

Pax Christi USA

NATIONAL CATHOLIC PEACE MOVEMENT



your giving to Pax Christi USA do so at this crucial moment, we will be unable to continue to staff and resource the movement at our current level. What we need is no less than a "surge" in support of Pax Christi! I ask you to please seriously and prayerfully consider what Pax Christi USA means to you and express that meaning in an extra gift at this time.

Unlike many other nonprofits, Pax Christi USA relies almost exclusively on the financial support of its members to implement the programs, campaigns, and events and to publish the resource materials that you, the members, direct through the decisions of your representatives on the National Council. Already since this crisis began last year, the National Council has directed, and the national staff has implemented, a number of cutbacks in budgeted programs, including eliminating three staff positions. We are currently operating at a bare-bones staffing level. Additional cuts will necessitate fundamental changes in the operations of Pax Christi USA that will seriously limit our ability to continue to provide the resources, organizing, events, and engagement that have been the hallmark of Pax Christi USA's national efforts for many years. So I ask you again, please support Pax Christi USA at this critical moment with an extra gift. You can send your gift in the enclosed Economic Security for All Fund envelope. Or you can visit our secure Web site and make a contribution online. It would be a tremendous help if you could make an ongoing pledge by becoming a Sustainer and making monthly automatic donations on your credit card. You can cancel or change at any time.

As Pax Christi USA continues its journey and deepens its anti-racism analysis, the National Council continues to take concrete action to align Pax Christi USA's institutional life with the values and commitments it has made to becoming a truly anti-racist, multicultural Catholic movement for justice and peace. To that end, Constitutional Changes are presented here for your approval. Please take a minute and review the proposed changes on pages 3 and 6 and return your yea or nay to the national office on the enclosed form on page 6 by June 15.

Also included in this mailing is this year's Ballot for National Council. These are tumultuous times, both nationally and organizationally, as Pax Christi USA, like all nonprofits, faces serious challenges to funding. Strong, effective leadership is critical at this important moment. So please review the enclosed Ballot and return it with your choices to the national office by June 15.

Through the efforts of all of you, the members of Pax Christi USA, we have collectively met the challenges of our times. Whether it was witnessing and articulating the call to Christian nonviolence in the wake of 9-11 when a spirit of vengeance and retribution seized our national psyche, or standing in opposition to the invasion of Iraq when the popularity of that war led to the demonization and even punishment of anyone who spoke of peace, Pax Christi USA members, collectively and individually, stood up and were counted when the moment cried out for such witnesses. Today, the collapse of the financial system is heaping collateral damage on millions of people worldwide. Homelessness is rising at pandemic rates in this country. Our nation's leaders struggle both to understand the problems and to conceive solutions. Our voice, the voice of justice, the voice of sustainability, the voice of alternatives to vulture capitalism and its gross exploitations, must remain viable and vibrant. I know that just as you were able to muster the courage and strength to meet previous challenges, you will stand up and be part of the surge for peace that we need at this moment both organizationally and in our communities and nation. I thank you for your partnership at this critical moment and for your ongoing witness to Christ's peace for the long haul.

In peace,

Dave Robinson
Dave Robinson,
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

INSIDE

Executive Director's Letter	1, 8
Peacemaking Day by Day	1
News Updates	2, 7
Proposed Changes to the Pax Christi USA Constitution	3, 6
Out of Iraq in 16 Months	4
End the Occupation of Afghanistan	5
Constitutional Ballot	6
Turning the Page on the War on Terror Speaking Tour	7
Contact Information	8

PEACEMAKING: Day by Day

Strive for peace with all, and for that holiness without which no one can see God.
- Hebrews 12:14

* This quote and hundreds more are available in Pax Christi USA's *Peacemaking Day by Day*, Volume I. To order your copy, visit our Website, www.paxchristiusa.org.

Greetings of peace! As you review the items in this newsletter, you can see that a lot is happening. Plans are shaping up in Washington, DC, for an escalation of the war in Afghanistan, and there are disturbing indications that the Pentagon is not willing to leave Iraq as expected. Instead, Pentagon planners are promoting a definitional sleight-of-hand that would eliminate U.S. combat forces in Iraq simply by changing their definition from "combat" to "trainer." In Afghanistan, the announced change of mission from so-called "nation building" to fighting and conquering insurgents though a new version of the "surge" is deeply troubling and a recipe for quagmire. To challenge this, Pax Christi USA is preparing a number of efforts this summer to educate the public and Congressional representatives. One effort is the sign-on ad included in this mailing. Pax Christi USA will publish this statement in Catholic and secular periodicals this summer. Please support this important effort by returning the enclosed form to the national office or by visiting our Web site.

Pax Christi USA will hold its annual National Conference on Catholic Peacemaking July 17-19 in Chicago. Several key speakers will gather to address the economic collapse, the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the climate crisis, immigration justice, nuclear disarmament, and more. In addition, Pax Christi USA has partnered with the Office of Racial Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago to offer a training day in anti-racism on Friday, July 17, immediately prior to the opening of the Conference. For the first time, we are holding the Conference at a hotel, the Wyndham O'Hare. As you can see from the

enclosed Conference brochure, we have secured an excellent room rate. We are confident that not only will the Conference offer us spiritual replenishment, excellent insights from noted speakers, and concrete opportunities to engage in action, it will also be comfortable and affordable. While we have a large block of rooms held for this event, they are not unlimited, so I encourage you to sign up early to ensure that you have a Wyndham room at the great rate offered.

I would like to draw your attention to how the deepening economic crisis poses an unprecedented threat to the financial stability of Pax Christi USA. Many members have been seriously impacted by the devastating stock market crash and widespread layoffs. Our hearts and prayers go out to all who are struggling with this crisis and the pain and uncertainty it has caused. Pax Christi USA is experiencing a severe shortage of funding as religious communities and long-time donors increasingly are forced to make very difficult choices with diminishing resources. At the same time, other members have expressed to me that they are fortunate enough to be less affected by the terrible economy and have pledged their increased support for Pax Christi USA. I cannot overemphasize just how bad this situation is. Yet the onset of dwindling resources is inversely related to what I believe are exponential opportunities to make change and shift policy directions in this country. Pax Christi USA is so well positioned to seize these opportunities, to boldly articulate a vision of nonviolence, and to work to make that vision concrete—but it takes resources. Unless those of you who also have the ability to increase

June is Torture Awareness Month!

Please visit the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (www.tassc.org) for more info.

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Visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more educational and spiritual resources for peace.

**PAX CHRISTI
USA**

**PAX CHRISTI USA BISHOP PRESIDENT
ISSUES LETTER ON LABOR**

This year, Congress will debate the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). EFCA modernizes union election law and protects workers from employer intimidation in the workplace. On a moral level, it is among the most effective measures our country can take to reduce poverty. Pax Christi USA Bishop-President Gabino Zavala recently issued a letter on EFCA in his capacity as board president of Interfaith Worker Justice.

“As the United States now endures what is perhaps one of the greatest economic crises in its history, it is vitally necessary to recognize that we cannot recover the health of our economy and our society without ensuring that the dignity and freedom of every worker is secure,” Zavala wrote.

EFCA allows workers a say in how their companies—and the economy—will be reorganized in the economic instability of the coming years. To win passage of this legislation, it is important to educate our faith communities on its importance. Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice, chaired by Dr. Joseph Fahey, PCUSA Ambassador of Peace, submitted its position paper on EFCA to the Obama transition team, urging enacting EFCA as part of the national economic recovery program.

**PC NATIONAL
COUNCIL MEM-
BER NAMED TO
OBAMA’S FAITH
INITIATIVE**

In early February President Obama signed an executive order establishing the new White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The office will

work on behalf of people in the United States committed to improving their communities, regardless of their religious or political beliefs. Pax Christi USA National Council member and the President of the Mexican American Catholic College, Arturo Chávez, Ph.D., was named to the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Unlike the faith office under the Bush Administration, which focused primarily on funding programs and which drew criticism that it was assisting political supporters, President Obama said he wants to use the Office for policy guidance. He stated, “There is a force for good greater than government. It is an expression of faith, this yearning to give back, this hungering for a purpose larger than our own, that reveals itself not simply in places of worship, but in senior centers and shelters, schools and hospitals, and any place an American decides.”

The Office’s top priority will be to involve community groups in the economic recovery effort. Beyond its domestic agenda, the Office will work with the National Security Council to foster interfaith dialogue with leaders and scholars around the world. Other members of the Council include Father Larry J. Snyder, President, Catholic Charities USA, and Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Executive Director, Sojourners.

**PAX CHRISTI
MEMBERS HELP
KEEP
NUCLEAR PORK
OUT OF
STIMULUS BILL**

Pax Christi USA was one of four national organizations singled out for mobilization of its membership to remove more than \$1 billion

*continued on
p. 7*

continued from p. 2

in funding in the economic stimulus bill for the nuclear weapons complex. The Senate Appropriations Committee took advantage of the current economic crisis to try to give the nuclear weapons complex money to expand its programs, but due to the cry over such wasteful spending, the final package, negotiated between the House and the Senate, did not include the money for nuclear weapons.

In announcing the removal of this nuclear pork from the economic stimulus menu, The Nuclear Abolitionist blog stated: “Thanks to action alerts from at least four organizations, Council for a Liveable World, Faithful Security, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF), and Pax Christi, people took action and made it happen.”

Thousands of Pax Christi USA members responded with phone calls, emails, and faxes within a 24-hour period after an action alert went out over our Rapid Response Network. Congratulations and thank you!

**PIKES PEAK PAX CHRISTI ADVOCATES
FOR THE HOMELESS**

Members of Pikes Peak Pax Christi (CO) were at the forefront of a public outcry over police sweeps at homeless camps in Colorado Springs. Police introduced new guidelines aimed at answering some of the concerns raised by advocates for those who are homeless. But Patrick Ayers, a veteran and member of Pikes Peak Pax Christi, stated that he would continue to advocate for a lawsuit against the police for violating the civil rights of the city’s homeless.

“They didn’t answer our concerns,” Ayers stated in reference to the new guidelines. “There are too many incidents that have not been answered.”

Ayers reported that the city council decided to delay a vote on the new guidelines until police and

the city-sponsored nonprofit Keep Colorado Springs Beautiful meet again with homeless advocates.

**PAX CHRISTI NEW JERSEY HOLDS
STATE ASSEMBLY IN LATE MARCH**

Pax Christi New Jersey held its Spring 2009 Assembly, “Banishing the Darkness: Our Christian Witness for Disarmament and Demilitarization,” on Saturday, March 28, at Felician College in Lodi. Speakers for the assembly included Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA, and Dr. Joe Fahey, professor at Manhattan College and co-founder of Pax Christi USA.

**PAX CHRISTI LOCAL GROUPS ORGANIZE
TO PROTEST GAZA INVASION**

Pax Christi local and campus groups organized around the nation to protest Israel’s offensive in Gaza earlier this winter. Groups from Michigan to California to Florida to Minnesota participated in or organized demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns, meetings with government officials, and numerous other actions to call attention to the situation in Israel-Palestine and to educate U.S. citizens on the roots of the conflict. In the New Orleans newspaper “The Dissident Voice,” an article cited how a new wave of organizing among the city’s Arab population had brought energy and inspiration to actions around the Israel-Palestine issue, including the recent Gaza invasion. The article cited Pax Christi New Orleans as one of the groups that new activists had built ties with. Members of Pax Christi New Orleans joined a January 4th march, the second of four mass demonstrations for Gaza during the Israeli bombing, which was organized and led by Palestinian youth from New Orleans.



President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the White House. PCUSA National Council Member Arturo Chávez is sixth from the left.

photo by John Kelly

**Turning the Page on the War on Terror:
Alternative Approaches for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Beyond**

**A national speaking tour with Tom Cordaro,
activist and author of *Be Not Afraid: An Alternative to the War on Terror***

From April through December, Mr. Cordaro is available to speak at conferences, universities, churches, community events, and special engagements. His presentation is typically 45 minutes followed by a 30-minute period of discussion or Q&A. Book signings are encouraged immediately prior to or following speaking events. For more information, please contact Patrick Cashio at communications@paxchristiusa.org or 814-460-5512.

Proposed PCUSA Constitutional Changes

(continued from p. 3)

- add: The National Council will elect one of its members to serve for a one (1) year term as vice-chairperson; she or he is eligible for re-election for a second and third term.

6. Article 4, Section 6 (Committees of the National Council)

- add: All committees should reflect both racial and gender diversity.

7. Article 5 (Local and Regional Organization of Pax Christi USA), Section 1 (Purpose and Establishment of Local Organization of Pax Christi USA)

- add: In order to meet more effectively local needs and interests, members are encouraged to come together in local groups and chapters. Pax Christi USA affirms and promotes the value of local groups that are racially and ethnically diverse. Such groups may form around parishes, schools, or any workable group of people. Chapters may form around cities, dioceses, or states.

8. Article 6 (Sessions and Meetings of Pax Christi USA), Section 1 (National Assembly)

- Change from “A National Assembly or regional assemblies of Pax Christi USA shall be held each year at times and places determined by the National Council.” to A National Conference shall be held each year at a time and place determined by the National Council.

9. Article 6, Section 2 (National Council Meetings)

- add: At least six (6) phone conference calls will held throughout the year.

10. Article 8 (Rules of Order), Section 3

- change “Parliamentary Procedure” to Decision-Making Process
- remove: The latest revised edition of Robert’s Rules of Order will prevail and supply for any procedures lacking in the constitution.

The Pax Christi USA Constitution states that amendments to it may be proposed by two-thirds of the members of the National Council. The below changes are unanimously recommended by the National Council. These changes stem from two sources:

body of Christ.

2.) Changes to make Pax Christi USA more structurally sound and in line with other non-profits, as well as to reflect the changing times (e.g., easy availability of conference calls).

1.) Consultation with the Pax Christi USA Anti-Racism Team. PCART and the National Council believe these changes make explicit the 20-year vision and commitment of Pax Christi USA to become an anti-racist, multicultural movement for peace with justice that truly reflects the

Please vote on the changes with either “yes” or “no” and return in the enclosed envelope. The entire current Constitution may be read at www.paxchristiusa.org/constitution.pdf.

To make these changes to the Constitution, three-quarters of the members who respond must vote “yes.”

Proposed Changes

1. Article 2 (Purpose, Role and Use of Funds), Section 1 (Purpose)

- add “with justice”: The movement springs from a gospel vision of peace with justice.
- change “peace” to “nonviolent”: It asks its members to ground their peacemaking in prayer, study and action on the nonviolent message of Jesus.
- add final sentence: “Pax Christi is committed to doing all of its work from an anti-racist perspective that is expressed within accountable relationships with Communities of Color.”

2. Article 3 (membership): add phrase

- Rooted in the church, the people of God, membership in Pax Christi USA is open to members of all faiths, race/ethnic, and socioeconomic background who support the statement of purpose of Pax Christi USA and are guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church on peace and justice.

3. Article 4 (Organization of Pax Christi USA), Section 1 (National Council)

- add phrase: c) approves official collaborative efforts with other organizations and takes care to ensure that these collaborations operate within the framework of Pax Christi USA’s anti-racism commitment to be accountable to Communities of Color;
- change “one member-at-large” to “vice-chair”: d) elects from among the members of the council the chairperson, treasurer, and vice-chair to the Executive Committee;
- change “National Coordinator” to “Executive Director” (and two other instances in the document where this occurs): e) appoints the Executive Director;
- add: g) Maintains an on-going relationship with the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team (PCART) by appointing one council person to attend the annual PCART gatherings.
- change “for a second term” to “by the council”: The term of office for the Bishop President shall be for four (4) years, with eligibility for re-election by the council.

4. Article 4, Section 2 (Executive Committee)

- change “one member of the National Council” to “vice-chair”: The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Bishop President, Chairperson, Treasurer, and Vice-Chair elected by and from the National Council.

5. Article 4, Section 3 (National Officers)

- add: c) Council Vice-Chairperson: The Vice-Chairperson assumes the duties of the Chairperson in the Chairperson’s absence. (continued on p. 6)

Ballot on Pax Christi USA Constitutional Changes



No. As a member of Pax Christi USA, I vote to REJECT the constitutional changes proposed in this newsletter (April 2009).

Yes. As a member of Pax Christi USA, I vote to ACCEPT the constitutional changes proposed in this newsletter (April 2009).

Please return your ballot to Pax Christi USA by mail, postmarked by Monday, June 15.

Those who supported the Bush invasion and military occupation of

Out of Iraq in 16 Months: Yes We Can—Yes We Must

Iraq are back at it, warning that President Obama could “imperil” Iraq if he keeps his campaign promise to remove U.S. combat forces within 16 months.

Outgoing Iraqi Ambassador Ryan Crocker told reporters last week that “the greatest error the United States could make in Iraq would be a hurried withdrawal.”

Former Iraq coalition spokesman Dan Senor warned a Fox News audience that Obama’s promise to remove all combat brigades from Iraq within 16 months of taking office should be “flexible.” Or, as President Bush liked to say, it should be based on “conditions on the ground,” not an “arbitrary time-frame set by Washington politicians.”

As Yogi Berra would put it: “It’s déjà vu all over again!”

Candidate Obama was right to be clear and specific that he will remove all U.S. combat forces from Iraq within 16 months from taking office. President Obama will be just as right when he follows through on that commitment as Commander-In-Chief.

The presence of U.S. military forces in Iraq is deeply unpopular with the Iraqi people. One of the biggest barriers to gaining support for the current Status of Forces Agreement from Iraqi officials was the strong public sentiment against allowing U.S. forces to remain after January 1. The election of Barack Obama played an important role in its ultimate passage precisely because Iraqi officials trusted the president-elect and his commitment to withdraw unwanted U.S. military forces.

I was recently asked by a reporter if it would not be risky for President Obama to stick to his firm timetable for withdrawal of U.S. combat forces. In fact, it would be extremely risky if the president were to choose to back down and not to fulfill his commitment.

First of all, it would erode the trust of the Iraqi people and their elected leaders that the United States was committed to fundamentally changing its deeply flawed policy and the debacle that policy generated in Iraq. This would bode poorly for the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement when it goes before the Iraqi public in a national referendum in July. The failure of the referendum would send all U.S. troops packing immediately, making the transition more abrupt than President Obama’s 16 month withdrawal timeline.

The election of President Obama sent a powerfully

positive message to the world about the United States at a time when

U.S. credibility and respect were at an all-time low. Reversing a fundamental foreign policy pledge within weeks of assuming office could send a dangerous message to the region and the world that the more things change in U.S. leadership, the more they remain the same. It is critical to the U.S. and the success of President Obama’s foreign policy for trust and credibility to be restored.

The new Commander-In-Chief is absolutely right to consult with his military commanders on Iraq—just as he pledged he would do as a candidate. But as important as their perspective is, the military frame is only one of many for U.S. Iraq policy. President Obama must consider a wide range of considerations in making his decision, starting with the message that it will send to the citizens and leaders of Iraq, the region, and the world.

President Obama’s pledge to withdraw troops in 16 months was perhaps his most widely known, and supported, pledge during the campaign season. It set him apart during a critical juncture in the presidential primaries. Wavering on this promise so early in his Administration could damage the credibility of his claim that his election represented fundamental change from the politics-as-usual in Washington. The U.S. people would like to believe that it is possible for politicians to mean what they say and say what they mean—both before and after an election.

Despite the sky-is-falling warnings from supporters of the Bush war in Iraq, fulfilling this pledge is highly achievable militarily. A report by former Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb for the Center for American Progress released in August of last year made this abundantly clear, concluding that an orderly and safe military withdrawal from Iraq could reasonably be achieved in as little as 8 to 10 months. What is required is the political will.

A military withdrawal from Iraq in 16 months? Yes we can and, yes we must!

Tom Andrews is a former Congressperson from Maine and National Director of the Win Without War Coalition. He will be a featured speaker at the PCUSA National Peacemaking Conference in Chicago, July 17-19. This article reprinted with permission.

Afghanistan

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, many in the United States initially supported the war in Afghanistan because they believed that it would reduce the threat of another attack on U.S. soil and that it would enable the United States to bring to justice Osama bin Laden and others responsible for the attacks. Once the Taliban fell, the war was touted as a success. However, while public attention shifted to the war in Iraq, the conflict in Afghanistan entered a new phase of violence and decay.

Concerns about the increased violence and lack of stability in Afghanistan have led many—including President Obama—to call for an increased presence of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

However, the idea that more U.S. troops are the answer to Afghanistan’s woes is misguided. Rather than a military escalation, what is needed is a shift away from militarism and toward diplomacy, aid, and reconstruction.

Today, as calls grow louder for the U.S. military to send more troops to Afghanistan, it is time to address the realities and counter the misconceptions surrounding the war and occupation. We

must become better informed about the true consequences of U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan. We need to listen to the Afghan peacemakers and grassroots movements who are calling for alternatives to military action and work with them to devise strategies for building a lasting peace.

Outlined below are ten reasons the United States should end the occupation in Afghanistan. We call instead for a drastically revamped U.S. policy focused on diplomacy, negotiation, aid, reconstruction, and international cooperation. We hope that this information and analysis will inspire discussion and debate among U.S. citizens, our elected representatives, the military, policy makers, and the media. The time for a new strategy in Afghanistan has arrived.

Adapted from September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

Entire report (“Afghanistan: Ending a Failed Military Strategy,” 22 pages) available at www.peacefultomorrow.org/downloads/Afghanistanprimerjan09final.pdf

TEN REASONS TO END THE OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN

1. U.S. and NATO occupation creates civilian casualties, angering Afghans.
2. Military occupation has hampered humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts.
3. Afghan women continue to face violence and oppression under the occupation.
4. U.S. policy has empowered warlords, drug lords, and the Taliban.
5. The occupation contributes to violence and destabilization for ordinary Afghans, including refugees.
6. NATO allies and military leaders are questioning the occupation.
7. U.S. troop casualties in Afghanistan are rising.
8. Afghans are calling for a negotiated end to the war.
9. Military escalation will only increase the violence and potentially lead to a wider war involving nuclear-armed Pakistan.
10. Military occupation of Afghanistan does not curb terrorism.

See also (and sign!) Pax Christi USA’s enclosed statement on Afghanistan: “It is Time to End the Trail of Resentment and Hatred.”