Dear Pax Christi USA Member,

Greetings of peace! By now you may have become aware that after nearly 10 years as Executive Director, I am stepping aside to make room for new leadership that will be based at our national office in Washington, DC. I have truly loved the work that I have been privileged to do for Pax Christi USA over the years. I began as National Coordinator one month before the tragedy of 911. Since then, it has been an all out sprint to address the litany of violence and war unleashed by the Bush Administration. These years of endless war, rendition, torture, racism, demonization, false patriotism, unaccountable military spending and scapegoating have finally taken their toll. I need a break. The National Council has approved my taking a sabbatical though the end of the year. After that, I will explore with the new Executive Director how I can best support the work of Pax Christi as we transition to this new generation of leadership.

I firmly believe it is the right time for Pax Christi to move to DC-based leadership. At the same time, it was actually an easy decision for me to remain in Northwestern Pennsylvania. My family has been more than accommodating these many years as I spent so much time traveling for Pax Christi USA. I’m looking forward to “stillness” and the opportunity to reconnect with family and friends here. Today, my most important peace project is my three-year old grandson Nicholas. Barring President Obama offering me the opportunity to transform the Pentagon into a nonviolent peace force, I am confident that spending as much time as possible with Nicholas will be the most important peacebuilding project I can pursue at this time. And just as with my work with Pax Christi these many years, it is truly a labor of love.

Pax Christi USA has taken on much leadership among national organizations in recent years. Whether in the coalitions to end the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan or in support of torture victims, immigrants and farm workers, Pax Christi’s voice, your voice, has become indispensable. Our work and relationships now extend well beyond the peace community to include committees of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, to providing analysis and support to the international religious communities based in Rome, to collaboration on nuclear disarmament with the Holy See to name only a few. Our grassroots network remains vital and engaged across the spectrum of social justice work. Hardly a day goes by anymore when I don’t receive a google news alert on some great project by a Pax Christi local group or parish. I am very proud of the work that we have all done over the years and am confident that Pax Christi USA will continue to grow in numbers and influence moving forward.

But behind the work—the events, resources, initiatives, etc—are the people that I have been so privileged to come to know in the movement. Pax Christi USA is a remarkable community—faithful and effective in raising the voice of reason and peace in an otherwise unreasonable and violent era. I treasure the relationships that I have developed with so many of you. I’ve witnessed incredible commitment from local group leaders, regional leaders and especially staff. I know how hard Pax Christi leaders work—often at great personal cost—to build a movement to build the

continued on p. 8
Pax Christi St. Cloud (MN) 
sponsors art contest for youth

In an effort to make nonviolence part of mainstream culture, Pax Christi St. Cloud recently co-sponsored an art and slogan contest for youth. The contest was aimed at young people under 18 years of age and asked them to design a positive image, poem or story of peace. Winners received t-shirts.

The group also continues to organize a monthly peace demonstration and join together for reflections on topics raised in the ENGAGE book series.

Pax Christi Richmond holds “rejuvenating” gathering

For over 20 years there has been an active Pax Christi chapter in Richmond, with Bishop Walter Sullivan, former bishop of Richmond, serving as the long-time bishop-president of Pax Christi USA. On June 5th, PC-Richmond held a “rejuvenating” gathering, bringing new and old members together to re-organize, re-energize and re-commit to the gospel values of peace building and justice. Activists throughout the area were invited to attend and become part of a community to learn with, journey with, and work with for justice and peace in our world. The gathering included the sharing of information about Pax Christi, a short organizing brainstorming session and a pot-luck meal. If you live in the Richmond-area and are interested in connecting, contact Patrice Schwermer at 757-575-7002 or pschwermer@comcast.net.

Pax Christi Long Island organizes Memorial Day Peace Procession

During Memorial Day weekend, Pax Christi Long Island organized, “A Time to Remember,” a peace procession at Jones Beach. Memorial Day is a sacred occasion dedicated by our nation to mourn the loss of American soldiers killed in wars. In that spirit, PC-Long Island gathered Long Island peace groups at Jones Beach to reflect upon the consequences of war, to re-commit to ending war and to bringing all soldiers safely home to their loved ones. The event included a procession along the board walk and a presence at recruiting stations.

Pax Christi New Mexico to hold annual Hiroshima Day Commemoration

“Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now! 2011 Annual Pax Christi New Mexico Hiroshima Day Commemoration” will take place July 29-30 in Santa Fe and at Los Alamos. On July 29th, there will be a 4p.m. Mass for Peace at Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Church, in Santa Fe. Later that evening, at 7p.m., there will be a showing of the new anti-nuclear documentary, The Forgotten Bomb, followed by questions and answers with the filmmakers, Bud Ryan and Stuart Overbey, at El Museo Cultural Center, also in Santa Fe (tentatively scheduled, check the website).

On Saturday, July 30, from 9a.m. to noon, join PC-NM for a nonviolence training with Keith Bierbaum at Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Church in Santa Fe. From 2 to 4p.m. will be the “Sackcloth and Ashes Prayer Vigil for Peace,” in Los Alamos. For information, contact bud@siochainworld.org or call 505-264-2838.
Tradeoffs of the Afghanistan War

- 125.2 million Households with Renewable Electricity - Solar
- 113.7 million People Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year
- 8.4 million Police or Sheriff’s Patrol Officers for One Year
- 70.9 million Military Veterans Receiving VA Medical Care
- 334 million Households with Renewable Electricity - Wind
- 283.5 million Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare
- 8.5 million Elementary School Teachers for One Year, OR
- 70.1 million Scholarships for University Students for One Year, OR
- 99.6 million Students Receiving Pell Grants of $5550
- 9.7 million Firefighters for One Year, OR
- 2.3 million U.S. Military Members with Photovoltaic for One Year, OR
- 500,000 Kids served + 120,000 Teachers for One Year, OR
- 10,000 HUD Rental Assistance

The human, spiritual, and economic costs of withdrawal: long anticipated, long debated. Ever announcement about how many leave from the Pentagon is realized. Soon the announcement of the current force of 100,000 will occur. As public debate occurs this summer, let us keep in mind the real trade-offs of our continued presence underlined the abundance of alternative energy resources in the Solar State. To mark the anniversary, fifty people, including members of Pax Christi-Phoenix, joined the Stand Together for a Nuclear Free Future demonstration to condemn the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC) recent decision to grant a 20 year license extension for Palo Verde, and to call for an end to uranium mining near the Grand Canyon.

Pax Christi Metro New York honors peacemakers

On May 22nd, Pax Christi Metro New York honored their 2011 Peacemakers at a reception in the auditorium of the Academy of St. Joseph in Greenwich Village. The national honoree was Pax Christi International Co-President Marie Dennis who also serves as the Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Fr. Michael Perry, pastor of Our Lady of Refuge in Brooklyn will be honored for his local work on behalf of peacemaking. The PCMNY Service honoree is Renata Mulder, who serves on the PCMNY Board and as a Development Committee Member.

Pax Christi Maine conference investigates connection between the environment, war

Pax Christi Maine hosted their annual assembly on May 14 in Bangor. The assembly included a presentation by Sally Chappell, former environmental health consultant for the Maine Council of Churches, on the effects of toxic chemicals in our daily lives. Following her presentation, there was a special viewing of the film, Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives, about the environmental impact of war and militarization.

Pax Christi Phoenix marks the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster

The sun shone brightly and the wind showed its power in Phoenix, Arizona on Tuesday, April 26, the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe. Their prominent presence underlined the abundance of alternative energy resources in the Solar State. To mark the anniversary, fifty people, including members of Pax Christi-Phoenix, joined the Stand Together for a Nuclear Free Future demonstration to condemn the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC) recent decision to grant a 20 year license extension for Palo Verde, and to call for an end to uranium mining near the Grand Canyon.

Pax Christi Phoenix members joined a demonstration in May on the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster

Holding colorful signs with a smiling sun proclaiming “Nuclear Power, No Thanks!”, the group gathered downtown in front of Arizona Public Service (APS) headquarters, owner/operator of the three-reactor Palo Verde nuclear power complex 50 miles west of Phoenix, the country’s largest.

Pax Christi groups around the nation observe Good Friday with Way of the Cross events

Over 25 Pax Christi groups from across the country participated in or organized “Way of the Cross” prayer witness events on Good Friday. These events connect the sufferings of Christ during his passion with the suffering of our brothers and sisters at the hands of violence, greed, poverty, sickness and war. Events took place in New York City; Harrisburg, PA; Beaverton, OR; Utica, NY; Denver, CO; Washington, DC; Seattle, WA; Austin, TX; Pittsburgh, PA; Baltimore, MD; Springfield, IL; and several other cities. Additionally, Pax Christi Metro New York coordinator Rosemarie Pace had a piece she wrote on the Way of the Cross in NYC appear in the Huffington Post, the web’s largest online newspaper.
“Jesus introduces the hope of a place of unlimited forgiveness, where we will be with others as God has been with us.” (from Reflections for Lent 2011, Called to Consciousness,” by Angie O’Gorman.)

In February, right before Lent began, I prepared to join an international delegation of peace activists to Afghanistan, sponsored by Voices for Creative Nonviolence. In my Inclusive Language Bible, I found the daily readings to cover my travel dates, March 21-31. I also began the Pax Christi reflection booklet, “Coming to Consciousness,” by Angie O’Gorman. I hoped to share perspectives and prayers with Catholic Workers and others on the delegation.

But I had to change my plans to honor the sensitivities of our Muslim hosts. To protect them, we would have no religious activities as a group. In effect, as a Pax Christi nonviolent activist —witnessing to the peace of Christ— I would travel as an underground Christian. A good challenge, though a key question arose in me: Would I ever have to deny being a Christian?

For the flight to Kabul, I tucked my tiny Salvadoran string cross under my shirt, and hid it safely on arrival. On my own, I continued my daily spiritual practice. With my roommates usually still asleep, I awakened to the early morning Muslim call to prayer from a nearby mosque. In my sleeping bag, I sat in lotus position to meditate for twenty minutes. I used passages like “Jesus’ openness to outsiders” and “the hope of a place of unlimited forgiveness” to center me.

Two days into my stay —the Friday Muslim day of prayer and rest— I traveled outside of Kabul for the first and only time. Seven of us, all new to Afghanistan, arranged for a driver and van from Afghan Logistics, the company whose reputation is based on a record of “no incidents” (i.e., no attacks or kidnappings.) We were happy to get up into the beautiful Hindu Kush mountain range.

As we rolled along heading north, I sat by myself in the back. On the road there were dark green Afghan police trucks patrolling regularly. Yet I wondered how we would respond if armed insurgents stopped us along the treacherous mountain route up through the Panjshir Valley. Several times we made short stops for photos of the rugged, majestic scenery and of the rusted tanks and trucks abandoned by the Soviets who withdrew in 1989. At one point, a helicopter flew over us. I was very aware of our vulnerability.

In Bazarak, as we walked towards the impressive monument and tomb of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the legendary leader who drove out the Russians, a group of young Afghan men approached us, asked where we were from and what we thought of Afghanistan. Peggy Gish, a wise and gentle Christian Peacemaker Team member with experience in Iraq, spoke with them briefly. Her answers —honest and yet cautious —still made me uneasy. We had no idea who these men were or their attitude towards Westerners. However, they treated us hospitably and thanked us for coming. We took some photos together and it seemed like a positive connection.

That brief encounter still stays with me because at the time I felt very conflicted. Words of advice from a friend who serves in Afghanistan as a helicopter rescue pilot had echoed in my mind: “Be a bit paranoid and distrustful. Even a mention of Christ can get you jailed.” How could I be my best self: open, friendly and faithful and yet still very, very careful?

Thanks be to God, nothing untoward happened that day. We were fortunate to have had two young Afghans friends with us—a teacher and her brother—as well as an excellent driver. All were fluent in English and great company for us. Their guidance helped keep us safe.

After a full week of meetings and interviews, I returned home feeling energized by the great Afghans who had so earnestly shared their hopes for a nonviolent future. I wholeheartedly support them in their resolve to work towards an end to Afghanistan’s conflicts. Then the news broke of a Koran burning by a pastor in Florida and the reaction of an Afghan mob in the northern town of Mazar-e-Sharif. Seven UN work-
ers died. I felt anxious for everyone I knew in Afghanistan, and infuriated with religious intolerance.

To complete my intense Lenten journey, I celebrated Easter mass with the Jonah House community in Baltimore. During our shared reflections, we heard high praise for an award-winning film, “Of Gods and Men.” It is the story of French Trappist monks based in a monastery in the Atlas Mountains of Algeria during the civil war of the 1990s. Visible and vulnerable to hostile Muslim fundamentalist insurgents, they held firm in their faith, despite their fears. Coming so soon after my time in Afghanistan, the film inspired me to learn more. I found a book, “The Monks of Tibhirine” by John Kiser, and learned that the abbot, Christian de Chergé, had served in Algeria in the French military. He came to appreciate Algerians and Islam through a Muslim friend, Mohammed, who protected Christian during an attack by a small group of rebels. For this gesture of love, Mohammed was killed in reprisal the next day. Christian’s life turned on this tragic incident, and eventually, as a monk, he returned to Algeria. His life and witness lifted me, especially his study of the Koran. He knew it as well as he did Christian scripture.

Now I also want to find where these two great Abrahamic faiths, Christianity and Islam, can come together. I want to be strengthened by Islam, as well as Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. I ask: why not all faiths, if, indeed, all lead to a deeper understanding and revelation of God. Afghanistan has opened the door of spiritual solidarity for me. I want to connect at a deeper level, with whomever I meet, in Afghanistan or anywhere, out of respect and love. May God’s will for peace be done. Insha’Allah.

Judith Kelly traveled to Afghanistan in March 2011 with support from Pax Christi Metro DC- Baltimore. In solidarity with Muslims, she hopes to do the Ramadan fast from August 1-31.
Trade Offs of the Afghanistan War

The July deadline for beginning troop withdrawal: long anticipated, long debated. Ever since Obama chose a “surge” strategy for Afghanistan in 2009, the peace movement has been hoping (and strategizing) that the commitment for significant troop withdrawal starting this July is realized. Soon the announcement about how many leave from the current force of 100,000 will occur. As public debate occurs this summer, let us keep in mind the real trade-offs of our continued military strategy in Afghanistan and the immense human, spiritual, and economic costs.

Taxpayers in the United States will pay $553 billion for proposed Department of Defense budget for FY 2012. For the same amount of money, the following could be provided:

- 283.5 million Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year, OR
- 8.5 million Elementary School Teachers for One Year, OR
  - 9.7 million Firefighters for One Year, OR
- 72.8 million Head Start Slots for Children for One Year, OR
- 125.2 million Households with Renewable Electricity - Solar Power for One Year, OR
- 334 million Households with Renewable Electricity - Wind Power for One Year, OR
- 70.9 million Military Veterans Receiving VA Medical Care for One Year, OR
- 113.7 million People Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year, OR
- 8.4 million Police or Sheriff’s Patrol Officers for One Year, OR
- 70.1 million Scholarships for University Students for One Year, OR
- 99.6 million Students Receiving Pell Grants of $5550

~ National Priorities Project, Trade-offs Tool

“Trade-off is a situation that involves losing one quality or aspect of something in return for gaining another quality or aspect.”

~ Wikipedia definition

“The human toll of the conflict is rapidly increasing. Since 2007, civilian casualties have increased by 64%... The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that there are currently 319,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan.”

~ Nowhere to Turn, a joint briefing paper by 29 aid organizations working in Afghanistan, Nov. 2010 http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/nowhere-to-turn-afghanistan.html

“The Pentagon is spending $5.3 billion a month in Afghanistan as of March 31.”

~ Financial Times, June 3, 2011

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES IS 9.1%.

~ U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. JUNE 3, 2011 HTTP://WWW.BLS.GOV/NEWS.RELEASE/EMPST. NR0.HTM

“How has continuation of warfare become the moral default position for cases in which the United States is fundamentally uncertain how to proceed? Has the United States allowed its wealth and technological achievement to combine with its idealism to create a society in which major warfare is a permanent part of its national life?”

NICOLE WILLIAMS: I am from St. Louis, MO. I graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from Maryville University in May 2010. I hope to go back for my Masters and eventual Doctorate in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, which is the study of the interaction of people and their behavior in the workplace. Since I will be working with Pax Christi USA in an administration-type setting, I believe this will be a wonderful opportunity for me to learn what it means to work with a wide variety of individuals towards a common goal. I am looking forward to learning many new skills that I will be able to use in my future endeavors.

I recently finished a Just Matters program, called “God’s Creation Cries for Justice – Climate Change: Impact and Response,” through JustFaith Ministries. The JustFaith program covers the whole spectrum of Catholic social justice teachings. Going through the program piqued my interest on how exactly I impact not only my immediate surroundings but the whole world. I am excited to be a part of Pax Christi, to be able to bring important social justice issues to light, and to work on bringing our world much needed peace.

PETER ALOYS: I was born and raised in Musoma, Tanzania. I grew up loving the calmest and agitated waves, and cool breezes of Lake Victoria. Catching tilapia and Nile perch and swimming in the lake are my greatest childhood memories. Musoma will always remain my home, but there is always a home away from home.

Moving to Berea, Kentucky was a plus in my life. I graduated from Berea College in International Studies and Peace & Social Justice, with a minor in Women’s Studies. In addition, I worked at the college in the labor program in different departments, ranging from janitorial to office work. These opportunities created in me love for the Appalachian people and the vibrant international community that the college brought in. Berea, a home away from home, whose people have become family and lifelong friends who have shaped my life.

Now, I am in Washington, D.C., my new home. I am grateful to be a part of the Pax Christi community. What a wonderful organization! I heard about the PCUSA internship program from a friend who lives in Berea. I believe that working for Pax Christi will give me profound and steady opportunities to use my energy, time, skills, life experience, and spirit to embrace Christ’s peace by working together as a team and to fully cooperate with everyone who supports Pax Christi to deal with the challenges our world is facing today. While at Pax Christi, I am enthusiastic to contribute my “little” African and international perspectives that promote social justice, believe in positive change, and seek truth. Most importantly, I am looking forward to learn and understand more the “PEACE” of Christ by living and working with people from different backgrounds. All this will help me to become a better, more well-informed citizen of a free world. Together, we can make the world a better place for everyone!

Congressman Ryan’s budget proposal is projected to reduce Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and other mandatory spending by $2.9 trillion through 2021.

--Defining the FY2012 Budget Debate, National Priorities Project

“A central moral measure of any budget proposal is how it affects ‘the least of these’ (Matthew 25).”

~ Letter to Senate on FY 2012 Budget Resolution, Bishop Stephen E. Blaire and Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, May 5, 2011

59% of those surveyed in an AP-GfK poll report they oppose the war in Afghanistan.


“The Office of Management and Budget estimates that the United States spends $10 billion annually for every 10,000 troops it has in Afghanistan.”

~ Financial Times, June 3, 2011
Peace of Christ.

Soon after I first joined the staff in 1990, as an enthusiastic, though quite clueless newcomer to Pax Christi, Sr. Mary Ellen Cummings, OSB, gave me a copy of Thomas Merton’s Letter to a Young Activist. I’ve kept it near my desk—and my heart—for over 20 years. In it Merton tells the young man, “Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect.... In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything.” It was not an easy lesson to accept, but with 20 years of reflection I have come to know the deep truth of which Merton spoke. I thank each and every one of you for your gentle and consistent tutelage over these many years and I look forward to continuing to work with you all in new ways in the future.

Over the years I have asked you many, many times to support Pax Christi USA. I have come to know that movement building is about organizing people and money. Without money, we are grossly limited in our options. The past three years have presented unprecedented challenges to nonprofits trying to raise money. The national council and staff have made very tough choices and in the end, Pax Christi USA has remained vital and financially sound because of your commitment and ongoing support—even while so many of you have yourselves struggled. So, I ask you, one last time, to prayerfully consider sending a special gift to Pax Christi USA today. Enclosed in this mailing is our Summer Appeal for 2011. Normally, this Appeal is sent out on its own, but we decided to include it in this mailing to save the costs associated with sending it separately. This is a risk, because many of you regularly give to the Appeal as well as sending an additional gift through these membership mailings. Knowing that we are being very prudent with our spending, I hope that you will respond generously to this combined appeal and send a check to the national office in the enclosed envelope. I’m sure you would agree that a sound financial foundation will be crucial to the successful transition to new leadership. Help us make that foundation doubly sound by sending a generous gift today.

In closing, I would point back to Merton again. For in this one line, I have found the true meaning of what I deeply believe we are all about in this movement: “All the good that you will do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used by God’s love.” I thank you all for the deep love and commitment you bring to Pax Christi USA, and look forward to working with you all in new ways after a much needed break.

In peace,

Dave Robinson
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

BE NOT AFRAID: AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE WAR ON TERROR, written by Tom Cordaro

What if the fear-based story—the narrative—we are asked to believe is not the only alternative?

Named “Best Book by a Small Publisher” in 2008 by the Catholic Press Association and “Peacemaker of the Year” award from the Independent Publishers

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Peacemaking Quote

“Most important, peacemaking means planting seeds though we may never see the flower, and never losing sight of the vision promised by God.”

- Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB