



# Pax Scotia

Issue 6



**Gender violence** has become a pandemic within a pandemic. Across the world, the statistics (already unacceptable) have risen over the past year – in some countries reported incidences have gone up by as much as 25 and 30 per cent.

A Scottish Government report on our attitudes towards gender violence reveals worrying levels of acceptance

(<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-survey-2019-attitudes-violence-against-women-scotland/>).

If we seek a nonviolent society, we must work to change perceptions.

**See Page 4 for details of our February 11 Zoom on gender violence based on Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month.**

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## Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – what next?

**A reflection following our vigil marking the treaty's activation**

By Kit Fry  
Pax Christi Scotland  
Executive Committee

Ironically, fear is the reason we risk oblivion by keeping nuclear weapons. First there was fear of communism. Churchill reportedly discussed atom-bombing the Soviet Union and China - fortunately Churchill wasn't Prime Minister at the time. Later came fear of annihilation leading to the madness of Mutually Assured Destruction, a faux deterrence that can only last until it inevitably fails. And then there's the fear of losing power.

During our 22nd January Vigil marking the day that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons became legal, we heard the metaphor of the five major nuclear states behaving like playground bullies, pushing weaker countries around. That metaphor is very apt - but eventually the bullied and the fair-minded must stand up to those bullies.

That has now started with the TPNW, which puts pressure on nuclear states to look at disarmament seriously, stopping them putting weapons in other countries. With continuing publicity, we can re-awaken concern in the de-sensitised rich-world populations that we live under a nuclear umbrella that is as dangerous to ourselves as to any foe.

Thankfully, President Biden wants to renew START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). That treaty won't eliminate nuclear weapons but is necessary for maintaining a dialogue with Russia to prevent escalation. Total disarmament could happen if nations amicably worked together - but not any time soon.

We should not procrastinate, believing in a multilateral disarmament fantasy. In the spirit of TPNW and the Pope's teaching, I believe we must start with unilateral disarmament. Scotland must show strong support for the Treaty and work to be rid of Trident.

*Kit Fry*

# The Call to Peacemaking from a distance?

Hugh Foy, Pax Christi Scotland executive committee member, considers Lent in lockdown

We know well that in the Catholic tradition Lent is a period of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We are invited throughout the season to reflect more profoundly on the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus as every day our gaze gets closer to Easter, the pinnacle of our liturgical experience and doctrinal understanding of faith.

This year we are immersed in another COVID lockdown. We are a people perhaps locked in more deeply to the experience of human suffering and fragility by this pandemic period. The watchfulness of those committed to gospel nonviolence perhaps differs little generally in the wider context of Church Lenten observance.

However, in this period of reduced human contact, isolation, and limited social participation, how does it speak to us individually in terms of our own experience of the call to peacebuilding and conflict transformation? How can we balance the prophetic call to be part of a righteous people and at times make the loud challenge against injustice, and the pastoral call to be an often more silent healing presence in the face of so much hurt, brokenness and fear?

Pope Francis reminds us “Having faith does not mean having no difficulties, but having the strength to face them, knowing we are not alone.” This leap of faith has been difficult at times during the last year, I must admit. However in those difficult times a Church tradition has come back to me that allowed me to traverse the most difficult moments of reality in pandemic life, that is LAMENT.

The Biblical scholar (and Bishop) NT Wright offers a biblical vision of Lament that finds expression as...

- ✚ A form of PRAISE (two thirds of the psalms are laments)
- ✚ A PROOF of a relationship (God's covenant with us can never be broken)
- ✚ A PATHWAY to intimacy with God (in our painful honesty with God in which we truly place our pain, anger, and fear before the living God)
- ✚ A PRAYER of invocation for God to act (remembering Jesus taught prayer as a core part of our participation in the arrival of the kingdom)
- and
- ✚ A PARTICIPATION in the pain of others (whether those at home if we have anyone living with us, or at a distance, communicating in any way we can)

Lament can then become a form of *small kindness solidarity* that allows God's mercy to happen between and among us, whether close or at a distance. We stand in faith-filled knowledge in lament that it is however “not our final prayer, but a prayer in the meantime”. As peacemakers we think, pray and act in the grace-filled trust that we witness to the most profound hope in human history, the resurrection! And so as peacemakers we add our voices to the great life giving chorus that is Church in this time of Lent and together for the sake of all on God's earth we say again and again and again...”He is risen, He is truly risen”.

# Reflections on Peace

## Dialogue – the way forward

By Marian Pallister  
Pax Christi Scotland chair

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis explores in depth the parable of the Good Samaritan. He reminds us in FT 101 that those who ignored the injured man were 'concerned with their duties, their social status, their professional position within society'. The man they ignored was 'a "nobody"...irrelevant to their plans'. And so they ignored the problem.

But the Good Samaritan, a foreigner 'without a place in society' responded to the injured man's needs - a 'neighbour' in the truest and fullest sense.

We have all been put into health 'bubbles' during COVID – but for some time prior to the pandemic, there was a retreat into bubbles of a different kind. *Bubbles that excluded those seen as irrelevant to our politics, our plans, our comfort zones.* People haven't been listening to each other or speaking to each other for too long. That doesn't just lead to walking by on the other side but to violence – of thought and of action.

That's why dialogue must be the way forward. If we don't even talk to the poor guy lying injured in the gutter, how will we ever understand his needs? If we don't talk to the 'foreigner' – the person 'different' to those in our bubble – how can we reconcile our prejudices? How can we move forward to peace?

We were honoured to bring together an ecumenical list of speakers for our January 22 Vigil, who in one short hour demonstrated inspirationally how much we have in common.

We are excited to bring together an interreligious group of experts in the field of gender violence for our conversation based around Pope Francis' prayer intention for February. Talking to Safa and Mahrukh about their faith take on gender violence, I was impressed by how much we can learn from these two young women.

It's good to talk – even better to listen! Pope Francis' prayer intention for January was:

'May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.'

*I'm praying that Pax Christi Scotland can play its role in dialoguing towards peace.*

Marian Pallister

## Peace be with you

By Pax Christi Scotland member  
Anne Dobbing

Greetings from Shetland to my friends in Pax Christi Scotland. It has been anything but a peaceful year for all of us, threatened by a worldwide virus and distanced from friends and families.

Here in Shetland we know we are fortunate to have the space around us to carry on our lives relatively safely while avoiding transmission of the virus, but even here families are grieving the loss of a loved member; and health care workers are overworked and over stretched.

The message of peace is needed all the more in this situation where anxiety for survival can lead to suspicions, accusations against neighbours and aggression. Even here in Shetland rumours and lies have been spread about individuals and families, falsely suspected of not following distancing rules. Fear drives hostility.

But the beautifully simple message of Jesus in 'peace be with you' calls us back to sanity. When we work for peace we can have the confidence of knowing that we are doing exactly the right thing. We are resisting those base urges to suspect the stranger, to attack those who are different, and to foster hatred through lies and prejudice.

This dreadful lockdown has also led us to discover the potential power for good of connection through the Internet. So people like me, far away in Shetland can talk and interact with folk in the rest of Scotland, or even further afield around the world.

Instead of spreading false rumours or suspicions, we can spread truth; we can celebrate the things we have in common: the similarities between us, and the shared mission to create a safe, peaceful world, where all children will be able to thrive as they grow.

Peace isn't always easy; and working for peace doesn't always make us popular, as Jesus and his followers discovered. But it is right and courageous and just and noble. It's a good path to devote one's life to achieving. God bless us all in our efforts to bring peace to our families, our communities and to our world.

Anne Dobbing, Yell, Shetland, January 2021.

## Seeking a nonviolent society – answering Pope Francis’ prayer on gender violence

Pope Francis’ prayer intention for February is: *‘We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.’*

Pax Christi Scotland believes that a nonviolent society begins in the home, but the alarming rise in gender violence around the world during the pandemic tells us that we must work to change perceptions (see the link to the Scottish Government’s report on P1).

At 7pm on **February 11**, we are holding a Zoom event to raise awareness of gender violence and the strategies that could help us address in our own communities this ‘pandemic within a pandemic’.

Our distinguished speakers are:

- ✚ **Tom Halpin**, former Deputy Chief Constable, Lothian & Borders, former Chief Executive at Sacro, now board member of the Scottish Police Authority & Council Member of the think tank Scottish Association for Studying Offending.
- ✚ **Safa Yousaf**, Project Coordinator for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Programme and Helpline Project; and **Mahrukh Shaukat**, Campaign and Development officer, both at Amina, the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre in Glasgow.
- ✚ **Bishop Victor Phalana**, Bishop of Klerksdorp, in the Prefecture Apostolic of Western Transvaal, South Africa, who has worked extensively to address gender violence.

To register for our **February 11** Zoom meeting, go to:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEsduGgrjosHtONYKkBq2ySa5UpAs3EsuEJ>  
You will then receive an email for the event.

## Our vigil marking the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons becoming effective

On January 22, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons became effective and Pax Christi Scotland held a vigil to mark the occasion and reflect on Scotland’s future.

Our speakers were inspirational - Bishop William Nolan, Bishop of Galloway and Bishop President of the Justice and Peace Commission, Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Damer, Liberal Democrat Life peer & member of the cross party anti nuclear group in the House of Lords, and our chaplain Fr John Convery each gave us much food for thought.

Thoughts to take away – we have to stand up to the bully boy nuclear nations; we must pursue divestment from companies manufacturing nuclear weapons; we must dialogue and pray. If you weren’t able to be with us at the vigil, the link to the recording is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/QWbCPxL3ruly4ddyIXmlNwWEssNRXopruZ24zM4mNLCKNdDSuElzBOhZ-1W-aMhv.4X9xly7tjK9NstgO>

You will also find the link on the website. We are most grateful to all our speakers, and we look forward now to making a nuclear free world a reality.

### The website

Our website has had a makeover (thanks to **Chris Boles of Caledonian Computers** - <https://www.caledoniancomputers.com/>).

You can now pay your membership subs on the **Membership page**, see **planned events & links to past ones**, look back over our newsletters, and read our blogs. Even make donations!

We hope you’ll share

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/>

### Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

[www.paxchristiscotland.org](http://www.paxchristiscotland.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland@PaxScotland>

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Pax Christi Scotland invites you to follow the **Scottish Laity Network’s Lenten Journey 2021**. See details at <https://youtu.be/BuKds1y1OSY>

and register at: [slaitynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:slaitynetwork@gmail.com)