



# Pax Scotia

## Issue 55

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## Listening From The Heart - A lesson from the Holy Land

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Thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank are no longer allowed to work in Israel. They are jobless, with no income. The tourism industry has collapsed. Bethlehem is a dead city: shops and hotels closed. In addition to the already existing checkpoints, Israel has added dozens of checkpoints in the West Bank, even operating 'flying' checkpoints. Palestinians must queue for hours to cross these. Many do not get to work or school; many do not get home. It destroys the economy and social life.

At the same time, the settlers are given free rein to lash out aggressively at the Palestinians. Even children on their way to school are harassed. The settlers' intention is not only to continue occupying the entire region of Judea and Samaria, but more importantly to completely annex that area. Most Palestinian villages are already surrounded by the settlements.

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One of many moving encounters was with two Comboni

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**Inspired by their Christian faith, Daoud and the Nassars are an powerful example of non-violent resistance through their motto: "We refuse to be enemies."**

Instead their aim is to attempt to transform their pain and frustration into positive actions that will help create a better future. They continue to plant and harvest their crops, especially olive trees which are

trees which are especially significant to Palestinian culture.

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You can find out more about the HLC, including reading and downloading their Final Communique released at the end of the visit, at: [Holy Land Coordination](#).

You can learn more about and support Daoud and Tent of Nations at: [Home | Tent of Nations](#).



Above: Anne-Marie with Daoud Nassar

Below: Anne-Marie against the backdrop of Bethlehem



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## Membership Reminder

Please pay **in November** on the **membership page of our website**, or, if you pay by online banking, please give your name to identify your payment.

If you wish to pay by cheque, send to the address below, cheques payable to Pax Christi Scotland.

You can also make regular donations on our 'donate' page or by standing order - thank you.

Membership fees per annum are £10 for waged, £5 for unwaged.

Explore the website for all our activities:

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[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[PaxChristiScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[@PaxScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

Snail mail:

Pax Christi Scotland

c/o Xaverian Missionaries

Calder Avenue

Coatbridge ML5 4JS

## YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

<https://www.youtube.com/>

[@paxchristiscotland](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

[land](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

Click on the word 'Subscribed' and you will be informed whenever a new recording is posted.

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## Martha Inés Romero-Pax Christi International Secretary General's Scottish Visit

Martha Inés Romero, Secretary General of Pax Christi International, has accepted our invitation to visit Scotland and to engage not only with Pax Christi Scotland but with agencies of the Church and civil society.



Our executive has organised a packed schedule, and we hope that Pax Christi Scotland members and friends will join us on what will essentially be a Lenten journey of hope. Here is the updated schedule. The asterisked events are ones we hope you will attend:

\*\*Monday March 3, she will give a talk at 227 St Andrews Building, Glasgow University. The title is "A Living Theology of Peace: Exploring Gospel Non-Violent solutions to contemporary Global issues." 5pm-6pm.

Tuesday March 4: Martha Inés will give the Reflection in the Scottish Parliament, and then there will be a Parliamentary Reception from 6.30- 8pm.

\*\*Wednesday March 5: We will join the annual Catholic Worker Ash Wednesday Vigil at Faslane nuclear base around 2pm

Thursday March 6: Martha Inés will visit SCIAF, whose Lenten campaign this year is focused on Colombia. Martha Inés is Colombian and joins us from her home country.

\*\*Friday & Saturday March 7 & 8: Catholic Bishops Interreligious Dialogue Committee annual symposium at the Conforti Centre in Coatbridge. Please book through [www.interreligiousdialogue.org.uk](http://www.interreligiousdialogue.org.uk) - email [joseph.sikora@bcos.org.uk](mailto:joseph.sikora@bcos.org.uk). Friday evening from 7.30pm-9pm and all day Saturday - you can stay at Conforti overnight or simply attend each session.

\*\*\*Sunday-Tuesday, March 9-11: Pax Christi Scotland Residential Gathering This is a residential event at the Conforti Centre for Pax Christi Scotland members. Please email [anna.sweeney@xavs.org](mailto:anna.sweeney@xavs.org) to book.

Martha Inés will then leave us for Brussels, the HQ of Pax Christi International, for the events there that will mark our peace organisation's 80th anniversary. We are most grateful to her for giving her time and wisdom.



## The Pax Christ Scotland Book Project - the update

The Catholic Nonviolence initiative published *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace within the Church and the World* in 2020. The text explores how the Church can return to the tradition of Gospel nonviolence and, in doing so, enrich the world.

Pax Christ Scotland launched our online monthly reading group last November to study this inspirational text, led by Anna Blackman. The recording of each meeting can be accessed on our website (<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/book-project/>). You will be able to access all Anna's notes, etc. at that link. The next meeting is on Monday, **March 17 at 7pm**.

Haven't signed up yet? It's never too late:

Register with <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pax-christi-scotland-tickets-1041817703797?aff=oddtcreator>

Step 2: Eventbrite will send you the link to the Zoom meeting. Sign up for all events or singly. All the information is also on our website (<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>)





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Snail mail:

Pax Christi Scotland  
c/o Xaverian Missionaries  
Calder Avenue  
Coatbridge ML5 4JS

## YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

<https://www.youtube.com/>

[@paxchristiscotland](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

[land](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

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# Pax Scotia

## Issue 55

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Secretary: the Scottish visit update details



## Listening From The Heart - A lesson from the Holy Land

*Fr Paul Lansu is a board member Pax Christi International and parish priest in Borgerhout (Antwerp), Belgium. Since his ordination 1981, he has visited the Holy Land (Israel, Palestine and Jordan) regularly. Earlier this year he participated in a visit by a group of bishops (including the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Most Reverend William Nolan), and met with Pax Christi International partners.*

After the 19 January 2025 ceasefire, most Gazans have tried to return to their original homes, if they are still there. The little parish of The Holy Family with Fr Gabriel Romanelli has provided shelter in the church, clean water and necessary medical facilities. They are supported by the Latin Patriarchate and by Caritas. They celebrate worship every day and draw strength and perseverance (Sumud) from their faith in a God of peace.

Thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank are no longer allowed to work in Israel. They are jobless, with no income. The tourism industry has collapsed. Bethlehem is a dead city: shops and hotels closed. In addition to the already existing checkpoints, Israel has added dozens of checkpoints in the West Bank, even operating 'flying' checkpoints. Palestinians must queue for hours to cross these. Many do not get to work or school; many do not get home. It destroys the economy and social life.

At the same time, the settlers are given free rein to lash out aggressively at the Palestinians. Even children on their way to school are harassed. The settlers' intention is not only to continue occupying the entire region of Judea and Samaria, but more importantly to completely annex that area. Most Palestinian villages are already surrounded by the settlements.

Tens of thousands of Israelis have left their country in search of safer places and Palestinians are also trying to emigrate.

Meanwhile, the Latin Patriarchate has been able to offer temporary work for thousands of Palestinians. That way, they still have a minimum income. Thus, we found ourselves renovating and restoring many rooms and parts of the Latin Patriarchate's seminary buildings in Beit Jala.

One of many moving encounters was with two Comboni

sisters who run a school in East Jerusalem, right against the separation wall. Their convent has two units: the wall is in between. They must walk several kilometres to see each other. They also work with dozens of Bedouin communities in the desert. These communities are also harassed by young aggressive settlers and their tent camps are surrounded by new settlements. They not only risk losing their culture but are also forced to leave the area. The sisters are a great support to these Bedouin communities. They are present with those people who are suffering.

I also met with Robi Damelin and Elana Kaminka of the Parents Circle Families Forum (PCFF), an Israeli Palestinian organisation of more than 800 families. All have lost an immediate family member to the ongoing conflict. Robi's son David was killed in 2002 by a young Palestinian who had killed several Israeli soldiers and civilians. After several years, the Israeli army was able to catch David's killer, who is still in prison today. There is a chance that he is one of the Palestinian prisoners who will be released as part of the 19 January 2025 Gaza ceasefire. Robi is in contact with the perpetrator's parents. Not taking revenge on perpetrators and trying to forgive, however difficult, is the ethos of the group. And forgiving is not easy.

Elana's eldest son was in the Israeli army and stationed 700 metres above the Gaza Strip on the coast. On 7 October, at 8.30 am, their unit was hit by Hamas bombs. He was killed along with many other soldiers. As a mother of a soldier, you are left with many questions, but she refuses to hate.

'Listening from the heart' is a project the PCFF families want to spread to the world. 'I listen from my heart.'

I learned from them that we must speak from the heart, show that we love the other person. We must feel and share the bitterness, pain and suffering of the other person. This, their lesson taught me, is how trust is established, and reconciliation can begin to grow.

*Paul Lansu*



*Since Donald Trump was once more sworn in as president of the United States, he has alarmed countries around the world with a series of measures intended to impose tariffs, cut aid, exclude Ukraine from peace talks, and in the case of the Middle East, remove the people of Gaza to build what would seem to be a Riviera-style complex. Pax Christi International spokesperson Nick Mele reflects on what all this might mean for world peace.*

## Donald Trump & the Prospect for Peace

Almost daily, the reality of the Trump Administration's impact on the world changes. Every day, a new distorted or false story about the misuse of government funds captivates social media and some more traditional media outlets while the same media ignore small voices pointing out how the cessation of assistance programs, including emergency food distribution and the firing of aid workers, undermines U.S. efforts to save lives, support democracy and build peace in places like Sudan.

At the same time, the Trump Administration sows discord within the U.S., continually spreading disinformation and lies about the Biden Administration, transgender people and immigrants. Deporting immigrants (and some citizens) to other nations and threatening to assimilate Canada, Greenland and Gaza seem designed to create controversy. Indeed, Mr. Trump thrives on controversies and his actions often seem intended to create chaos and upset norms rather than create a better outcome for anyone. We can expect similar disruptions and chaos throughout his term of office.

The reaction has begun with Democrats speaking up after nearly a month of crises, law suits blocking Trump's executive orders, and a growing movement among American farmers to oppose his tariffs and his aid cutoff. It is too soon to predict what sort of government, and what sort of global community, Trump will leave us in four years. One hopeful sign is how readily he claimed victory over Mexico and Canada, both of which countered his tariff threats with promises to do what they are already doing on their U.S. borders. It might be that he has no plans to follow-up on other actions he says he will take.

As I am writing, Trump has announced that he opened negotiations for peace between Russia and Ukraine in a discussion with Vladimir Putin. It is difficult to imagine Ukraine ceding territory, especially the Crimea, to Russia. Trump, who has suggested that Ukraine do just that to end the war, often claims great if unsubstantiated successes but his most significant achievements spread chaos. A good example is his impromptu suggestion that the U.S. administer and redevelop Gaza, first shipping the Palestinians who live there to other Arab countries, a plan opposed by all Palestinians and Arabic nations. His offhand remark about this has threatened the current ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Even so, the Trump Administration might be creatively disruptive in some areas, for example in Trump's expressed desire for China to join the U.S. and Russia in talks to limit nuclear weapons. The Biden Administration mentioned a willingness to engage in multilateral talks on nuclear disarmament but never realized that goal. Perhaps the Trump Administration will engage China and Russia in a three way conversation to further limit the arsenals of such weapons that already exist and avert a renewed arms race. The ongoing U.S. nuclear modernization program which spends about \$75 billion annually seems unlikely to advance arms limits. Conflicting words and actions are also typical of Trump, who withdrew from nuclear arms treaties in his first term and is now intent on strengthening the U.S. missile defense system, which has never worked well even in tests conducted under ideal conditions, by adding a component based in outer space.

In short, there is some chance of peace during the Trump Administration, but no one can predict if, when, where or how it will break out.

*Nick Mele*



Nick Mele

*After 25 years as a US diplomat in Africa and Asia, Nick Mele retired to pursue peace outside of government. A faith-based activist, he has worked as a nonviolence trainer for Pax Christi USA; as a founding staff member for the Nonviolent Peaceforce; and as the Pax Christi representative to the Inter-Religious Conference on Article 9, an international group working to reduce militarism and armaments in the Asia-Pacific region. He has served Pax Christi USA and Pax Christi International as a consultant on nuclear issues since 2014. Currently, he coordinates the Pax Christi nuclear abolition working group and works locally in Western Washington state toward abolition of nuclear weapons and to inform US Catholics about nuclear weapons issues. Nick contributes to the Pax Christi USA blog and writes on foreign affairs, nonviolence and other justice issues for a variety of publications. He is also a member of the editorial board for A Matter of Spirit, a quarterly journal published by the Inter-community Peace and Justice Center in Seattle, WA. Nick was born in New York City but moved away in 1972 and has been living in Bellingham, Washington, since 2000.*





# We Refuse To Be Enemies -

## A story of Christian nonviolent resistance

*Anne-Marie Clements is a member of Pax Christi Scotland's Executive Committee. She works for the Bishops' Conference of Scotland as the Catholic Social Teaching Engagement Officer at Justice & Peace Scotland, Here she reflects on her experience with Holy Land Coordination 2025.*



Anne-Marie Clements

In January of this year, I was privileged to travel Jerusalem as a delegate of the Holy Land Coordination 2025. On behalf of Justice & Peace Scotland, I accompanied Archbishop William Nolan as he journeyed to meet with other bishops from across Europe for the annual visit.

The Holy Land Coordination is a yearly meeting of bishops, mandated by the Holy See, that is defined by 'four Ps' – Presence, Prayer, Pilgrimage, and Pressure. The bishops, joined by representatives from their associated episcopal conferences and various Christian organisations, go to be present with the Christians who remain in the Holy Land, to let them know they are not forgotten; to pray with them; to encourage pilgrimage to their land; and to advocate on their behalf at home. The Coordination exists to act in solidarity with region's Christian communities and share in the pastoral life of the local Church as it experiences extreme political and social-economic pressure.

We met many people, visited many communities, and heard many stories. Early in our tour we spent the day journeying to several areas around Bethlehem. The people we encountered gave first-hand accounts of the daily injustices endured by Palestinians in the West Bank. I would like to tell just one of those stories now.

Tent of Nations is a project run on beautiful farmlands belonging to Daoud Nassar and his family who are Palestinian Christians and natives of Bethlehem. The Nassar family have owned, farmed and nurtured the land for more than a century. But despite having documented proof that the land was purchased in 1916 by Daoud's grandfather, they are continuously resisting attempts by Israel to designate their farm as "state land". They have been engaged in legal battles in various courts for over 30 years.

Undeterred by the hostility and intimidation they face from Israeli authorities, including being cut off from electricity and running water and having the main road to their farm blocked by the military, the Nassars are steadfast in their commitment to remain on their land, as in Daoud's words: "What we inherited, we cannot sell."

At Tent of Nations they grow and harvest a variety of crops, such as olives, grapes, apricots and nuts. The farm is surrounded on all sides by illegal Israeli settlements. The family face constant violence and intimidation from settlers who have attacked members of the family directly, damaged their property, and destroyed their crops by cutting them down or setting them on fire, all with the goal of forcing the Nassars to abandon their land.

**Inspired by their Christian faith, Daoud and the Nassars are an powerful example of non-violent resistance through their motto: "We refuse to be enemies."**

Instead their aim is to attempt to transform their pain and frustration into positive actions that will help create a better future. They continue to plant and harvest their crops, especially olive trees which are

trees which are especially significant to Palestinian culture.

To ensure access to electricity and a reliable water supply, they have set up solar panels, generators, and systems for collecting and storing water. They have hosted thousands of volunteers from many nations over the years who come in solidarity to provide an international presence (which helps lessen the incidents of settler violence), to give their time to help run the farm, and to witness, hear, and tell Daoud's story.

The story of the Nassar family is by no means unique. Their account mirrors the accounts of countless others who are in much need for the realisation of justice and peace for all in The Holy Land.

*Anne-Marie Clements*

You can find out more about the HLC, including reading and downloading their Final Communique released at the end of the visit, at: [Holy Land Coordination](#).

You can learn more about and support Daoud and Tent of Nations at: [Home | Tent of Nations](#).



Above: Anne-Marie with Daoud Nassar

Below: Anne-Marie against the backdrop of Bethlehem



## Our website

Blogs, podcasts, the book project, past and future events – these are all on our Pax Christi Scotland website. All newsletters are archived there. You can pay your annual membership fee on the Membership page and make donations. Please explore and share:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

Continued thanks to webmaster Chris Boles of Caledonian Websites:

<https://www.caledonianwebsites.com/>

## Membership Reminder

Please pay **in November** on the **membership page of our website**, or, if you pay by online banking, please give your name to identify your payment.

If you wish to pay by cheque, send to the address below, cheques payable to Pax Christi Scotland.

You can also make regular donations on our 'donate' page or by standing order - thank you.

Membership fees per annum are £10 for waged, £5 for unwaged.

Explore the website for all our activities:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

## Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

<http://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[PaxChristiScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[@PaxScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxScotland)

Snail mail:

Pax Christi Scotland  
c/o Xaverian Missionaries  
Calder Avenue  
Coatbridge ML5 4JS

## YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

<https://www.youtube.com/>

[@paxchristiscotland](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

[land](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

Click on the word 'Subscribed' and you will be informed whenever a new recording is posted.

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## Martha Inés Romero-Pax Christi International Secretary General's Scottish Visit

Martha Inés Romero, Secretary General of Pax Christi International, has accepted our invitation to visit Scotland and to engage not only with Pax Christi Scotland but with agencies of the Church and civil society.



Our executive has organised a packed schedule, and we hope that Pax Christi Scotland members and friends will join us on what will essentially be a Lenten journey of hope. Here is the updated schedule. The asterisked events are ones we hope you will attend:

\*\*Monday March 3, she will give a talk at 227 St Andrews Building, Glasgow University. The title is "A Living Theology of Peace: Exploring Gospel Non-Violent solutions to contemporary Global issues." 5pm-6pm.

Tuesday March 4: Martha Inés will give the Reflection in the Scottish Parliament, and then there will be a Parliamentary Reception from 6.30- 8pm.

\*\*Wednesday March 5: We will join the annual Catholic Worker Ash Wednesday Vigil at Faslane nuclear base around 2pm

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