



Pax Scotia

Issue 62

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Could the Auld Alliance bring an end to UK & French nukes?

*Born to an English father and a French mother, **Marc Morgan** was a pupil at the French Lycée in London before studying Philosophy and Theology at Oxford and History at the Université de Paris-X. A member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Trident Ploughshares in Britain and the Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-Violente in France, he has been an anti-nuclear activist in both countries for more than 40 years. Here he spotlights peace events in October & November.*

On 2nd November 2010, the UK and France entered into bilateral treaties known collectively as the 'Lancaster House' Treaties. They comprised a treaty for 'Defence and Security Co-operation' and another relating to 'Joint Radiographic/Hydrodynamics Facilities'. In July this year, Keir Starmer and Emmanuel Macron reaffirmed their commitment to the treaties, and to increased military cooperation between UK and France based on a narrow, militaristic vision of security.

For the third successive year, a coalition of Franco-British religious organisations will be commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the treaties. In November 2023, letters were sent to the UK prime minister and French president respectively. The following year, twelve religious organisations from France, England, Scotland and Wales issued a declaration condemning the spirit of the Treaties and calling for a change of approach.

This year the "coalition" has been greatly expanded. Initially centred around Pax Christi France and Pax Christi England and Wales, it has been broadened to include a number of other organisations including in particular Pax Christi Scotland. This has enabled the coalition to be more ambitious, and we are in consequence planning three related events in 2025:

- October 23: a vigil and press conference near Valduc in France. Valduc is a major French nuclear weapons research establishment, and is with Aldermaston the main centre for Franco-British cooperation on nuclear issues.

- **October 28:** a meeting at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh that will address issues of primary concern to our coalition, and will amongst other things hear a statement from Archbishop William Nolan, Archbishop of Glasgow.

- **November 1:** a conference in London bringing together religious, lay and non-religious speakers from France, England and Scotland. In the afternoon, a walk and vigil will be held taking in the French embassy, Lancaster House and Downing Street.

The rationale for our "coalition" is twofold. First, Christians have a particular responsibility to rediscover and uphold Christ's message of peace, and the radical incompatibility of Christian teaching with the possession, use or threatened use of nuclear weapons; secondly, the UK and France are particularly well placed, providing the will is there, to take radical steps to free humankind from the scourge of these terrifying weapons.

The UK and France are democracies, and each claims to be the birthplace of human rights, and to have contributed, via Scottish, English and French thinkers, to the emergence of the Enlightenment.

As medium powers of historical importance, their renunciation of nuclear weapons would not threaten but would instead enhance their status in the world. Each still has enough influence and diplomatic clout for such a renunciation to be a path-breaking, world-changing step. The collusion of our governments in promoting a militaristic route must be met by a corresponding coming together of activists and believers from our different countries, to promote the paths of peace.

My own commitment is very personal: I am a lapsed Roman Catholic and an Attender at Quaker Meeting, and uphold the Quakers' peace ministry. I am dual national Franco-British, and while my recent ancestry on my father's side is English, I have Celtic blood since my forebears were Welsh; I fully appreciate the unique contribution both Wales and Scotland can make to the debate – not least because of the close ties between Scotland and France.

Marc Morgan

See https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/UK-and-France_Lancaster-House-Treaties_Joint-Declaration_Final_WithSignatories_11122024.pdf

Places at the Scottish Parliament event are limited, but email admin@paxchristiscotland.org if you would like to attend (6pm start)



Dr Philippa Whitford is a retired breast cancer surgeon and former SNP MP who has worked as a medical volunteer in Gaza with Medical Aid for Palestinians, for whom she is now a Trustee.

International Law - a casualty of the Holy Land conflict

As we watch a genocide unfold in Gaza in real-time, we struggle to forget the images of quivering children pulled from the rubble, covered in blood and concrete dust, or parents desperately clutching small white cotton bundles.

We must also remember the pain and grief of the bereaved and hostage families from the Hamas attack, but the scale of Israel's destruction and slaughter in Gaza has brought the world to the edge of the abyss. The official death toll is already approaching 70,000, two thirds of them women and children, and most of us feel utterly helpless at our inability to do anything to stop the killing.

My husband and I worked in Gaza as volunteers in 1991-92 with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). The Strip was under direct military control by the IDF and clashes were common, with young Palestinian protestors throwing stones at the soldiers and getting shot in response. Such gunshot injuries could be life-threatening but we were not dealing with the horrific blast and crush injuries currently faced by Gaza surgeons.

I returned in 2016 to find women with Breast Cancer almost inevitably underwent mastectomy and had only half the survival chances of Israeli women a few miles up the coast.

Again working with MAP, I helped established a partnership between clinicians in Scotland and Gaza to develop specialist breast cancer services. However, with the Strip under blockade since 2007, the biggest challenge remained: getting cancer drugs in, or patients out to receive radiotherapy in Jerusalem.

Despite being protected under International Law, all Gaza's hospitals have been bombed and over 1500 clinical staff have been killed. This amounts to the deliberate destruction of Gaza's healthcare system and, with little access to water or food without the risk of being shot, it is estimated the death toll from disease and malnutrition will even outstrip the casualties of the bombing.

While we are all watching in horror for me it is personal, as I hear the suffering directly through the words of my friends and colleagues. Always hoping the lack of a reply just means their phone is out of charge, I have spent nights flicking between WhatsApp, online news and desperate prayer. Six weeks into the conflict, I received a heartbreaking text from a friend and colleague who lost 48 members of his family in one night when his house was targeted.

"I am in deep pain Philippa, I lost my son Majd, his wife and two of his children. My lovely daughter

Dima, a WHO staff member, her husband and her 5 month child. My little son Omer 17 yrs. Only my wife Aya and little daughter Lama saved alive."

Such tragedies are not uncommon, with many extended families completely wiped out or leaving orphans who are too young to even know their own names.

Then in March, the morning after Israeli bombs destroyed the ceasefire which offered the only glimmer of hope, I received the dreaded WhatsApp message about my close friend: "Have you heard about Nadia?" Nadia and I had been discussing when I might return to Gaza, planning favourite foods to share and looking forward to real hugs instead of just emojis.

She survived 15 months of war only to be killed during a supposed 'ceasefire'.

A major casualty of this conflict is International Law itself, as Western leaders defend the indefensible and continue to supply the weapons delivering death and destruction in Gaza. Instead, they should be working to end the fighting and establish a genuine peace process. Only a just settlement can offer Palestinians and Israelis any hope of peace.

Philippa Whitford



The Reverend David Coleman works ecumenically as Environmental Chaplain for Eco Congregation Scotland, a post gifted by the United Reformed Church. He visits grassroots churches and colleges and engages in conversation with many bodies on spiritual and environmental issues. He curates the Season of Creation resource for Scotland. He is a member of the Iona Community, and active in developing challenging reflective visual/liturgical material. He celebrates 30 years in ordained ministry in September. Here is David's personal reflection on the links between peace & the environment as we come to the end of 2025's Season of Creation.



'Peace with Creation' - Are we even trying?

This year, I'm writing prayers differently. Closer to the defiance of communities for whom 'hallelujah anyway!' is a real source of strength and joy. A 'prayer for resilience' for the board meeting of EcoCongregation Scotland was a turning point.

Daring to be honest with God. Truth sets us free, by God's grace, to be part of healing and peace. Because tomorrow will be worse than today, so the solidarity of the Maker of birds and flowers becomes a more coherent comfort. 'Do not worry about tomorrow.' We're up to our eyes in today!

And how. The accession of a climate denier to horrendous power, and the violence of US withdrawal from climate agreements, came as 1.5 degrees of global warming was exceeded. This year a UK government, of a party once thought left wing, crowed about switching aid to arms, whilst the carbon footprint of the ecocide/genocide in Gaza exceeded that of multiple peaceable nations combined. This month, a colossal, fascist, march in London, amplified by coverage always denied events of such size for goodwill, includes men clutching crosses, chanting hate. Have a nice day!

Science and, even grudgingly, the news media, show how 'natural' disasters have been left behind. More, and worse disasters, expressing the pain and anger of 'nature's' prophetic voice are barely 'news' anymore. Yet robust causal links between injustice and ecocide are already well established by climate science. I'm grateful for Pope Leo acknowledging, albeit cautiously, these links, as the Season began. Economists recognise that only incompetent investors will choose fossil fuels long-term. But still they do. Knowing this is a choice to kill, rather than love their neighbour, human and otherwise. That's why, church leaders do their job well, simply by stating the bleeding obvious: that ecocide - alongside genocide - is 'sin'.

In a reflection for week 2 of the Season of Creation, I observed that if the previously harmless sheep of "creation care" seems to veer off and become the suspect wolf of "peacemaking", then it remains completely on track. The global Season theme this year, "Peace with Creation" has helped end preciousness about defined boundaries of commitment. Poetry and liturgy both challenge such divisions.

Poetry? My first degree was in German. With the gift of Bertolt Brecht's poem 'To those born after': 'What times are these, when a chat about trees seems almost a crime, in collusion with silence on so many misdeeds'. I value how the poet acknowledges spiritual damage done, even to himself, by the experience of violence and oppression, and yet I've said to Christian leaders in training, that to present that vital poetic gift of a sermon or homily lacking mention of "trees" is a 'crime', because it colludes in the toxic disconnection of humanity from the Communion of Creation. That visceral fellowship, which we should not have waited for science to confirm, feeds and sustains us, way beyond basic nutrition. So just as our love of God is impoverished without love for those fellow creatures with whom we're in relationship, [cf 1 John 4:20] so, whatever mode of worship a community might engage in, it misses the mark if it even inadvertently adds to the idolatry of human supremacy.

Pope Francis spoke of "war with Creation", taking care not to separate the suffering of the Earth and "the poor". Writing this, I'm reminded, following conversations with friends in indigenous communities, that it is an oppressor's stratagem to insist that affirming human relatedness to 'animals' is insulting. Non-human is not necessarily sub-human. We are the biodiversity we preserve or destroy, as following God's high calling to humanity, we 'love, listen to, and fiercely protect the Creation we also are'.

David Coleman

Links: Season page 2025: <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creation-2025/>

Prayer for resilience video <https://vimeo.com/1060489607>

Week 2 reflection including Faslane footage <https://vimeo.com/1085642182>

Our website

Blogs, podcasts, book projects, 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:

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Continued thanks to webmaster Chris Boles of Caledonian Websites:

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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:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

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Treading the path of peace contrary to the direction of travel

The Reverend Muriel Pearson was appointed as the Church of Scotland's Mission Partner in Israel/Palestine in September 2021. In October she returns to Scotland as an Interim Minister accompanying a group of congregations in Forth Valley and Clyde Presbytery. Here she reflects on four unexpected years...



I could not have imagined the shocking events since 7th October 2023, when so many have been killed, injured and displaced in Gaza and the UN has declared a famine 'in sight of food'. Or on the West Bank where settler violence has increased in shocking ways.

Awda Hathaleen, teacher and community activist in Masafa Yatta in the South Hebron Hills was shot dead by a settler and as I write this, news comes that the settlers have cut off electricity and water to the brave beleaguered community.

This is one story among many. Many Palestinians have been rounded up, imprisoned without charge and mistreated in detention. Houses in East Jerusalem and the West Bank have been demolished and the Israeli government's stated intention to further divide Palestinian territory and extend illegal occupation is going deeper and further than ever.

Against this backdrop of immense suffering and ongoing humiliation, the Church of Scotland's presence and activity seem insignificant. Yet it matters. Our partners tell us it matters.

As well as the small English-speaking congregation in Jerusalem and Tiberias (in better times bolstered by pilgrims who were often deeply moved by worship in the land where Jesus walked) we have two hotels and a school and many partners ecumenical, interfaith and with groups committed to a just peace.

Much of my experience of leading worship has been via Zoom, but I have come to value this eclectic group of Jesus followers who often feel and think differently than I do, yet who faithfully worship together and pray the prayer for peace in English, Arabic and

Hebrew.

As a denomination which was in the Land before 1948, we have a privileged place, and our presence is a mute reminder that the narrative of the formation of Israel is not as uniform and straight forward as is often presented by Zionists. We hear and reflect the stories of Palestinians remembering the Nakba and still experiencing it.

Our hotel in Jerusalem provides employment for Palestinians from Bethlehem and East Jerusalem. When work permits are greatly restricted this is a lifeline for many families. Now, most guests are Israelis who are not used to meeting Palestinians and Arab Israelis, and who do not expect the welcome and hospitality they receive. In Tiberias our staff is Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze and there are very few places where a large and diverse staff team work so well together and demonstrate that co-existence is possible. This is also the story of Tabeetha School, which like the Scots Hotel (founded as a Medical Mission Hospital) welcomes diversity and promotes acceptance and kindness.

At a time when 'decent people do indecent things', the witness and work of our establishments is important. It has been my job to listen, to stand alongside and share stories of injustice and resilience and bravery with folks in Scotland.

I have found the experience enriching and my faith has deepened. My understanding of 1st century Palestine as a place of occupation and Jesus as non-violent confronter of injustice from the state and from religion has expanded. I have seen the difference brave individuals make when they tread the path of peace contrary to the direction of travel of their society.

Muriel Pearson