



Pax Scotia

Issue 51

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Re-committing to Nonviolence: The background to our book project

Judy Coode is communications director for Pax Christi USA and former project coordinator of Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. She spent 20 years with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She lives and works in Washington, DC. She co-edited *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World*, our book project which begins November 11 (See P4 for details).

The 2020 publication of *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World* was the result of years of dedication of many Pax Christi members and other committed peacemakers from around the world, and the hope is that it will be used as a resource to show that nonviolence – as a strategy, a philosophy, a discipline, and as a response to violence – is integral to the heart of the Catholic faith.

The efforts to move the Catholic Church toward a stronger embrace of nonviolence started at least 10 years ago. Marie Dennis (then co-president of Pax Christi International) and several others had been discussing that, regarding the work necessary to create a lasting peace, it was not enough to simply call for an end to violence, but rather to shift our understanding of and commitment to nonviolence.

The support of the Catholic Church, with its global reach and profound influence on society, for this shift would be of critical importance.

Marie and her colleagues spent a long time gently approaching what was then known as the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to ask if they would be willing to engage in a conversation about the role of Gospel nonviolence in the life of the Church. After many months, the Pontifical Council agreed to co-sponsor, with Pax Christi International, a gathering of 80 theologians and peace practitioners from around the world who would convene on the topic of nonviolence and just peace.

That first conference was held in April 2016. Participants drafted the "Appeal to the Catholic Church to recommit to

Gospel nonviolence" which thousands of individual Catholics and Catholic communities and organisations have endorsed. Soon after the April 2016 event, Pax Christi International formally announced the creation of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), the programme through which Pax Christi International promotes its work for nonviolence.

In order to broaden and strengthen its work, CNI decided to create five roundtables, international conversations comprised of 10-25 people with deep experience in theology and/or nonviolent practice, on five different aspects of nonviolence: 1) The foundational theology of nonviolence; 2) Biblical foundations of nonviolence, including its centrality to the life and mission of Jesus; 3) Nonviolence and just peace: A new moral framework for Catholic theology; 4) Integrating Gospel nonviolence at every level of the Church; 5) The power of nonviolence: Concrete experience, principles, methods, and effectiveness in the past, present, and envisioned future.

Each roundtable met online on a regular basis for 18 months during 2017-18, for rich conversations and thoughtful analysis. Each group prepared a well-curated document by the end of the project. These findings were shared at the second CNI conference, held at the offices of the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development.

To share the roundtables' work more effectively, Pax Christi International decided to put the five papers together into one document, and, with a bit of additional material, publish them as *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World*, the book you about to study with Anna Blackman. Marie Dennis, Ken Butigan, Rose Berger and I were tasked with arranging and editing the material; a member of the Pax Christi International staff provided the design and layout; and a contract was signed with a print-on-demand company. The English-language book was published in 2020, along with study guides for students and small groups. The book has since been published in Spanish and German, and excerpts in French and Italian. I hope that in the coming months you are inspired by the book to renew your work for a nonviolent world. *Judy Coode*



The Secretary at the Bishops' Conference of Scotland Office for Care of Creation explains the commitment of the Bishops as we head towards COP 29. The 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29) will convene from 11 to 22 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Climate and Peace Entwined

The Care of Creation Office of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland was founded prior to COP26 being held in Glasgow in November 2021 and, in preparation, the Conference announced that it was divesting from fossil fuels.

Hosting COP26 in Glasgow was regarded by the Bishops as an ideal opportunity to outline the Catholic theological vision and tradition of environmental/ecological ethics, and the chair of our group, Fr. Gerard Maguiness, was invited to join the Holy See delegation.

An awakening of conscience is really our first goal – to raise awareness at the national, diocesan, and parish level of the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Our Care of Creation Group meets quarterly, and membership includes representation from three of the agencies of the Bishops' Conference – Justice & Peace, SCIAF, SCES (Scottish Catholic Education Service), as well as representation from Eco-Congregation Scotland, and parish representation from various dioceses. Our volunteers have also assisted and led workshops at national educational events.

We work nationally with the other Christian denominations on the Scottish Churches Committee's Net Zero Sub-Committee. We have produced some practical and spiritual resources for

parishes, and are currently committed to a survey of all church properties at a diocesan and national level to plan our priorities in terms of energy efficiency and finance.

Our Episcopal President, Archbishop William Nolan, and Fr. Maguiness both represented the Bishops' Conference of Scotland at the CCEE (Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe) meeting in Munich in June 2024 which had as its theme "The Cry of Creation as a Challenge for an Ecological Conversation".

Special mention should be made of the resource made by SCES for schools to enroll as Laudato Si' schools, with 80% of all Catholic schools in Scotland currently signed up. To further encourage the work of Laudato Si' primary schools, the Care of Creation Office, liaising with SCES, and generously funded by the Knights of St. Columba, held a 'Design a Garden' Competition which attracted entries from primary schools from across all eight dioceses. Our congratulations go to our winners, Our Lady's Primary School in Perth, who were presented with their winner's trophy by Bishop Andrew McKenzie in September. The competition for 2025 will be launched in January.

In September 2024, we held our inaugural national Season of Creation Conference in St. Margaret's, Raploch, which was attended by people from all eight dioceses, many of whom are already seasoned campaigners who valued the opportunity to come together and be reinvigorated by each other's enthusiasm and commitment.

This too showcased the work of agencies such as SCIAF, Justice & Peace, and Eco-Congregation Scotland. At the conference, there was a strong desire from the attendees for a Mass to be celebrated for the success of this year's

COP29 meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan.

We are delighted that Archbishop Nolan will celebrate this Mass on Thursday 14th November 2024 in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Glasgow at 1pm, and all are invited.

After the Mass, we hope to have a live online link to Ben Wilson, Director of Public Engagement at SCIAF, who will be attending COP29 in person.

All in all, the Care of Creation Office, on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, wants to promote the faith-inspired vision that is outlined not only in Laudato Si' but also Evangelii Gaudium, Fratelli Tutti, and more recently in Laudate Deum and Dignitas Infinita.



<https://www.bcos.org.uk/Care-of-Creation>

The Office for the Care of Creation was established by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland in 2021. Inspired by Pope Francis' documents Laudato si and Laudate Deum, it provides advice and guidance to dioceses and parishes to assess their carbon footprint and discern how to work towards carbon neutrality. It also collaborates with Eco-Congregation Scotland, SCIAF, and Justice & Peace on issues at home and abroad.



One Small Act of Compassion

Antonia Sobocki is a survivor of familial abuse who grew up depending on the church as her sanctuary and safety. Antonia founded the UK LOUDfence movement after learning about the extent of abuse in the Church. The LOUDfence was founded to help a small community of Christians in Cumbria but has spread throughout the UK, Europe and to the United States. Pope Francis has formally endorsed the UK LOUDfence movement.



Antonia Sobocki

The LOUDfence started as one small act of compassion from one Christian to another in a tiny rural church in a small village in northern England you will never have heard of. It was started to alleviate pain caused by a local crisis.

The Anglican Bishop of Carlisle wrote a character reference for a clergyman convicted of abusing two children. That bishop is not a terrible man, but he did make a terrible mistake. He made a mistake we all think we could not make. He failed to see the victim. He did not think of the children involved or how his actions would hurt them further. I wonder how many times we have we failed to see the victim? If we did see the victim, would we have the courage to say anything?

The LOUDfence allows you to show compassion by tying ribbons and messages on a fence so survivors will see them and take comfort. The evidence shows that it works.

We held our first LOUDfence in 2020. We hoped it might help a few people in a little village in northern England. I posted some pictures on social media with a question, "Is anybody out there?" We had responses from Australia, the US, Germany, Poland, Portugal and all over the UK.

The response was so big that the LOUDfence spread to cathedrals all over England. The outpouring of love spread from England to the Bishop's Council of France and last year the Bishops held a LOUDfence in Lourdes. The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, led by Cardinal Sean O'Malley held a LOUDfence in Rome. We are honoured the LOUDfence has been recognised and welcomed by the Holy Father, Pope Francis. He said the LOUDfence is a symbol of hope for the whole Church. This April past we took the LOUDfence to West Virginia in the United States and to Oban in Scotland.

One small act of compassion in rural England had the power to spread to the other side of Europe and cross the Atlantic and touch the lives of countless people on its journey there.

We were deeply honoured to be invited for the first time to Scotland, the origin of LOUDfence, the home of the cloutie tree which has been a feature of the Scottish landscape for centuries and our inspiration for this project. The LOUDfence in Oban is the inspiration for the hymn for the LOUDfence, "Ribbons of Hope".

No matter where we are in the world we are one holy catholic and apostolic church. We are the church which adores and glorifies God, who is perfect love, and he calls on us to love each other.

Silence and indifference are not loving. We are a church in need of reconciliation and healing. We must support and care for all who have been affected by safeguarding failures of the past.

Sometimes we look at the scale of the harm which has befallen children and vulnerable adults in the church and wider society, and it can be overwhelming, but please never underestimate what can happen as a result of your one small act of compassion. If you would like to be part of the revolution of compassion, please contact us at LOUDfence.com

Antonia Sobocki



Antonia Sobocki meets Pope Francis

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

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 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>

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

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

[@PaxChristiScotland](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>

[@paxchristiscotland](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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Our book project:

The Catholic Nonviolence initiative published ***Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace within the Church and the World*** in 2020. The text, the result of a global consultation with activists, organisers, Church leaders, social scientists, and theologians, explores how the Church can return to the tradition of Gospel nonviolence and, in doing so, enrich the world (See P1).

At **7pm UK time on November 11**, Pax Christ Scotland launches an online monthly reading group to study this inspirational text, led by Anna Blackman (see below). In each meeting, the text will be used to examine a particular theme within nonviolence. Anna will talk about that theme, then there will be discussion and a Q & A. The course is totally free, costing only the price of the book (subsidies may be available). Everyone can feel comfortable with the course, from novices to nonviolence to seasoned veterans. In our world of current conflict, and with the Synod highlighting nonviolence, this is such an important issue.

How to sign up for the course:

Step 1: Register with <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pax-christi-scotland-tickets-1041817703797?aff=oddttdtcreator>

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

How to get the book:

There is a link on our website for the book:

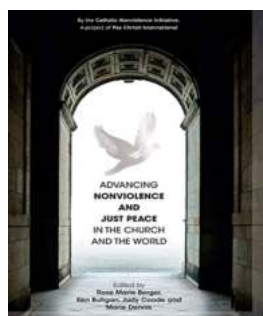
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Advancing-nonviolence-peace-Christi-International-ebook/dp/B08WNFBT8Y/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

Amazon have a **Kindle** version for £12.99. The paperback is £24.87. You can also find the paperback at https://www.thegreatbritishbookshop.co.uk/products/advancing-nonviolence-and-just-peace?srsId=AfmBOorH-Id-o7pWk3NxE8WeedjpSV6AgmE3BYK-G4z_Gq0kQ0Xq6GRM for £20.50 + p&p

Please contact us at <https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/contact/> if you have problems accessing the book.

Anna Blackman is a Lecturer in Catholic Religious Education at the University of Glasgow. She serves on the Columban Missionaries in Britain's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee and co-chairs the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church's roundtable on nonviolence and just peace. Anna also serves on the Education Committee for the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

This promises to be an inspiring course under Anna's guidance. We look forward to spending time with you.



Anna Blackman