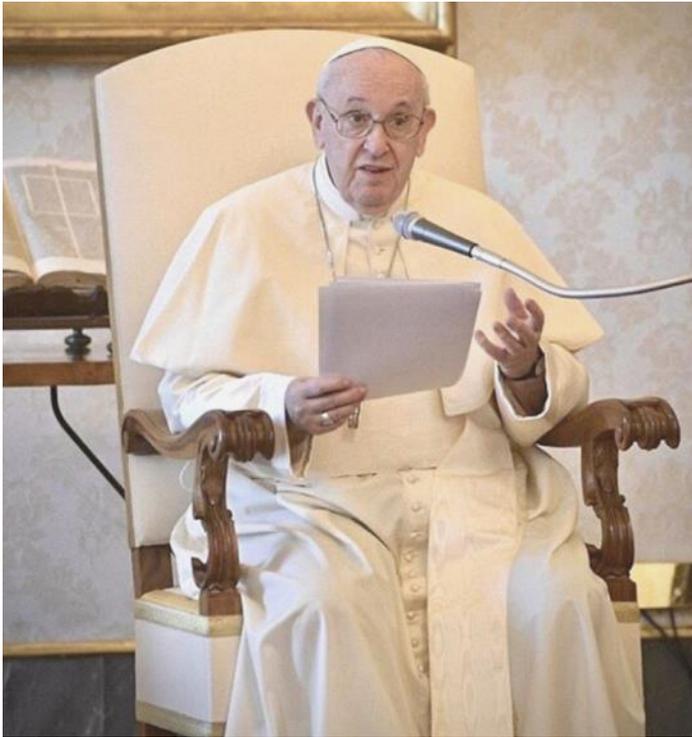


The Peace Current

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



“We were put in this world to love him and our neighbors. Everything else passes away, only this remains. The tragedy we are experiencing at this time summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that *life is of no use if not used to serve others*. For life is measured by love.”

POPE FRANCIS



Our Statement of Principles for the 2020 elections

Guided by a spirituality of nonviolence, our history as peacemakers, a commitment to work for justice

In early September, Pax Christi USA released our “Statement of Principles” as a resource to inform the decisions that our members, partners, and all people of conscience will make in the context of the 2020 U.S. elections. The leaders we choose will impact people in the United States and many others around the world. Therefore it is incumbent that we elect leaders with the values, character and integrity required to serve our communities.

We envision this statement to be a living document, one open to the discernment and dialogue to which the future calls us. Its content has been shaped, first, by our deep trust in the gospel message of Jesus which reminds us that what is foundational to every decision we make is our responsibility to love God through loving our neighbor, both near and far, with a preferential option for those who are impoverished. Second,

these priorities are shaped by the transformational principles of Catholic Social Teaching, designed to guide us in applying the gospel message to our common life together as one people, within and outside current borders. Pax Christi USA’s engagement in this election is thus guided by a spirituality of nonviolence, our history as peacemakers, and a commitment to work for that justice which affirms the dignity of all human beings, individually and collectively, and assures peace for all creation.

You can read the entire Statement of Principles on our website as well as seeing excerpts on racial justice, immigration, militarism and the climate crisis in the Pray-Study-Act section on pages 4-5.

For a downloadable, printable version of our Statement of Principles in its entirety, visit our website at www.paxchristiusa.org.



One year in and no slowing down

By Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director



I'm writing this short note to you just a few days short of my first anniversary as your executive director. Normally, I think that the one year mark would be a time to take a breath and look back, evaluate some of what we're accomplished so far and celebrate making it this far (especially this year!). But it's not time to take that deep breath just yet...

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As I write we're just beginning the Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action and we've already got three webinars scheduled, two Pray-Study-Act bulletins have gone out over our email network, and numerous other resources have been created for or curated on our web page as we expand our work around the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, which these days support.

You should be receiving this newsletter just a short time before Election Day 2020 and we're deep into the process of fleshing out our Statement of Principles with resources we're sharing on the website, through social media and elsewhere that take a deeper dive into the issues and themes which the statement explores and raises up. Elections are opportunities for us to assert, as the quote from Pope Francis states on the front page of this newsletter, those things that we should be taking seriously, the issues that matter, and that we want leaders who first and foremost will demonstrate a commitment to serve others.

Just a few weeks ago we completed a major project, The Peace Ribbon 2020, to mark the 75th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to demonstrate our commitment to nuclear disarmament. And we're continuing to engage at every level with the reckoning on racial justice that is long overdue in our country. We're about to finalize this year's Advent booklet and, as a staff, start formulating our plan for 2021. And did I mention that we're still in a pandemic?

All this is to just say that like you, we believe in our movement. With you, we're putting in the work, extending ourselves, and doing everything we can to make this world come a little closer to that vision Jesus gave us of the reign of God. It's incredibly important work, even when it is hard and overwhelming, but we're privileged to do it. Most of all, we're privileged to do it with you, the Pax Christi USA community. Thanks for all you do and I hope that — despite the isolation, quarantines and social distancing of this pandemic — you know and feel that we're right there beside you.

In peace,

Johnny Zokovitch
Executive Director

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Pax Christi USA welcomes two new members to our staff

Pax Christi USA is pleased to welcome Lauren Bailey and Roxana Bendezú to the Pax Christi USA National Staff.

Both began with us in July, with Lauren assuming the position of National Field Organizer — the first staff member in that role in over a decade — and Roxana coming on as our new Communications Coordinator.

Originally from Columbus, Ohio, Lauren graduated from Xavier University with a Bachelor of Social Work and minors in peace and justice studies & gender and diversity studies. While at Xavier, she participated in programs through the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice, which allowed her to wrestle with questions concerning faith and justice. Prior to coming to PCUSA, she completed her Master of Social Work with an Area of Emphasis in Community and Social Justice, while working on a research project aimed at increasing food accessibility.

“I am excited about joining Pax Christi USA’s rich community full of engaged members,” stated Lauren. “The generations of progress achieved by PCUSA gives me great hope in a future that is more just and equitable for all.”

Lauren’s responsibilities include developing and implementing a plan for national field operations to mobilize grassroots action and strengthening relationships with regional and local group leaders to support and elevate their work. She will also be helping to lead Pax Christi USA’s outreach to students and young adults.

Roxana was born and raised in Lima, Perú and migrated to Turtle Island (currently known as the United States) in 1999. She is an activist, documentarian, and the founder and director of Migrant Roots Media. She has collaborated with various organizations, including the Office of Migration and Refugees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National TPS Alliance.

“What excites me is the vision of working collectively with the thousands of members of Pax Christi USA and the larger international Pax



New Pax Christi USA staff members, Lauren Bailey (left) and Roxana Bendezú (right). Lauren is the new National Field Organizer and Roxana is the new communications coordinator.

Christi family to move our communities forward towards collective liberation,” shared Roxana.

Roxana’s responsibilities include managing and facilitating Pax Christi USA’s internal and external communications strategies to support and promote program work and to engage our members, our grassroots network, new audiences and the public at-large. Her work includes elevating Pax Christi USA’s public profile through the creation and management of accessible, attractive and engaging platforms and resources.

“My contribution within and outside the Pax Christi USA family is to provide the tools necessary to continue shifting narratives to ones that center not only the stories but also the analysis of people directly affected by multiple issues that consider historical context,” stated Roxana.

“I’m really excited to have Roxana and Lauren join us,” stated Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA. “Bringing these two incredible people onto our team increases our capacities to do the work of peace with justice, especially by putting an emphasis on how we can facilitate greater involvement from members throughout our community with a commitment to organizing and expanding our reach.”

Pray, Study, Act: Elections 2020

The resources here are offered for individuals and groups to pray, study and act in preparation for the 2020 elections. 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.

PRAYER

The following prayer is a shortened form of a prayer that our deputy director, Dianna Ortiz, OSU, wrote to accompany our Statement of Principles for the 2020 elections.

A prayer for this election season

*By Dianna Ortiz, OSU
Pax Christi USA Deputy Director*

God, Promise Keeper of the new creation, in this election season guide us to be Gospel-informed voters, who stand on the side of justice and truth.

As a community of conscience, we recognize our shared responsibility in righting the wrongs that dishonor and dehumanize the dignity of the most vulnerable among us.

As a community of conscience, we acknowledge the harm that has been done to the environment and the urgency to work collectively to care for the Earth, our common home.

We see our country in turmoil—experiencing a time of chaos that not only impacts every person of this nation, but peoples from across the globe.

As individuals and a faith community, we recognize that we bear both a privilege and a burden to vote our conscience and to make choices that will and do affect the future of everyone.

As we ready ourselves to go to the polls this November, may our time of discernment be rooted in the teachings of our faith and our common life together.

May our faith guide us to vote for genuine servant-leaders, who, like Jesus, will welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, embrace the sick and dying and promote peace and nonviolence.

Send your Spirit to be with us as we cast votes for the common good and, regardless of the outcome of the elections, may we continue to work for a more just and sustainable world.

May we always stand on the side of justice and truth. Amen.

STUDY

On September 24th, Pax Christi USA held an Elections 2020 Virtual Teach-In, "Working for Peace with Justice," with Bishop John Stowe, Leslye Colvin, Suyapa Portillo Villeda and Marie Dennis. Below are four excerpts from our Statement of Principles that were developed by our panelists. We encourage people to go back and view the webinar which was streamed on Facebook Live and is available as a video on our Facebook page.

4 excerpts from our Statement of Principles for the 2020 Elections

ON RACIAL JUSTICE

Racism penetrates every aspect of life in the United States, seeding the terror that continually threatens and kills people of color while perpetuating white supremacy, and leaving all of humanity disfigured. The historical reality—readily apparent in policing, the prison system, education, and highlighted in the racial inequities heightened during the pandemic—indicts our society as one in which Black lives have



(continued from page 4) not mattered. We assert that Black lives matter and that the violence inherent in systemic racism is an affront to the God who creates, redeems, and sanctifies all, and calls us together as one family. As a community of conscience, we stand together and fully support the divestment of resources away from policing and toward education, healthcare, and community investment designed to serve people. We support reparations for the suffering inflicted on Black people because of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and targeted mass incarceration.

ON (IM)MIGRATION

Across the world, migrants and refugees are fleeing poverty, violence, and environmental devastation due to climate change and resource extraction, to seek a safe place for their families. We recognize the role that the government of the United States of America and U.S.-based corporations have played and continue to play in creating the conditions that millions of people in the Americas and around the world are forced to escape. The racist fear-mongering and “blaming the victims,” as well as the cruel policies to detain immigrant children, separate families, and dismantle the asylum system are stains on our nation’s soul. As a community of conscience, we stand together and fully support the right of people to migrate and seek refuge, citizenship, and justice, as well as the right of people not to migrate and live in safe conditions in their communities of origin.

ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Our world is in a climate crisis. As Pope Francis stated in *Laudato Si’*, we cannot ignore the Earth and her people’s desperate and urgent cries for environmental justice. As heat waves, wildfires, famines, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels sprawl across the globe, the poorest and most vulnerable are being disproportionately affected. Climate change not only forces people in poor and struggling countries to migrate, but fuels poverty, food insecurity, displacement and violence in communities around the United States. As a community of conscience, we stand together and call on the United States to declare the climate crisis a national emergency by recommitting to the Paris Agreement, reinforcing the Clean Air Act, investing in clean energy sources, and pursuing a

comprehensive justice approach as expressed in the U.S. Green New Deal.

ON MILITARISM

During this election cycle we must resist identifying strength as military might, marshal our resources and summon our moral courage to say “no” to a bloated military budget which robs people of the education, healthcare, housing, and jobs that they deserve. The human needs of communities in the U.S. and the world are held hostage to the greed of the Pentagon and a war economy that makes the entire world increasingly more insecure. Excluding Social Security benefits, almost half of our federal budget goes to military-related spending, including debt payments for prior wars. As a community of conscience, we stand together and call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a federal budget which prioritizes the promotion and funding of nonviolent solutions to conflict, the transformation of the war economy, and the radical transformation of U.S. foreign policy, as well as an immediate halt of U.S. interventionism in other countries. In addition, we call for an end of the militarized repression of social justice demonstrators in the U.S. and the militarization of the southern border.

ACT

Pax Christi USA is an endorsing organization of Faithful Democracy, a multi-faith community of organizations and congregations who share the moral imperative of fixing our democracy. Below is an excerpt from “Unheard Voices: A Faithful Democracy Toolkit”.

Volunteer and Mobilize the Vote!

We know that there will be bad actors wanting to take advantage of challenging circumstances to suppress the vote. People of faith are called to be vigilant and neutralize such efforts. Another way to support a fair election is to volunteer as legal, field and support assistance to help protect the vote. Mobilize with thousands of other volunteers to help our fellow Americans navigate the voting process and cast their votes without obstruction, confusion, or intimidation.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3iXPjLy> and scroll to page 12 for how you can defend disenfranchised voters, observe elections & mobilize against suppression.

The Peace Ribbon Vision Continues...

On August 8th, Pax Christi USA and the Peace Ribbon Coalition conducted a very special event called "The Peace Ribbon Vision Continues", a virtual commemoration marking the 75th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The event took place over Zoom with hundreds joining in to express their enduring, tangible hope for a nuclear-free future. Ribbon panels from around the world, creatively depicting "what you cannot bear to think of as lost forever in a nuclear war", were shared visually and speakers addressed a variety of topics related to the work of nuclear abolition. In the middle of the event, 214 seconds of silence were observed for the estimated 214,000 who perished in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

You can find a video of the entire event on the Peace Ribbon 2020's Facebook page at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePeaceRibbon>

To learn more about the Peace Ribbon project, visit www.thepeaceribbon.org.

Pax Christi USA thanks all those who participated in the project this year whether behind the scenes, creating ribbon panels, or attending the Peace Ribbon Vision Continues event on August 8th!



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

METRO NEW YORK THANKS ROSEMARIE PACE

On Sunday, September 20, Pax Christi Metro New York held a very special Zoom event to express their thanks for Regional Coordinator Rosemarie Pace (photo at right) for her twenty years of leadership and her imminent retirement. The event involved prayers, readings, and expressions of thanks by a number of Pax Christi members and friends, including representatives of Pax Christi USA National Staff, the National Council and Pax Christi International. Many people spoke to share their gratitude for Rosemarie's long-term contributions, her loyalty, her experience and wisdom, her writing skills and her outreach to young people during her time in leadership. All of us at Pax Christi USA also give thanks for Rosemarie and look forward to her exploring new roles of leadership in the movement!



a litany for those killed because of racial injustice.

PAX CHRISTI BALTIMORE SUPPORTS BLM

Pax Christi local groups around the nation continue to support the Black Lives Matter movement. Recently members of Pax Christi Baltimore joined a coalition of faith groups in Towson, MD organized by the group Racial Justice Circle to demonstrate at a rally in support of BLM and to condemn racism. More than 15 different organizations joined the rally standing alongside a busy road and encouraging passersby to show their support. More rallies are planned.

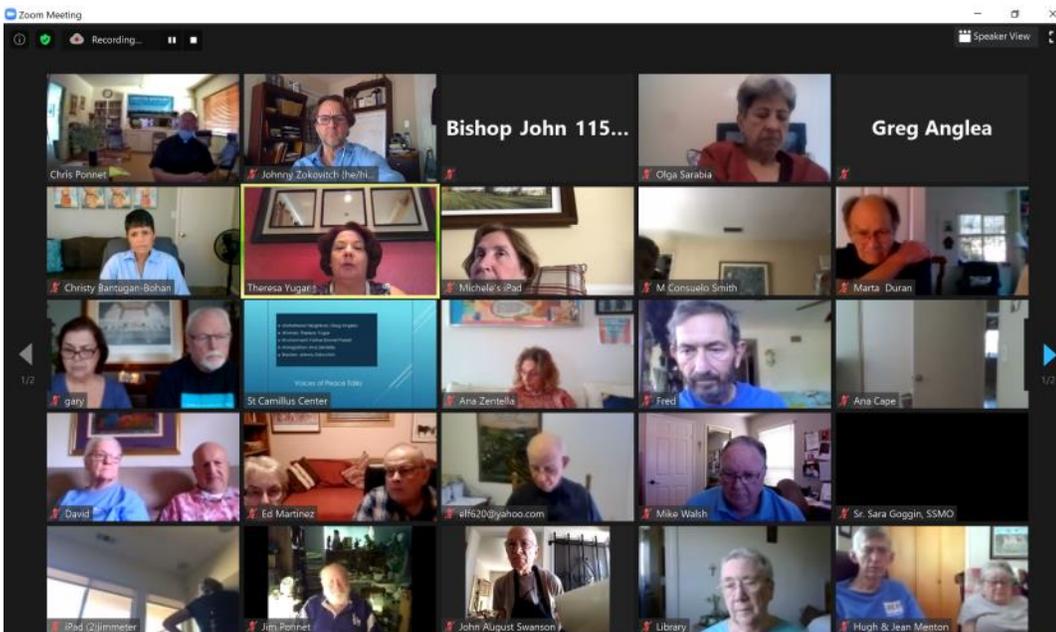
PAX CHRISTI SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HOSTS ASSEMBLY ON 2020 ELECTIONS

Pax Christi Southern California hosted their regional conference over Zoom in September on the theme: The 2020 Elections: Morality in a Time of Global Pandemic (photo below). Keynote presentations were delivered by Bishop John Stowe and Johnny Zokovitch and break-out sessions addressed unsheltered neighbors, women's rights, racism, immigration and the environment. The conference concluded with a communal pledge of the Vow of Nonviolence and

PAX CHRISTI LASALETTE STUDIES IRAN

Given recent tensions between the U.S. and Iran, and knowing that conflict could erupt at any time,

the Pax Christi group at the National Shrine of LaSalette (MA) decided to study Iran during the spring and summer of 2020. They have been educating themselves about Iranian history and culture, the covert U.S. involvement in Iran, and the situation there currently. This study will help to inform their communications with elected officials urging relief of sanctions and renegotiation.



Reflection for the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29

By Martha Hennessy

First Sunday of Advent | November 29, 2020 | 40th Anniversary of Dorothy Day's Death

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b, 64:2-7 | 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 | Mark 13:33-37

"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come." Mk 13:33

Our task of watchfulness will always be with us. Mark's chapter 13 warns of the destruction of the Temple, signs of the end, and paying attention to the signs of our Lord at the gate.

My mother Tamar watched with her mother Dorothy, as my grandmother's death drew near. It was in the evening that she passed on to God, her life given over to loving the least among us. The sting of that loss and grief is still with me but I am grateful that we have Dorothy in heaven to pray for us in these turbulent times. We are being scourged with war, pestilence, and famine. It has been 18 years since the destruction of Iraq and 5 years of the bombing and starving of Yemen. Our own streets are now reflecting these sins; our chickens have come home to roost. Our Lord will come upon us in this chaotic state and what will we have to say for ourselves?



There is nothing to do but repent in this opening moment of Advent. We will wait in hope for God's coming, the infant Christ, God who has come to us in our own form. Our Prince of Peace came to teach us how to love one another. We have failed miserably when we take an honest look at our world today. I myself am now a convicted felon, awaiting sentencing, forced to ask myself: "What does your faith mean in this age of nuclearism?"

Two years before the 75th anniversaries of our dropping of the Bomb on two Japanese cities, I chose to walk onto a military base that houses nuclear weapons and submarines. I came with my companions to deliver our bodies and blood, for a sacramental act of disarmament. I grew up with the phrase from Dorothy and the Father Hugo retreats: "We must die to ourselves, put off the old one and put on the new." Renewal in Christ provides an opportunity to do penance, seek God's mercy, and try anew each day to practice God's love with each other. Current signs indicate that we have chosen to love objects and technology rather than each other — an immense affliction and violation. Yet the beginning of Advent once again brings us to our knees in gratitude and acknowledgement that we are helpless when we turn away from God's love.

Prayer: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, and peace to all nations." (Bob W., Oscar Romero Catholic Worker, OK)

For reflection: In our daily tasks, how do we practice "dying to the self" and bring heaven on earth as God intended us to do?

Martha Hennessy, the seventh child of Dorothy Day's only child Tamar, divides her time between the family farm in Vermont and volunteer work at Maryhouse Catholic Worker in New York City. She has been arrested and imprisoned protesting nuclear power, war, the use of drones, the torture of prisoners in Guantanamo and other prisons, and the use of starvation as a weapon of war in Yemen. Martha travels and speaks on the topics of life and work in community, Catholic Social Teaching, and peacemaking efforts in the tradition of the Catholic Worker movement.

Order this year's Advent reflection booklet at www.paxchristiusa.org.

