



Pax Scotia

Issue 49

Contents:

Page 2: EcoCongregation's David Coleman on peace & climate

Page 3: Jonathan Frerich's snapshots of the NPT in Geneva

Page 4: Faslane - A Scottish voice from Geneva & a diary date



A Reflection on Evil & Silence

Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop of the Diocese of Argyll & the Isles, reflects on the recent tensions we have witnessed in England and Northern Ireland.

Sixteen years ago I visited Kenya in the immediate aftermath of post-election ethnic violence. I had spent several summers in the same town and knew many people well. It was painful to see how viciously neighbours – including parishioners - had turned against each other. I visited friends who had fled for their lives. I had previously received hospitality in their homes but now they were forced to shelter in tents in a refugee camp.

This was long before the advent of social media, but I learnt that several radio stations served the various tribes in their own languages. Culturally this was a good thing, yet it had been misused. A prolonged and determined campaign of bigotry had flourished on these radio stations which allowed lies, insults and exaggerations to partly prepare the way for the violence. Loyalty to tribal vows silenced good people who neither challenged this sinister direction of travel nor warned their neighbours and friends.

In the same year I visited Bavaria and went to Dachau, the first Concentration Camp built by the Nazis. I learnt that initially Dachau was intended to be a place where through cruelty, intimidation and sometimes death those who thought differently or spoke out against the Nazis were 're-educated'. Early protestors were quickly incarcerated in Dachau and the majority remained silent. However, sin is a slippery slope and Dachau inevitably became a place of mass murder.

Six months later I visited Auschwitz. There it was impossible to ignore the depths that human depravity can reach. I was struck that the undeniable evil which permeated Dachau had further deteriorated to even greater depths of evil - the extermination of 6 million Jews and so many others. I recognised the truth revealed by the Book of Genesis, not least in Adam and Eve, that sin/evil, when not effectively challenged, quickly grows and spreads.

A combined culture of evil and silence can only go in one direction.

Closer to home we have recently witnessed the unscrupulous manipulation of a horrific crime to orchestrate hatred and violence against Muslims, asylum seekers, migrants and the police. This is what happens when blatant lies and the manipulation of half-truths run amok. It has happened too often before, and it is happening right now. Nor must we ignore that while this particular form of bigotry, lies and violence can be found in the Far Right, it can actually exist anywhere.

As Christians, and indeed as human beings, we must be vigilant regarding our own ideas and choice of language. We must also be courageous in challenging any kind of bigotry whenever and wherever we encounter it: within myself, or among family, friends or at work. Evil breeds evil and silence permits this. What is sinful/evil language today (verbal or written) too easily becomes violent tomorrow. The way of Christ is different and that is the path we must choose.

I pen these words on the Feast of St Maximilian Kolbe. I stood in the cell where he was murdered, disturbed at the new violence destroying Kenya at that very moment, half a world away. I marvelled at how Maximilian's faith drove him to confront evil and triumph over it in love. When I visited Kenya two months later, I promised myself that I would always challenge bigotry, no matter its form. Although I can point to occasions when I have kept that promise unfortunately there are many times I have failed. Today, as this latest bigotry spreads I again find myself asking if I am willing allow Christ to transform me. Time will tell.

Bishop Brian McGee

Argyll and the Isles

14th August 2024



David Coleman is chaplain of EcoCongregation Scotland. He is a minister of the United Reformed Church, having studied at Coventry, Oxford, Birmingham and Johannes Gutenberg Universities. Ahead of the Season of Creation (September 1- October 4) he reflects on the inextricable links between our relationship with the environment and peace.

Peace and the Climate Crisis

Sunday 1st September marks a World Day of Prayer for Creation and launches the variously named Creationtide/Creation Time/Season of Creation, with a theme: 'To hope and act *with* Creation.'

I do pray that the ecumenical liturgical eyes turned to this aim will open wide enough to acknowledge that a concern with peace is integral to an appreciation of God at work in, for, and with God's Creation, whom war and preparations for war so indiscriminately eradicate. An 'ecological conversion' cannot ignore the environmental obscenities of war.

Creation, Nature - whatever name you choose - remains the first casualty of every military action, irrespective even of whether the criteria are supposedly met for its being 'just'.

The historic salting of crops, through Agent Orange, fired or spilled oil fields, 'scorched-earth' and other 'policies' represent the pinnacle of anthropocentric othering of God's creatures, conscripted as disposable means to the end of harm to human enemies. Enemies who are dignified only as being the target rather than the weapon, though as with nuclear warfare, chemical defoliants, polluting incendiaries, and the destruction of habitats and ecosystems cause suffering for generations beyond any immediate military objective, and beyond the initially intended targets. And commerce, as well as war, readily employs such means. It's fact, not speculation, that harm to Creation is harm to us as creatures among creatures. I'm amazed that Christians have felt the need to look sheepishly to their leaders before confidently identifying this as 'sinful.'

But the inertia of churches about our relationship with the rest of the creation and biodiversity lags sadly behind.

What can be done about the blind spots which become active when folk read the radical poetic Franciscan words of *Laudato Si*: - 'Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us.'

We're then content to talk of 'stewarding' 'gifts' 'resources' and 'assets'. The place and purpose of humanity can be richer, more relational, less concerned with a janitorial colonial model of care-by-means-of-domination-without-consultation. Scripture is full of the prophetic voices of Creation. How do we choose not to hear?

The recent Ukrainian attack on a Russian oil refinery will have released tons of CO2 and toxic chemicals, adding directly to the de facto casualties of climate crisis, but it seems few reflected on the carbon footprint of that attack.

Given the exemption from carbon reporting of most of the world's military, and the toothless and opaque methodologies for reporting impacts of UK and NATO 'defence' operations, that's hardly surprising. We let them off very lightly indeed. Even when figures are supplied - which exclude violent effects of actions such as fires, infrastructure and ecosystem damage, reconstruction following conflict, and more.

Nor is it surprising, given that it took until COP28 for 'fossil fuels' to be named as the problem, that global climate discussions have not dared seriously to rattle the military cage. But climate crisis is a threat-multiplier for tensions between peoples.

My perception of our global north culture is that a barbed-wire fence superficially adorned with roses hides the violent contribution to what Pope Francis helpfully revealed to be the 'war on Creation', even by the existence of armed forces, their operations and exercises. A UK Government paper admits to 'defence alone accounting for half of central government's greenhouse gas emissions'.

As long as human cultures, some of them cherishing the label 'Christian', insist on the absolute hierarchical separation of human and other suffering and need, the spiritual framework remains for war.

This Season of Creation, let Creation look you in the eyes. And make peace, when and where you can.

David Coleman

<https://catholicreview.org/war-against-creation-must-stop-pope-says-in-message-for-day-of-prayer/>

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41129/documents/200843/default/>



The Non Proliferation Treaty

Time to hold our nerve...

Jonathan Frerichs, Pax Christi International Representative at the UN in Geneva, attended the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, held in Geneva from 22 July to 2 August 2024. Here are some of his snapshots from Geneva.

The world's biggest arms control treaty, the 191-country nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), met in July at the United Nations in Geneva. In preparation, Pax Christi members in five countries which rely on nuclear weapons urged their governments to live up to their NPT obligations and support steps toward nuclear disarmament. War in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East and tensions in Northeast Asia all pose urgent nuclear risks, Pax Christi International members in Scotland, USA, South Korea, Belgium and Italy said. Yet, as their letters noted, "For decades now, the NPT's five-year cycle of meetings has borne little fruit."

At the NPT meeting, Naomi Zoka of Pax Christi Flanders delivered the statement of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. "We do not need to see nuclear weapons used in war again to know their impact," she said. "The over 2000 nuclear tests - conducted primarily by the nuclear weapons states in this room - forever altered the lives of these thousands of women, men and children, and of little girls in particular, as girls exposed to nuclear weapons use and testing got cancer at twice the rate as the boys."

Pax Christi representatives at the NPT met with countries PCI members had contacted in advance. In response to Pax Christi Scotland's letter, UK diplomats said the UK is absolutely committed to nuclear disarmament. At this stage, however, this means the UK is keeping nuclear weapons so that other powers don't use them. Nuclear weapons are not war weapons, the delegates said, they are political weapons.

US diplomats told PCI that the US government takes current challenges related to nuclear weapons very seriously, and is prepared to do more. However, the US is constrained in this by the lack of unanimity among the 'P5', the five nuclear powers which are also the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The Republic of Korea does not foresee the return of US nuclear weapons to South Korean territory, a Korean diplomat told PCI regarding Pax Christi Korea's letter. It is more pressing that North Korea remains outside the NPT, his ministry says.

He also noted that the South Korean government appreciates the US and Japanese archbishops' Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons, which Pax Christi Korea and other PCI members are promoting.

In two weeks of speeches, with little genuine debate and no closure, who was speaking seemed to determine much of what they would say.

The five nuclear powers in the NPT mostly blamed each other for nuclear deadlock. China, for example, argued that all security interests are equal, its nuclear arsenal is small, so the US and Russia have the heaviest disarmament burdens.

The majority of states without nuclear weapons held the high ground—morally and empirically. This included states such as Namibia denouncing the US\$ 91 billion spent on nuclear weapons in 2023, putting a fresh ICAN statistic to good use. It also included a coalition of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and South Africa citing practical steps the nuclear-weapon states could take in short order, such as: taking their missiles off high-alert, stopping nuclear threats and declassifying 'close calls'.

Nearly 100 of the states in the NPT have now signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). These states are a growing reminder that the TPNW does what the NPT does not do: It actually bans nuclear weapons now, rather than simply calling for nuclear disarmament without any timeline for action.

"The refusal of the NPT's five nuclear armed members to eliminate their nuclear arsenals has led us to a point where the treaty's survival is at stake," warned Reaching Critical Will, a disarmament project of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.



Jonathan Frerichs

https://www.icanw.org/ican_statement_to_npt_prepcom_2024

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 by the invoice sent out (see below) - OR

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 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>

[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.

Pax Scotia August-September 2024 Issue 49



A Scottish Voice From Geneva

Bill Kidd is a constituency MSP for Glasgow Anniesland. He is a staunch supporter of anti-nuclear power and weapons policies. He is a Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), an international organisation comprising 70 Parliaments and over 800 members from around the world who engage in working towards nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament issues.

He also has given numerous speeches at various United Nations conferences on the abolition of nuclear weapons. Here he reflects on the Geneva event.

I was honoured to address the NPT Prep Comm 2024 event at the United Nations in Geneva this summer. I spoke on behalf of both PNND and Abolition 2000 and attended both the Main Assembly and also many of the numerous NGO side-events along with the significant numbers of delegates from many countries across the world.

I'm afraid that many of the Ambassadorial and Consular delegates had little to contribute to debates on where our world stands internationally on the NPT; indeed, as is too often the case, the P5 made little contribution to debates in the Assembly Hall, and the other four nuclear weapons-holding states said nothing at all. It was left to Russia to make largely irrelevant arguments about being spoken of negatively by other delegacies and they said they were unfairly singled out as an aggressive state whose leadership had suggested that so-called tactical nuclear weapons might be deployed should they deem it necessary at any point.

There were interventions from a few states which raised the matter of nuclear disarmament, but this was mostly spoken of by NGO representatives during the section set-aside for their contributions – and it must be said that there was a significant amount of coherent, logical and well-researched statements, given with honesty and passion by women and men of true commitment.

In honesty I have to say that the 2024 NPT Prep Comm was a missed opportunity for those nations who have signed up to the TPNW to work coherently together in order to pressurise the Nuclear Nine and their supporting arsenal-holders towards moving our world away from Ninety Seconds to Midnight.

Bill Kidd



Register at: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0scO2hrzwtE9E8gDiyJLbQZJ1rbdLXja36>