



Pax Scotia

Issue 69

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Peacemaking involves reaching across boundaries

Anne Dobbing has been a nurse, a primary teacher, and now volunteers as a language teacher with refugees. She is a very active member of the Pax Christi Scotland executive committee as well as volunteering as a panel member for Children's Hearings Scotland. In her South West Scotland garden she has a peace chapel for people of all faiths & none

We live in a crazy world where news every day is increasingly terrifying and shocking, as people beloved by God and precious in their families, are slaughtered mercilessly by power mad men of war.

Each day I steel myself to read about the latest atrocities and grieve for each of these precious lost souls. One detail that shocked me was that families in Gaza write the names of their children on each of the arms and legs of their children, so that if they are struck by Israeli mortars, their body parts can be identified and returned to their families for burial. No child anywhere should have such an experience.

My own response to the violence in the world has been influenced by my personal faith and trust in God; and by people I respect, including my 96-year-old former parish priest in Portsmouth, Derek Reeve. Five years ago, he challenged me and others to join Pax Christi to work for peace. I searched for the recently formed Pax Christi Scotland, to learn about the lives of people worldwide; and I have been given a focus for active peacemaking.

As a peacemaker, I believe in the importance of prayer, for personal support and as part of a daily routine of action for peace. I pray with the universal church; and I pray every day in silent Contemplative Centering Prayer. I also pray the Rosary, in my own way, naming and focusing on areas of the world where people suffer. I don't understand how God uses my prayers, but I know that somehow prayer is effective in countering violence.

Each day I pray amongst others for the women of Darfur in Sudan, who are victims of savage gang rape by the so-called Rapid Support Forces. And for the Tigrayan women

and girls savagely raped by Eritrean soldiers.

Pax Christi Scotland webinars have taught me so much more about the origins and current events in Palestine. Last year I joined a fund-raising sponsored walk for Medical Aid for Palestinians and discovered a local MAP group here in Galloway. With a small group of local people, I gather each Thursday at 6pm to bang empty pots for five minutes to remind people here that Palestinians are still under attack. MAP Galloway hosted an exhibition recently of Artists work from Palestine in Kirkcudbright and we took turns to volunteer to staff the exhibition to welcome visitors. MAP have also hosted Palestinian musicians and a wonderful Palestinian poet and cookery writer to CatStrand (local Community Arts organisation), which I was privileged to attend.

I pray at home in a tiny chapel for all faiths in my garden, where a sign emphasises that 'All Are Welcome'. My tiny chapel is like the mustard seed that Jesus spoke about which though small, is used by God to bring about his kingdom of peace and love.

Peacemaking for me has always involved reaching across boundaries.

I am now working as a volunteer online English Language teacher four evenings a week, with people from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Egypt. I tell my students that we are all newcomers, trying to build lives peacefully together.

Through Pax Christi Scotland I have learnt much more about weapons of war, especially the cataclysmic threat of nuclear weapons and their cost to our economy. In Children's Hearings Scotland, I read about poverty and suffering of families here in Scotland. And I rage that people still justify spending billions of pounds on nuclear weapons. So with my Pax Christi colleagues I trek to Faslane each year to join peacemakers who seek to live a different way.

And so, as a now elderly - 70-year-old - woman of no particular talent, I am deeply grateful to Pax Christi for the opportunity to be part of peacemaking here in Scotland.

Anne Dobbing



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Building Peace from the Ground Up: A Scottish Response to a Fractured World

It is hard to ignore how unsettled the world feels at the moment. News of conflict, division, and uncertainty seems constant, and it can leave many of us wondering what difference we can really make. Yet peace is not only something negotiated in distant places or shaped by world leaders. It is also something that takes root much closer to home in our conversations, our communities, and the way we choose to respond to one another.

In Scotland, the question is not whether we are affected by global tensions, but how we respond to them in our own everyday lives. But this raises a more uncomfortable question: if relationships within our own homes are increasingly strained or fractured, what does that mean for our wider efforts to build a peaceful society?

At PeaceWorks Research, our work in Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria, particularly on identity conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding, has consistently shown that lasting peace is rarely the result of quick fixes or top-down solutions. Instead, it grows out of relationships, trust, and a willingness to engage honestly with difficult and multi-layered issues. A key part of this is a community-driven approach; recognising that those closest to a problem are often in the best place to understand it and contribute to its resolution. When communities are given the space and support to take ownership of challenges, solutions tend to be more sustainable and meaningful. Many of the same patterns we see in large-scale conflicts, misunderstanding, exclusion, and a breakdown in communication, also appear in quieter ways within our own communities and, often, within our homes.

While Scotland may not experience violent conflict on the same scale as other parts of the world, it is not without its own challenges. Differences in views, background, and experience can sometimes create distance between people, whether within families, workplaces, or wider society. These are not always dramatic or visible, but they matter. If peace is to mean anything real, it must speak to these everyday experiences and be shaped by the people living them.

One of the most practical ways of building peace is also one of the simplest, though not always the easiest: learning to listen well. Genuine dialogue, where people feel heard rather than dismissed can begin to shift even deeply held tensions. But beyond listening, there is also value in approaching conflict as something to be worked through together rather than won. A joint problem-solving approach encourages those involved to move away from fixed positions and instead identify shared concerns and possible solutions collaboratively. This kind of engagement builds trust and reduces the likelihood of conflict becoming entrenched.

It is important to make space for others, especially those whose voices are often overlooked. PeaceWorks' research points to the risks that arise when people feel excluded or marginalised. In view of current global peace, I believe the current conflict involving Iran could have been avoided if all avenues for negotiation had been fully explored. Creating more inclusive communities whether through local initiatives, faith groups, or informal networks can help to build a stronger sense of belonging. In Scotland, where communities are increasingly diverse, this kind of

intentional inclusion matters more than ever. A community-driven approach, combined with a willingness to solve problems together, creates the conditions for relationships to strengthen and strive rather than fracture under pressure.

For those shaped by faith, the call to peace carries a deeper meaning. It is not simply about keeping the peace, but about actively pursuing it through justice, compassion, and a willingness to stand alongside others which can sometimes be challenging. Yet it is in these small, steady choices that something different begins to take shape.

Peace is not built all at once, and it is not easily achievable. More often, it grows quietly in the decision to listen, to include, and to work through difficulties together. These may seem like small actions, but they are not insignificant. If a more peaceful world is what we hope for, then it is here, in these everyday decisions, shaped by our shared efforts, that it must begin.

Doyinsola Agunbiade





Reflections on Peace and the United States

As an American abroad, I have been following the recent situation with a great deal of sadness, stress, and bewilderment. As of April 7th, it was speculated that 3,540 people had been killed in Iran, 1,616 civilians, and at least 244 children. On April 9th, it was reported that the most recent Israeli strikes had killed 300 people and injured over 1,600. We know that these numbers, both in Iran and Lebanon, have increased since early April.

The situation in America is embedded with violence – in thoughts, words and deed. Never have I seen such deep divide in the American psyche. I'm not arguing that there has never been such a divide. If we look at the eras of Civil Rights, Vietnam and the Watergate crisis, as well as the Civil War itself, division is not unknown. But in my lifetime, I have never known my country to feel so steeped in fear, suspicion, and disgust amongst friends and family.

Even beyond the international situation, there are things happening in America that I believe border on evil. The tactics of ICE, detaining vulnerable people including children and the elderly is heart wrenching. To see some Christians try and justify it makes me feel even worse. I have been speculating that the dark side has taken hold of a certain segment of the American public. Because we know the dark side takes hold of people in a devious, and sometimes insipid manner – many of the people who support the tactics of ICE are rather good people in other ways. It's the very strange juxtaposition – the way someone can feed a hungry neighbour but not spare a thought for the older lady languishing in a prison cell because her paperwork is not perfect. That makes me understand, for the first time, exactly how the holocaust happened.

Trying to remain optimistic, to hold onto inner peace and advocate for wider peace feels a very "big ask". It is so easy to succumb to despair. Yet – we know that we are called to be people of the Resurrection and of Joy. Our Lord is a God of Peace. He is the Prince of Peace, asking us to live in Peace with ourselves, each other, our families, and our world - to live in peace with the Earth itself. As our Lord said to Catholic mystic Luisa Piccareta, "Don't you know that I am the Spirit of Peace?" But how do we advocate for needed change in a way that hones peace in our own hearts and offers love towards others, even our enemies?

I have been watching with interest the No Kings Protests in America. It's good to see people making placards, meeting in community, taking to the streets. I'm impressed by my aunts and uncles in their 70s and 80s, who were young protestors during the Vietnam War, still having a voice – lamenting for the country they thought they had bettered. They have made the decision to continue the good fight. Multiple generations, ethnicities, and faiths all marching together to say America can do better.

But there's a growing conviction in me that protest can never be enough without prayer, sacrifice and penance. Peace activist Dorothy Day fasted for peace, ruminating on the fact that the Holy Family lived in "peace and poverty and love and joy". She said in one letter "let us live in peace, and then we are a little oasis of peace in a war-torn world". She also said, "Our Manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount and we will try to be peacemakers."

She shows us that our political protest needs to be deeply intertwined with our own spirituality. Whatever is happening out in the world, whatever distresses us, no matter how we see the dark side gaining traction – we know that it is only love, service, sacrifice and prayer that defeat the darkness. Our Lord died on the Cross instead of fighting back. Carrying our own crosses, and trying to carry them well, can help to herald God's Kingdom.

Maybe we are all called to be Simon of Cyrene, helping our Lord carry His cross. Simon stumbled upon a situation he could not possibly have understood, forced in his bewilderment to help a man he did not know to carry a load beyond human comprehension. Many of us today feel the load of this world is too much, and peace too elusive. Simon was instrumental in the Passion and thus the eventual Resurrection. Maybe every cross we carry well, every prayer we add to the Communion of Saints and every sacrifice we offer is a piece of Simon's work, heralding the hidden but emerging Kingdom Come. This is not to say we don't protest – of course we protest and make our voices heard. But always with a prayer on our lips and in our hearts.

Most of all, maybe our role in heralding a world of peace lies in forgiveness. There is so much hatred right now, coming from so many quarters. As hard as it is, as feeble our efforts, we must all cling to the words of Jesus: "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do".

Nobody is beyond redemption. Nobody's heart is stone forever. And if we offer our forgiveness and trust in the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth – maybe we have done our parts.

Tamara Horsburgh

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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.

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Bridging ballots & hemispheres

As Scotland approaches its election at the beginning of May, I find myself reflecting not just as a distant observer, but as a citizen of Zambia who is also preparing for an important democratic moment later this year. Though our contexts differ in geography and history, the questions facing voters in Scotland resonate deeply with me - especially those concerning nuclear weapons and green energy.

In Scotland, the debate around nuclear weapons is not merely symbolic; it touches on global peace, security, and moral responsibility. The presence of nuclear systems tied to the United Kingdom raises critical questions: Should national security be anchored in weapons of mass destruction? Or should countries move toward disarmament in pursuit of a safer world? These are not just Scottish concerns - they are global concerns. As someone with a deep knowledge of peace and conflict, I believe voters must challenge candidates to clearly state their position on nuclear disarmament and their commitment to international peace.

Equally pressing is the debate around green energy and the controversial suggestion of reopening oil and gas fields in the North Sea. At a time when the world is grappling with climate change, such proposals seem to contradict the urgent need for sustainable solutions. Expanding fossil fuel extraction risks undermining efforts to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment. Scotland has the potential to lead in renewable energy - wind, tidal, and solar - and I believe voters should demand bold, forward-thinking policies that prioritise the planet over short-term economic gains.

As I turn my thoughts back home to Zambia, I see both similarities and differences in the concerns we must raise with our own candidates. While Zambia does not deal with nuclear weapons, we are not exempt from the broader conversation about peace, security, and responsible governance. Voters in Zambia should ask: How will our leaders promote peace internally and contribute to stability in the region? What mechanism will they strengthen to prevent conflict and uphold justice?

On environmental issues, the parallels are even stronger. Zambia is richly endowed with natural resources, yet we face increasing threats from deforestation, mining impacts, and climate variability. Just as Scottish voters must question the reopening of oil fields, we must ask our candidates: How will you balance economic development with environmental protection? What is your plan for sustainable energy? Will you invest in renewable energy resources such as solar, which is abundant in Zambia, or continue to rely heavily on practices that degrade our ecosystems?

Another key area is accountability. Scottish voters are being encouraged to engage candidates directly on critical issues. In Zambia, we must cultivate the same culture of active citizenship. We should not vote based on rhetoric or party loyalty alone, but on clear actionable policies. Candidates must be transparent about their plans for economic recovery, job creation, education, healthcare - issues that directly affect our daily lives.

However, there are also divergences. Scotland's debate is shaped by its position within a developed economy and its role in global geopolitics, while Zambia's priorities are often centred on development, poverty reduction, and infrastructure. Yet, even within these differences, the underlining principle remains the same: Leadership must be responsible, forward-looking, and people centred.

I think the election in Scotland serves as a reminder that democracy is not just about casting a vote - it is about asking the right questions. As a Zambian, I am inspired to see this level of civic engagement and believe we must rise to the same standard. Whether in Scotland or Zambia, the future depends on informed voters who demand accountability, sustainability, and peace from those who seek to lead.

Njila Banda



Njila Banda is a public relations practitioner with a strong passion for strategic communication and stakeholder engagement. With an academic background in Peace and Conflict Studies, he has a deep understanding of conflict dynamics, mediation, and peace-building processes.

His experience integrates communication expertise with conflict-sensitive approaches, enabling him to contribute to dialogue.