



The Peace Current

Pax Christi USA

The national Catholic peace movement

Winter 2024

Pax Christi USA revitalizes anti-racism team

The newly invigorated Pax Christi USA Anti-Racism Team (PCART) is up and running: After an extensive search and interview process over the summer, 13 people were invited to participate in two training weekends — October 25-27 and November 8-10 — facilitated by Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Tom Cordaro, National Council Chair Sherry Simon, Executive Director Charlene Howard, and National Field Organizer Stephen Niamke.

In 1999, Pax Christi USA affirmed Brothers and Sisters All, a 20-year initiative to transform Pax Christi USA into an anti-racist, multicultural Catholic peace and justice movement. Pax Christi USA has sought to embrace this identity and do all its work from an anti-racist perspective, in the conviction that personal and systemic racism continues to perpetrate deep spiritual and social brokenness and endangers creation.

An important part of this work was the formation and implementation of the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team (PCART), which for years offered workshops, resources, and guidance to assist the larger organization in this goal of transformation.

In July 2023, more than 40 Pax Christi USA leaders gathered to assess our first 20 years of the racial justice commitment; reflect on our work to become an anti-racist, multicultural peace movement; and look ahead to the next steps. At that gathering, it was agreed to relaunch and strengthen the PCART team, which led to the two recent training weekends.

Congratulations to our 2024 PCART cohort: Marian Barber, Gerry Berry, Adrienne Curry, Jacques DeTiege,



Tawnya Lane, Elise Mares, Toni Moore-Duggan, Douglass Moorer, Jim Myres, Camila Perez, Teresa Sullivan, Flora Tang, and Jeanelle Wheeler.

The training covered PCART's history; information on racism on a personal, cultural, historical, and institutional level; orientation to Pax Christi USA as an anti-racist organization; and the theological foundations of our work as a Catholic social justice movement. The PCART members also selected a leadership team, created a draft of their covenant, explored potential goals, and made projections for the scope of their work. PCART members make a three-year commitment to help Pax Christi USA reach anti-racism goals.

A special thanks to Charlene Howard, James Watts, Sherry Simon, Iyana Turner-Vance, Cathy Woodson, Stephen Niamke, and Vicki Lott for the role they played in creating and implementing the selection process for this year's PCART cohort.



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What are we willing to risk in hope?

By Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.
Bishop President, Pax Christi USA

At the Pax Christi USA National Council meeting in Washington, D.C., held Nov. 1-3, we began our time together practicing the “Conversations in the Spirit” which have become the methodology of the Synod on Synodality. This method is being taught throughout the Church as a way to do “ecclesial discernment” so that our decision-making will be inclusive and involve the Holy Spirit. It was the final weekend of the seemingly endless presidential campaign when we met, and naturally we were all concerned and prayerful about the impending outcome. We reflected on being a people of hope, St. Paul’s admonition to rejoice in all circumstances, and we shared our thoughtful and prayerful responses to the possible election results. Each shared their thoughts on how the election of each candidate might affect them personally and how Pax Christi USA would be changed by either a Harris or a Trump election.



Following the prescribed method, we listened for what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us at this moment, even before we knew the outcome. We clearly affirmed that our work of peace-building is essential, perhaps more than ever in our polarized context which the election might exacerbate. We were affirmed in the importance we place on creating and sustaining relationships. We recognized the intersectionality of so many of the threats to peace today: nuclear armament, climate change, massive human migration, threats to democracy, “Christian” nationalism, materialism, increases in mental health challenges, etc.

Not surprisingly, our answers to the questions differed; from someone who said they would rejoice regardless of the outcome to many who were fearful of the outcome which actually occurred. Several thought that even if we had avoided a Trump presidency, there would have been so much work to do because of the presumption that the US is defined by its military strength on the world stage and because the poor treatment of migrants, from indifference to cruelty, has continued regardless of which political party is in office. The unleashing of “Christian” nationalism is unlikely to dissipate in the near future.

But the response, in the form of another question, that remained with me after the session was, **“How much risk are we willing to take as a movement?”** To continue working for the dismantling of the white-supremacism systematically embedded in our nation just became more difficult. To stand with immigrants and refugees, recognizing that we are all sojourners with no lasting home, will be more costly in many ways. To uphold the dignity of women, made in the image and likeness of God with full and equal dignity and rights just became unpopular. Even to simply listen to each other becomes counter-cultural.

Will the effect of a multiply-convicted felon provide any impetus for the

Continued on page 4 ...

Symposium on Black Catholic liturgy, culture

From November 22-24, Pax Christi USA attended the **Seeking for a City: Academic Symposium on Black Catholic Liturgy and Culture** which took place at the University of Dayton (Ohio). Staff members Michelle Sherman, Stephen Niamke, and Charlene Howard participated in this inaugural event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the pastoral letter, 'What We Have Seen and Heard,' a landmark document promulgated by 10 African American Catholic bishops in 1984 to call attention to the need for elevating the spirituality, gifts, and liturgical practices of Catholics of the African American community.



Glen Glenn with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Catholic Social Action Office with Michelle Sherman and Charlene Howard

In addition, this unique gathering recognized the 20th anniversary of the life and witness of Fr. Clarence Joseph Rivers, an African American priest who served in the Diocese of Cincinnati, Ohio as a prolific composer, director and singer of Catholic liturgical music that resonated from the cultural experiences of Black people.

Through various workshops, the symposium reaffirmed the gifts, perspectives, and values of the African American

experience as it relates to reforming and uplifting the Catholic Church. Fr. River's music was used in the symposium's liturgies while the works of other African American Catholic liturgical musicians, some of whom were present to share their talents throughout the event, were introduced. The weekend event illustrated that African Americans Catholics are uniquely positioned to spread the Gospel of Christ due to their collective Christ-like suffering. This suffering is integrated into liturgical expressions that allow all the faithful to complete the process of moving from lamenting, to compassion, to conversion, to transcendence which is the ultimate experience of feeling God's presence.

The Pax Christi USA staff were able to interact and share materials with many of the symposium attendees. Charlene Howard provided the sermon for Saturday evening prayer. (Watch the video of her preaching on the Pax Christi USA YouTube channel.) Overall, the Pax Christi USA presence afforded our movement the opportunity to become more visible among a new community of people while providing experiences and information that will inform our program, outreach, and field organizing efforts as we grow our membership.

IFTJ 2024: "Steadfast hope in precarious times"

Pax Christi USA was present again for the **Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice**, held the last weekend of October in Washington, DC. Two of the keynote speakers, Fr. Bryan Massingale and Ruben Garcia, are Pax Christi USA Teachers of Peace (2021 and 2012, respectively). Several Pax Christi high school chapters, friends, and colleagues came by the display table, including our newest high school chapter, Loyola Academy in Wilmette, IL (right), and the Elizabeth Seton High School chapter (Bladensburg, MD, left, with Michelle Sherman and Eliane Lakam).



In addition to members of the national staff, Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus (PCYAC) members and young adults who have been part of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative programming were present, including Eliane Lakam, Lauren Bailey, Rudy Dehaney, Kascha Sanor, Becky "Bex" McIntyre, and Christian Bentley. We even ran into a former Young Adult Forum member, St. Louis University campus minister Michael Schreiner, and Pax Christi New York State coordinator Rosemarie Pace, to name just a few.

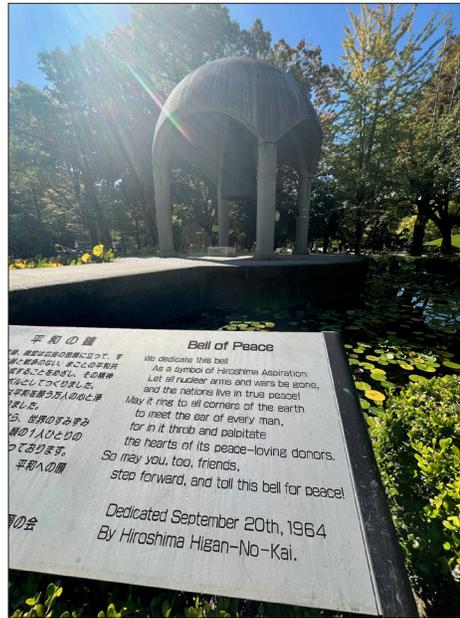
May this year's theme of "steadfast hope in precarious times" continue to speak to us and inspire our work.

And the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize goes to...

By **Ronnie Fellerath-Lowell**
Ignatian Volunteer Corps
Pax Christi USA nuclear
disarmament working group

On December 10, the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize was presented to Nihon Hidankyo, one of the largest and oldest *Hibakusha* organizations of atomic bomb survivors. I have listened to *Hibakusha* tell their stories of being in Hiroshima or Nagasaki when the bombs were dropped and the horrific aftermath. In Nobel Committee Chair Jorgen Watne Frydnes' Oct. 11 announcement of this year's prize, he said, "The *Hibakusha* help us to describe the indescribable, to think the unthinkable, and to somehow grasp the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by nuclear weapons."

As we approach the 80th anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and 9, 2025, **Pax Christi members are called to give extra attention in their prayer-study-action efforts toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.** We encourage you to plan ahead for your commemoration activities. Even as nuclear weapons have become so much more powerful, world powers have withdrawn from nuclear



Peace bell memorial in Hiroshima

treaties that provided some safeguards. The extraordinary power of nuclear weapons, as well as their potential to create nuclear winter, means that we have the ability to destroy our world. We must act to prevent this catastrophe.

Choose one or more of these actions in 2025. Many resources are already available to help you plan. **We also welcome new ideas and initiatives:**

- Read and discuss Archbishop John Wester's 2022 pastoral letter, "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament." Available for sale from the Pax Christi USA online store.
- Hold a movie night to watch and discuss "The Day After" as a lead-up to the 80th anniversary; find other films at <https://education.unoda.org/films.html>
- Become active in Back from the Brink (www.preventnuclearwar.org).
- Order a pack of 100 prayer cards with the prayer for nuclear disarmament to distribute at your parish or in your community; available at the Pax Christi USA online store.
- Plan early – please share your ideas and resources with us!

What are we willing to risk in hope? continued from page 2

necessary work of criminal justice reform? Not if some people never face a penalty while others are left without voice or vote for years for lesser offenses.

Will the election of a jury-determined rapist cause women to think that their own defense just got much tougher in every sense? I am afraid so.

Will the re-election of someone famous for stiffing workers, leaving bills unpaid and denigration of unions affect the rights of workers and the ability to advocate for just and fair wages and treatment? It seems so.

Will the election of someone who stubbornly believes in his own faulty understanding of how tariffs work really help the economy? Can't see how.

Will someone who ignored, then mishandled, a global pandemic and put the lives of millions of US Americans at risk, really be capable of his constitutional duty to protect us? He has demonstrated that he can't.

Will someone who enjoys the company of brutal autocrats uphold the founding ideas of US American democracy? Not likely, at least not without our constant and loud protest.

What faces us as Pax Christians is the question of how hard are we willing to work for peace and justice, to end systemic racism, to conserve the planet and to redirect resources from weapons to the common good?

It comes back to that question, **how much are we willing to risk in hope.**

On the line: Updates from local, state and regional groups

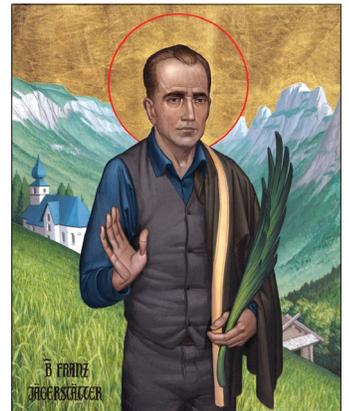
Pax Christi Texas hosts quarterly social justice forums online. This is an excellent model for witnessing, outreach, and invitations to get involved. In 2024, the following topics were discussed:

- First quarter/February: Dr. Judith Norman from Trinity University shared a Jewish perspective on Gaza.
- Second quarter/April: The effects of climate change on our health with Dr. Adelita Cantu PhD, RN, FAAN, University of Texas Public Health
- Third quarter/August: Violence and the abuse of women in our society, presented by Patricia Castillo, LMSW
- Fourth quarter/November: Social justice at the Texas border and reflections following the national election by Sherry Simon, PhD, National Council Chair, Pax Christi USA.

To find out about forums planned for 2025, contact Arthur Dawes at arthurdawes@att.net.

Following the election in November, **Pax Christi Florida** sent its members a message of hope and encouragement: “Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer and conscientious objector during World War II, once wrote: *‘Just as those who believe in Nazism tell themselves that their struggle is for survival, so must we, too, convince ourselves that our struggle is for the eternal Kingdom. But with this difference: we need no rifles or pistols for our battle but, instead, spiritual weapons ... Let us love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who persecute us. For love will conquer and will endure for all eternity. And happy are they who live and die in God’s love.’*”

See the entire letter, “A message of resilience and hope” on the Pax Christi Florida website, www.paxchristiflorida.org



On November 16, **Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore** held its annual peacemaker of the year ceremony, this year honoring Eli McCarthy. Eli teaches theology and justice and peace studies at Georgetown University, is the Just Peace Fellow with the Franciscan Action Network, co-founded the DC Peace Team, and is an original member of the steering committee of Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. In the past year, Eli has organized and facilitated the Christians for Ceasefire coalition, which meets weekly to discuss and strategize on ways to respond to the ongoing violence in the Holy Land, particularly in Gaza. *Congratulations to Eli!*



On December 5, Christians for Ceasefire gathered at the lighting of the national Christmas tree ceremony at the Ellipse in Washington DC, where they sang ceasefire carols and displayed a “Christ in the rubble” creche to remind the thousands of people attending the tree-lighting event of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Book review: *Nevertheless, We Persist: A Feminist Public Theology*

By Tiffany Hunsinger
PhD candidate, University of Dayton (Ohio)
Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus
Marianist Social Justice Collaborative



Tiffany Hunsinger

In *Nevertheless, We Persist: A Feminist Public Theology*, author Rosemary P. Carbine reimagines public theology as a practice rooted in narrative, creativity, and solidarity. This book arrives at a critical time, addressing the polarized state of the US Church and broader society. Carbine challenges us to rethink our faith's public role

in advocating justice, drawing from historical movements and feminist theological frameworks to offer a vision for a more inclusive and action-oriented theology.

To begin her book and explain her motivation, Carbine critiques the “kyriarchy,” a concept from Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that highlights interlocking systems of oppression beyond patriarchy, encompassing injustices of gender, race, class, sexuality, and more. These systems idealize a narrow, exclusionary version of humanity: white, male, heteronormative, and able-bodied. Carbine argues that overcoming this requires a public theology that uplifts marginalized voices and incorporates storytelling, community-building, and solidarity. Her case studies, including the Catholic Worker movement, the civil rights movement, United Farm Workers, and the Plowshares movement, illustrate how religion and politics have fused to challenge systemic injustices.

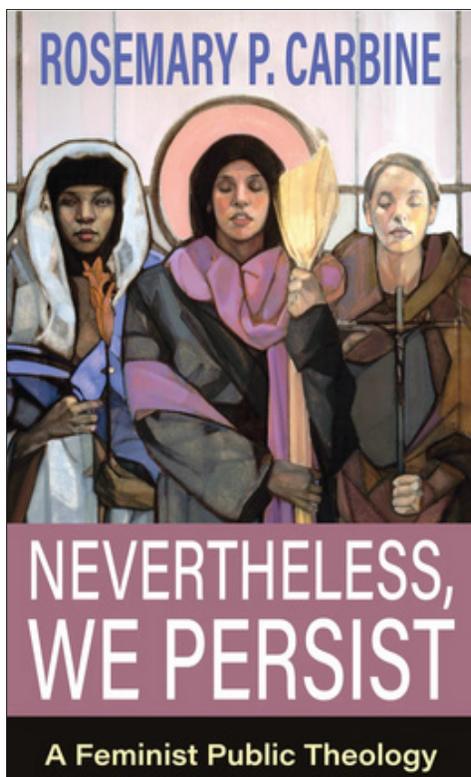
The theological narrative is central to Carbine’s vision. She critiques kyriarchal tendencies to dismiss storytelling as un-theological, asserting that shared narratives are the foundation of Christian communities. Through prophetic praxis, these stories cultivate alternative socio-political orders and resist oppressive ideologies. For Carbine, tradition involves content and process, allowing for reinterpretation through the justice lens. Carbine’s reliance on feminist theologians such as Kathryn Tanner,

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, and Elizabeth Johnson shapes her constructive approach: critiquing patriarchy, recovering women’s experiences, and reconstructing theology to reflect these experiences. Her nuanced analysis of US Catholicism highlights the increasing disconnect between bishops’ politics and lay Catholics’ justice-oriented actions. She critiques the myth of a monolithic “Catholic vote,” which the Church episcopacy has often utilized to align the Church with particular partisan agendas while sidelining broader Catholic social teaching.

One of the book’s most compelling sections explores the Catholic Worker Movement. Carbine uplifts Dorothy Day’s narrative, framing her conversion as rooted in gratitude, community, and solidarity. Day’s personalist theology prioritizes relationships and offers a model for feminist public theology. Carbine also highlights Day’s belief that Jesus’ ministry began with overturning moneylenders’ tables in the temple — a radical act of justice. Through this lens, Carbine introduces a “Feminist Wisdom Christology,” emphasizing Jesus’ mission and ministry over his personhood. This approach empowers women to engage in public Church work and continue Jesus’ mission through political praxis.

Carbine’s analysis of the United Farm Workers Movement further exemplifies her narrative, solidarity, and justice themes. She details the fusion of civic participation, Catholic social thought, and Mexican activism in events like the 1966 march on Sacramento. Protesters carried crosses and images of Our Lady of Guadalupe, blending religious symbolism with political action. For Carbine, such narratives reclaim the political subjectivity of marginalized groups, fostering prophetic practices that oppose injustice and envision a more inclusive future.

The book is deeply relevant in light of the current political climate, especially after the recent election. Carbine notes the rise of “antidemocratic dogmas” — free-market fundamentalism, militarism, and authoritarianism — that have filled the vacuum left by the declining Religious Right. These forces threaten the Church’s mission to advocate for justice and solidarity. Carbine urges the US Church to



Continued on page 7 ...

Pope John's Pacem in Terris and the Call for Global Governance



Joe Fahey

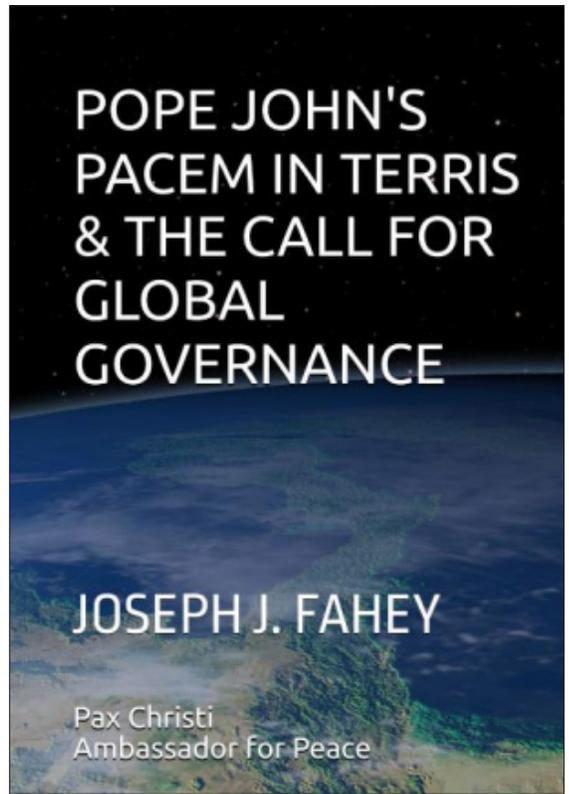
Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Joe Fahey — one of the founders of Pax Christi USA and one of our first secretaries general — has just published a new book based on his years of research: *Pope John's Pacem in Terris and the Call for Global Governance* (Pacem in Terris Press, 2024). This book expands on Pope John XXIII's prophetic appeal in his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* for a "new global order" championing human rights, worldwide disarmament, and global justice and peace. In this encyclical, Pope John endorsed the United Nations as a significant step toward "a juridical and political

order for the world community."

Joe Fahey spent 50 years teaching theological ethics at Manhattan College, where he co-founded and served as director of the Peace Studies and Labor Studies programs. He founded Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice and participated for many years on the Pax Christi International disarmament committee.

This book recounts how John XXIII wrote *Pacem in Terris* in response to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which nearly triggered a global thermonuclear war. It further reports how the pope secretly worked with President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev to defuse the Cuban Missile Crisis and to initiate mutual disarmament, a process that may have precipitated President Kennedy's assassination. Joe argues that global governance is the essential alternative to war, and proposes the European Union's regional structure as a model for future global governance. The book includes several appendices, including one on the United Nations Pact for the Future. Patricia Mische, PhD, Lloyd Professor Emerita of Peace Studies and World Law at Antioch College, wrote the foreword, and Joe Holland, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion at St. Thomas University, wrote the afterword.

Visit www.paceminterris.net to find information about purchasing *Pope John's Pacem in Terris and the Call for Global Governance*.



Book review: Nevertheless, We Persist, continued from page 7

embrace an ekklesial model of storytelling, community, and radical nonviolence. By listening to and amplifying the stories of those on the margins, the Church can confront polarization and work toward healing and justice.

For me, as a young peacemaker involved in the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative and Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus, reading this book felt like a call to action. Carbine's insistence on narrative as a justice tool resonates with my experiences of amplifying marginalized voices through community engagement. Her emphasis on prophetic praxis inspires me to approach activism with passion and a grounding in faith and solidarity. The book's exploration of feminist wisdom theology helped me see how movements like the Catholic Worker prioritize relationships, offering a framework that aligns closely

with the principles of nonviolence and community organizing central to our work.

Nevertheless, We Persist serves as both a guide and a challenge for other young adult peacemakers. We must consider Carbine's insistence on incorporating feminist perspectives and marginalized narratives into our activism. This approach reminds us to resist the temptation of top-down solutions and instead build movements that honor lived experiences. Additionally, her exploration of historical justice movements provides valuable lessons on integrating faith and action, reminding us that justice is not merely an ideal but a practice rooted in relationships and solidarity. This book is a must-read for anyone committed to building a Church and world more reflective of Gospel values.

A reflection for Christmas Day, December 25

By Leslye Colvin

from *Seeking Wisdom's Light: Reflections for Advent and Christmas 2024*

"Godspell," a film based on an off-Broadway play, was released in 1973. The film questioned some of the social ills of the time including the worship of power, prestige and financial wealth. Those of us who are a certain age may experience an earworm in being reminded of one of the film's most popular songs, "Prepare Ye (The Way of the Lord)." A simple and joyful tune, it is a clarion call for the work of John, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. It also gives voice to the work that is ours to do as followers of Christ.



They were not removed from the challenges of this world, but surely their perspective and knowing were expanded by God's grace. Sharing a special bond, they embodied a profound humility and a courageous faith.

How many times must they have paused, prepared, and waited to discern God's wisdom over the years?

Now, it is our responsibility. In the midst of the world's challenges, how do we love and nurture the Christ? This question may be more challenging if we pack away the joy of this season with holiday decorations, or if we discard the awe of the

Incarnation with the dried out Christmas tree. It may help to remember that in spite of our lavish decorations and the size of our Christmas budget, neither reflects our living connection to the Holy One.

Once again, we have journeyed through the Season of Advent and arrived into the Season of Christmas. We ponder the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where they were accompanied by uncertainty and the unexpected. The birth of the Holy One must have been ineffable for them in many ways. Even so, they knew that this prophesied and long-awaited birth was not the end of uncertainty or the unexpected in their lives.

If we truly desire to celebrate the Incarnation let us consider paths leading us to seek Emmanuel, God is with us, as a way of life. We need not confine our attention to Christmas Day or the Christmas Season. The Christ light is always lit. We are sure to see it as we live the Beatitudes, and encounter our siblings on the margins. When we do, we may be surprised to recognize that all along it was the light of Christ guiding us there.

God gifted the couple with the responsibility of loving and nurturing this child. Mary and Joseph prepared Jesus to grow into his true identity, human and divine.

As you begin the Christmas season, be aware of the questions stirring with you. Welcome the questions inviting you to discernment.

***Mark your calendars and join us!
July 25-27, 2025***

Pax Christi USA's 2025 national conference

**Reclaiming the Power of
Nonviolence in a Broken World
*Detroit, Michigan***



Thursday, July 24 pre-conference events // **Friday-Sunday, July 25-27** national conference

We need your help! Do you have suggestions of people, communities, and/or organizations that would be interested in co-sponsoring the conference? Please send a note to Daniel Francis at dfrancis@paxchristiusa.org.

More information at www.paxchristiusa.org soon!