Dear Pax Christi USA Member,

A very warm summer greeting to all from steaming hot Washington, D.C., where the cool feel of refreshing fall breezes seem light years away. Hopefully you are faring better than the D.C. area and you are keeping cool and relaxed.

In last month’s membership newsletter, Dave Robinson shared with you his gratitude for his time as Executive Director and an update on his transitioning into a new phase of life. He reminisced about his work and the new contexts which Pax Christi USA has entered into in recent years. I worked with Dave tangentially in my role as the Executive Director of the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and, for these past two years, as a member of his staff as the Director for Institutional Advancement. I speak for all of the staff—and for all of you as well—I am sure—when I say how grateful we are to Dave for his twenty years of service and leadership. As Dave has done in building upon the success of the people who preceded him, I am confident that we will take this new opportunity to continue to grow this movement and build our organization as a voice for peace and justice within our Church and to the world.

I am excited to offer myself in service as the Acting Executive Director while the Pax Christi USA National Council continues its search for the next leader of our organization. Transitions always come with challenges, and I hope to do what I can with you, and with all who care about Pax Christi USA, to embrace and take advantage of the new opportunities which lie ahead of us.

For the past several months PCUSA’s national staff has been hard at work with transferring the national office from Erie to Washington. We have been going through voluminous files in order to send them to the archives at Marquette University, loading up and moving furniture, and packing books and resources. As I looked through the many photos and mementos from the Erie office, it brought to mind the roots of the peace movement. Like all who have experienced a move or have had to close the home of a loved one—in our case the closure of an office which for decades served as the home of the Catholic peace movement in the United States—the feeling is the same. A degree of sadness is mixed with joyful memories of successful actions and all who have made us into what we are today.

I did not know personally many of those past staff members, former members of the National Council, Ambassadors of Peace and ordinary members who were captured in those photos—people who dedicated their lives to educate and train peacemakers throughout the country in the spirituality of nonviolence. But what I do know is that over the past forty years, I was a beneficiary of those teachings and prayerful reflections. In humility, I give thanks for their witness and I think it is appropriate at this time of change for all of us to remember and honor the efforts of those who have built Pax Christi USA into what it is today. It is our responsibility to now build on their legacy with gratitude.

In this newsletter we hope to provide you with some of the resources to undertake our common responsibility to be the Catholic voice for peace and justice. All around us at this time we are hearing different interpretations about the meaning of what happened ten years ago on September 11th and what has been accomplished—or lost—in the years since. We offer our own contribution to that national conversation on page 6 with a statement on the tenth anniversary of 9-11. Toward the end of the statement, we assert: This anniversary offers us an opportunity to reflect the values of the God to whom we
Pax Christi Florida members attend the Space Organizing Conference

In June, John Stewart and Anne Richter of Pax Christi Tampa Bay attended the Space Organizing Conference of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space at Merrimack College in North Andover, MA. Following the conference, Richter and Stewart released a report of the event which was posted on the Pax Christi USA website. The report included excellent resources which they experienced first-hand at the conference as well as a list of “work still to be done” which local groups could consider. For the full report, go to http://bit.ly/nnQC1F.

Pax Christi groups throughout the nation observe Hiroshima/Nagasaki anniversaries

In early August, more than 25 Pax Christi local groups and regions organized, co-sponsored or participated in actions and events to commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 66 years ago. Groups from New York City to Southern California, Lansing, Michigan to Dallas, Texas and all points in-between planned prayer vigils, participated in civil disobedience, created public art projects and more in order to remember the tragedy of the atomic bombings and call for a nuclear-free world. Pax Christi New Mexico hosted its annual Hiroshima Day event, including its Sackcloth and Ashes Prayer Vigil for Peace, at Los Alamos National Laboratories, a major research and development facility for nuclear weapons. Numerous groups also hosted special public screenings of The Forgotten Bomb, the new anti-nuke documentary directed and produced by Bud Ryan of Pax Christi New Mexico and Stuart Overbey.

Fall conferences and assemblies planned for Pax Christi state and regional chapters

Conferences and assemblies on a variety of issues and topics are planned for the fall at Pax Christi USA state and regional chapters. On September 17, in Watertown, Pax Christi South Dakota will present their annual conference, “Until They Have Faces: A Gospel Perspective on Nonviolence,” which includes Kathy Kelly, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace, as the keynote speaker. Pax Christi Minnesota will gather in Rochester, also on September 17, for “Breaking the Culture of Silence; Choosing a Nonviolent Path,” with Coleen Rowley. In May of 2002, Rowley brought some of the pre 9-11 lapses to light and testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee about some of the endemic problems facing the FBI and the intelligence community. Pax Christi Southern California will host “Connecting the Dots of Peacemaking: War, Economy, and Environment”, with Sr. Simone Campbell, on September 24 at Mount Saint Mary’s College. Pax Christi Florida will be hosting NETWORK organizer Jean Sammon on October 15 in Leesburg to speak. Pax Christi Metro New York’s assembly will commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11, with Pax Christi author Tom Cordaro speaking on his award-winning book, Be Not Afraid: An Alternative to the War on Terror. It will take place on October 15 in Yonkers. On October 22, Pax Christi Massachusetts’ fall assembly, “Reconciliation: Rising from the Ashes of Destruction” with Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace Colleen Kelly will take place in Dedham. For more regional events, go to the Pax Christi USA website and select “Regional Events” on the sidebar under “Issues and Topics.”

Pax Christi Michigan helps organize Moveable Peace 2011

In July 2010, representatives of Pax Christi Michigan—and other peace and justice groups throughout Michigan—met at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit to discuss a problem that confronts us all: millions in Michigan care about peace and justice, but too few act. Par-
participants agreed to collaborate on a statewide effort to reach out and listen to grassroots concerns; to help folks “connect the dots” between the skewed federal priorities and the crises in funding human needs programs; and to petition for a State Commission for Peace and Justice. Using Michigan Peace Network as a hub for communication and coordination, a core of volunteers planned Moveable Peace 2011. There were many components to this state-wide effort: Community Listening Events, a Budget Priorities Roadshow, a Peace Walk to Lansing from July 30th to August 9th culminating at the State Capitol where marchers will present petitions calling upon the state legislature to institute a Commission for Peace and Justice. In September, activists will be present in the Detroit Labor Day Parade and a Labor Day Mackinac Bridge Peace Gathering. For more info go to www.moveablepeace.org.

Pax Christi USA released a statement which said, in part:

Ten years ago, just scant hours after our nation witnessed the horror of 9-11, Pax Christi USA released a statement which said, in part:

Our God is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion. God pardons all our iniquities, heals all our ills, redeems our lives from destruction, and crowns us with love and compassion. The Peace Current

Let us remember those who were lost and memorialize them where they were killed. Let us write a new chapter and create a new legacy for peace in our nation. The Peace Current

Pax Christi at the University of Dayton highlights work done over the past year

The Pax Christi campus chapter at the University of Dayton accomplished a great deal during the 2010-2011 school year. Highlights from the year’s activities include: a campus vigil on the anniversary of the beginning of the war in Afghanistan; International Day of Peace events; a Christmas toy drive; Archbishop Oscar Romero Stations of the Cross; Invisible Children and LiNK documentary screenings; and morning prayer each Friday during Lent. The group has also collaborated for the past two years with the SOA Watch group on campus in organizing the trip down to the annual vigil and action at the School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, GA.

Pax Christi East San Jose members mentor gang members into community leaders

Pax Christi East San Jose has many active members who are doing significant non-violence and social justice work in the community at some level or another. This past spring, one member was named to the San Jose Police Chief’s Community Advisory Board, taking one of the 18 spots on the board for a city of over 1 million people. He is using “Pax Christi-East San Jose” as its official community affiliation. Several other members are doing major mentoring of gang members in the Eastside neighborhoods, transforming violent teenagers into positive community leaders. On May 7 at our meeting site (Most Holy Trinity parish), one group member conducted a “weapons turn-in/amnesty day”, which was led by youth who have recently renounced their gang affiliations.
Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement, has recognized the life and witness of Colleen Kelly, naming her the 2011 recipient of the Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace Award. Pax Christi USA first gave the award to Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, in 1978 and has since recognized some of the most significant U.S. Catholic activists for peace and justice of the past 3 decades, including actor Martin Sheen; poet and priest Daniel Berrigan, S.J.; and Dead Man Walking author Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J. Kelly is one of the founding members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

Kelly’s brother Bill was at a breakfast conference at Windows on the World and was killed during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Inspired by decades of non-violent response to deadly conflict, Kelly met several other like-minded family members in December 2001. This group of people who experienced first-hand the tragedy and loss of 9-11 eventually formed September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, which took its name from the Martin Luther King quote, “Wars make poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.” The group has over 200 family members and has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

“At a time when our nation needed models for how to deal with our grief and anger, Colleen and the members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows showed us how to do so—seeking our own healing by committing ourselves to the work of making a more peaceful and just world for all,” stated Ronaldo Cruz, Acting Executive Director of Pax Christi USA.

In January 2003, Kelly joined a person-to-person Peaceful Tomorrows delegation to Iraq to learn about the conditions facing civilians in the aftermath of two wars, sanctions, and the threat of new military action there. For the fifth anniversary of 9-11, Peaceful Tomorrows hosted more than thirty family members of victims of political violence from around the world who had consciously chosen to respond nonviolently. Participants included atomic bomb survivors; families affected by violence in Bali; Beslan, Russia; Madrid; Chile; Algeria; Rwanda; South Africa; Uganda; and Israel/Palestine. This new international group committed to support families recently affected by the loss of a loved one, and to channel grief to break cycles of violence.

“As the tenth anniversary of 9-11 approaches, we cannot think of a more apt way to remember that day than by honoring the work of Kelly as one of the founding members of Peaceful Tomorrows,” stated Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, Chair of Pax Christi USA’s National Council. “Her response to the loss of her brother on 9-11 stood in stark contrast to the response of our elected leaders. She showed all of us, how, faced with the biblical question of choosing life or choosing death, even in the shadow of the terrible evil of that day, we can respond by choosing life and peace.”

Kelly will be honored at the Pax Christi USA-sponsored event, “Peace and Reconciliation: Spiritual Reflections a Decade After 9-11,” featuring best-selling author Jim Wallis, on September 8 at the Catholic University of America.
I was at a conference at Fordham University this past May entitled ‘Moral Outrage and Moral Repair – Reflections on 9-11 and its Afterlife’. The title interested me, as it seemed to accurately describe large portions of my existence this past decade.

My brother, Bill Kelly Jr. died in Tower 1 on September 11th. He wasn’t supposed to be there. He didn’t work at the Trade Center. Ironically, Bill’s prior visit to Windows on the World was in December 2000 to receive an employee recognition award. Who knew that the one-day conference Bill was attending on September 11th, the conference he persuaded his boss into letting him attend, would be an event from which he would never return.

Moral outrage – certainly. At the extremists that murdered my brother. At the twist of fate that led him to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. At a humanity that allows for violence as a means to make a point, state your case, right perceived wrongs. At anyone who dared exult in the agonizing smoke and fire.

Then came feelings of confusion – at my country, now planning to bomb others a world away. Didn’t we … yes we …. just live through terror and horrific violence? So then how could we … yes we … be the cause of similar harm to others? Confusion also with my church. What is a just war exactly? Why does the justification to injure others seem so hypocritical … and human? And how does one truly live out the gospels - or are they simply a collection of beautiful stories? Finding a group of 9-11 family members who had these and similar concerns was a true blessing. In February of 2002, we formally became an organization – September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

We have been working together to break cycles of violence ever since, and our members are ‘the best friends I never wanted to know’.

I have learned that moral repair will take a lifetime, and then some (I believe). September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows is a large part of this process for me. Bill is gone; and safe; and no longer in pain. I also like to believe he is surround-ed by love. My faith tells me so.

But I learned another lesson in moral repair at Fordham, from one of the speakers – a rabbi named Irwin Kula. He pointed out a truth that I desperately believe in – the most important and sacred value in our very fragile human lives is love. In the months following 9-11, Rabbi Kula became fascinated with the last words of those killed on September 11th. After reading a few stories in the paper, he began seeking out the last words and sentences of anyone he could find who was killed that day. And you know what he discovered? Not a single person said “Kill them.” “Get those **** back.” “Avenge my death.” No. Last words were not about hatred; they were sometimes about fear, but ultimately, and overwhelmingly, the last words of those killed on 9-11 were about love. “Tell mom and dad I love them.” “Tell the kids I’ll miss them and I love them.” “Julie, it’s bad, but know that I love you.”

So what do these last words tell us? I like to think they teach a lesson. There’s a time for righteous moral outrage, just as there’s a time for accountability, and justice. Peaceful Tomorrows helps with these vital goals. But in the end, it’s about love, and my brother Bill. How much he loved and was loved. How much I miss him. And how much I want the world to be a place where last words are never the end result of political violence, but instead reflect a full and just life, well lived.

Colleen Kelly is one of the founding members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. She is the recipient of Pax Christi USA’s Teacher of Peace Award and will be honored at our annual Momentum event in Washington, D.C. on September 8, 2011.
Ten years ago, just scant hours after our nation witnessed the tragic events of September 11th, Pax Christi USA released a statement which said, in part: 

We recognize that as the reality of the magnitude of loss becomes clear, our nation’s grief will soon move toward rage. As people of faith and disciples of the nonviolent Jesus, we must be willing, even now in this darkest moment, to commit ourselves and urge our sisters and brothers, to resist the impulse to vengeance. We must resist the urge to demonize and dehumanize any ethnic group as ‘enemy.’ We must find the courage to break the spiral of violence that so many in our nation, we fear, will be quick to embrace. (Pax Christi USA’s Official Statement on 9-11, published on September 12, 2001)

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, the tenth anniversary of 9-11, as we gather to celebrate the Eucharist together, a question will be put to us:

Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord? Can anyone refuse mercy to another, yet expect pardon for one’s own sins? (Sirach 28:3-4)

These past ten years, we have witnessed the failure of policies built on vengeance. Our elected leaders manipulated our grief and fear to justify foreign policy decisions which had little to nothing to do with the tragedy of 9-11. Our nation was ensnared in a culture of fear, where the scapegoating of peoples, the fanning of religious intolerance, and the curtailing of civil rights served the needs of political expedience.

We have been witnesses to the dark places where our government’s response to 9-11 led our nation—the justification of torture, the moral bankruptcy of pre-emptive war, the daily reports of innocent civilians killed as collateral damage, the deaths of thousands of U.S. service personnel, and the stealing of our national wealth to pay for wars abroad as our children, our elderly, and the most vulnerable are left to suffer at home.

Today, as we acknowledge the ten year anniversary of 9-11, there can be no doubt that responding with war and violence can neither console us in our grief nor achieve the security for which we long.

In the weeks following 9-11, Pax Christi USA proclaimed that very message, and challenged our political leaders to seize this moment for peace by establishing justice for all peoples throughout the world. Until we commit our own nation to the pursuit of peace and justice for the entire human family, we should not be surprised when the violence suffered by those living on the other side of the world—as well as those living on the wrong side of town—eventually engulfs us all.

Ten years have passed, but we believe that the opportunity is still with us. Let us start, now, today, in Washington, D.C. and in every city and town across this land, in our schools and our places of worship and within our own homes. Let us write a new chapter and create a new legacy for all those whose lives were shattered on 9-11. Let each one of us decide what it is that we can do to create a legacy which heals instead of harms. Let us begin with the assurance that such healing will come if we make economic, political and social justice for all our top priority.

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, at the responsorial, Catholics will sing in churches throughout our nation:

Our God is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion. God pardons all our iniquities, heals all our ills, redeems our lives from destruction, and crowns us with kindness and compassion. (Psalm 103)

This anniversary offers us an opportunity to reflect the values of the God to whom we have given our allegiance. Let us remember those who were lost and memorialize this day by committing our lives to “the things that make for peace”—drawing closer to those who suffer, cultivating understanding in the midst of suspicion, finding truth in the arguments of those with whom we disagree, embracing some measure of personal sacrifice today to make a better world for our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

Let us gather one decade from now—not amidst the ruins of all that has been torn down—but in the midst of that new world of peace and security for all which we have built up together.

As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “If this day you only knew the things that make for peace!” (Luke 19:41-42)
Pax Christi USA Announces Executive Director Transition

Dave Robinson, former Executive Director of PCUSA, helping a voter during the 2004 El Salvadoran elections

Washington, D.C.—After serving ten years as Pax Christi USA’s Executive Director, Dave Robinson stepped down from the position on July 31. He was honored at a special gathering at PCUSA offices in D.C. during late-July.

“It is with gratitude that we celebrate and thank Dave for all that he has given in service of the mission of Pax Christi USA,” stated Bishop Gabino Zavala, PCUSA’s Bishop-President. “Dave’s commitment over the years has helped to shape and define who we are as a movement in the world today.”

Robinson began his time in leadership just weeks before the events of September 11, 2001, and his vision for how the organization would engage the world was formed in the crucible of those first days as director. Robinson articulated PCUSA’s commitment to reconciliation and nonviolence in the face of political forces mobilizing to use the 9-11 attacks as excuses for a foreign policy built on the doctrine of pre-emptive war, the justification of torture, and the stifling of dissent at home. In March 2003, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, Robinson led the effort to organize religious leaders for civil disobedience at the White House. In the immediate aftermath, Robinson would join Rev. Jesse Jackson and United Methodist Bishop Joseph Sprague in meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to call for a peaceful alternative to the U.S.-led invasion.

“Dave’s experience and determination enabled Pax Christi USA to speak critically and prophetically in response to the Bush Administration’s policies in the wake of 9-11 and leading up to the war in Iraq,” said Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM, Chair of PCUSA’s National Council.

Other highlights of Robinson’s time in leadership include the implementation of Brothers and Sisters All, a twenty-year plan to transform PCUSA into an anti-racist, multicultural Catholic movement for peace and justice; the hosting of the Triennial World Assembly of Pax Christi International at Seton Hall University; and the creation of the People’s Peace Initiative, an effort of 21 national Catholic organizations articulating a vision of peace from ordinary Catholics in the pews.

Robinson frequently traveled to areas of conflict in the world, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, helping to build relationships of solidarity with oppressed people as well as sections of Pax Christi throughout the world.

“The entire Pax Christi community—including colleagues and friends in the Pax Christi International network—will miss Dave,” said Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International. “We are grateful for his lifelong commitment to disarmament and his passion for peace for all of the human family.”

During the search for a new Executive Director, Ronaldaldo Cruz has been named the Acting Executive Director. Cruz, formerly PCUSA’s Director of Institutional Advancement, will oversee the organization as it completes its move from Erie, PA to Washington, D.C. Cruz served for over twenty years at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as the executive director of the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs. His achievements include the development of organizational strategies for Small Christian Communities, the organization of Encuentro 2000, development of an HIV/AIDS ministry model for the education of Hispanic/Latino Catholics, and collaboration with Latino/Hispanic communities in the U.S. in the areas of youth and young adult ministry, pastoral ministry, women in the church and justice and peace.

Cruz has experience and background in community organizing, education, anti-racism organizing, mental health and social services, immigration, and leadership development. He has operated in lay ministry at every level in the Catholic Church, from diocesan to the international.
have given our allegiance. Let us remember those who were lost and memorialize this day by committing our lives to ‘the things that make for peace’—drawing closer to those who suffer, cultivating understanding in the midst of suspicion, finding truth in the arguments of those with whom we disagree, embracing some measure of personal sacrifice today to make a better world for our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

I hope you will take the opportunity to read the statement, to use it in your own communities as a counter-narrative to the narrative of triumphalism that is so often promulgated by our elected leaders, and that you will share the statement with your friends, families, your church and your local media.

No one demonstrates better the sentiments we express in the above quote from our statement than this year’s recipient of the Teacher of Peace Award. Colleen Kelly is one of the founding members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, that brave group of family members who lost loved ones on 9-11 and yet showed us a different way to respond to our grief and anger. Colleen has contributed a poignant reflection in this newsletter (page 5). During the week of the anniversary of 9-11, we will honor Colleen at our Momentum event in Washington, D.C., to be held at the Catholic University of America. We’re excited to have best-selling author and founder of Sojourners, Jim Wallis, join us, offering his thoughts on “Peace and Reconciliation: Spiritual Reflections a Decade after 9-11.” We hope that many of you within driving distance will join us for this event. (Additional information is in this newsletter.)

I know that like me, you believe in the work of Pax Christi USA. It is vitally important—ESPECIALLY DURING A TIME OF TRANSITION—that we have the resources to be an effective, prophetic voice for change rooted in peace and justice. If you are in a position to do so, I ask you to consider giving an extra gift to help prepare the way forward and set our organization on firm ground to face the new challenges ahead. Enclosed in this mailing are the slip, Growing the Seeds of Peace and a return envelope to make it easy for you. Even quicker and easier would be to give through our secure website, http://paxchristiusa.org. I give you my thanks for whatever you can offer.

It is a privilege to serve you in this capacity, even if for only a short time, as the search for a new Executive Director takes place. I thank you for the opportunity, and I hope that together, we can seize this moment to solidify our organizational direction and build momentum for change. I am excited about what these next months hold. I hope you are too.

In Christ’s peace,

Ronaldo Cruz, Acting Executive Director

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**Save the Date!**

**Pax Christi USA National Conference 2012**

Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Pax Christi USA

**July 20-22, 2012**

Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

More information available soon at www.paxchristiusa.org

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**Advent 2011 Booklet Available!**

We are Advent people. We are hopeful despite the injustices we see in the world. We seek God’s light, accepting that there is growth in facing the darkness. With God’s help, we meet the challenges in our lives and in the world by shining the light of transparency, truth, and love. Written by Diane Lopez Hughes, a former member of the PCUSA National Council and past chair of the Global Restoration Committee.

AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

For more information or to place your order on our secure website www.paxchristiusa.org or call 814-453-4955 x 231

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**Peacemaking Quote**

“Faith is the bird that sings when the dawn is still dark.”

-Rabindranath Tagore