH the inmates...

To read the entire article about this exciting endeavor, go to the Pax Christi USA website, http://bit.ly/1AdVv3N
There are two Americas: one that privileges white people, and one that exists for non-whites. The killing of Mike Brown and the resistance in Ferguson have shown a bright light on this fact, making many of us in the former category uncomfortable indeed. I am a seasoned, radical, anarchist Catholic Worker who believes in nonviolence and anti-racist principles; I thought that I “got it.” My understanding of these two Americas resided more in my intellect than in my heart, despite having done hospital work for homeless women and resistance work for over 15 years. Mike Brown and Ferguson have pushed me forward in the journey in ways I couldn’t have imagined. So I ask myself, what would I want to know? If it were you here in Ferguson instead of me, if it were you hearing these stories, marching on the street, and sitting in the forums, what would I want you to tell me about what’s going on here?

First, tell me about the context in which Mike Brown and Darren Wilson (the police officer who killed him) lived. It is true that both white people and African Americans call Ferguson home, but they don’t typically have access to the same neighborhoods, schools or businesses. Ferguson is functionally segregated, just like most other cities in this country, a result of white flight, sprawl, red-lining, and structural racism. Despite constituting less than a third of the population of Ferguson, white power is still firmly in control: 5 of 6 city council members are white; 6 of 7 school board members are white; 50 of 53 police officers are white.

Tell me what it has been like on the ground in Ferguson. It’s essential to understand that the extent of “protestor violence” and “looting” continue to be miniscule compared to the violence of the police during the past two months (despite the media focusing only on the former). Early on, the tanks moved in. Police dressed in camouflage, toted M-4 rifles and aimed them directly at us as we stood on the sidewalk. The police have consistently initiated the violence; they tear-gassed peacefully assembling crowds over several days, including events where children were present. (Ironically, the tear gas canisters are the same as those found in Palestine. We have received much love and support from Palestinians, including how to best recover from tear gas attacks: use milk!) The police fired rubber bullets into large groups of people. Recently, they have been targeting leaders leading chants by surging into the crowd, dragging them out, and arresting them. (This during completely legal protest held on the sidewalk; First Amendment rights are not on their priority list.) The police have not hesitated to pepper spray, punch, beat and hog-tie people during peaceable assemblies and arbitrarily raise bond amounts. Even with the presence of the Department of Justice, the police consistently cover or don’t even wear their name badges. They have continued to wear “I am Darren Wilson” wristbands. The chant we often use, “Who do you serve? Who do you protect?” is hauntingly relevant here.

Remind me of the truth that sadly, Mike Brown’s murder is not an isolated or even unusual case. White society deems people of color as thugs, terrorists, criminals, and threats, instilling deep fear and irrationality that grow into structural racism. Unarmed Mike Brown, 18, heading off to college in days, was shot six times by Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014. In just the two months since Mike Brown’s killing, St. Louis police killed two more black people under questionable circumstances. It’s crucial for all of us to be aware of the fact that every 28 hours, a black person is killed by a police officer, security guard, or self-appointed vigilante in the U.S. The 2012 study that documented this noted that 44% of these people killed were unarmed, and in 27% of cases, the police claimed the suspect had a gun but there was no corroboration to prove this. How will we as a region and nation respond to these devastating truths? Rev. Osagyefo Sekou suggests that “the St. Louis region and the nation are presented with a clear choice: justice or shame.”

Remind me too that Ferguson is not an island, it’s not unique or different than the city from which you’re reading this article. One of the biggest barricades enforcing the divide between the two Americas is the criminal “justice” system, which targets people of color at every level – disproportionate surveillance, arrests, prosecution, and sentences. For example, even though African Americans use and sell drugs at about the same rate as whites, they are 2.8 to 5.5 times more likely to be arrested. While they constitute 13% of the nation’s population, they make up 40% of prison population. Our country’s racist legacy of the genocide of First Nations people, slavery, Jim Crow, and now, mass incarceration, continue to cause deep scars, many of which are ignored or denied by its white population. In his stunning article in

continued on page 5...
The Atlantic, Ta-Nehisi Coates notes, “Indeed, in America there is a strange and powerful belief that if you stab a black person 10 times, the bleeding stops and the healing begins the moment the assailant drops the knife. We believe white dominance to be a fact of the inert past, a delinquent debt that can be made to disappear if only we don’t look. There has always been another way.” Ferguson is not an island. It is everywhere, in the fabric of every city & town in this country.

Talk to me about the more difficult lessons from Ferguson. I’ve realized more fully that my rigid Catholic Worker devotion to nonviolence (which is somewhat grounded in my pattern as a white person to think “I know what is best”) has blinded me to certain things. In past years, it has kept me from supporting many events led by people of color because they felt “uncomfortable”. This in turn has kept me disconnected from the black radical community in St. Louis. I’ve realized that in the past I’ve placed a “nonviolence litmus test” on events led by people of color that I didn’t on white-dominated events. For example, do I require the environmental or progressive Catholic groups I support to have a published commitment and active track record of my style of radical nonviolence?

I’ve realized that as a person indoctrinated into white culture, I have at times not been thoughtful in the way I talk about nonviolence to people who have been absorbing state violence for decades, whether it be Palestinians or African Americans in Ferguson. Lately I’ve heard far too many white people complaining about the resistance, dismissing it as “undisciplined,” “intimidating,” or “a riot”. These observations, often fueled by unrecognized racism, can stem from lots of different places: a reliance on corporate media, white unconscious bias that associates “black” with “criminal”, and colonialism that encourages white folks to hoist our world-view onto a targeted population. Who gets to decide whether an action is nonviolent? Is it in the perception of the power-holders (white people)? That is, if I as a white person feel uncomfortable/called out/afraid, does that make the action violent? Is the level of nonviolence determined by the intentions of the participants? How loud can a black youth yell before white people (ensconced in centuries of white privilege) call her violent? These are important questions to reconsider within the new world that Ferguson has brought us.

When the tanks rolled into Ferguson was I going to condemn the person next to me for throwing a water bottle? No, I chose to condemn the tank and the state violence fueling it, though I didn’t choose to throw anything myself. But I won’t spend energy being distracted into thinking that small acts of property damage compare to the state violence that targets communities of color every day, in every town in this country. For what is the “acceptable” response to centuries of state violence, slavery, Lynchings, rapes, mass incarceration, and the continued implementation of “separate but equal”? We ask the guests at Karen House and receive a consistent answer: “Yep, they locked up my brother for walking while black.” “The police beat up my cousin on the street.” “I’ve got a felony, so I can’t find a job or an apartment.” People have a right to feel rage at yet another shooting of an unarmed black teenager and to yell about it to high heaven! For myself, I can help create events that jive with my personal belief in nonviolence, but I’m not going to tell people of color how they should be responding. It’s insulting and patronizing, adding more salt to the wound.

Ferguson exposes the fact that certain patterns of whiteness have watered-down the idea of nonviolence. Too often now, nonviolence looks polite, risk-less, non-threatening and compliant with state power (most often, the police). Sometimes our civil disobedience centers ourselves, promoting a “White Hero Syndrome.” Are we doing white-dominated activism challenging state violence elsewhere, or are we making commitments to our neighbors or to the people on whose stolen land we reside? Are we challenging the militant forces in our own communities – the police that have the very same weapons as the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan? What kind of priority are we giving to combatting racism, which undergirds so many of the justice issues the CW takes on?

Nonviolence, if used in radical and community-building ways, is a powerful tool to pull ourselves out of the racist hole that white America – not exempting the Catholic Worker – has dug, and Ferguson gives us some guideposts. A commitment to nonviolence should mean examining our own Catholic Worker communities for structural racism – a vile, insidious and ubiquitous form of violence – and really digging into the question of why the Catholic Worker is so...
PCUSA loses two former staff members

Ed Guinan, Pax Christi USA’s first General Secretary in 1972, passed away over the Christmas holiday, and Fr. Sebastian Muccilli, former staff member, passed in mid-February. Besides his help in the early years of PCUSA, Ed also helped to start the Community for Creative Nonviolence. For Pax Christi USA, he organized the first national assembly in 1973 and published the first PCUSA magazine, “Pax Christi Thirdly”. Fr. Sebastian served as associate coordinator of Pax Christi USA from 1986-1988. Fr. Sebastian stayed active in PC-Florida, accompanying death row inmates, working with people with AIDS, and acting as spiritual moderator of the Black Catholic Ministry in the Diocese of Palm Beach. PCUSA gives thanks for the lives of both these prophetic men. Please read more about them on the PCUSA website. Just do a “search” for their names.

PC Texas hosts PC members, Catholic communities of color

(from Jerry Maynard) Pax Christi Texas hosted the “We Grow Together: PCUSA and Catholic Communities of Color” workshop in February. At the beginning of the workshop, we opened with prayer and two songs... As we look back at the many faithful who were involved in the struggle for racial justice, civil rights, and the anti-war movement, we can definitely see the hand of God guiding the activists/peacemakers who keep taking a step forward even when they only had enough light for that one step. As we gather for these workshops, discuss the issues of our day, and commit ourselves to the dynamic lifestyle of nonviolence/peacemaking, let us be open to the power of the Spirit and shift with the wind which blows towards justice. (More info on the PCUSA website.)

Our Lady of Grace PC is active on many fronts

(from Dennise Burgess) Our Lady of Grace PC in Castro Valley, CA sponsors various events during the year like speakers or putting on movie nights. We also participate in the annual Bread for the World Offering of Letters and have an annual Fair Trade sale. We work closely with a couple of homeless shelters that our parish supports. A couple of members are very involved in the anti-death penalty movement and hang a black drape on the church door every time there is an execution and put a monthly list of executions in the church bulletin.

PC Pacific Northwest members take Vow of Nonviolence

(from Deacon Denny Duffell) In December, PC Pacific NW held an afternoon service led by Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, the auxiliary bishop of Seattle, at St. Mary’s in Seattle. A total of 34 of us professed the Vow of Nonviolence, with several friends and family also attending. PC members from Tacoma, Port Townsend, Seattle, and Bellingham attended, along with others we invited, especially associates and members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. We chose the 28th because it was the feast day of the Holy Innocents, which seemed fitting for taking this kind of vow. Many of those making the Vow had been through the retreat we offered a few weeks earlier, about vow-making and the different parts of this vow.

PC member and Ferguson resident ponders questions

(by John Powell) As a Ferguson resident and PC St. Louis member, I have been struggling to reflect and act on my understanding of these questions (raised by what happened in Ferguson). So many people have different definitions of “peace,” I have been in discussions with people on all sides, and many different interpretations are out there. Is it not peaceful if you make people feel uncomfortable? If you show up at events and protest? If you interrupt the “normal” course of peoples’ routines? Can one chant? Can one shout? What can one shout? At what time in a neighborhood of sleeping residents? Should the protesters be blamed for “disturbing the peace” if police helicopters are flying overhead? Should they be arrested for stopping traffic? What if they surround a car that is trying to get through their occupation of a street?... (Read John’s column on the PCUSA web site; search “John Powell.”)
PC Illinois hosts World Peace Day service
(from Tom Cordaro) On Jan. 1st Pax Christi Illinois joined with diverse faith communities from the Western Suburbs for an annual World Peace Day Interfaith Prayer Service. This year marks the 10th anniversary of this interfaith event that began as a project of local PC groups. The service included participation from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Baha’i and Christian faith communities. The event was attended by over 200 people... (Read more on the PCUSA website.)

PC Florida holds “Rally in Tally” against the death penalty
(by Judy Gross, NCR) Pope Francis called for an end to capital punishment the day before an Oct. 24 rally that drew those opposed to the death penalty to demonstrate in front of the Old Capitol in Tallahassee, FL. The weekend assembly was sponsored by Pax Christi Florida, Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty, and Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. At the juncture of two of the busiest streets in Tallahassee, loud honks from people in cars who supported those demonstrating cut through the speakers’ words, but it was noisy encouragement for those holding signs and banners. Nearly 100 advocates from around the state embraced the pope’s words to galvanize their position. (More on NCR’s site.)

For more news of PCUSA members, local groups & regions, check out On The Line on the PCUSA website.

“Solidarity & Nonviolence in Ferguson,” continued from page 5...
white-dominated. For white people such as myself, practicing nonviolence can mean doing the personal work on the patterns of white culture that keep us from being connected to others. For white CW communities, nonviolence should mean expanding relationships and coalitions with people and communities of color that are mutual, rather than based in white power (where we are the “helpers”). It should be about connecting war abroad with war at home.

Lastly, inspire me with the new insights on solidarity that are flowing from Ferguson. The most important lesson I’ve absorbed is that solidarity means following the lead of those most affected by injustice. It means that I as a white person need to step back, listen, and show up when people of color ask. It means I shouldn’t be controlling the actions, running the meetings, or telling people of color how to act. Of course I can decide how I participate, but when I control the messaging, ignore feedback, or think that I can tell African Americans how MLK would act in Ferguson in 2014, I am part of the problem. As bell hooks notes, “All our silences in the face of racist assault are acts of complicity.” Solidarity can mean doing things that are uncomfortable: showing up to events when we don’t know a lot of people, lovingly correcting racism in other white people, and seeking ways to be supportive, even if we won’t get any credit.

Thinking about what solidarity means today, I’ve been re-inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from the Birmingham Jail,” paraphrased here: “I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Councillor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate... This person is more devoted to “order” than to justice; prefers a negative peace (which is the absence of tension) to a positive peace (which is the presence of justice). This person constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action’; paternalistically believes [in setting] the timetable for another person’s freedom; and lives by a mythical concept of time, constantly advising the Negro to wait for a ‘more convenient season.’ Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.”

Mario E. Jones observed that “the only thing that’s changed since we were brought over here in the 1500’s is the type of chains being used.” Whether or not Darren Wilson is indicted, the struggle for justice for Mike Brown will continue. The movement will continue to challenge racial profiling, stop-and-frisk policies, the lack of police accountability, mass incarceration, and the myriad laws and policies that target non-whites in this country. We don’t have to live separated from one another in two Americas. Together, let’s shed our fear, continue to ask the hard questions of ourselves and each other, and call for justice; for Mike Brown, for Ferguson, for us all.

Jenny Truax is a member of the Karen House CW Community in St. Louis & part of the newly formed CW Anti-Racist Collective This article originally appeared in the Dec. 2014 edition of The Catholic Worker.
“They killed Jesus finally, hanging him on a tree, only to have God raise him up on the third day.” (Acts 10:39b-40a)

They killed Ita Ford, raped her in the back of a transit van, then shot her through the back of the head and buried her in a shallow grave. The wild youths hit the old man, kicked his ribs in, left him to die in the gutter, just for the hell of it...

It makes you want to throw up, doesn’t it? It’s too hard to handle, not really a suitable subject for today. Easter is a happy day, a day for clean spring dresses, Easter eggs, family luncheons and a walk by the sea. It’s a day to forget about evil, a day to thank God for Springtime.

All that’s right and proper, I suppose. We’re simple people, frail human beings and it’s too difficult for most of us to sustain a paschal overview of our world for very long. Nevertheless, this view is something we should strive for because it’s the only thing that makes sense of the mess we live in.

Perhaps that’s why the Byzantine Church loved the “harrowing of hell” story so much and used it as the resurrection story. Easter Sunday for them was not just about weeping women around an empty tomb – it was the day on which Christ triumphed over evil, defeated death. I look at the icons of Christ hauling Adam and Eve out of the tomb and kicking the instruments of torture into the abyss and I say to myself, wowie!

Now I know where Ita is, and Jeanie Donovan, and the old man who died in the gutter. That is what Easter is about. The hell with the Easter Bunny; there goes my God.

~Dr. Sheila Cassidy, from Lent: A Mapless Journey, Pax Christi USA’s 1993 Lenten reflection booklet

Reflection Questions

Is the comparison of Jesus with Ita Ford and the old man uncomfortable for you? Why or why not?

What are the characteristics of a family or community that truly believes that death was defeated?