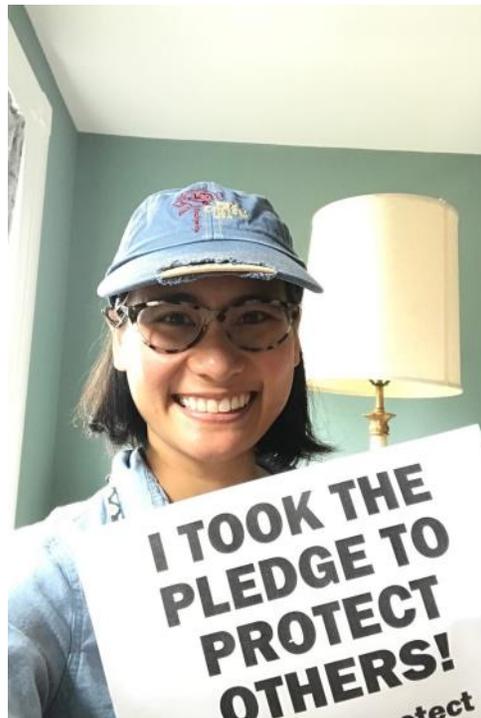


The Peace Current

Pax Christi USA, The National Catholic Peace Movement
Membership Newsletter, Summer 2020



Pledge to Protect Others fosters solidarity, responsibility

Offers counterpoint to displays of racism, threats of violence during pandemic

In mid-May, as cities and states in our nation started to weigh how and when to “re-open”, Pax Christi USA initiated the “Pledge to Protect Others”. The pledge was designed as both an “examination of conscience”, helping us to pause and think about how we would act in the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic; and secondly, as an “act of solidarity” with others, demonstrating consideration for how our actions affect others, how we would take personal responsibility to protect friends and strangers, and how we are prioritizing the common good, including making personal sacrifices.

Throughout the first months of the pandemic, the Pax Christi USA national staff heard from members, partners and friends who lamented the lack of leadership (from the White House in particular), the absence of calls to the common good, the racism of anti-lockdown protests, and

the erosion of common human decency at every level. People were expressing the desire for a simple, straightforward way to open up conversations in their families and among friends to discuss how to make decisions and act with integrity and respect during the crisis, especially when the information we have been getting from various levels of government and the media has often been contradictory, vague and lacking any sense of common mission. The pledge was written in such a way as to serve as a resource to open up conversations and engage others. The language was designed to be accessible to people from various political, religious and cultural locations. So many people are dissatisfied with things as they are and are looking for something that speaks to that dissatisfaction and gives voice to their yearning for an alternative.

Continued on page 6...



The Peace Current
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After the pandemic, **NO** return to normal

By Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director



One of the myriad of difficult things about the COVID-19 pandemic is just how quickly the situation can change. We prepare this newsletter about a month ahead of when you'll actually receive it, so anticipating what new developments will have occurred is nearly impossible. But there are a few things which aren't going to change. Most significantly for us as Pax Christi

USA is the need that this moment presents for us to push — not for a return to normal — but for a radical restructuring of our society that addresses all of the issues which the pandemic has brought into even sharper focus.

The voices clamoring for a "return to normal" started almost immediately, even as we were experiencing the first disruptions of the pandemic. Those pushing hardest for such a return to normal are those who benefit the most from the way things have been. But as people of faith, as activists and organizers, as teachers and ministers, as people rooted in the peace of Christ, our calling is not to help things return to normal. If this pandemic teaches us anything, I hope it teaches us how inadequate, oppressive and impoverished "normal" was for the vast majority of people in our country and for our sisters and brothers impacted by U.S. policy around the world.

What has energized me during this time is how many of us are asserting that there should be **NO** return to normal, that this crisis affords us the opportunity to unmask, arrest and overturn "business as usual". What we need is change: deep and meaningful, constructive and transformational change that brings us closer to a world which is more human, more just, more peaceful and more sustainable — that which is at the very heart of our mission as Pax Christi USA.

I look forward to working for that vision alongside you.

In peace,

Johnny Zokovitch
Executive Director

PS: We know that this is a very difficult time and that there are a number of organizations performing direct service to provide support for people who are sick, unemployed, and otherwise struggling because of the pandemic. We honor whatever choices you make during this time and recognize that we are all in this together. **If you have the capacity to contribute and help support Pax Christi USA during this time, we'd be grateful.** There's a donation envelope in this mailing that you can use whether donating with a check or credit card, or you can visit our website at www.paxchristiusa.org and give there. Thank you!

www.paxchristiusa.org

Facebook: @PaxChristiUSA

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Pax Christi USA welcomes new staff to the national office

Pax Christi USA is pleased to welcome Nadia Espinoza and Dianna Ortiz, OSU to the Pax Christi USA National Staff.

Nadia began as our new office manager back in November and Dianna joined as the new Deputy Director in March. She is a California native who has a “true passion for world changing organizations”. She describes herself as a “jack of all trades” and is looking forward to using her skills to help Pax Christi USA reach new heights.

“I’m excited to help PCUSA reach the Latinx community in my city (Washington, D.C.) and beyond, and continue the ever important work of spreading peace, justice and the nonviolence of the Cross,” Nadia stated.

As the new office manager, Nadia oversees and coordinates all of the national office’s administrative, logistic and operational activities. She has been tasked with helping the office to migrate to and employ a new database management system, increase our technological capacities, and institute office procedures and protocols, including assessing our business procedures, through the lens of our organizational commitment to anti-racism.

“Nadia brings a wealth of administrative experience to Pax Christi USA and is incredibly focused on keeping the office running smoothly and efficiently,” stated Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA Executive Director. “Her diligence and persistence in monitoring the situation with the current pandemic have been especially helpful during a difficult and uncertain time. We’re lucky to have her as a member of the team.”

Dianna is already familiar to many within our community as she was recognized in 2000 with the Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace Award.

A Mount Saint Joseph Ursuline Sister, she wrote in her memoir, *The Blindfold’s Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth*, about her life-changing ministry with the Mayan people in the highlands of Guatemala and gives a firsthand account of the personal and communal effects of political



New Pax Christi USA staff members, Nadia Espinoza (left) and Dianna Ortiz, OSU (right). Nadia is the new office manager and Dianna is the new deputy director.

violence imposed by a war situation and state oppression. Her journey led her down a path to work for global and domestic human rights. She credits family, her Ursuline Community, friends and total strangers for giving her the courage to use truth-telling as a nonviolent political tactic to raise awareness about human rights issues and to promote change.

“The world is changing all around us. In a sense, we are being forced to be eyewitnesses to the human suffering of those around us and to the destruction of our planet,” Dianna shared. “When hope gets tangled up in despair, I remind myself that working for peace is not a solitary act but a collective act of solidarity.”

Dianna served as the Guatemala Human Rights Commission USA’s program outreach coordinator; Executive Director for the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC); Project Director for Education for Justice; and most recently, a consultant with Global Sisters Report.

In her position as Deputy Director, Dianna oversees the daily management of the Washington, D.C. staff in collaboration with the Executive Director, facilitates Pax Christi USA

Continued on page 8...

Pray, Study, Act: Coronavirus pandemic response

The resources here are drawn from Pax Christi USA's webpage dedicated to offering tools for individuals and groups to pray, study and act in response to the pandemic. You can adapt the information below for use for yourself, within your family or household, whatever small group gatherings are possible where you live, or for a virtual meeting with other local group members or friends held over Zoom or any video conferencing platform. For other resources for prayer, study and action, visit Pax Christi USA's website and click on the "Coronavirus Response: Pray, Study, Act" icon.

PRAYER

Pax Christi USA is encouraging all of our members, partners and friends, and anyone who feels called, to recite the prayer below daily for the extent of the coronavirus pandemic. This prayer was written shortly after the pandemic started specifically for the Pax Christi USA community. It has been downloaded, read and shared from our website and on social media by over 15,000 people. If you want to know you are praying in solidarity and communion with others, this is one way we invite you to do this.

Prayer for peace and solidarity in a time of pandemic

By Michelle Sherman

Pax Christi USA National Council member

Creator God,

We look to you during this time of illness, uncertainty, & physical distancing from others. Be with us as we place our anxieties and fears in your hands.

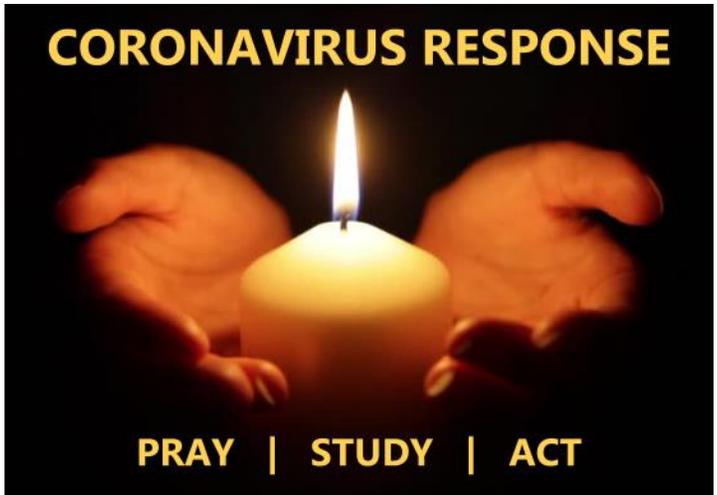
Free us from the illusion of invincibility, so that we might remember our actions affect others, especially the most vulnerable.

Free us from the fear of scarcity, which leads to competition and hoarding.

Free us from painful anxiety, so that it can be transformed into caring actions for ourselves and others.

Jesus, our brother,

As your ministry of healing brought physical wellness and connection and restored community, help us remember



that we are not alone.

As you mourned the death of your friend Lazarus, be with those who grieve the loss of loved ones.

May they feel your presence and peace.

As you experienced death, be with those who have died from the coronavirus.

May they be in your eternal embrace.

As you challenged your disciples to act for the common good, be with national and local leaders who have the power to ensure that the "least of these" have their basic needs met.

Inspire them to have a global vision of solidarity, a consciousness and priority to provide healthcare to all.

Spirit of God, breath of life,

Thank you for the countless nurses, custodial staff, doctors, receptionists, therapists, healthcare providers, and all who are working to care for those who are sick & suffering. As they live their vocations, may they be sustained by your Spirit.

Open our eyes to see the devastating implications of economic and racial injustice during this crisis. Be with vulnerable populations who are unable to have "social distance" from others, thereby increasing their likelihood of contagion.

Inspire our actions for equitable access to testing, treatment, and financial support for all affected by the coronavirus.

We pray together as Pax Christi USA that during this current pandemic, we can turn away from fear and be faithful to our sacred and civic responsibility for others. AMEN.

STUDY

In April, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Rev. Joseph Nangle began contributing a weekly column for our website entitled, *Hope & Challenge*. Below is his column from May 14. Read his column on the website every Thursday.

Lack of leadership means we must “speak truth to power”

*By Rev. Joseph Nangle, ofm
Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace*

Leadership comes in many forms and often from unexpected sources. There is the usual understanding of leadership which views it as a person or persons who stand on top of the hill, so to speak, and point the way forward—the prophetic role. This understanding of leadership, however, in no way exhausts its meaning. There is also the person or persons who have their fingers figuratively on the pulse of the community and indicate that the group is ready or not ready to act on the prophets’ challenge. And there is leadership exercised by the practical ones—the ones who know the resources at the disposal of the community and can indicate if there is the wherewithal to meet the challenge. All three, prophetic, communal and practical, are equal expressions of genuine leadership.

Today the human family yearns for leadership and finds it in short supply. The most disturbing absence of it is revealed in our current national experience. Through a deadly combination of ignorance, selfishness and meanness at the very top of our political life, together with the consequent failure of our country’s former status as “leader of the free world” (however flawed that concept has been), the United States is increasingly dismissed as a false and failed international guide. Instead of offering a much-

needed analysis of today’s grim global situation and the stern measures needed to emerge from it, we are seen, because of the convoluted rhetoric coming from the White House, as the international bully, interested only in saving ourselves and maintaining our privileged way of life.

A recent New York Times editorial put it this way: The present crisis is one “in which the United States could have emerged as the leader ... But on top of the widely chronicled failures at home, the Trump administration has provided little inspiration for the world.” Exactly!

So where do we look for a vision without which “the people perish?”

HOPE & CHALLENGE

*Where there is no vision, the people perish.
- Proverbs 29:18*

*Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets
so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint.
If it delays, wait for it –
it will surely come, it will not be late.
- Habakkuk 2:2-3*

In that same Times editorial we read the following:

“The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, and Pope Francis have both called for a cessation of all global conflicts to focus on what Mr. Guterres called ‘the true fight of our lives.’ The Pope’s call echoed these words from the Secretary General: ‘May

our joint fight against the pandemic ... inspire a renewed commitment to overcome rivalries among leaders of nations ... Conflicts are not resolved through war...’ Antagonisms and differences ‘must be overcome through dialogue and a constructive search for peace.’ These are examples of genuine leadership.”

Another, surprising, demonstration of leadership came

recently when King Abdullah II of Jordan wrote, “Covid-19 is a threat that confronts every leader. If we wish to defeat it we must do something counter-intuitive: put politics and popularity aside, and have a singular focus, the survival and well-being of human lives everywhere.”

The absence of American leadership, nationally and internationally affects Pax Christi USA



Continued on page 6...



Pledge to Protect Others, continued from page 1...

The pledge asserts something really basic — that we’re all human beings, that we care about each other, that we want to be thoughtful and considerate of our actions and how they impact other people during this crisis. In Pax Christi USA, we recognize this as basic Catholic social teaching. It may seem strange that this basic message has to be articulated, but people are telling us that it does. It’s an assertion that we stand against that other narrative which seeks to blame and castigate others, trafficks in racism, threatens violence, foments fear, and only considers self-interest.

After one week of promoting the pledge, we had over 1,700 people sign on, and we had reached over 100,000 people with our message on social media and through our website.

If you haven’t already, you can find out more and sign onto the pledge at www.mypledgetoprotect.org.

As we go forward from this moment, the pledge is a commitment each of us can make to demonstrate our concern for one another and our own capacity to act responsibly and compassionately, no matter how the situation changes. We hope you’ll sign on and share the pledge within your circle of family and friends and any networks to which you belong.

Pray, Study, Act: Coronavirus pandemic response, continued from page 5...

directly. Each of us individually and all of us collectively find ourselves at some point of the leadership spectrum described above. We have a vision, we are ready to live it in practice, and we know that we are able to do so. At every level of U.S. society, personal, local, regional and national, our vision of “modeling the Peace of Christ” can be brought to bear. And as a movement in the United States, we cannot shrink from what is so often described as—”speaking truth to power”. This has to be our contribution to the leadership so vital to our nation and the world.

One striking example of the need and possibility for our leadership is the scandalous impression of unquestioning partisanship by the Catholic Church with the current U.S. administration and the cynical utilization of the Church by that administration. It took place in the recent phone conversation between President Trump and a large number of Catholic leaders, including members of the hierarchy. Actions like these call for a Christ-like denunciation—and who better to speak it than Pax Christi USA?

ACT

Pax Christi USA has undertaken dozens of organizational actions to bring our values and our voices into the national conversation during this crisis. Visit our website & find actions associated with the pandemic on the Coronavirus Response webpage. Here are 2 other actions to take:

Sign the Statement on Anti-Asian Racism in the Time of COVID-19!

From the Asian American Christian Collaborative

Go to <https://bit.ly/2yEUVbU> or search for the Asian American Christian Collaborative to read and sign the statement denouncing the rise of anti-Asian racism associated with the pandemic.

Support a global ceasefire!

From Win Without War

Go to <https://bit.ly/2TGXOQu> and sign onto the petition supporting the UN Secretary General’s call for a global ceasefire during this crisis. Pax Christi USA joined Pax Christi International and other partners in promoting this initiative.

On the line: News from Pax Christi groups around the U.S.

PAX CHRISTI ILLINOIS PROTECTS WORKERS

Pax Christi Illinois followed up their signing on to the Pledge to Protect Others by sending a letter to Diversi-Pak Solutions, a packaging company in Illinois, after learning that 12 workers there had been diagnosed with COVID-19 and that all of the workers were Latinx. One of the major points of the pledge is: “To care for and advocate with those working in conditions that jeopardize their safety and those whose livelihoods are threatened because of the economic distress of this time”.

The letter addressed their concern for the workers’ health and urged concrete steps for Diversi-Pak to to protect their workers.

PAX CHRISTI MAINE HOSTS ASSEMBLY

Pax Christi Maine hosted their spring assembly over Zoom. The morning portion provided an opportunity to reconnect with members around the state, review activities from the past year, and form a new state council with four new members. Johnny Zokovitch, PCUSA Executive Director joined the assembly for the second half of the assembly, introducing himself and sharing a little of his background, the history of Pax Christi USA and Pax Christi International and answering questions from assembly participants.

JOHN X LINNEHAN—PRESENTE!



Pax Christi Florida and the entirety of our movement recently lost a truly great gentleman, peacemaker, activist, and gentle soul. John X Linnehan (pictured left) passed away in mid-May. With his wife Martina, John X founded the Metanoia Community

and built a house along the railroad tracks that transported nuclear weapons just outside the Kings Bay Naval Submarine base in St. Mary’s, Georgia. For over 30 years, John and Martina were the principal players in the sustained nonviolent grassroots resistance to the deployment of Trident nuclear weapons at Kings Bay. We give thanks for John X’s life and witness.

KINGS BAY PLOWSHARES 7 UPDATE

Just as this newsletter was going to press, we learned that the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 had received sentencing dates in June: Elizabeth McAlister’s date is June 8; Martha Hennessy, is June 29; and Patrick O’Neill, Clare Grady, Mark Colville, Carmen Trotta, and Fr. Steve Kelly, S.J. were given June 29 & 30. To keep track of the latest news and what you can do to support these resisters, visit <https://kingsbayplowshares7.org/>. Recent webinars and action ideas are also available at the site. Please keep the KBP7 and their families in your prayers.



PAX CHRISTI NEW JERSEY TAKES ACTION ON BEHALF OF DETAINEES

Pax Christi New Jersey has been active on a number of fronts regarding the detention of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pax Christi New Jersey was involved in an overnight vigil in front of Elizabeth Detention Center on May 19th designed to draw attention to and stop the deportation of Hector García Mendoza, a detainee. Earlier, members helped to organize car caravans at federal buildings, jails and detention centers to demand the release of immigrants who are being detained and people who are incarcerated, #FreeThemAll.

VOTE! See ballot for National Council election in this mailing

Enclosed in this mailing is the ballot for the 2020 National Council election. As a member of Pax Christi USA, you have the right and responsibility to participate in the yearly election for new members of the National Council, which is responsible for setting policy and direction for our movement. We have an incredible slate of 10 candidates. **With the changes that were instituted in the constitution last year, we no longer have two separate slates of candidates. You can choose THREE (3) people from the entire slate.** You'll find more about the candidates, their bios and their vision statement, on the ballot itself. Deadline to receive your ballot is July 10th. If



you have already voted online, please do **NOT** send in the paper ballot. If you prefer to vote online, go to: <https://forms.gle/xW15SpFUde2er7z56>. Online voting closes at 10pm ET on July 10.

QUICK NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE...

- ⇒ We're in the process of migrating all of our old information into a new database management system. Please bear with us as we make the move and work out any kinks!
- ⇒ In February, Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN, left her position as program director. We are so grateful for Sr. Anne-Louise's leadership at Pax Christi USA, especially her stewardship of the organization as interim director in 2019. She will continue, with Sr. Patty, to offer workshops and training in anti-racism. Thank you so much Sr. Anne-Louise!
- ⇒ Thanks to all of our members who have emailed or called to inquire as to how the national staff is doing during the pandemic. Your care and concern for us is a deep sign of how community is at the heart of who we are as Pax Christi USA. For more on the protocols we've put in place during the crisis, visit our website at <https://paxchristiusa.org/about/covid-19-protocols/>.



New staff members, continued from page 3...

representation in D.C. policy circles, and serves as the primary coordinator of Pax Christi USA's advocacy work.

"In this new chapter of my life, I hope to utilize what I have learned in previous ministries to assist Pax Christi USA in 'reconnecting' with existing members, cultivating a new generation of peacemakers, and promoting the movement's four priority areas," Dianna stated. "One of my roles as Deputy Director will be to represent PCUSA in various circles where we seek to have a voice and to build public confidence in the often-forgotten work of our members in the peace movement. In these circles, I promise to bring our members' concerns to the table and to advocate with, and on behalf of all in our movement on issues that not only impact our communities but our entire world."

We invite members to reach out and welcome Nadia at nespinoza@paxchristiusa.org and Dianna at dortiz@paxchristiusa.org.

