



Pax Scotia

Issue 5

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PAX CHRISTI SCOTLAND wishes you all a blessed Christmas and peace in the year ahead - in your home, your parish, and your community.

There is good news on the peace front and the day that the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* becomes law is of course hugely significant – but it won't be all our Christmases come at once.

There are nine 'nuclear nations' still to be persuaded to sign and ratify the TPNW. Pax Christi Scotland takes the position that as a host nation to nuclear weapons despite the objections of the Scottish government and Church leaders, this is a time when celebration must be tempered by reflection and prayer.

See details of our January 22, 2021, Pax Christi Scotland Zoom event on Page 4 and please register early.

Christmas – A time of hope for the future

By Rosalyn Mauchline,
Pax Christi Scotland
vice chair

Pope Francis' says, "Hope needs patience, the patience of knowing that we sow but it is God who gives growth." And as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, there is plenty of evidence that gives hope to those "sowing" for peace. There are positive signs that our patience has not been in vain.

First, the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will make nuclear weapons illegal from January 22. We can all use the date to raise awareness of the nuclear weapons issue and in our own communities highlight Pope Francis' recent teaching on the subject.

Although I can become despondent when it's hard to illicit response from others concerning issues of peace and justice, a recent event gave me reason for hope. I was sent an email to watch a film, *Jews Step Forward*, which highlighted the story of 24 American Jews who journeyed from supporting the state of Israel to now denouncing its actions. Their perseverance despite the criticism of many in their own community was inspirational. Part of the film highlights the situation in present day Bethlehem. Perhaps we should take time this Christmas to reflect on what it is like to live there today. (Information at www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk)

Another hope is encapsulated in the number of community organisations developing all over the world to engender peace. There is the Black Lives Matter movement in which so many young people are challenging inequality. And a huge number of people worldwide are completing the Laudato Si Animators course, responding to Pope Francis' wish to hear the cries of the Earth and the Poor. If you are interested, contact <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/> for information. And here in Scotland in our capital city, the construction of a memorial in Princes Street Gardens to Conscientious Objectors also gives grounds for hope for peace (contact admin@peaceandjustice.org.uk).

We can only sow the seeds - but let's be encouraged by these definite signs of growth this Christmas.

Rosalyn Mauchline

Fratelli Tutti and the Peace Movement

Fr John Convery, Pax Christi Scotland's chaplain,
explores Pope Francis' latest encyclical

(This article also appears in *Journal de la Paix*, journal of Pax Christi in France)

Once again we are indebted to Pope Francis for helping us to prophetically read the signs of the times. He invites us (Ch 4, No 128) **'to see things in a new light and to develop new responses'**. Not a new message for this pontificate, but through this Encyclical Francis has a message of hope for our difficult times. He talks of *'moving beyond ourselves'*, *'borders and their limits'*, *'social and political charity'*, *'the art and architecture of peace'* and *'Social dialogue for a new culture'*. His message is fundamentally grounded in the Gospel message of love and forgiveness. It is interwoven with the basic elements of the Kingdom preached to us through the life of Christ.

To those who say 'We've heard it all before', he lays down the challenge of the present times, of rediscovering our sense of 'the mission' of the Gospel. A message of true peace for our times. A Pax Christi reminding us of the dignity of each human being.

I believe we are living in a world tired of empty political rhetoric; politics that nurture individual and collective suspicion among people. We struggle to live with the fragile humanity that social distancing so sadly emphasises. Francis' message reminding us of our connectedness and interdependency is not only appropriate for today's world but to us who are convinced of his message, a call to be more courageous in how we communicate it with our lives.

'Paths of Renewed Encounter' (Ch 7), struck a raw nerve with me as someone professing to work for peace. Francis calls us, especially in today's social context, to perseverance in the struggle; to always place at the centre of this struggle 'respect for the common good' and the option for the marginalised and poor. In our struggle for global justice and peace we separate and exclude at our peril the local voices in our own neighbourhoods and communities. The two are so inextricably connected that they become one. Indeed, Francis reminds us (No 142) that *'to separate them would be to disfigure each and to create a dangerous polarisation'*.

He once again devotes his Encyclical to his Patron and inspiration St Francis of Assisi, recounting St Francis meeting the great Sultan Malik-el-Kamil in Egypt. The power and symbolism of this famous encounter sums up the theology and spirituality at the core of this Letter. Our world would do well to take this sublime example of the great risk-taking Gospel virtue of reaching out beyond ourselves to see the world as others may see it. Whether it be Black Lives Matter, the LGBTQ community, the many victims of food poverty and unemployment, domestic violence, human trafficking, war and violence, the fight against the arms trade and nuclear arms, as workers for peace we are called to engage in a dialogue which the world may see as weak and naïve. Francis invites us to be brave, to be risk-takers in a broken and divided world; to celebrate our diversity and interconnectedness as a tool to build the Reign of God to bring about harmony and peace among human beings.

'In the name of God and of everything stated thus far, we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard' (No 285). [Meeting with Imam Ahamad Al-Tayyeb]

Reflections on Peace

A Christmas Reflection

By Kit Fry, Pax Christi Scotland
Executive Committee Member

On Friday 4 December there was 10 centimetres of snow in Grantown-on-Spey. The primary school was shut, children were sledging, and some parents were skiing on the golf course before going back home to work on-line.

Fantastic. It took me back two years to the first winter after my grandchildren came here from Bangkok. They had never seen snow before and were ecstatic. Nor had they seen leaves turning gold and red in the autumn and falling in the winter, or conkers and acorns, which they potted and grew.

It also took me back to the cruel six-month process that my daughter-in-law had to go through before she was granted a spousal visa and could join us to see her tiny children again. Much of that is a painful story, but when it was over the elation and relief was wonderful for us, for her, and especially the children.

And that's what this year-long winter of the coronavirus reminds me of. What has been for very many people, varying degrees of misery, loneliness, poverty, bereavement and ill health, should very soon change into something really welcome. There are good signs with the arrival of the vaccines that soon we are going to 'come up for air', like miners from a long shift underground; when loving other people will feel like the most natural thing on earth with smiles and laughter everywhere.

There's a strong chance that we shall see and experience this Earth like we never have before, with the mud and muck cleared from our eyes and brains. I believe we shall better value our planet and try better to understand and value each other, no matter how different our beliefs, lifestyles or cultures - those who by luck or fate are experiencing this world at the same time.

COVID has given us all a lot more time to reflect, voluntarily and involuntarily, and analyse our lives. My good, bad, happy, unhappy and embarrassing behaviours and experiences have visited me over and over again with an intensity and clarity as never before. And also as never before, I have found myself more spiritually at peace, able to appreciate and at last forgive myself, understanding that I am just one of *all* fallible and creative human beings. I wish I could transfer that experience to all who need to have it too.

Happy Christmas!

Peace Matters

By Pax Christi Scotland member
Kenneth Sadler

(A longer version of this article first appeared in the Advent edition of Light of the North, magazine of the Diocese of Aberdeen)

'Peace' is a powerful and evocative word: something that Christians, indeed all people of goodwill, should desire. It is there in the Seventh Beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God' (Mt 5:9), in which our Lord commends those who work for it. After his death and Resurrection Jesus greets his astonished and frightened disciples with the sublime words, 'Peace be with you' (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19). It is there in the fruit of the Holy Spirit listed by St Paul in his letter to the Galatians - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Gal 5:22-23).

Peace matters.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church observes that peace is not simply the absence of war, such as the situation prevailing in Europe during the years between the end of World War II and the fall of Communism: Cold War and a balance of terror do not make for peace. Rather, peace depends on protecting the human good, open communication, the recognition of human dignity, and the active cultivation of fellowship. It is 'the work of justice and effect of charity' (CCC 2304).

In March 1982, in the early years of Margaret Thatcher's government, which was strongly committed to Britain's nuclear deterrent, the Scottish Bishops' Conference issued a statement on 'Peace and Disarmament', in which the Bishops observed that peace is fundamental to the Christian Gospel and resonates with the deep yearnings of humanity.

In the words of Pope Paul VI: 'Today war has at its disposal means which have immeasurably magnified its horror and its wickedness,' and of nuclear weapons, the Scottish Bishops said, '...if it is immoral to use these weapons, it is also immoral to threaten their use.' And all those decades before Pope Francis' firm stance against possession and use, they asked 'if a policy of self-defence based on the use or even the threat of use of these weapons of terrible destructiveness could ever be morally justified'. They also protested against the vast effort and resources spent on weapons of death while so many people lived in poverty, without the basic essentials necessary for a dignified human existence. Tragically, this observation remains all too relevant - and also relevant today is their exhortation to Catholics to work with movements that authentically seek to foster peace.

'Together with all men and women of goodwill we will work and pray for peace.'

Pax Christi Scotland Vigil to mark January 22, 2021

On January 22, 2021, The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons becomes effective.

You will recall how jubilant we all were back in October when the treaty received 50 ratifications, ensuring that this far-reaching treaty would come into force.

Since then, there have been more signings and ratifications, but nine 'nuclear nations' remain reluctant to sign.

As a partner organisation of the Nobel Peace Prize winner ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons), we will share the razzmatazz in January – this is such a significant landmark.

But as a reluctant nuclear host nation, Scotland sees this from a different perspective: when will Westminster say 'no' to nuclear weapons?

And so we are holding a vigil of prayer and reflection. Our speakers are:

- ✚ **Bishop William Nolan**, Bishop of Galloway and Bishop President of the Justice and Peace Commission
- ✚ **Right Reverend Martin Fair**, Moderator of the Church of Scotland
- ✚ **Most Rev Mark Strange**, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The vigil will, of course, be held on Zoom. The details to register are below (and a reminder will be sent out at the turn of the year).

You are invited to a Zoom meeting.
When: Jan 22, 2021, 7pm-8pm

Register in advance for this meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsdu2trzkjE9JUq6AB2Hut3NJuzrml1Nbx>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. See you on January 22.

A world of peace – working together increases the impact

A big thank you to the speakers at our AGM – Dr Mary Cullen, editor of *Open House*, and peace activist Sr Katrina Alton CSJP. (Link to their presentations:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AvCjB8qkhFVZxRZSpwCNaXkesVYj>

And thanks to all of you who joined the November 24 meeting.

As we move into 2021, we will be working with a range of organisations to engender peace in the family, the school, the parish and wider society. Of course, we will be working with the Xaverians (our chaplains), with CAAT Scotland, Don't Bank On The Bomb, ICAN, organisations supporting victims of gender violence (watch out for our February Zoom meeting, focused on Pope Francis' prayer intentions for the month), refugee and environmental groups and those involved in poverty alleviation. So many issues are interconnected, threatening peace – physical and emotional. Please help us to achieve peace: your support is so valuable.

But meanwhile, Pax Christi Scotland wishes you all a blessed Christmas and peace in 2021.

Membership fees

Membership of Pax Christi Scotland is £10 per annum, £5 for unwaged.

Our year runs November 1 - October 31.

Most members paid in the early part of our current year – have you renewed your membership? For those who have joined since August 2020, your membership will run until November 2021.

Please pay online, (and by standing order), using your surname and initial as reference. If you prefer to pay by cheque, post to the address in the box below (but be patient – the office is currently unmanned and mail is picked up sporadically).

Bank details:

A/C name – Pax Christi Scotland

A/C number – 20416030

Sort Code – 608301

Thank you for your support.

Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

<https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland> (Facebook)

www.paxchristiscotland.org (Website – please spread the word & share the membership form)

[@PaxScotland](https://twitter.com/PaxScotland) (Twitter)

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