

Pax Christi International: Seventy Years of Peacemaking

Introduction to Pax Christi

For almost 70 years, Pax Christi International has incorporated a wide range of conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peacebuilding practices into its collective program with a goal of creating environments in which peace can flourish. The list of examples that follow barely begins to describe the variety of Pax Christi methodologies and programs for peace, but at least suggests the range of experiences from which many lessons have emerged over the decades.

Such experiences include: “peace week” initiatives, many of them annual, in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, UK, the African Great Lakes region, Kosovo, Russia, Croatia, the Philippines and Colombia; excellent peace education programs for parishes, young children, high school and university students in England, the Philippines and elsewhere; exchanges of experience between civil society from the Middle East and from Central Europe on their role in bringing about non-violent social change; annual Pax Christi youth “routes” or pilgrimages for peace in different regions; a community garden in Cite Soleil, Port au Prince, Haiti; work at a national and international level for the abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; courses in preventive reconciliation using the principles of Aikido in the Philippines; and regular dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church during the Cold War.

Founded in France to promote reconciliation between the French and the Germans following World War II, Pax Christi was recognized by Pope Pius XII a few years later as the official Catholic peace movement. In Pax Christi, members of the

hierarchy, clergy and laypeople work together on an equal and democratic basis. A bishop and a laywoman, both of whom were elected, now share our presidency.

Pax Christi International has held consultative status through ECOSOC at the United Nations since 1979 and is working at UN centers in Geneva, New York, Vienna and Paris. It is also officially represented at the Africa Union and the Council of Europe and has regular access to the European Parliament, the European Commission and NATO.

Pax Christi member organizations and partners are now present on five continents, engaging in efforts to

- foster a culture of active nonviolence; support local nonviolent work for peace in a given context of war or violent conflict; contribute to the prevention or transformation of specific violent conflicts; and address the local, regional and international root causes of these conflicts;
- accompany communities suffering from the impact of repressive violence or war and organize concrete expressions of international solidarity with these communities;
- set a global stage on which sustainable peace is possible by, for example, challenging systems or mindsets that perpetuate war and violence; supporting popular education and grassroots efforts for life, peace and human dignity; reducing the militarization of international relations; strengthening multinational cooperation to address serious global challenges; reducing investment and trade in arms; giving serious attention to respect for human

rights and international law; giving priority to meeting human needs; and protecting the integrity of creation.

As a faith-based Catholic movement, Pax Christi pays special attention to the impact of religion in relation to violent conflict, recognizing that intolerance and extremisms toward or associated with any religious group can cause or exacerbate violence. At the same time, the resources of faith traditions, including our own, can make a significant contribution to peace.

This chapter will examine briefly lessons learned from three areas of Pax Christi's work for peace: (1) conflict prevention, transformation and peacebuilding; (2) advocacy and campaigning; and (3) peace spirituality and theology as articulated by Pax Christi members out of their experience in specific contexts and concrete struggles for peace. These different dimensions of our work for peace are always interconnected.

Conflict Prevention, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

Pax Christi's conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peacebuilding work is responsive to a particular context and adapts to new conditions and requirements as the context changes. As a global network, we also believe that our work is most effective when it takes full advantage of the reach, depth and diverse activities of the Pax Christi network. Once again, our intention is to enable Pax Christi member organizations and a strong, well-connected global Pax Christi network to support local nonviolent work for peace in a given context of war or

violent conflict. In doing so, we try to contribute in concrete ways to ending war; transforming conflict; accompanying and expressing international solidarity with communities suffering from the impact of repressive violence or war; and addressing its root causes, including international root causes. A few examples of Pax Christi's conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peacebuilding work are hopefully illustrative.

Syria: From the beginning of the Arab Awakening in 2011, Pax Christi paid close attention to possibilities for action in support of basic human rights, self-determination and liberation from oppression. As the situation in Syria deteriorated, Pax Christi facilitated numerous exchanges among our network's Middle East member organizations and partners from Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, plus experts on the Middle East from other parts of the Pax Christi world. A regional meeting in Amman addressed the violence in Syria and recommended that Pax Christi International continue to look for ways to support the nonviolent opposition to what had become an excessively abusive regime; encourage the international community to send humanitarian aid through small, local organizations; and launch a Lenten solidarity campaign of prayer and fasting to make more visible to the Syrian people that they are not alone in their suffering. Pax Christi also sent letters to the UN Secretary General, European decision-makers and the Russian Federation calling for an end to arms sales to Syria, access for humanitarian aid, a rejection of violence, regardless of its source, and prioritization of dialogue, diplomacy and nonviolent resistance. We issued public statements expressing concern over the severe repression by the Syrian government of the

peaceful protests and the deliberate targeting of civilian communities.

Sudan: In Sudan there were more diverse possibilities than in Syria. Pax Christi members – especially Pax Christi Netherlands and Pax Christi Italy - have worked in Sudan and, more recently, in South Sudan for many years, beginning and most often staying at a very grassroots level to connect with and support local Sudanese efforts for peace. Our principal partner there has been the Catholic Church, nationally and locally.

One good example of international collaboration with the local Catholic Church was Pax Christi's cooperation with Bishop Paride Taban, retired bishop of the Diocese of Torit, and his Kuron Peace Village, which is now itself a member organization of Pax Christi. Some years ago, as traditional cattle raiding was becoming extremely violent and dangerous, Bishop Taban asked IKV Pax Christi Netherlands and Seeds of Peace Africa (SOPA) to develop a program that would bring together the youth warriors from pastoralist communities to come up with alternative peaceful ways of relating for the good of their communities.

After successful conferences in Kuron and Narus (Sudan), with youth warriors and elders from neighboring pastoralist communities in Uganda, Kenya and Sudan, IKV Pax Christi Netherlands, SOPA and local organizations developed a peace and sports program called Playing for Peace that has been very effective.

Prior to the 2010 general election and the 2011 referendum, Pax Christi teams – comprised as much as possible of Sudanese staff – also worked in several villages and towns in Southern Sudan, including Nimule, Torit, Bor, Malakal and Juba, taking full advantage of existing parish and diocesan networks for organizing events

and campaigns or circulating information. They accompanied and supported local peace initiatives and sponsored workshops, dialogue and trainings - mostly for youth - on conflict resolution and other peacebuilding skills.

During those years, Pax Christi supported the establishment of the Southern Sudan Action Network on Small Arms and similar networks in Jonglei and other states; these networks energetically promoted elections and, later, a referendum *without guns*. Given the tremendous challenges of disarmament in Southern Sudan following so many years of war, this was a small but important step.

Pax Christi with other groups in the Horn of Africa supported the formation of a Sudanese civil society election and referendum monitoring team, SUDAMOP, helping it to make contact with groups in other countries where the Sudanese diaspora would vote – again, tapping into international Catholic and other religious networks.

All along, Pax Christi attempted to address the local, regional and international root causes of the violence in Sudan. IKV Pax Christi prepared numerous reports, for example, on implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and on potential flash points for violence, such as South Kordofan, as the referendum and then independence for the South approached. The Church and others used these widely for conscientization in Sudan and for international advocacy.

Some of this analysis and reporting focused on the impact of oil extraction on local communities, and the responsibility of international or transnational oil companies to make reparations for damage to the environment and the people living

nearby.

D.R. Congo: In post-conflict situations, security problems often arise when former combatants are left without livelihoods or support networks during the vital period stretching from conflict to peace, recovery and development. Security governance issues such as those addressed by DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration), SSR (Security Sector Reform) and processes to reinforce the rule of law are increasingly recognized as priority peace-building tasks.

Beginning in 2010, Pax Christi International and Pax Christi Flanders cooperated on a joint project to facilitate the reintegration of former combatants in Burundi and the DR Congo. Locally based “Listening Communities” met regularly in several locations to tell their stories and support one another in their efforts to return to civilian life. Trained moderators guided group discussions and created links to local services. During 2011 elections, football matches in Bukavu and Uvira (DRC) between former members of armed groups helped local Pax Christi Member Organisations demonstrate that competition does not necessarily entail violence.

Croatia: In April 2011, in Vukovar, Croatia, Pax Christi provided a safe space for discussion about restorative justice and reconciliation among representatives of churches, church-related initiatives, faith based organizations, independent intellectuals, and representatives of regional civil society organizations from Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, the Russian Federation (including Chechnya), and Lithuania.

The discussions, which took place in a town still bitterly divided well over a

decade after war in the former Yugoslavia ended, highlighted three complimentary approaches to restorative justice: (1) impartial trials for war crimes; (2) pursuit of the truth about what happened, including to those who disappeared; (3) expressions of solidarity and prayer for all victims in the places where they were detained, tortured, or killed.

Uganda: The great challenge for Pax Christi and others accompanying transitional processes is to listen attentively to the voices of the people most affected in a given situation of war or abuse and to reflect with care on whether we understand justice and its relationship to peace in a way that is consistent with the perspective of those most affected by violent conflict.

This challenge became very visible in 2006 as Pax Christi and others tried to stop the horrific violence inflicted on communities in Northern Uganda and other countries in the region by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony. IKV Pax Christi Netherlands was asked by Ugandan and South Sudanese church leaders to set up the Juba peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government. Some international human rights activists were concerned that this would undermine the authority of the International Criminal Court (ICC), but in the run-up to the Juba peace talks, Pax Christi and the Uganda Joint Christian Council had developed specific criteria for any forthcoming peace agreement that would ensure accountability for war crimes during the transition from war to peace. A ceasefire was reached and the security situation in Northern Uganda improved, but the International Criminal Court's indictment of Kony as the negotiations approached a successful conclusion drove Kony away from the negotiating table. He

refused to return to sign the final agreement and remained a murderous threat to communities in the DR Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

As part of its extensive analysis of the relationship between peace and justice, IKV Pax Christ Netherlands described their approach to the situation:

http://www.alcnoticias.net/documentos/pax_christi_document_peace_and_justice_on_the_dilemmas_in_peace_negotiations.pdf?PHPSESSID=81d698784a3d2358aff6b5a2187a3e13 They have continued to accompany the communities most threatened by the LRA and to look for possible solutions, including international actions, that would be consistent with Pax Christi's commitment to nonviolence and heed the collective advice of local religious leaders.

Advocacy and Campaigning

While all of the areas of Pax Christi work for peace are interconnected and chronologically mixed, advocacy and campaigning are essential because these strategies for peace are built on the experience of our member organizations around the world and regularly address structural and systemic issues that cause or perpetuate violent conflict. In this way, Pax Christi tries to “set a global stage on which sustainable peace is possible.”

Pax Christi advocacy and campaigning are usually collaborative – with other institutions and organizations that share our perspective on a given issue. We work with the Holy See, Bishops' conferences, other Catholic organizations, people from diverse faith traditions and a variety of civil society organizations.

Disarmament, Demilitarization, Arms Control: For example, since the early

days of the Cold War, Pax Christi has worked for disarmament and demilitarization through national advocacy toward specific national and regional security strategies, but particularly through the creation of binding and enforceable multilateral treaties with regards to all aspects of the development, use and proliferation of weapons. Currently, Pax Christi efforts at establishing such treaties focus on the elimination of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, which we believe is the only way to ensure that these weapons will never be used, either by states or non-state actors. Pax Christi has also worked in support of the ban on anti-personnel landmines, depleted uranium weapons and the regulation of cluster munitions. The widespread, profit-driven proliferation of these weapons has helped accelerate the move to violence in situations of conflict and has greatly increased the danger to life and limb in post-war contexts.

For decades, Pax Christi has been advocating for a robust Arms Trade Treaty that would end illegal arms trade and save lives. We participated actively in the Control Arms Interfaith Campaign and the Ecumenical Campaign for a Strong and Robust Arms Trade Treaty and called for a treaty that would: apply criteria of human rights and international humanitarian law; cover small arms, light weapons, ammunition and parts; deny arms transfers that put sustainable development at risk; deny arms transfers that may perpetuate gender-based violence; and address the need for assistance to survivors.

More recently Pax Christi International developed a position opposing the use and proliferation of lethal drones and the immorality of targeted assassinations that execute people identified as “terrorists” without due process. Pax Christi USA

and Pax Christi UK have begun a process of public education and advocacy that will hopefully halt the use and proliferation of this deadly weapon.

Peace and security require much more than the absence of war or a balance of power between enemies. Alternative methods to war for resolving intra- or international conflicts are essential, as are the development of effective nonviolent peacekeeping and conflict prevention policies and capacities. Pax Christi advocates in support of stronger and more accountable United Nations programs to avoid or end violent conflict through peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations

Furthermore, Pax Christi promotes a framework for a multilateral rights-and-duties based system with a preferential option for the poorest countries in the context of the United Nations. We support the development of a just world order through international cooperation, multilateralism and international law and an effective world authority that could promote, coordinate and direct collaboration among nations to address contemporary concerns from terrorism to poverty and human insecurity, from the proliferation of weapons to pandemics and the extremely serious environmental issues that make lasting peace an almost impossible dream.

Middle East and Northern Africa: In a context changed by the Arab Awakening in 2011, Pax Christi supported the efforts of our Member Organisations in the Arab world to provide a more just and peaceful future. Between February and June, we issued or signed joint statements that supported the peaceful protests in Egypt; called for UN and international action to stop atrocities by the Libyan government against its own people; called for the UN Human Rights

Council to respond to the repression of protests in North Africa and the Arab states and for the suspension of Libya and Bahrain from the UN Human Rights Council. As mentioned above, we called for the immediate implementation of reforms in Syria; urged the European Union, Turkey and the Russian Republic to act swiftly to avoid further bloodshed and promote a political process for transition in Syria; and expressed deep concern before the UN Human Rights Council over the severe repression by the Syrian government of peaceful protests in that country.

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution: For several years, Pax Christi has participated in the Article 9 Campaign, which urges civil society to support the principles of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which renounces war as a sovereign right and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. A Pax Christi Member Organization, the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace (JCCJP), and Pax Christi USA collaborated on a visit to Washington DC by Japanese religious leaders to urge the U.S. government to stop pressuring Japan to change its Constitution. A Pax Christi Executive Committee member and Member Organizations from Japan and the US participated in Asian Inter-Religious Conferences on Article 9 to link our international support for Article 9 to the priorities in Japan, including the presence of US military bases in Okinawa, Japan, a clear violation of Article 9. Pax Christi joined the call for the immediate removal of all US bases from the island and the reallocation of the controversial “sympathy

payments” that the Japanese government has been paying to US troops.

Human Rights: Pax Christi continues advocacy on critical human rights issues, recently including the human right to peace, the abolition of torture, the spiral of violence and deteriorating human rights situation in Ivory Coast; the intentions of the government of South Korea to destroy Jeju Island to make way for an Aegis destroyer base aimed at China; the impact of mining in conflict areas of the DR Congo; religious freedom in Pakistan; the rise of violent acts and discriminatory policies against minority religious groups in India and Indonesia; and the eradication of torture in Lebanon. Regular written and oral interventions before the U.N Human Rights Council in Geneva, public statements and campaigns often involving Pax Christi members in different countries are also regularly used tools for human rights advocacy at different levels and indifferent venues.

Extractive Industries in Peru: Pax Christi International with Pax Christi Peru identified defense of “the commons” (land, water and other natural resources) as a high priority in their work for peace. They sponsored development of a case study on a community’s right to water and land in relation to extractive industries operating in the region. Research was conducted in San Mateo de Huanchor, located 98 km from Lima with a population of 5,400, where intense mining activity over a long period of time had had extensive impact on five rural communities. Pollution from the mining activities is also contaminating the Rimac River, which flows into Lima.

Meetings with community leaders and a visit by Pax Christi regional leadership to the communities themselves underscored the importance of extreme

sensitivity to local tensions around the impact of mining. Based on the case study and research into existing advocacy strategies on related issues in the region, Pax Christi prepared advocacy workshops for Pax Christi Peru and for the broader community around a local, national and, possibly, an international advocacy agenda.

Peace Spirituality and Theology

Basic to Pax Christi's work for peace is a rich and vibrant spirituality and a commitment to respond to complex and destructive human behavior out of a deep well of moral and ethical principles inspired by the Christian Scriptures, Catholic social teaching and the witness of nonviolent peacemakers from different faith traditions, including Archbishop Oscar Romero, Franz Jaegerstatter, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day and Mahatma Gandhi.

Often, however, the spirituality – the faith that guides and motivates Pax Christi members - remains in the deepest places in the hearts of each one. Their experience of God's presence or absence, encounters with good and evil, inspiring moments, the impact on one of another's witness to their own beliefs are rarely shared – or even articulated.

Thus, more recently, Pax Christi has invited people in the movement from around the world to share their spiritual journeys. Bringing together the stories of grassroots people and their communities, Pax Christi has begun to capture the complexity of human experiences which take place in a world where war, conflict and violence exist alongside hope, peace and reconciliation.

This effort to understand how in a given situation people acted, and their

reflections on the use of violence or the option to employ methods of active nonviolence, has begun to bear fruit and is a rich source of insights into lessons learned by Pax Christi members in their work for peace. Recent PCI publications based on reflections and stories from Pax Christi members on different continents identify several commonly held and deeply rooted values and practices that resonate with the Catholic tradition.

First among them is a belief in the **dignity of each person**. Pax Christi spirituality confirms that “in the struggle against violence, poverty and injustice, we will act with love and compassion – respecting the human dignity of our opponents, even of perpetrators. This belief invites us to build bridges between people and communities, rich and poor, to cross the borders that separate and marginalize people, to establish bonds of collaboration between those who hold decision-making power and those who can hardly make their voice heard. On our path toward a just peace we seek reconciliation and work for it.”

Pax Christi expresses this absolute respect for the dignity of others through a fundamental commitment to **nonviolence**. Jesus called us to right relationships – to relationships built not on violence, but on respect and social justice. Everyone should have a life of dignity and sufficiency. The beloved community must include every person without exception. Our commitment to nonviolence is *personal* in that it helps shape the fundamental direction of our lives, the nature of our relationships at every level, and our peacemaking activities, but it is also *organizational*, shaping our identity as a peace movement, defining our way of working for peace and describing the right societal relationships we seek within the human and whole

earth community.

In the *Challenge of Peace* and ten years later in the *Harvest of Justice*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops said, “The vision of Christian nonviolence is not passive about injustice and the defense of the rights of others....it consists of a commitment to resist manifest injustice and public evil with means other than force.” The nonviolence that Pax Christi has embraced is decidedly active nonviolence.

Pax Christi believes that the pursuit of peace requires careful social analysis and theological reflection on the values of our faith tradition in specific situations of violent conflict and war; vigorous spiritual exercises and creative liturgical expression; plus, presence, accompaniment and the nurturing of relationships across boundaries between countries, cultures, neighborhoods, people. Work for peace necessitates the creation and use of a moral framework and ethical tools that apply the principles of nonviolence in a way that is appropriate to these times and appropriate to particular situations. Since its founding, Pax Christi’s commitment to prayer, study and action in a given context has kept our movement grounded in faith and thoughtfully engaged.

We struggle with the application of this commitment in an already-violent world – in particular, how to respond when people or whole communities are threatened, subjected to horrific violence or faced with annihilation – how to make nonviolence functional in the political arena.

As Christians, whose worldview is defined by hope, Pax Christi believes in the possibility of a radical global conversion to nonviolence and sustainable peace. We believe that human beings are *subjects* of a future in which life can be protected, not

victims of a future over which we have no control. The work of Pax Christi members and member organizations in situations of intense violence gives testimony to that belief.

Despite its effective use in the Philippines, Eastern Europe, South Africa, Colombia, the Sudans, El Salvador and elsewhere in recent years, however, the nonviolence tradition remains underdeveloped, both theologically and pragmatically, especially at an international level. The beginnings of theological thought have been articulated: nonviolence is rooted in the value of every human life and respect for creation; it is formed in the shadow of the cross; and it is infused with hope. The importance of nonviolence also is emerging from painful, practical experience when resorting to violence – even violence that seemed justified – in fact perpetuated violence. In some countries where war has been a way of life for decades, whole generations have little understanding of other-than-violent ways to resolve conflict and an ongoing flood of small arms helps make violence readily available and painfully effective.

Furthermore, given the extent of war's physical, psychological and environmental damage; the nature of real threats from extremist groups and non-state actors; the tendency to respond to criminal activities with military action, and so on, it is likely that what we know as "just war criteria" are being used more often to justify unjustifiable war than to avoid it. Evidence from many different corners of the world increasingly suggests that active nonviolence is the only pathway to sustainable peace, especially if it is coupled with effective international capacity to resist manifest injustice and public evil nonviolently – respecting just international

laws and moral boundaries defined by the obligation to respect the sacredness of human life and the integrity of creation.

Theologically, politically and strategically there is much work to be done. The diversity of experience among Pax Christi member organizations results in a rich, ongoing dialogue about the application of our commitment to active nonviolence. Some among us are pacifist; others believe that the use of even-violent force can occasionally be justified in circumstances of already existing extreme violence. Our dialogue about ways to interpret the “responsibility to protect,” for example, is rich and ongoing, highlighting the challenge of understanding in the context of the 21st century the moral laws around the use of violence and even whether the consequences of the use of violence can reduce existing violence and thus be positive in some extreme cases.

Most Pax Christi member organizations, though, would agree with Professor Emeritus of Philosophy Nick Gier from the University of Idaho that “The virtue of nonviolence, along with patience and fortitude, should be taught as central virtues in any character education program. As future citizens, children should be taught that violence is never morally necessary, and that conflicts should always, whenever possible, be resolved peacefully. In a world where moral character is understood to be internal — as taught by the examples of Christ, the Buddha, Gandhi, and King — nonviolence would not just be optional personal virtue, but a required civic virtue.”

Longtime Pax Christi member, Mary Evelyn Jegen, says, “Nonviolence in

international affairs is analogous to good nutrition and exercise as a way of promoting and maintaining health. Nonviolence ...is a way of life that requires courage and sacrifice. It holds promise for displacing war if sufficient human resources are invested in its study and in training for its practice”

A virtue-based approach, as described, for example, by Eli McCarthy, and which would “not exclude the use of rules and strategy in nonviolent peacemaking,” but “uplifts and shifts the emphasis to virtue” may in fact be the most practical route to bringing the practice of nonviolence into the political debate, nationally and internationally.

Pax Christi also believes that there is no real peace without **reconciliation**, which is both a vital element in Pax Christi’s spirituality and a significant tool in Pax Christi’s peacebuilding toolbox. Reconciliation was the founding motivation for Pax Christi as a movement and our commitment remains strong to support practical steps toward the healing of relationships broken by war and injustice. The work of a Pax Christi member organization, the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights Osejik in Croatia (http://www.paxchristi.net/international/eng/show_mo.php?id=33&bug=74) is a good example. During the war in the Balkans, the Centre for Peace prepared the ground for the peaceful return of displaced persons and refugees, building confidence across ethnic divides and initiating interethnic cooperation toward the recovery of war torn multi-ethnic communities.

Almost 20 years later, Pax Christi meetings in Vukovar, Croatia, mentioned earlier, continued this impetus to reconciliation and underscored the importance of truth telling and memory in the process of reconciliation. Completely destroyed by

Serbian forces 20 years ago, the wounds of Vukovar are not healed, but many citizens and the local government are promoting inter-ethnic trust. To accompany their move toward reconciliation, participants in the Pax Christi meetings in visited the Memorial Center Ovčara, which served as a concentration camp for non-Serbian prisoners during the war. Two hundred civilians and soldiers imprisoned in the camp were killed and buried in mass graves; 62 people disappeared. To honor their memory, the Pax Christi group held a prayer service at the place of execution. In part, we prayed:

*God of all goodness, you have called us together in these days to remember the victims of a terrible atrocity. We do remember them – each one. We have heard their stories retold. We have listened with care and allowed these stories to open our hearts, to fill us with com-*passion*.*

We are standing on holy ground.

*Too many times we have stood on ground made holy by human suffering
Too often we have been to places where violence overwhelmed life –*

Throughout the world, communities of resistance to violence, people yearning for a just peace, enact liturgies of memory that have profound creative power. ...

But death by horrific violence continues; so does a spirit of irrepressible resistance. That's why we come together this afternoon. Resistance to death is impelled by memory. Those who were so brutally killed in all of the places we have named as sacred become more and more alive if we remember - even though life has been taken from them.

With them and in their names we reestablish claims of justice and love and sustain the audacious power to refuse death.

Each step toward truth, each effort to uncover the roots of the violence, each movement toward a better world, honors the whole cloud of witnesses.

God of life, you who are the Good in a world broken by hatred and

violence, hear us this day. Let our small gathering nourish the possibility that truth and justice will prevail. Grant us compassion – the capacity to suffer with another, even the bitterest of enemies. Let us become the better world we yearn for, the peace we seek - by who we are, by how we live, by the work we do. Amen.

Growing from this commitment to reconciliation, Pax Christi's spirituality also reflects a deep valuing of **diversity**. Although ours is a Catholic peace movement, people from many different faith and cultural traditions share and enhance our journey toward peace.

In New Zealand, for example, Pax Christi members have learned from the Maori culture that the key to peace is awareness, sensitivity to who we are and where we are that involves a continuing dialogue with self, neighbor, communities, nations, the earth and its creatures. Maori believe that to reconcile is to re-establish right relationships, to reveal the reality of the violation and damage to victims and perpetrators and to ensure truth and integrity in repairing the damage, introducing compassion, sacrifice and generosity into the healing.

We also recognize that "difference" is often used to evoke fear and as a basis for violent repression, the abuse of human rights, social and economic injustice and war. In many parts of the world, Pax Christi is responding to the demonization of Islam by encouraging greater tolerance and by increased interaction and cooperation with Muslim communities and organizations. Recognizing the importance of symbols to promote respect for diversity, Pax Christi Austria countered a wave of protests in their country against the building of even very modest minarets in the "country of Catholic bell towers" by publishing a pro-minaret

statement that attracted the attention of the media.

As another example, in the United States, Pax Christi has made a 20-year commitment to transforming itself into “an anti-racist, multi-cultural movement for peace with justice. Because racism inflicts violence on people of color; because violence anywhere is injustice everywhere; and because injustice is a sin against humanity and against the God, who creates, redeems, and sanctifies us, racism is contrary to who we are called to be: brothers and sisters all.” <http://paxchristiusa.org/programs/brothers-and-sisters-all/>

Since the beginning, Pax Christi has sustained attention to the spirituality that nourishes our movement and has an impact on the priorities and effectiveness of our work for peace. This spirituality is richly influenced by the Catholic tradition in which our movement has been nourished. Almost every member organization of Pax Christi International produces culturally and contextually appropriate resources for personal and communal prayer and integrates prayer, reflection and sacramental expression into their programs on a regular basis.

Inviting a more systematic theological reflection from different cultural and religious perspectives on Pax Christi’s experience of working for peace in challenging, often violent, circumstances will also, we hope, make a contribution to a Catholic theology of peace.

Lessons for the Future of Catholic Peacemaking

Pax Christi Aotearoa/New Zealand’s reflection on the long process of engaging in this work for peace highlights the importance of not underestimating

the impact of our actions: “New Zealand is a small and powerless nation remote from everywhere significant in the world. Yet we are constantly amazed by the success, which has visited so many of the projects in which we as Pax Christi have participated. Our first action in the late 1980s was to give support to the people of Bougainville, suffering dominance by their Papua-New Guinean neighbors with the support of Australian mining and other corporate interests. We hosted priests, ‘freedom fighters,’ strong women advocates who when the dust cleared became prime ministers, national leaders and framers of constitutions.... President Mandela told us himself when he visited not long after the breakdown of apartheid how the demonstrations against sporting contacts had given him and his fellows great heart as they were at the spear point of their struggle. Aceh, Mindanao, Burma have all been part of our ongoing agenda for peace and who knows how much of their liberation has depended on our getting out there in support of their struggle.”

From more recent experience and nearly 70 years of working for peace in an ever-changing and more challenging world, Pax Christ has identified what we believe are not unique but important lessons for the future of our own movement and of Catholic peacemaking:

- *The values and practices of faith -- in Pax Christi’s experience, particularly the Catholic tradition – can ground and transform the work for peace, enabling peace workers to sustain a deep commitment to nonviolence even in the context of horrific violence; give meaning and direction to advocacy and campaigning, helping those involved to avoid partisan or self-serving proposals; and underscore the very long-term, transformative nature of the work for peace on earth.*

- *The nonviolence tradition remains underdeveloped, both theologically and pragmatically, especially at an international level. To build a culture that understands and owns the virtues of nonviolence is a crucial personal and political challenge that requires urgent attention and significant investment. That includes public investment in effective national and multilateral nonviolent mechanisms for stopping or avoiding violent conflict, repression and human rights violations.*
- *Widespread, well-organized, mainstreamed and holistic peace education; deep involvement of young generations in the work for peace; interreligious dialogue and cooperation; and increased attention to the role of women as peacemakers are all essential to our future work for peace if our efforts are to be successful.*
- *Peacemaking is a complex and difficult process, even more so in the context of an increasingly interconnected world. To achieve sustainable local, regional and international peace will require attention to many different roots and expressions of violence; careful attention to and nurturing of creative, culturally appropriate and potentially enduring models of societal organization, including political, economic, sociological and ecological; the use of many different, but interconnected, tools and strategies for building peace; and a long term commitment involving a variety of actors working in a coordinated way at different levels of society and in response to different dimensions of the challenge to peace.*