



Pax Scotia

Issue 23

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Answering the call to support refugees

Offering refugees the support called for by Pope Frances is not proving easy. The environment engendered by the UK Home Office grows ever more hostile. Refugee rescue activist Brendan Woodhouse, one of the speakers we heard at our event on this issue earlier in June, suggested the policies may be racist, but families from war-torn Ukraine are also facing difficulties as visas fail to materialise.

Jill Kent, chair of Justice and Peace Scotland, has been working to bring a refugee family to her home town of Inverness. It has been frustrating.

Here she tells the story of a prayerful journey and her hopes for a peaceful outcome for one family seeking refuge.



God of love, God of peace,

We thank you for all that you have provided for us. We ask for your help and strength to make courageous choices so that we may share from our abundance with our brothers and sisters, who do not have what we have.

Help us to open our hearts and our homes, to share our stories, and learn from each other. In that way may we truly grow in peace.

Amen.

Imagine two groups of people across the world from each another on the opposite ends of a prayer. One is a family fleeing a dangerous situation, or famine, hoping and praying to be let through the difficult asylum process and be accepted into a safe country. The other group is a collection of people in Inverness from different backgrounds, praying that they will be approved to welcome this family in need.

We have all watched the human migration problem growing in recent years.

Here is the link where people can find more information:

<https://resetuk.org/about/what-is-community-sponsorship>

In 2015 Pope Francis called on parishes across Europe to take in one refugee family to help solve that problem. Our Inverness Justice and Peace group discussed what we could do to help the situation – and we began our journey with a prayer.

After months of praying, we started to research what it would take to welcome a refugee family into our community. That's when we learned about a Community Sponsorship scheme through the Home Office. It is one of the few safe and legal routes that a family has to begin a new life in the UK. We were warned from the beginning that it is a lengthy process, and the warnings were not wrong! We have been working on this project for the past 18 months.

Some of the basic requirements demanded by the scheme have been to fundraise £11,000, find a charity to sponsor us and find a home for that family. I could list the many setbacks we have faced in this process, but we have stayed determined to keep our sights on the end goal of welcoming a family. More important has been the opportunity to meet and work with many kind and generous people also wanting to be part of a solution.

Now we are getting close to being matched to a family chosen by the Home Office. It will soon be time to get the home ready and prepare for their arrival. But of course, considering that there are an estimated 100 million people having to leave their homes in search of safety or refuge, we know this is just a drop in the ocean.

It is one small contribution to the worldwide problem, but the difference it will make to this one family will be monumental. And alleviating the suffering of others is a small step towards making the world a more peaceful place.

Jill Kent

War is an abomination. The dictionary definition is 'a state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country'. While praying that predictions of a prolonged war in Ukraine are unfounded, we recall that the 20th century's two world wars lasted for four and six years respectively. But what about Korea - still officially at war 70 years on?



Still seeking peace after seven decades

Sandy Sneddon, Asia Secretary of the Church of Scotland's Faith Action Team, has become a close ally of Pax Christi Scotland as we work together to campaign for an official end to war in Korea. Here he explains Korea's situation and the action that we can all take to turn an amnesty into a peace treaty and make the world a safer place.

Korea Peace Appeal

Seventy years ago, the Korean War was raging, not ending until June 1953, with an Armistice rather than a peace treaty. Nearly five million people died, more than half were civilians – about 10 percent of Korea's pre-war population.

Among the military casualties were over a thousand British soldiers. They are commemorated at the Korean War Memorial at Witchcraig near Bathgate. The Memorial is an arboretum of 1,114 native Scottish trees, one for every man who died, and a shrine surrounded by two mounds in the shape of the Ying and Yang on the Korean flag. The shrine is built in the traditional style of a Korean shrine and contains name boards listing all the men who died.

By the end of that brutal war perhaps 10 million families were separated on either side of the 38th Parallel. In the south, the Republic of Korea entered 34 years of military rule, while the Kim dynasty in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) devised the Juche political doctrine that has led to isolation, widespread poverty, and human rights abuses while at the same time enduring the harshest sanctions regime in the world.

At a webinar in January 2022, hosted by National Christian Council in Korea (NCKC) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), churches in Britain and Ireland were urged to support the Korea Peace Appeal.

Seven decades on from the war we agree that "It is time to end this pain" caused by years of political and military confrontation and hostile relations.

The hostile policies aimed at discrediting and forcing one side to yield have only aggravated the situation. Since the 1953 The Korean Peninsula has suffered from threats of nuclear war and has fuelled a global arms race and nuclear proliferation. Without a formal end to the Korean War, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will not be achieved. We call upon the governments involved to take sincere and responsible action: End the Korean War Now.

Let's change the Korean Peninsula from a symbol of confrontation and conflict into a birthplace of peace and coexistence together with peace-loving people around the world.

NCKC is one of over 370 civil society groups, that include each of the country's seven faith communities, campaigning to end the Korean War by collecting 100 million signatures by June 2023, the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Agreement.

Korea Peace Appeal

The Korea Peace Appeal aims to:

- End the Korean War and establish a peace agreement
- Create a Korean Peninsula and a world free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat
- Resolve the conflict with dialogue and cooperation instead of sanctions and pressure
- Break from the vicious cycle of the arms race and invest in human security and environmental sustainability



Korean War Memorial, Witchgate, nr Bathgate

Action for peace in Korea

- * Go to the website at: <https://en.endthekoreanwar.net/>
- * Read more
- * And please, sign the appeal.

(Also on www.paxchristiscotland.org)

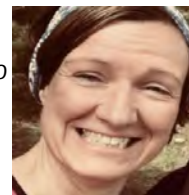


"If they were white..." Is Scotland trying hard enough?

One of the powerful speakers on our 'Challenging the Hostile Environment' online event on June 13 was Brendan Woodhouse, a rescue activist who explained the stark realities faced by refugees seeking sanctuary.

He read his poem 'If they were white...', and this inspired **Nicola Jane Munro** to write this article for Pax Scotia. It challenges us all to think about our attitudes to those we see as 'other'. Scotland prides itself on its tolerance and diversity - but are we really trying hard enough?

Nikki Munro



In many (Scottish) schools, we have traditionally studied: white European male artists; white male scientists, aspects of history and geography from a 'western', 'civilised' British/European perspective.....I could go on. The result: our young people only seeing the world through the narrow lens of a particular lived experience. We need to decolonise our curriculum, subject by subject and call out that which seeks to stifle and reject.

My learning during the course was huge: my unconscious bias was exposed, my white privilege revealed, and my white fragility threatened.

These terms challenged me and it took explanation and listening to really understand. In this short article I am not able to explain in detail but I will provide some links that hopefully will help.

If white people can begin to understand themselves and the privileges that white skin brings, they may indeed, with the grace of God, help to change the world. We ALL belong to the ONE human family, each made in the image and likeness of God. Brothers and sisters.

Jesus, our Lord, God, brother, teacher and friend, himself, coming from Nazareth, would have been non-white. He loves all unequivocally...and so should we, as well as pray that we 'do unto others as we would have done unto us'.

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

'Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man no more....'

John B Foley, SJ

On Monday 13th June, I attended a webinar organised by Pax Christi Scotland. I heard the witness of three knowledgeable and inspiring speakers regarding 'Challenging the Hostile Environment' of refugees. This powerful and emotional witness touched the hearts of all who listened, and we were encouraged to take the practical action of writing to our MPs, airlines and institutions who house refugees, to challenge the current hostile reactions to those fleeing for their lives.

One of the speakers, a refugee rescue activist, spoke of his first hand experience, trying to save the lives of those desperate enough to flee violence, oppression and war by any means possible, across the Mediterranean sea. His recounting of his experiences was heart rending. And he is convinced that the fate of some refugees, compared with others, is rooted in racism. This resonated with me.

As a Depute Head Teacher in a primary school on the outskirts of Dundee, I was part of a cohort - the first of its kind in Scotland - to undertake a professional learning course entitled 'Building Racial Literacy'. It's purpose: to educate educators about the social construct of race, in order to support us to lead anti-racist practices in our schools.

For most (white) people, the scourge of racism was catapulted into our consciousness and conversations following the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. For non-white people, racism is part of their daily lives. By this, I do not necessarily mean that people of colour are overtly abused (although this does happen, where their colour of skin/religious belief/attire is used to abuse them), but the way in which society is constructed, to further empower those who already hold the power: the white people.

Let me try to explain.

Want to know more....?

(White privilege: John Amaechi)

<https://twitter.com/bbcbitesize/status/1290969898517254145?s=24&t=dhl5krJh2xVLzsQfeG-QBg>

(Unconscious privilege: John Barnes) <https://www.itv.com/hub/the-jonathan-ross-show/2a1166a0211>

(Powerful documentary from 20202)

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-school-that-tried-to-end-racism>

Our website

Blogs, podcasts, 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

Easiest method? Pay on the membership page of our website.

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 - thank you.

Membership fees 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>

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

[@PaxScotland](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/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szp95g

[UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szp95g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szp95g)

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

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May they rest in peace...

Bruce Kent was a giant in the peace movement, and Pax Christi Scotland joins with all who mourn his passing early in June.

A more fitting tribute to him appeared on our website, written by Arianna Andreangeli, a member of our executive board and someone who was privileged to call him a friend.

There are some members of Pax Christi Scotland who will recall Bruce Kent attending a meeting in Musselburgh at which he encouraged the founding of a separate Scottish organisation. It took a little time, but we made it - and the peacemaker continued to encourage the new Pax Christi kid on the block.

Arianna wrote that she gathers strength from the example of Bruce Kent, recognising that 'Bruce would have not stopped the work of peace'.

May Pax Christi Scotland continue that work of peace, with the help of all he inspired to the end of his very long life.

Brendan Woodhouse, fighter, refugee rescue activist, poet and author, who spoke so powerfully at our event ***Challenging the Hostile Environment***, clearly inspired all who listened to his account of the plight of refugees attempting to reach safety by crossing the Mediterranean.

Devastatingly, Brendan faced tragedy in his own family just days after he took part in our event. His daughter Jennifer and her best friend Lara were involved in a car accident which took their lives. Brendan describes them as 'The kindest, funniest, most hardworking people and wonderful friends. To know them was to love them and they will forever be remembered for the joy they shared'.

Pax Christi Scotland offers sincere condolences to Brendan and his wife and family. May Jennifer and Lara rest in peace

The recording of our online event, 'Challenging the Hostile Environment', is now available on the Pax Christi Scotland YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NX5ttEDN90&t=5s>

Brendan Woodhouse's book, *Doro*, is to be published by Unbound, and you can fund it by going to https://unbound.com/books/doro/?utm_campaign=doro&utm_medium=AuthorSocial&utm_source=AuthorActivity&fbclid=IwAR3upW6mUn9z7eeeXKRLNkD7QyArnmNrFSMn8tyWpZVRpHlb4XikKTQBCc

This is the story of one refugee - it is the spirit of the stories of all refugees.

The Pax Christi Scotland statement on the UK government's policy to deport refugees to Rwanda can be found on the website:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/>. This was co-signed by Pax Christi England & Wales and Pax Christi International and has been sent to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Home Secretary Priti Patel.



Doro
Goumāñeh