



Pax Scotia

Issue 9



Dialogue is the buzzword of Pope Francis' papacy, and he has led by example. He has met leading Sunni clerics in several Muslim-majority countries, including Bangladesh, Morocco, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, and two years ago, he and Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the imam of al-Azhar mosque in Cairo and an important authority for Sunni Muslims, signed a text encouraging Christian-Muslim dialogue. In March, as head of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, he talked over an hour with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, spiritual leader of most of the world's Shia Muslims, during the first-ever papal visit to Iraq.

What about us? Can we dialogue our way to peace in our everyday lives? See P4 for details of our Zoom conversation on The Role of Dialogue in Engendering Peace. Put the date in your diaries – **Thursday, May 13, 7pm.**

Inside:

Pax Christi Action Round-up – P2
The Role of Dialogue in Engendering
Peace: our next Zoom meeting details – P4

Working for human rights – part of the peace-making process

By Marian Pallister
Pax Christi Scotland
chair

Pope Francis's prayer intention for the month of April has been to pray for those fighting to protect people's fundamental human rights in all parts of the world. On first reading, this very Pax Christi objective seemed to apply to other countries, to other people – Hong Kong, Myanmar, Yemen, Eritrea, South Sudan, Mozambique, Nicaragua...the list is long.

But while he did specify that we should "...pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships [and] authoritarian regimes", he added "...and even in democracies in crisis".

As we emerge from the pandemic, there is no denying that many democracies are indeed in crisis. The fundamental rights of Black people, women, and front-line workers have been thrown sharply into focus in recent months - surely people Pope Francis had in mind when he penned this prayer intention. He talked of those "actively combatting poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, and the denial of social and labour rights".

Those – including nurses working in COVID wards – who have had to seek help at food banks over the past year, those who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic, those marginalised or made homeless, all live in **our** democracy. Lives may not be risked in this country to protect their rights, but we should remember that to protect *everyone's* rights, we must exercise the privileges democracy brings and use our political vote wisely.

Pax Christi Scotland has no politics, except to echo Bishop William Nolan, Bishop President of Justice and Peace Scotland, who has said that democracy puts an obligation on the citizen to be engaged with the political process, to work for the good of society, to be active in trying to achieve good government - and not just leave it to others. So *I'm* continuing to pray Pope Francis's April intention into May, ahead of the Scottish election. *Marian Pallister*

Pax Christi Scotland's Action roundup

Pax Christi Scotland chair Marian Pallister wrote to her MP, Brendan O'Hara, MP for Argyll and Bute, about the cuts to overseas aid versus the additional warheads proposed by the Westminster Government. Here are extracts from his robust response:

Thank you for contacting me with your concerns regarding the UK Government's abhorrent decision to increase its nuclear arsenal. As you will know, the UK's nuclear weapons are based in Argyll & Bute and alongside my SNP colleagues, I have signed EDM 1667, which opposes the plans to increase the number of these weapons in Scotland, against the will of the Scottish people. You can find this EDM here: <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58299> Not only are the Tories cutting conventional forces and abandoning the world's poorest, they are taking the proactive and fundamentally unnecessary step of ordering yet more weapons of mass destruction (from 180 to 260 – a 40% increase).

While the government sees fit to spend billions on nuclear weapons, it has neglected other very obvious (and even legally-binding) priorities.

The Integrated Review says that the UK will return to 0.7% ODA spend – it should never have left the commitment to begin with...Any end to the 0.7% commitment constitutes a clearly broken manifesto commitment from the government.

The UK government has shamefully given NHS workers in England a real-terms cut (where in Scotland under the SNP they've had a 4% increase) – this is frankly shameful and a subject for embarrassment given the year these public servants have had.

The SNP will remove nuclear weapons from Scotland with independence speedily and responsibly. Scotland's share of the £2.5 billion spent on Trident annually equals £204 million a year – this could instead train 10,552 nurses, 4,080 doctors, 6,415 police officers, or 24,329 teachers: any of these things would make Scots safer than nuclear weapons ever would.

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP, Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa, responded (April 7) to an email from Pax Christi Scotland (March 18) regarding the welfare of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Referring to her continued ordeal as 'cruel and intolerable', this is an extract from the letter:

We are doing everything we can to secure the release of British dual nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran, so that they can return home, safely.

It is indefensible and unacceptable for Iran to bring new charges against Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We have repeatedly called on Iran not to return her to prison. The Foreign Secretary continues to press for this directly with Foreign Minister Zarif, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani, most recently on 10 March. Our Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Exercising diplomatic protection in Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case has formally raised it to a state-to-state issue, clarifying we consider her to be a British national, despite Iran refusing to recognise her dual nationality. We will take any action we judge will help secure her permanent release, keeping under review what we judge to be in her best interests.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was sentenced to a further one-year prison sentence on April 26, and a travel ban until 2023. Labour MP Tulip Siddiq said in Parliament "The prime minister did not even arrange for UK officials to attend Nazanin's recent court hearing, which might have ensured she got a free and fair trial. He still hasn't got his government to pay the £400m debt that we as a country owe Iran." Pax Christi Scotland will continue to add our voice to support Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Pax Christi Scotland co-hosted an on-line peace hustings with CAAT Scotland and Scottish CND at which Maurice Corry (Conservative), Ross Greer (Greens), Bill Kidd (SNP), David McKenzie (LibDems), & Alex Rowley (Labour), answered questions on a range of peace issues. If you missed this, here is the link to the recording: <https://youtu.be/P-0Z81weeB0>

Reflections on Peace

A roadmap for peace

Arthur West, Member of Don't Bank on the Bomb Scotland Network and joint convener of Scottish CND Trade Union Network, welcomes the new DBOTB report.

Eye-watering levels of investments in the production and development of nuclear weapons are highlighted in a new report by the Don't Bank on the Bomb Scotland Network, compiled by peace campaigner Linda Pearson.

The report, *Disarmament through Divestment** reveals that the Scottish Local Government Pension Fund, the Scottish Parliamentary Pension Scheme, Scottish financial institutions and Scotland's top ten universities together hold investments worth £7.7 billion in nuclear weapons producers - this despite international law on nuclear weapons having been strengthened by the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons coming into force in January 2021.

The treaty prohibits countries that sign it from being involved in the development, production and use of nuclear weapons. It is the beginning of a process towards stigmatising nuclear weapons and pressure is building on the Westminster Government to co-operate with the Treaty.

As the report shows, this ground-breaking treaty presents a legal challenge to the banks and pension funds who are currently involved in nuclear weapons-related investments.

I believe that this excellent report is a major resource in the struggle to rid Scotland and the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons, providing a compelling case for the redirection of investment funds away from nuclear weapons and into areas such as renewables and socially useful products. It is an effective tool in the struggle to rid our country and our world of the scourge of nuclear weapons.

* Go to the Don't Bank On the Bomb website (<https://nukedivestmentscotland.org/>) for the new report (<https://nukedivestmentscot.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/2021-dbotb-scotland-guide-final-1.pdf>)

Human trafficking – a post Zoom reflection

By Arianna Andreangeli, Pax Christi Scotland Executive Committee Member

"Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity." (Pope Francis, address to the Combating Human Trafficking conference, April 2014)

In April 2021, Pax Christi Scotland hosted an on-line event about human trafficking that posed the question 'What price human dignity?' We heard that the world's economic system enables trafficking, and that there could be victims working in plain sight in the warehouse of a Scottish supermarket chain. We learned what organisations based in the UK and internationally are doing to combat the situation, and from lawyer and UN advocate Carmen Artigas Moreno in Uruguay, there was also a faith perspective.

And of course, the Gospel calls each of us to cooperate in the construction of the Kingdom of God - not an abstract ideal but in today's world, where justice and mercy (Mt 23:23) must be practiced; where the poor must be enabled and captives freed (Lk 4:18-19).

When Pope Francis and members of law enforcement services and social and humanitarian workers from 35 countries committed in 2014 to eradicating human trafficking, the Sancta Marta initiative was born. Its core objective is to "develop strategies in prevention, pastoral care and re-integration, placing the victim at the centre". In 2021 the head of Sancta Marta, Cardinal Archbishop Vincent Nicholls reminds us that seven years on, human trafficking is all too real and that the pandemic has exacerbated the problem, bringing about "an order of people in distress, poverty, isolation and anxiety" who are easily prey to traffickers.

Cardinal Nicholls offers a clear checklist, mirroring our call as Pax Christi Scotland members:

* Pray for the victims of human trafficking, for the authorities involved in fighting human trafficking and for those supporting victims in their process of recovery.

* Speak out for those who have fallen prey of trafficking, for fair immigration and asylum systems and seek greater responsiveness of governments to their need for protection and healing.

* Call for greater resources to be given not only to law enforcement agencies but also for the creation of caring and supportive structures where victims can find refuge and be free from persecution, discrimination and diffidence.

Let's unite in our prayers and be guided in our actions by the example of the patron saint of the Sancta Marta initiative, the trafficked St Josephine Bakhita.

The Role of Dialogue in Engendering Peace.

He couldn't be clearer - Pope Francis is the world's greatest advocate for dialogue.

He says, 'If there is one word that we should never tire of repeating, it is this: dialogue. We are called to promote a culture of dialogue by every possible means and thus to rebuild the fabric of society.' He asks us to build 'a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter', reminding us to respect and listen to all members of society. That is the starting point for our Zoom event on May 13, entitled *The Role of Dialogue in Engendering Peace*.

Two peacemakers who value dialogue have accepted our invitation, and there will be an opportunity for us all to discuss the ideas they will put forward. They are:

- ✚ **Carolyn Merry**, director of Place for Hope, an organisation that accompanies and equips people and faith communities to reach their potential to be peacemakers who navigate conflict well.

Before joining Place for Hope, Carolyn worked as a peacemaker for 25 years in places of war, extreme poverty, repressive discrimination and exclusion of those most vulnerable.

- ✚ **John Dornan**, a former teacher, has been a development educator with SCIAF and more recently with the Xaverian Missionaries. He suggests that 'Dialogue is the new name for peace' and says his remaining ambition is to leave a more peaceful, sustainable and just world for future generations.

To join the dialogue on May 13, 2021, 7pm-8.30pm (London time), register in advance at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrcOqsrT8vHtcHnYebqSDmhxtVUOk-d-7z>

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

Working in solidarity to address discrimination, the treatment of migrants & refugees, environment issues and those of weapons of mass destruction



Working with Pax Christi International – we endorse the urgent letter demanding members of the UN Security Council immediately oppose Israel's impending plans to forcibly evict Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem (to be carried out on 2 May 2021). Read the letter at <https://paxchristi.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-to-UN-SC-Council-Members-1.pdf> & seek support from UK politicians through our website.

Working with SCIAF - An evening of reflection on 'Laudato Si' and the climate crisis (**24 May 7-8.15pm**), bringing Catholics across Scotland together to reflect on the closing of this special 'Year of Laudato Si'. Book at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/everything-and-everyone-is-connected-tickets-150471198405?utm_medium=discovery&utm_campaign=social&utm_content=attendeeshare&utm_source=strongmail&utm_term=listing

Working with Scottish Laity network - Email slaitynetwork@gmail.com or see Facebook for events.

The website

Don't forget - you can now see planned events & links to past ones on our website. The newsletters are archived there. You can pay your membership on the Membership page and make donations. Please explore and share:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/>
Continued thanks to webmaster Chris Boles of Caledonian Computers -
<https://www.caledoniancomputers.com/>

Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

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

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To join Zoom conversations from the Edinburgh Jesuit Centre, go to edinburghjesuitcentre@jesuit.org.uk or see their Facebook page.

To catch up with Scottish Laity Network's Lenten Journey and retreat, email slaitynetwork@gmail.com
And find Eco-Congregation events at <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>