Letter from the Deputy Director

Dear Pax Christi USA Member,

When I put together an agenda for our senior staff meetings, I often like to include a short quote for inspiration, one which will help to frame the work we’ll be going over together and orient us to the tasks at hand. I think you can imagine that with all of our recent changes at the national office, in addition to the ever-present issues of our time which we are called on to address, these past few months have been busy and sometimes daunting. So as the agenda for one of our recent meetings got longer, and longer, and LONGER, I found myself feeling the full weight of it all. While the litany of work to be done both within our organization and in service to the gospel is a long one, there are resources we have to lighten that load. And no resource is more important than this: We have each other. So at the top of the agenda, I wrote this line from Aesop: “In union, there is strength.”

As members of Pax Christi USA, we recognize that our greatest strength is our commitment to each other. We do not do this work alone. It is work that connects us to those who have gone before us in this movement and it is work that stretches out ahead of us in anticipation of those who will follow in our footsteps. Our faith—and the work that flows from it—connects us, unites us and this unity makes us strong. Never are we more aware of this truth than at times like this when there is so much to do, to create and make new, to rebuild and repair, to make whole and heal.

Last month, we observed the anniversary of the events of 9/11 and this month, we unfortunately mark the first of many missteps our nation took in its response to that tragedy—the war in Afghanistan. I don’t know if anyone, even the most prophetic among us, would have guessed that ten years later our nation would still be engaged in a war with a nation which has seen two generations of horrific conflict. Shortly after 9/11, a Bush administration official had promised that we would “blow Afghanistan back to the Stone Age.” The sad truth was that, at the time of the commencement of U.S. bombing, much of Afghanistan—because of its war with the Soviet Union and then fighting between various homegrown war lords—already resembled the Stone Age.

Our criticism of the war in Afghanistan has not waned. Despite the hope that things would be different under a new administration, military power continues to trump relief and development for Afghanistan. We are still unequivocal in our demand: End the war. Bring the troops home. No bases left behind. No torture. As we know from our friends in the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, the Afghan people want peace, they want our friendship and they want to control their own destiny. As you participate in actions this month and reflect on this war which is now entering its second decade, we hope you will find the resources later in this newsletter to be helpful and hopeful.

continued on p. 8

The Peace Watch is finalizing their schedule and room assignments for the SOA! Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Pax Christi USA this year is by Diane Lopez Hughes, a former National Chair of the Global Restoration Committee and past PCUSA National Council and past PCUSA National Staff. Although the challenges we face are great, they are not insurmountable. We are with those who have gone before us in this movement and those who will follow. Together on the journey!
Pax Christi Florida explores “God, Country and the Common Good”

On October 15-16, Pax Christi Florida will gather with Jean Sammon, field organizer for NETWORK, to explore the topic “God, Country, and the Common Good.” In his CD, Spiral of Violence, Richard Rohr, OFM, tells us that Jesus showed no undue loyalty either to his Jewish religion nor to his Roman-occupied Jewish country; instead, he radically critiqued both of them, and in that he revealed and warned against the idolatrous relationship that most people have with their country and their religion. These have allowed us to justify violence in almost every form and to ignore much of the central teaching of Jesus. Sammon will lead us in examining our government—what works and what doesn’t; the effects of a bloated U.S. military budget and the ever-widening wealth gap on ordinary families; plus what strategies we might employ to more effectively influence policymakers on behalf of the most vulnerable among us. As we look to the 2012 elections, we will conclude the weekend by developing a Platform for the Common Good which will be key input to a larger Catholic social tradition platform for the State of Florida. Check out the promotional video for the conference on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOnYyaOZu-4. More info can be found at www.paxchristiflorida.org.

Pax Christi groups observe 9/11 anniversary

Pax Christi groups across the nation participated or organized events marking the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore organized an event at the Catholic University of America featuring best-selling author Jim Wallis and joining with Pax Christi USA in honoring Colleen Kelly of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows as this year’s Teacher of Peace. Pax Christi Springfield (IL) sponsored a peace vigil at the Federal Building commemorating those who were injured or killed on the anniversary of 9/11. Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore organized an event at the Catholic University of America featuring best-selling author Jim Wallis and joining with Pax Christi USA in honoring Colleen Kelly of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows as this year’s Teacher of Peace. Pax Christi Springfield (IL) sponsored a peace vigil at the Federal Building commemorating those who were injured or killed on the anniversary of 9/11. Pax Christi Springfield (IL) sponsored a peace vigil at the Federal Building commemorating those who were injured or killed on the anniversary of 9/11. Pax Christi Springfield (IL) sponsored a peace vigil at the Federal Building commemorating those who were injured or killed on the anniversary of 9/11.

Pax Christi members participate in Tar Sands action at White House

Pax Christi members, including Pax Christi International Co-President Marie Dennis, participated in nonviolent direct action at the White House in August, hoping to convince President Obama not to grant a “presidential permit” for a Canadian company to begin construction of the Keystone XL, a 1,700 mile pipeline from the Canadian tar sands to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico. In July, Pax Christi USA Deputy Director Sr. Dianna Ortiz, OSU signed onto a letter with 30 other activist leaders calling for massive sit-ins at the White House to pressure the President Obama to deny the permit. Over 1250 were arrested over two weeks of action. For next steps, visit tarsandsaction.org.

(Tar sands action outside White House, photo by Jean Stokan)
Osama Bin Laden’s reasons for attacking the US on September 11th were to establish permanent military bases, a permanent occupation, and to launch and project hard power. The ‘extreme’ country, write in their August 9th statement: “The U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Declaration will kill any possibility of us ever escalating conflict arising from the violence. … Why can’t we quiet our nerves, make ourselves more safe (among other motives), and an ever escalating conflict arising from the violence.”

Kelly article continued from p. 4

The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, a group of young adults, including members of PCM’s Young Peace Activists and students from the local parishes. The Annual Purple Ribbon for Peace was presented to PCM member and octogenarian Sally Peck, member of Plowshares PC and longtime activist on civil rights, peace economics which has supported so many for so long can be purchased through our website or by contacting Lori Nemenz at sales@paxchristiusa.org.

Pax Christi Dresden member speaks at interfaith gathering on nuclear weapons

On the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, Joyce Hall of Pax Christi Dallas delivered a presentation at the Hiroshima/Nagasaki event at the Interfaith Peace Chapel in Dallas. Ms. Hall shared how in the late-nineties, over 100 Pax Christi USA members had issued a statement critiquing U.S. nuclear weapons policies in light of the strict conditions that allowed for the moral acceptance of deterrence. Ms. Hall stated, “In The Morality of Nuclear Deterrence, their 1998 statement, these bishops observed that the U.S. deterrence policy had been expanded to confront non-nuclear threats and was itself an impediment to nuclear disarmament. They concluded, ‘The policy of nuclear deterrence is being institutionalized. It is no longer considered an interim policy but rather has become the very long-term basis for peace that we rejected in 1983.’”

Ms. Hall concluded her presentation by sharing recent developments within the Vatican and U.S. hierarchy on the issue.

Over 200 attend Pax Christi Michigan conference

Pax Christi Michigan hosted its 30th Annual State Conference, “Behold I Make All Things New: Building the New in the Shell of the Old,” this past spring. Over 200 listened as keynoter and co-founder of the Michigan Peace Team, Fr. Peter Dougherty, unfolded his message of challenge and hope. Participants included numerous young adults, including members of PCM’s Young Peace Activists and students from the local parishes. The Annual Purple Ribbon for Peace was presented to PCM member and octogenarian Sally Peck, member of Plowshares PC and longtime activist on civil rights, peace

and the death penalty abolition, which she became involved with following the murder of her mother. The Annual Young Adult Peacemaker Award went to Kati Garison, prior intern with Michigan Peace Team and former member of PCM’s State Council. The “Artisans of Peace Award,” was presented to the Alpena Peace Coalition, for their dedicated work in designing their Annual 30 Days of Peace which involves a wide array of community, local government, education and peace activists.
It’s a bit odd to me that with my sense of geographical direction I’m ever regarded as a leader to guide groups in foreign travel. I’m recalling a steaming hot night in Lahore, Pakistan when Josh Brollier and I, having enjoyed a lengthy dinner with Lahore University students, needed to head back to the guest lodgings graciously provided us by a headmaster of the Garrison School for Boys. We had boarded a rickshaw, but the driver had soon become terribly lost and with my spotty sense of direction and my complete ignorance of Urdu, I couldn’t be any help. My cell phone was out of juice, and I was uncertain anyway of the needed phone number. I bumped and jostled in the back seat of the rickshaw, next to Josh, as we embarked on a nightmare of travel over unpaved, rutted roads in dizzying traffic until finally the rickshaw driver spotted a sign belonging to our school - the wrong campus, we all knew - and eager to unload us, roused the inhabitants and hustled us and our bags into the street before moving on.

We stood inside the gate, staring blankly at a family that had been sound asleep on cots in the courtyard. In no time, the father of the family scooped up his two children, gently moving them to the cot he shared with his wife so that Josh and I would have a cot on which to sit. Then he and his spouse disappeared into their humble living quarters. He reappeared with a fan and an extension cord, wanting to give us some relief from the blistering night heat. His wife emerged carrying a glass of tea for each of us. They didn’t know us from Adam’s house cat, but they were treating us as family - the celebrated but always astonishing hospitality that we’d encountered in the region so many times before. Eventually, we established with our host that we were indeed at the wrong campus, upon which he called the family that had been nervously waiting for our errant selves.

This courtyard scene of startling hospitality would return to my mind when we all learned of the U.S. Joint Special Operations (JSO) Force night raid in the Nangarhar province, on May 12, 2011. No matter which side of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border you are on, suffocating hot temperatures prevail day and night during these hot months. It’s normal for people to sleep in their courtyards. How could anyone living in the region not know this? Yet the U.S. JSO forces that came in the middle of the night to the home of a 12 year old girl, Nilofer, who had been asleep on her cot in the courtyard, began their raid by throwing a grenade into the courtyard, landing at Nilofer’s head. She died instantly. Nilofer’s uncle raced into the courtyard. He worked with the Afghan Local Police, and they had told him not to join that night’s patrol because he didn’t know much about the village they would go to, so he had instead gone to his brother’s home. When he heard the grenade explode, he may well have presumed the Taliban were attacking the home. U.S. troops killed him as soon as they saw him. Later, NATO issued an apology.

“The raids occur ‘every night. We are very much miserable,’ said Roshanak Wardak, a doctor and a former member of the national Parliament.” I am reading a McClatchy news report, dated August 8th of this year. “Residents of the Tangi Valley area, in eastern Wardak Province, about 60 miles southwest of Kabul, issued similar complaints about the night raids in their vicinity, charging that they have killed civilians, disrupted their lives and fueled popular support for the Taliban.”

Imagine it. People in an Afghan village pass sleepless nights, anxious that their home might be targeted by a U.S. led night raid. Villagers are enraged when they hear stories of elders and imams being roughed up and detained, of wives and children being killed, of belongings stolen and property destroyed. Increasingly, the U.S. military battles against the so-called insurgency are creating a stronger resistance as more Afghans grow determined to fight back.

In Helmand province, in Nad Ali, the district governor told a New York Times reporter one incident in the spiral of
After Ten Years of War, Embracing a New Story

By Tom Cordaro
Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace

Tom Cordaro’s award-winning book, Be Not Afraid: An Alternative to the War on Terror, makes the case that U.S. foreign policy since 9/11—including the war in Afghanistan—has been based on a national narrative that envisions peace as the result of “enforced order”. His book explores how there is another story, a narrative which is based not on fear or on a view of peace as enforced order, but rather on the concept of peace as an enterprise of justice. We believe that the premises outlined in his book stand today as the kind of thoughtful reflection our nation still needs to undertake, and provides hope for a path out of the spiral of violence which has characterized U.S. foreign policy these past ten years. The following excerpt is from the chapter entitled “Re-Visioning the U.S. Narrative: Things that Make for Peace.”

Our dominant U.S. narrative tells us that competition for scarce resources is inevitable and that violence is an inescapable part of our human condition. This dominant narrative would have us believe that the only response to conflict and violence is through enforced order, domination and control. But this is not the whole story. We do have one story about the violence of systemic poverty and the growing gap between the rich and the poor, but it is not the whole story. Our nation’s story is also about how people have come together across the boundaries of race, class and gender to eradicate poverty. We have one U.S. story about the constant drive for profits and growth with little regard to the impact on our environment. But we also have the story of the awakening of the U.S. conscience to the human-made dangers to our planet and the struggle of ordinary citizens working together to protect and preserve the natural resources of the earth. On one hand, we have the story of the long legacy of racism in the United States. On the other hand, we have countless stories of people working across the racial divide to purge it from our hearts and dismantle it in our institutions. The story of U.S. militarism is deeply embedded in our popular culture and mythology, but another U.S. tradition addresses conflict without recourse to war.

Within our national story, the vision of Peace as Enforced Order is always at play with the vision of Peace as an Enterprise of Justice. While it is true that, at this time, our dominant narrative is captivated by the vision of Peace as Enforced Order, we know from our history that it has not always been so. We can choose to re-vision our narrative in a way that will unleash our creativity and imaginations, allowing us to move beyond the false choices and either/or thinking of our dominant national narrative.

As we move forward, we can rely on the resources, wisdom and experiences from our unacknowledged and under-appreciated history to help us through these difficult times. Nothing is set in stone. We are not predestined to always have those who are rich lord it over those who are poor. We are not pre-ordained to a future of false choices between human progress and environmental degradation. We are not eternally bound by our nation’s racist past, and we need not be held captive by our addiction to militarism. A different world is possible. At the 2003 World Social Forum people from almost every continent came together in global solidarity to witness to a different, more inclusive world community, one freed from poverty, racism, and militarism and dedicated to protecting the environment. As Arundhati Roy, an Indian activist who spoke at the Forum, reminds all of us: “Another world is not only possible, she in on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

Tom Cordaro is an author and a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace. His book, Be Not Afraid: An Alternative to the War on Terror, was updated and reissued in 2010 with a new preface addressing the Obama Administration. Tom will be on a speaking tour this year assessing the ten years since 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan and how we might chart a new way forward. He can be contacted at tomcordaro@juno.com. Tom’s book is available on our website. Discounts are available for your event sales. Contact Lori Nemenz at sales@paxchristiusa.org for more information.
Osama Bin Laden’s reasons for attacking the US on September 11th may be due to the US military presence that will provoke resistance groups there to establish permanent military bases, a permanent occupation presence and the risk of terrorism. … Why can’t we quiet our nerves, chance for our madness to slow down and our violence to ever escalating conflict arising from the violence.

The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, a group of young people dedicated to ending wars and inequalities in their country, write in their August 9th statement: “The U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Declaration will perpetuate ‘terrorism’ and bring it to everyone’s doorsteps: ‘The ‘partnership’ will allow permanent joint U.S.-Afghanistan military bases to launch and project hard power. The ‘extreme’ Taliban will conveniently ‘use’ these bases as a stand-alone reason for their ‘holy jihad.’ We cannot forget that one of Osama Bin Laden’s reasons for attacking the US on September 11th was the presence of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia. … This Strategic Partnership Declaration will kill any chance for our madness to slow down and our violence to calm down. … It will doom ordinary Americans and Afghans to permanent terrorism. … Why can’t we quiet our nerves, look deep inside humanity, and begin healing?”

Everyone wants to be safe, but I think of the Lahore family taking us into their sleeping courtyard and their home that night, knowing nothing of these crazy Americans who had been dropped on their doorstep. We had woken them up but they chose to stay awake and take care of us. Americans seem to respond to our endless wake-up calls from Afghanistan by just going, every time, back to sleep, rather than work to make the situation better. I think of the night raids, families being woken up to sudden horror somewhere every night in the region, children killed sleeping in our efforts to make ourselves more safe (among other motives), and an ever escalating conflict arising from the violence.

We are startlingly, terrifyingly lost, and we’re getting ever more so. If we see a sign here in the darkness, an opportunity to make contact with the people around us, we should take it gratefully. The letter from my Afghan Youth friends is another sign for me that we do not belong in the Afghan home forever, occupying it at gunpoint. However gogglingly we may have awoken or reawoken to this dreadful situation and our role in it, we must act now to free our Afghan hosts of their overstaying guests, and get the U.S. safely back to where it should be.

Kathy Kelly (Kathy@vcnv.org) co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence and is a Pax Christi Teacher of Peace. This story first appeared on the Voices website, vcnv.org.
Cite Soleil: Sun, Dust and Hope

Coming Soon!

By Amy Watts, Manuel Padilla
Haiti Project Coordinators

In April’s newsletter, we were pleased to announce to the membership our reinvigorated relationship with Pax Christi Port-au-Prince and their peacemaking efforts in one of the most marginalized neighborhoods in the Western Hemisphere. Thanks to all of you who have responded positively to this collaboration between sister organizations!

A few months ago, Pax Christi USA staff traveled to Port-au-Prince in order to document, through film, Pax Christi Port-au-Prince’s projects in Cite Soleil. It was an inspiring trip, full of interviews with those most intimately involved in the SAKALA youth program and the opportunity to see their day-to-day activities. SAKALA blends sports, community-building, and peace education in an effort to provide safe environments and empower youth and other community members.

Since that time, we have been hard at work with film editors to turn the interviews and footage into a 20-minute video entitled, “Cite Soleil: Sun, Dust, and Hope.” This video is a tool for our goal to promote and sustain their innovative grassroots efforts for human development and peace education. Additionally, the film works to recast the simplistic, violent narrative that the U.S. media has constructed about the people in Cite Soleil and images a different story, one where Haitians themselves define the needed changes for their neighborhood and set the agenda for realizing them. It is truly a story of “non-violence in action” that can provoke us all to examine both our own local initiatives and our ideas about international development.

We need your help to get the word out about this educational and promotional film! Do you have an upcoming Pax Christi meeting, community event, or parish gathering where you would like to show the video? You can contact us by email at manuel@paxchristiusa.org or amy@paxchristiusa.org with your ideas for getting the video into the hands of more people! Keep your eyes on the Pax Christi USA website and email network for information on how to purchase your copy in the days ahead! We hope it will inspire you as much as it has inspired those of us in the national office. Thank you for your continued support of this collaboration between Pax Christi USA and Pax Christi Port-au-Prince to expand capacities for peace in Cite Soleil, Haiti, and beyond.

Pax Christi USA brings on new Associate Director of Development

In late-July, Pax Christi USA added another piece to the staff of the new headquarters in Washington, D.C. Stepping in as the new Associate Director of Development is Adrienne Swanson. Adrienne joins Pax Christi USA with over 20 years of broadcast media experience. Having worked for numerous media organizations, she comes to us from public broadcasting where she was Director of National Corporate Underwriting for Washington WETA’s TV and radio stations.

A Virginia native, but lifelong resident of Washington, D.C., Adrienne is a graduate of Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA. “I have been blessed to work in broadcasting for 20 years in my hometown,” stated Adrienne. “I am an avid gardener (not much luck this summer though), voracious reader, consummate couch potato and fanatic foodie!”

Acting Executive Director Ronaldo Cruz stated, “We’re excited to have Adrienne on board. We envision her contributions as essential for the years ahead as we continue to grow our movement and speak truth to power here in nation’s capital.”

“I’m enthusiastic about the opportunity to put my extensive marketing, media and donor relations skills to work for Pax Christi USA,” Adrienne shared. “With the move to D.C., Pax Christi USA’s capability to be of greater influence on the national, political and religious dialogue about issues which are at the heart of our mission will be greatly enhanced. I am grateful to assist our members in continuing the work of spreading Christ’s message of peace with justice.”

To send Adrienne a message of welcome, or for questions regarding Pax Christi USA’s development, you can contact her at awanson.pcus@gmail.com or by phone at 202-635-2741.
Join Pax Christi USA at the SOA!

Look on our website for more details regarding our annual Friday evening program featuring music, prayer, reflection, speakers and more! Details coming soon! Visit www.paxchristiusa.org

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

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 info or to place your order on our secure website www.paxchristiusa.org or sales@paxchristiusa.org

Peacemaking Quote

“The first thing to be disrupted by our commitment to nonviolence will be not the system but our own lives.”

-Jim Douglass

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newsletter to be helpful and hopeful.

I also want to call your attention to several other ways the national staff is doing their best to serve you and give you the tools you need to promote gospel nonviolence in your churches, schools and communities. In mid-November, we’ll be hosting what has become an annual event for us on Friday evening, November 18 at the School of the Americas Vigil and Action outside the gates of Ft. Benning, GA. As this newsletter goes to print, SOA Watch is finalizing their schedule and room assignments and we’re putting our program together, so check our website for the specifics.

Also, Advent is quickly approaching as well and we’ll be offering you a variety of resources in print and electronically during the season. Our Advent reflection booklet this year is by Diane Lopez Hughes, a former National Council member and one of the creative voices behind the work of Pax Christi USA’s Global Restoration Committee. You’ll find a reflection from the booklet included in this newsletter as well as information on how to order copies. And make sure that you are subscribed to our free email service so that you’ll receive reflections and resources for Advent and Christmas directly to your inbox. You can subscribe through our website by clicking on the tab, “Our e-Network.”

I also want to remind you to set aside the dates July 20-22, 2012 to join us in Washington, D.C. for what will be our 40th anniversary National Conference. There is a save-the-date in this newsletter on page 8; we’ll be announcign the program and speakers before December, so again visit the website when you can. If you have not been to a conference in recent years, I really want to encourage you to attend. With the move of the national office to D.C., a new executive director coming on board, the upcoming election year, and our 40th anniversary, this conference promises to be exceptional. Your participation will assure it!

And I hope that you’ll take a moment today and invest an extra gift in support of the work that we do together. We’re in the process of completing the office move to D.C. and soon (maybe even by the time you’re reading this letter!) we’ll have a new Executive Director in place. Anything that you can give to help us build a secure financial base as we move into the future would be greatly appreciated. There is a slip and envelope included in this mailing for you to send in an extra gift. (You can also give through our secure website.) You have our thanks.

It is a great privilege to work with you as Pax Christi USA. Although the challenges we face are great, they are not greater than the strength we have together. Thank you for all that you are, all that you give and all that you do. May God continue to bless our work for peace and justice!

Together on the journey!

Sister Dianna Ortiz, OSU, Deputy Director

“The first thing to be disrupted by our commitment to nonviolence will be not the system but our own lives.”

-Jim Douglass