Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Companions on the Journey,

Welcome to this Spring 2016 issue of The Peace Current dedicated to the theme, “Economic and Interracial Justice in the United States”.

For all of us, poverty and racism in the United States are not far from where we live. These last couple of years have seen an increase of violence in our families, schools, neighborhoods, cities and even within the debate milieus that we can no longer ignore. Our brothers and sisters rendered poor by unjust economic systems that perpetuate racism have felt the brunt of brutality, a lack of accountability from the perpetrators of violence, blatant disregard, and the not-so-subtle rhetoric of politicians. Anyone who is different is suspect, feared, looked at as a threat, and forced into isolation.

It is to these realities that Pax Christi is situated:

• To address violence with diplomacy, dialogue and mediation.
• To mirror the nonviolence of Jesus whose words and life we model.
• To see connections among all the issues that confront us and to have a consistent and seamless approach to all of life.
• To live our lives in such a way that ALL people matter.
• To offer our very lives in the quest for peace with justice.

It is a blessing for me to be on this journey with you.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA
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SAVE THE DATE!

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:
Addressing the Signs of the Times with Bold Conversations Leading to Transformative Actions

PAX CHRISTI USA NATIONAL GATHERING
August 12-14, 2016
DoubleTree Hotel
Linthicum, MD 21090

Visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more information
Official Statement: Called to Build the Beloved Community

The following statement was issued by the Pax Christi USA National Council at their January 29-31, 2016 meeting in Bay Saint Louis, MS.

The National Council of Pax Christi USA, at its recent January 2016 meeting, reflected on the challenge of building the Beloved Community. In reading the signs of our times, we recognized the destructive political discourse currently gripping our society and call on all Pax Christi USA members and all people of good will to reject the language of violence and disrespect against women, Muslims, immigrants, communities of color and people living in poverty.

In addition, destructive policies and practices that harm our shared creation must also be denounced as acts of violence.

We pledge ourselves to speaking with respect and dignity to all persons, regardless of their political and religious stances, for they too are our brothers and sisters. Thus we contribute to building the Beloved Community together, while caring for the earth, our common home.

Pax Christi USA will be holding their 2016 National Assembly, “Building the Beloved Community: Addressing the Signs of the Times with Bold Conversations Leading to Transformative Actions”, in Baltimore, Maryland, August 12-14, 2016.

Pax Christi USA now accepting nominations for Teacher of Peace Award

This year, Pax Christi USA will honor an outstanding peacemaker with the Teacher of Peace Award, in the tradition of Sr. Thea Bowman, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, and Pope Paul VI. This award recognizes women and men whose lives and work exemplify the theme of Pope Paul VI’s World Day of Peace message, “To reach peace, teach peace.”

All nominations must be received by email or postmarked by April 11, 2016 to be considered. When sending in your nomination by email, please include “Teacher of Peace nomination” in the subject line.

Eligibility criteria for nominations for the Teacher of Peace Award are:

• A living person
• A Catholic individual or group
• A United States resident
• Widely recognized for their contributions to Catholic peace with justice activities
• A person who demonstrates an intentional and sustained effort to challenge & transform racist & sexist attitudes & actions that continue to separate & oppress God’s people

Officers of Pax Christi USA should be considered ineligible until at least three years have elapsed since leaving office.

Past recipients of this award include: Dan Berrigan, SJ; Fr. Roy Bourgeois; Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB; Msgr. Ray East; Bishop Thomas Gumbleton; Kathy Kelly; Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ; Martin Sheen; and Ruben Garcia.

Visit the Pax Christi USA website to download a nomination form. Send your nominations to jzokovitch@paxchristiusa.org.
The 70th anniversary of our peace movement is coming to an end, and to close such an important milestone, a delegation from Pax Christi International attended the General Audience of Pope Francis in Rome on 16 December 2015. After the audience, on behalf of our movement, the international co-president, Marie Dennis, presented Pope Francis with the “Bethlehem Commitment: Bringing the Future into Focus 2015-2020”. The document, adopted by the world assembly held in Bethlehem last May, outlines the main lines of action for our movement for the next five years.

The delegation included: Marie Dennis, Sr. Filo Hirota (Missionaries Mercedaries of Berriz, member of the international board), Catherine Billet (national coordinator of Pax Christi France), Fabrizio Truini (Pax Christi Italy), Edwin Ruigrok (PAX Netherlands), Wiltrud Roesch-Metzler (Pax Christi Germany), Sr. Julia Arciniega (Salesian Sisters), Fr. Ken Thesing (Maryknoll Society), Fr. Paul Lansu (International Secretariat), Greet Vanaerschot (International Secretariat), and José Henríquez (International Secretariat).

To read “The Bethlehem Commitment” online, go to http://bit.ly/1WPyAbK.
If you have ever attended an anti racism workshop facilitated by the Pax Christi Anti Racism Team (PCART), you will no doubt recall that our singular focus is on race. As an African American woman and anti racist activist, I embrace PCART’s analysis that race and racism has historically been the organizing principle of our society—America’s ‘original sin’ as Sojourner’s Jim Wallis and others have described racism. PCART has enjoyed a considerable measure of success in leading the Brothers and Sisters All initiative, in large part by having the opportunity to share a common analysis of racism. Perhaps a sense of urgency, or simply the intentional singular focus on race in both PCART’s analysis and workshops, has relegated to the side any serious discussion of identities other than race, e.g. gender and class. The question at this juncture in the Brother and Sisters All initiative may be: Is it now time for PCART to enlarge our anti racist gaze to include identities such as (but not limited to) gender and class?

Nearly 30 years ago white feminist theologian Susan Thistlewaite, in her book, Race, Sex and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White, wrote a fine analysis of the troubling indifference on the part of white feminists to the vast dissimilarity of lived experiences for white women and black women. She argued that even while understanding their own gender oppression in society, white women were privileged by their race (a fact, Thistlewaite states bluntly, that went unexamined by feminists). Race privilege helped explain why the experiences and perceptions of black and other women of color were not only not understood, they were not even heard by white feminists.

The same year Thistlewaite published her book, 1989, legal scholar and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is African American, wrote an essay in a prestigious law journal to explain the marginalization of black women whose identities intersect at race and gender, and more often than not, class. Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” as an approach to understanding social and power relationships and how they are mapped by many variables. In the ensuing years, intersectionality has gained traction in academic and legal circles. Rooted in the experiences of black women, intersectionality, now more broadly understood and applied, describes how power, inequality and victimization are produced and reproduced by the multiple identities each of us possesses, and the points at which they intersect to maintain power, inequality and victimization.

Intersectionality, both as an exploratory and analytic tool, has entered into the consciousness of social justice activists and activism. The permutations of intersecting identities that produce power, inequality and victimization are many and varied. Intersectioning multiple identities can also render a mix of both privilege and inequality for the subject. As an anti racist activist, it has always been challenging for me to hold, much less explain, that an economically struggling single white mother, or a male victim of sexual assault are socially privileged, by her race in the case of the mother, and privileged by his gender in the case of the sexual assault victim. In both cases, the privilege enjoyed by one identity is clearly not trivial, but then neither is the inequality and victimization that results from another intersecting identity or identities. Intersectionality can help us understand each of our intersecting identities and their relationship to institutional and systemic power.

Moreover, understanding how our identities engage power, intersectionality can help us begin compassionate conversations around enlightened self-interests and build coalitions among similarly disempowered brothers and sisters to create peace and justice. It is no coincidence that one of the priority areas of Pax Christi USA is both economic and interracial justice—one category. Instead of different interests competing within that priority area, we have an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how power moves among us, in Pax Christi, in the church and globally. We can begin to see that the source of racial oppression is also the source of the trials of the struggling white mom, or the indifference and denial of the anguish of the sexual assault victim.

I believe as we continue to grow organizationally and as a movement, we will learn to see how are stories are linked. We are wise to stay mindful, however, if PCART embraces analyses that go beyond the identity of race such as gender and class—and even more as we include categories of sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability and even religion—the temptation to diminish, or dismiss altogether, race as the nexus of intersectionality, which can be irresistible among some activists. Those of us who are trained antiracists are challenged and tasked with the duty to insist on the saliency of race when applying an intersectionality framework. PCART’s major contribution to Pax Christi, in my view, is that we tenaciously work at healing the colorblindness that denies the centrality of race in the production of power, inequality and victimization in Pax Christi, in our church and in our world.

Cathleen Crayton is a co-founder of the Pax Christi USA Anti Racism Team. She is a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace.
Beginning in 2012 and into 2013, seventeen regions in the United States were visited by members of the National Staff in an effort to meet the people, to hear what their needs were, and to offer support for the important work they were engaged in.

These visits, rich in dialogue and honesty, clearly showed that Pax Christi USA was a predominantly white organization that was missing important and critical voices in the work for peace with justice. One of these was clearly the voice of African American and Latina/o-Hispanic communities of color.

Pax Christi USA applied and received a grant to do Communities of Color workshops in 5 major cities in the U.S. which would focus on the corrective histories of communities of color and their contributions to the American Catholic community. We entitled these workshops “We Grow Together”.

PCUSA gathered communities of color in 6 major U.S. cities to review Catholic Social Teaching and to dialogue with local Pax Christi members on ways to be in solidarity with communities of color in addressing the needs in their local neighborhoods. At each site we brought together a group of 30-40 individuals from the Latino/a, African American and white communities. We intentionally invited facilitators who were African American (Sr. Jamie Phelps OP, PhD) and Hispanic theologians (Ronaldo Cruz) to present the corrective history of these communities and to begin to do together a social analysis of the local area the participants were from. Many of those who gathered commented that this was the first time they experienced the 3 communities working together for a common purpose and expressed the need for further work.

What did we learn? The contributions of communities of color to the U.S. Catholic Church are hidden, unknown and underappreciated. As a collective they embody an uncommon faithfulness in spite of invisibility, threats, slavery, conquests, invasions and continuing segregation and persecution. Their faith in God and in each other is a remarkable testimony to the depth that faith calls all of us to.

In August 2016, prior to our National Assembly in Baltimore, we have invited 8 representatives (2 African Americans, 2 Latina/o-Hispanic, 2 white Pax Christi members, and 2 young adults) from the 5 regions mentioned above for 2.5 days of focused training which will enable them to be facilitators of future workshops.

An Open Letter to American Politicians and the American Public

The following letter appeared as an ad in The Washington Post on December 21, 2015. Pax Christi USA was one of 50 signatories to the letter, initiated by Shoulder to Shoulder.

“I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance, or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinions of others.” ~ Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Edward Dowse

In the past weeks, some politicians, candidates and commentators have not followed Jefferson’s example, nor that of our first President, George Washington, when he declared in his letter to the leaders of the Touro Synagogue that the Constitution “gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” Ironically, the highly offensive remarks of these individuals deny the foundation of the Constitution, which our political leaders, through their oath of office, swear to defend. Our religious principles teach us to love and respect each other, and our civic responsibility demands that we take a public stand against this gross injustice happening before our eyes today.

Simply, suggestions that a Muslim cannot serve as President, or that Muslims should be registered and their mosques closed, are un-American and un-Constitutional. As persons of faith and as Americans, we deeply value our own freedom of religion in this country and the religious freedom of others. It is thus a matter of grave concern to us that this most basic of American precepts is endangered.

Good citizens must speak out. As faith and community leaders that value our own freedom of religion, we state unequivocally that we love our Muslim siblings in humanity. They serve our communities as doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, journalists, first responders, and as members of the U.S. Armed Forces and Congress. Muslims are our equals. They are no different than anyone else pursuing the American dream. Together, we are proud Americans. Together, we choose freedom, not fear.

So stand with us. Stand with the values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. And in so doing, send a message to the rest of the world that we live by our nation’s own unswerving standards ... and no one else’s.
PC Seattle members take the Vow of Nonviolence  
(from Deacon Denny Duffell) On the Feast of the Holy Innocents at Mass at St. James Cathedral, Pax Christi members in the Seattle area took the Vow of Nonviolence. The program for the event thanked Fr. Ryan and the staff of the Cathedral, and invited all those in attendance to learn more about Pax Christi. “This is our third year in taking this vow publicly, in order to encourage others to join us. One thing we hope is that the community of people who gather around these words and the hope behind them will support one another through prayer and action in living them out. If we do this, we are hopefully confident that this community will grow.”

PC Illinois hosts World Peace Day Interfaith Service  
(from Tom Cordaro, Pax Christi Illinois) Pax Christi Illinois was a major sponsor and organizer of the 2016 World Peace Day Interfaith Prayer Service, celebrated January 3, in Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College in Illinois. Over 300 people attended. The event was co-sponsored by Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Bahai, Christian Scientist and other faith communities.

PC Michigan responds to the Flint water crisis  
(from PC Michigan) The water crisis in the poverty-stricken, African-American-majority city of Flint, Michigan has its roots in decades of waste dumped by corporations into the Flint River, and more recently, surface runoff from roads, lawns and farmers’ fields. The water in the Flint River contains significant levels of chlorides, making it highly corrosive to lead pipes. In addition, state revenue sharing cutbacks for Michigan cities have exacerbated the negative impact on budgets already stretched thin by deindustrialization and the sharp decline in tax revenue. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder took office on January 1, 2011. With his accounting background, he brought to state government a corporate philosophy that was highly bottom-line oriented. One of Snyder’s first actions was legislation expanding an earlier law by giving the state sweeping powers to take over failing municipalities and school boards by appointing “emergency managers” with unchecked authority to replace democratically elected officials. In December 2011, Flint was placed in receivership under an emergency manager... Read the entire statement on their website.

On Dec. 23, PC Houston members helped to distribute Christmas gifts to children who were leaving the Harris County Jail with their parents. The children had been visiting their loved ones in the jail. (Photo courtesy of David Atwood)

PC NJ holds annual prayer service for migrants  
(from multiple sources) On Ash Wednesday, February 10th, clergy, faith leaders and community members gathered in Liberty State Park along the water next to the bridge to Ellis Island to offer prayers and to remember all those who have been displaced from their home countries. Participants called for compassion and mercy for all those who have died fleeing violence and persecution, those who have been incarcerated as they attempt to flee and all those who have died trying to reach safety. Pax Christi New Jersey led the gathering on Ash Wednesday, an annual interfaith prayer service for migrants and refugees. With the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island serving as a dramatic backdrop, the seventh annual service called for compassion, mercy and solidarity with all those forced to leave their homelands.

PC Northern California hosts regional assembly  
(from Tom Webb, PC Northern California) Nearly

Pax Christi Los Angeles members participate in a community prayer vigil to protest conditions at Los Angeles Men’s Central Twin Tower Jail in September 2015. (Photo courtesy of PC-Los Angeles)
100 people gathered for Pax Christi Northern California’s assembly “Creative Nonviolence: Peacemaking in the 21st Century” on Saturday, October 17th. They listened carefully as a panel featuring Sr. Megan Rice, Elizabeth Murray and Rivera Sun responded to questions from Pax Christi moderator Lorin Peters examining the signs of the times and what members of the faith community could do to respond. Rice is certainly known among many in Pax Christi circles, and for those with links to Pace Bene, Rivera Sun has been a widely-followed speaker on non-violence. Murray on the other hand is new to the movement. After spending 27 years with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a Middle East intelligence officer, Murray retired and has dedicated her life to peacemaking. She resides at the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action outside Tacoma, WA as a volunteer. She is also a regular participant in talks given by Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, founded by Ray McGovern.


PC Memphis rallies for the Fight for $15 (from Paul Crum, PC Memphis) Pax Christi Memphis participated in the Memphis Fight for $15 parade on Tuesday, Nov. 10, to show our support for raising the minimum wage to a living wage and to obtain union rights. This action is one of over 270 taking place around the nation. After the parade, the group went to the Quaker Meetinghouse for a potluck dinner to discuss the day’s events and prepare for their monthly meeting.

Holy Cross chapter co-sponsors refugee awareness week (from the College of the Holy Cross website) College of the Holy Cross students, faculty and staff, hosted “Refugee Awareness Week” at the end of October. The week helped to raise awareness of the complex social justice issues surrounding the ongoing refugee crisis around the world... The Pax Christi chapter sponsored advocacy tables set up daily in the Hogan Courtyard to offer more information about refugees around the world, a chance to sign online letters and petitions to Congress regarding the crisis, and to collect monetary donations for the Jesuit Refugee Service. ... Pax Christi also sponsored a candlelight vigil as an act of solidarity with refugees from around the world.

PC MetroWest (MA) works to end gun violence (from The MetroWest Daily News) Thoughts and prayers are nice, but to end gun violence, more has to be done, state Rep. David Linsky told a group of about 60 anti-gun violence advocates. Speaking at a Community Interfaith Gathering at the Common Street Spiritual Center on Saturday, the Natick Democrat said it is time for action. ... The gathering was co-sponsored by the Spiritual Center, the First Congregational Church in Natick, Temple Israel of Natick, Pax Christi MetroWest, Fisk United Methodist Church and the Massachusetts Chapter of the Brady Campaign.

PC Indianapolis supports archbishop on refugee response In a letter to Archbishop Joseph Tobin of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, PC Indianapolis wrote, “We, the members of Pax Christi of Indianapolis, are supportive of and encouraged by your courageous actions and example in deciding to accept the Syrian refugee family to our Indiana home. Your words and your decision have sent a strong message of Christianity and the words of Christ to ‘love one another.’ Thank you for your leadership and the message of justice you have sent.” The Archbishop had decided to go through with the refugee relocation over objections from the Governor of Indiana.

For more photos and updates from Pax Christi USA’s grassroots network, check out “On The Line”, published monthly at www.paxchristiusa.org.
"When all are free," continued from page 5...

workshops in their respective geographical areas.

Can forty people make a difference in a world where fear is feeding the hatred in so many people? Jesus began with twelve people and it did make all the difference. The diversity that forms such a rich tapestry in our country is threatened by the political and public rhetoric that seeks to unravel the ‘welcome’ that is a hallmark of the U.S.

Those who attend the workshop and you, dear Reader, do make a difference in promoting economic and racial justice here at home. Your letters, phone calls and petition signing to welcome the immigrant and refugee among us ... is making a difference. Standing up in solidarity with our brothers and sisters where and when racial violence erupts in our neighborhoods, mosques, churches and street corners ... does make a difference. Whenever you encourage and support dialogue instead of in-fighting within your families, among your co-workers or in the public arena ... does matter.

In short, none of us can rest until ALL of us are free. Free to be who we are, free to speak our truths to one another, free to learn and accept forgiveness for what we have said and done to each other ... and free to recognize the One who has always lived among us whom we have chosen not to see.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN is the Executive Director of Pax Christi USA. Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN is the Director of Programs for Pax Christi USA.

Congratulations to Pax Christi International Co-President Marie Dennis, recipient of the Public Peace Prize

In early January, it was announced that Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International, was a finalist for the Public Peace Prize. The Public Peace Prize is an international recognition determined by the choices of people from around the world. Later that month, the Public Peace Prize released the following announcement:

All of the laureates received considerable support from the public, both in terms of the quantity of “votes” acquired, and the quality of the comments and the support letters received. ... Marie Dennis is the laureate who received the greatest number of supporting gestures overall, from a largely international audience. ... Marie DENNIS, of the United States, is a respected icon of peace and reconciliation movements on an international scale. Her implication in a number of endeavours reuniting a compassionate vision, the art of negotiation and spiritual wisdom and her contribution to intercultural and interreligious dialogues are indispensable to world peace. A large number of her project partners and people who have witnessed her work from several countries have expressed their support and admiration to this laureate of the 2016 Public Peace Prize as GLOBAL PEACE and RECONCILIATION INTERNATIONALLY-REPUTED PEACEMAKER.

Resources for Earth Day from the Pax Christi USA Store

PRAYER FOR GLOBAL RESTORATION PRAYER CARD: A prayer of reverence for all creation, an invocation asking that we may know we are irrevocably part of the web of life, asking for forgiveness for our ignorance, asking for our own radical transformation into God’s kin-dom. Price: $10.00 for a pack of 100

LISTENING TO EARTH: FAITH AND ACTION IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS: How do we connect our responsibility to address global climate change with our work for justice and peace? What does care for creation have to do with our call to follow Christ? How can we renew community through prayer, study and action? This five-session series features diverse stories of environmental injustice and the hope that inspired grassroots solutions for change. Each session includes stories (written and optional suggested video), small and large group discussions, prayer, and suggestions for action. NOTE: This is a PDF download. When you purchase a copy, you will receive a link to download the resource after your payment has processed. Price: $5.00 to download 1-5 copies; $10.00 for 6 and up. Order on the web or at 814-520-6245.

Peacemaking Quote

We must say, “We want a just system! A system that enables everyone to get on.” We must say: “We don’t want this globalized economic system which does us so much harm!” Men and women must be at the center as God desires, and not money! - Pope Francis