



Pax Scotia

Issue 74

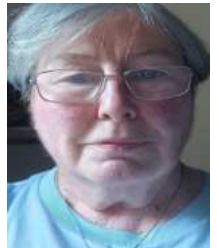
Contents:

Page 2: Andrew Smith reflects on how we can challenge the far right

Page 3: Janet Fenton says peace will take courage and compassion

Page 4: Palestinian poet Ahmed Miqdad brings us the reality of Gaza

Why am I going to Paris? We have to start somewhere...



Grace Buckley is a retired solicitor/senior manager with ScottishPower. She is now deeply involved in social justice issues. She is a member of the Executive of Pax Christi Scotland, and on the Board of Pax Christi International, as well as a member of National Justice & Peace Commission Scotland. In October, she & PCS chair Marian Pallister go to Paris.

Until just over a year ago, I had never heard of the Lancaster Gate Treaties signed in 2010 between the UK and French governments and would probably not have noticed the fairly low-key announcement of their updating in 2025 by Prime Minister Starmer and President Macron, but for my colleague in Justice & Peace Europe mentioning the plans of a small group of peace activists to mark the 15th anniversary of the original signing.

I suspect my ignorance would have been shared by the vast majority of my fellow citizens. Why? I think that since the end of the Cold War, we have become comfortably forgetful of the dangers of nuclear weapons and the risks they present. If we thought about them at all, we might well have subscribed to the view often expressed that the reason we have had peace is because they existed. The well-named MAD (Mutually assured destruction) concept would keep us safe.

Well, the events of the last few years have proven what a fallacy that was. Instead, what we have seen, to pick just two of the most damaging current wars, is that, in the Ukraine war, Putin has used his nuclear arsenal to threaten any country supporting Ukraine, and in the Iran war, Trump and Netanyahu have justified their actions by claiming their war is to prevent Iran having nuclear weapons. Furthermore, both these wars have led neighbouring countries to consider whether they should be developing their own nuclear weapons for their safety.

Add to the mix the fact that President Trump has allowed the New START treaty to lapse and is contemplating restarting the testing of nuclear weapons, and the US, UK and France have all announced that they will not sign or ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which came into effect in 2017, and it is easy to see why the Doomsday Clock has now been set to 85 seconds to midnight (representing how close the world is to global disaster), the closest it has been since its inception.

The world is slowly waking up to the real dangers posed by these weapons, as well as their financial and environmental impacts, and to the urgent need for action, thanks to the work of organisations such as CND, Scottish CND, Pax Christi Scotland and, internationally, ICAN. and Pax Christi International. However we need to build up public pressure on our governments to move away from the nuclear option and seek alternative ways of making and keeping peace in our world.

The developing Franco-British network meeting in Paris believes that one way to progress on this journey is to bring together representatives of Christian peace organisations in the UK and France – two of the nine nuclear armed countries in the world and also members of the UN Security Council – to discuss and publicise the Christian position on nuclear weapons and the alternatives for peace, and plant the seeds for change both in our church communities and in the wider society.

We cannot stand on the sidelines and leave it to organisations like ICAN and CND who can be dismissed by politicians as the “usual suspects”. We need to stir up our faith communities from within and mobilise them to demand that our respective governments lead the way in searching for alternative ways to peace. Just marking anniversaries is not enough and our Paris meeting is an attempt to get things moving. We have to start somewhere!

Grace Buckley



Andrew Smith has worked with Justice & Peace Scotland as Campaigns and Communications Officer since May 2026. Prior to this, he was 35 years in sports journalism, spending 25 years with The Scotsman. As well as his work with J&PS, Andrew serves as a trustee on the board of Scottish Fair Trade and is a volunteer with Scottish Detainee Visitors, the only organisation in the country dedicated to providing visits to those held indefinitely for immigration purposes in Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre. This is a personal reflection on the symposium 'Claiming Christianity: Responding to the Far Right in Scotland'...



A challenging encounter: how do we respond to the 'far right'?

Symposiums such as the recent Conforti House gathering under Chatham House rules, which brought together so many different Christian groups and denominations, are inevitably derided by cynics as echo chambers. Get-togethers where worthy, pious persons will sit in a room and pearl-clutch about how terrible people have drunk the Kool-Aid in espousing racist narratives over migrants and asylum seekers. This wasn't that. This wasn't that at all.

I have to be honest and say, though, that by the end of that day's conference, I probably felt less secure in my own moral certainties as to how to respond to the far right in Scotland who, appallingly and incomprehensibly - to me - have claimed Christianity for such purposes. It could be no other way for me when among those providing information sessions, my preconceptions were challenged; shaken.

I can't simply other those who will deploy the dog whistle tropes of "fighting age males" and safeguarding for "our women and girls" because some of them will be sitting in the pews beside me at church on a Sunday. A University of Sussex poll stated that almost half of those Catholics surveyed would consider voting Reform. Anathema to me, but the reality. A reality which is inescapable when catching snippets of conversations in public spaces going about my daily life these days.

Similarly, another study demonstrated that those who are ultra-religious are as likely to express racist sentiments as those with no religion at all. The bell graph for these findings at its lowest for those who are occasional church goers. Another head-wrecker, frankly.

The takeaway from such data collection is that simply refusing to engage with those who appear to find the mere presence of brown and black faces in their communities an affront to their values isn't a viable response. Yet, my reflex is to consider loathsome those who don balaclavas and throw a traffic cone at a brown-skinned individual working as a Deliveroo driver; or

or abuse a Black man for the crime of being a Black man. We have all seen those videos from the streets of Glasgow.

I just cannot fathom what is lost in the translation of Jesus' parables, in the very commandments that tell us to "love thy neighbour as thyself", for those who consider that Christianity provides a cover for race hate. However, *my* Jesus also preaches forgiveness, of turning the other cheek, essentially telling me to engage and to attempt to understand the mangling of his message. My love cannot be only for the strangers who have fled war, famine and economic deprivation to come to our country, but for those who despise them for doing so. - some of my fellow Catholics among them, despite Pope Leo telling us unambiguously that no one "should be despised for crossing a border". What do I do with such a desperate disconnect? How do I resolve it? I can't provide you with a cogent answer. I can only continue to pray for a world, and a Scotland, that turns away from such division and hatred and continue to advocate for those who are on the receiving end of such vile discrimination, now moved from racist words to racist violence.

At that symposium, I kept remembering an encounter I had earlier in the summer, in Glasgow city centre. I take part in the Scottish Peace Movement's monthly vigils beside the Donald Dewar statue in Buchanan Street. We hold up placards denouncing war and the addiction to weapons of mass destruction. Arresting conversations ensue with a small smattering of those who stop to talk with us. These tend to move on rapidly from the topic of war, its causes and consequences, with ever more of those who want to offer their opinion expressing racism dressed up as concern over immigration and, it should be acknowledged, antisemitic views.

The day in question two clearly inebriated

young men, bare-chested in a baking hot evening, approached me. As is often the way, the young man keen to engage almost instantly didn't restrict his thoughts to our peace slogans. Was I religious, he asked. I said I was and that my Catholicism was incredibly important to me. He said he had been raised Catholic but had turned away from that religion because of his treatment in the care homes where he had been raised but found God again in another guise. Then came his zinger. Would I take up arms to defend my Christian values? I said my Jesus was a Prince of Peace, and I felt he would not ask nor expect that of me.

He said there would come a time I would have to be prepared to fight for my Christianity, and that this time was fast approaching. Stating what I really felt at this point wouldn't have served any purpose. He pulled in his friend, a Latvian he said, who could barely stand. He grabbed his arm and pushed it towards me. Look at that, he said, showing me a tattoo of an iron cross, that even without the swastika I, rightly or wrongly, associate with the far right. I could only repeat that I believe in societal cohesion and that I consider all who make their home here are my brethren who deserve to live in peace and harmony. He remained impassive, then said "I'll pray for you" as he backed away. To which I responded: "I will pray for you too, and God bless you." And I have done so. I sincerely doubt I've altered his belief in the need for Christian crusades on our own streets, but at least I didn't shun him. A message reinforced at Conforti House that day. Though not one that provides a solution to the frightening far-right capture we are seeing in those who claim to worship the same God. I don't know what does. *Andrew Smith*



Security v war-readiness?

We'll need courage & compassion

Janet Fenton is co-founder and Organiser with Secure Scotland. She was Secretary of the Cross Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament and was been an officer with Scottish and UK CND and Scottish consultant with AIDD for many years. She is a former co-ordinator of Peace and Justice Scotland, and worked with Scotland's for Peace. She co-organised a high level International Law Conference on Scotland's Obligations under IHL. She is currently a non-executive director with the Nuclear Information Service and international Disarmament Officer of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK Section and Co-convenor of the Scottish branch. She serves on the International Steering Group of ICAN (2017 Nobel Peace Laureate) as Scottish Partners Liaison.

Scotland has elected another parliament and now operates under another government. The sovereign people of Scotland can hope it will improve lives, here and in other places, and that it will include some of those who are committed to an equal, peaceful and sustainable Scotland by supporting disarmament, renewable energy and climate action, but saying no to genocide and war crimes.

The significant Scottish demographic that distances itself from UK 'foreign' policy seems to be increasingly limited in operating, as its voice is drowned out by a 'free speech' that contributes to miscarriages of justice and shameful displays of reactionary racism. The election coincided with the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, (NPT Rev Con) held every five years, in New York at the UN. Yet again, that conference concluded with disintegrating dialogue and broken promises. Scotland has no formal say, since the UK speaks for us at the UN. The poisonous and suicidal weapons that the UK deploys in this country, and its nuclear-armed intransigence is set against the year-on-year increases in global allegiance to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, (TPNW) which is offering a safe legal route to disarmament. The TPNW is now supported by the majority of UN Member States, but the UK and other Nuclear Armed states stay away.

These nuclear-armed and climate emergency-denying leaders are equating peacemaking with supporting genocide and oppression. The Increasing expenditure involved in being war-ready comes from the removal of resources from the populations that these leaders actually have a responsibility to keep safe. Free speech should not mean silencing others, nor having the 'right' to control all means of amplifying your message.

A large section of the UK population considers that attempting to stop the genocide of the Palestinian people by the Israeli Government is not terrorism, and that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was correct in giving the UK government their opinion and advice that the ban should be lifted, so that the International Criminal Court's view of Netanyahu and others as guilty of war crimes is recognised and

progressed by the UK Government. In the last year, police north and south of the border have arrested just over 3000 people for sitting in silence holding up placards about Palestine Action – compared to 242 'terrorist' arrests the year before the ban. The average age of those arrested for terrorism has climbed during the last year, so that the average age of those arrested (59) is now almost the same as the age Aneurin Bevan decided in 1948, at which people required a state pension. The year before the ban, the average age was 31. Is this legislation that keeps people safe?

Secure Scotland was born of a desire to champion or even model a much more holistic and inter-connected view of 'security'. There exists a spectrum of inter-connected issues that require scrutiny so that governments can better understand the experiences of insecurity in terms of food, energy, the environment, digital and online safety, financial means. Both communities and the individual are increasingly affected, for some people at several levels by this insecurity and often all at once. The disadvantaged, those least able to cope and above all those directly impacted by militarised and violent hierarchical controls have security needs that are unmet, with catastrophic impacts for themselves and for those with whom they are involved.

While the problems seem intractable (What can I do about Donald Trump, Putin or ongoing sexual violence and starvation?) there are points at which we can all take transitional steps towards removing our consent to what is done in our name, and by coming together and speaking to each other in our own communities.

It seems that this is going to require courage and compassion, but it is more likely to provide security than war readiness.

Janet Fenton

**Organiser with Secure Scotland
Scottish Partner Organisation Liaison,
ICAN (Nobel Peace Laureate 2017)**

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 make donations on the membership page. 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 by online banking, and give your name to identify your payment. Use the email address on the website to get banking details.

If you wish to pay by cheque, send to the snail mail 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:

<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/](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

[@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: September-October 2026
Issue 74**



They lied to you...



*We are pleased that the reputation of **Ahmed Miqdad**, the Palestinian poet, who lives with his family in Gaza, is growing worldwide, shared now not only on social media but published in international circles. Here, he again kindly gives Pax Christi Scotland permission to share one of his latest poems. Thank you. Ahmed.*

They lied to you
When they said
They had stopped the genocide.

They lied to you.
I still hear the buzzing of nasty drones
Hovering over the grey sky,
Like hungry birds searching for another home.

They lied to you.
I witnessed my home collapse
Under the weight of heavy bombs,
Its walls falling like broken memories,
Its rooms swallowing the laughter
That once lived inside them.

They lied to you.
I hear the screams of widows
And orphaned toddlers,
Their trembling voices rising
From beneath the dust and rubble.

They lied to you
While they razed our homes,
One after another,
Until familiar streets
Became fields of concrete and ash.

They lied to you
As the horizon of destruction
Grows wider and wider,
While the grey sky carries
The smell of smoke and fear.

They lied to you
While they are killing us quietly,
While our names disappear beneath the rubble,
While our stories are buried with us,
And the world is told
That the killing has stopped.

Ahmed Miqdad

Photograph from Arab News.

