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The Newsletter of Pax Christi Metro New York

The Politics of Peace, A PCMNY Fall Assembly

by Rosemarie Pace

Like most everything else this year, Pax Christi Metro New York's (PCMNY) Fall Assembly was different. Like so many other programs and events, we held it via Zoom. While Zoom has become a standing joke to some and a way of life to others, it does enable us all to continue doing what we might not otherwise be able to do, and it enables people to join who might not otherwise be able to do so due to time or distance. In PCMNY's case, it meant about 40 people were able to gather, and it meant one of our speakers, MJ Park, was able to present without leaving her home in Maryland. In short, it was a blessing.

Our topic this year was *The Politics of Peace*, a theme that was inspired by the U.S. presidential election and the initiation of a new political party by one of PCMNY's own, Kirin Taylor. The Party name is the Peace International Political Party. More about that later, but let's begin at the beginning.

The Assembly started, as always, with a welcome and prayer. Margaret Flanagan, former PCMNY Board President and current Chair of the Witness Committee, served as our very able MC. We then heard brief reports from a number of PCMNY Board and Committee members regarding the state of the PCMNY region through the just-ended fiscal year which spanned pre-pandemic and pandemic times. We heard a bit about the events we were able to host (UN Peace Day 2019, an interfaith prayer service for UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons 2019 and 2020, Human Rights/Holy Innocents 2019, Peacemaking through the Arts 2020, the Good Friday Way of the Cross 2020 via e-mail, and the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial 2020 via Zoom), and we heard about our precarious financial status.

After that, we were able to move to the heart of our Assembly, which was filled with hope and promise. MJ Park, co-founder with her husband Jerry of Little Friends for Peace, provided a foundation for our topic. Little Friends for Peace teaches children and adults skills "to prevent, resolve, and transform conflict." It promotes respect, acceptance, and reconciliation among families and communities. It offers means to interrupt violence and build peace. A primary process for doing this is the Peace Circle. MJ and a few of her young adult team demonstrated how a Peace Circle works and then gave us a chance to practice, too.

The Peace Circle process begins with some form of group centering, possibly a prayer, quotation, or a moment of silence. Especially with youth, it is likely to include the recitation of the Peace Pledge, which says:

I am a peace builder. I pledge:

to talk to others with respect
 to treat people with care
 to make peace, not break peace
 to build peace
 at home
 at school
 and in my neighborhood
 each day.

Then there will be the “check in” where everyone has the opportunity to share what is breaking their peace and what is making their peace that day or at the moment. Thus, everyone has the chance to speak, be heard, and connect with everyone else. MJ emphasized the importance of connecting before confronting. Connecting is critical to being able to hear, heal, and move forward.

Another important component of peacebuilding that MJ taught us is illustrated on the Wellness Wheel which has six dimensions: Mind, Spirit, Body, Work, People, and Feelings. Nurturing all six in positive and constructive ways contributes to our mental, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional health. In turn, such wellness helps cultivate peace. (You can learn more about Little Friends for Peace at www.lffp.org.)

Kirin has built on the work of MJ and Jerry Park and Little Friends for Peace in the development of the Peace International Political Party. She is a protégé and ambassador of Little Friends for Peace. In a PowerPoint presentation, Kirin defined politics, using the words of David Easton, “the struggle for the authoritative allocation of resources,” and she spoke of peace as personal, interpersonal, and global. She stressed the importance of peace education, stating that democracy is not enough to create peace. We need active and informed citizens. Using climate change as an example, she noted that Party membership, like climate change, transcends borders. She linked climate change to peace with the grim fact that the U.S. military is one of the largest polluters in history. Other Principles of the Peace International Political Party include non-discrimination and openness toward all people regardless of “religion, race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability,” diplomacy, demilitarization, nuclear abolition, humanitarian advocacy for migrants and refugees, a green economy and wealth redistribution, restorative justice, affordable housing, human rights, and such peace practices as “mediation, dialogue, and nonviolent protest.” One of her last slides was a good summation of the overall message of the Peace International Party. It is a quote from the renowned environmentalist, Rachel Carson:

The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

Kirin left us with a question which we should all try to answer, “What are the most pressing peace and social justice issues facing your community?” Perhaps as we respond, we will agree that the time for a Peace International Political Party has come. You can contact the party at peaceinternationalpp@gmail.com.

Rosemarie Pace is retired Director of Pax Christi Metro New York and a member of PCMNY's Education Committee.

May we give flesh to God's Word.

Nuclear Weapons Banned: 50th Ratification of United Nations Treaty

*"Any use of nuclear weapons would be abhorrent to the principles of humanity."
Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*

For decades Pax Christi International has been working toward a nuclear weapon-free world with members and partners from every corner of the world. Today (10/24/2020), Honduras, ratified the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, agreeing with 84 other signatories and 49 other states parties to "never under any circumstance . . . develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons."

The treaty brings the force of international law to nuclear disarmament efforts. Pax Christi International celebrates this historic achievement, including the efforts of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, of which we are a member. More than 80 countries have shown moral leadership through early signings and ratifications, and we urge remaining UN Member States to follow in their lead.

The new treaty reinforces legal, diplomatic, and financial pressure in addition to public advocacy for the total eradication of nuclear weapons. The treaty enters into force in three months.

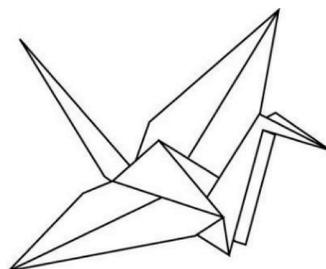
Nuclear devices are weapons of mass destruction, with radiation disproportionately affecting women and girls. Indigenous people are especially vulnerable as their lands are exploited for resource extraction and testing in the development of nuclear technologies.

The UN treaty obliges states parties to help with victim assistance and environmental remediation, within and beyond their own jurisdictions. An estimated 200,000 people died as a direct result of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with many survivors—hibakusha—still struggling with discrimination, trauma, and extensive health problems.

Pax Christi International and through members in all regions will continue to advocate for further signatures, ratifications, and full implementation of this treaty. Our work will continue with church leaders, governments, and at the United Nations. As the Catholic peace movement, we look especially to the Vatican for leadership, encouraged by Pope Francis' words, "[The common destiny of humankind demands a world without nuclear weapons.](#)"

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons. There are nine nuclear-armed states in the world, none of which have signed the treaty. It was adopted at the United Nations on 7 July 2017. For the full text of the treaty, please visit [the United Nations website](#). For more information on the ongoing efforts to build a world without nuclear weapons, visit the [ICAN website](#).

As of 12/11/2020, there are now 86 signatories and 51 ratification of the TPNW.



BOOK REVIEW

by Marian Ronan

Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter Who Revealed It to the World. By Lesley M.M Blume. 185 pp. Simon and Schuster. 2020. \$27.00.

Just before the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, I took my copy of John Hersey's *Hiroshima* down from the bookshelf where it had been for years and read it. As an old friend was given to saying, I mostly don't read my books; I feel warmly toward them.

But with *Hiroshima*, I decided it was time. And when I read it, I was blown away, primarily by Hersey's brilliant interweaving of the personal, devastating stories of five Hiroshima residents who underwent the catastrophe.

So when I heard Lesley Blume being interviewed on "Fresh Air" about her new book, *Fallout*, which documents how John Hersey uncovered the details of the effects of the US bombing of Hiroshima and the massive cover-up of that bombing, I had to go out and buy a copy.

Blume is a journalist and an award-winning non-fiction writer. She begins *Fallout* by laying out the details of the bombing of Hiroshima and the media's early coverage of the news, as well as how the government convinced the public that the bomb was a conventional weapon and downplayed the effects of radiation. She then follows Hersey's journey to Hiroshima in May 1946, almost a year after the bombing.

Blume also details the significant challenges that faced Hersey and the *New Yorker* editor, Wallace Shawn, regarding the publication of *Hiroshima*, navigating, as they had to, the rabbit warrens of federal approval. But when they did master those challenges, it's hard to overstate the impact of the publication of *Hiroshima*, first in one entire issue of the *New Yorker* the following December, and subsequently in the millions of copies sold in English and many other languages.

Hersey played a major role in helping to prevent nuclear war since the end of World War II, and his book has inspired generations of activists. This is so, in large part, because he told the overlapping stories of the effects of the bombing on the lives of five actual human beings, "victims whose eyeballs had melted and run down their cheeks, others whose skin hung from their bodies or slipped off their hands like gloves." He enabled them "to speak for themselves," as Nick Turse notes in his detailed "Tom Dispatch" review of the Blume volume.*

The story Blume tells of Hersey's writing and publishing *Hiroshima* is itself a galvanizing read. Yet her emphasis on the government cover-up of the dire effects of nuclear war is now more important than ever, because we are in a new—or perhaps an ongoing—era of such obfuscation. You are perhaps unaware, for example, because almost everyone is, that the threat of nuclear war, and the massive build-up of nuclear weapons after the previous limited downsizing of our nuclear arsenal, was hardly mentioned in the recent presidential campaigns or their news coverage.

Yet Donald Trump and his administration were hell-bent on pulling the US out of various nuclear treaties that had modestly lessened the nuclear threat for some years, while the military budget has expanded steadily since well before that administration. A billion dollars went into research last year on something called "hypersonic weapons systems." They are named that because they travel so much faster than the speed of sound that they can "dodge defenses and keep an adversary guessing about the target."** This at

a time when the federal government failed to support states, local governments, and struggling families during the pandemic.

Is it any wonder that the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* puts the Doomsday Clock at one hundred seconds to midnight, closer than it has ever been since they started using the clock in 1947?

I imagine that a lot of us are working hard on very important issues like the effects of the pandemic, ending wars, and Black Lives Matter. But we also need to start organizing and working relentlessly to change the behavior of the US government on nuclear weapons. The survival of humanity depends on it.

Marian Ronan is a former PCMNY board member and a participant in the Downtown Brooklyn Pax Christi group.

*https://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/176753/tomgram%3A_nick_turse%2C_one_hundred_seconds_till_the_apocalypse

** <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/01/national-pride-stake-russia-china-united-states-race-build-hypersonic-weapo>

A Gift of Peace has been given

in honor of:

Sr. Elizabeth McCarthy, RSM
Sr. Ann Caron, RSM

in memory of:

Maria Borrero
Charles Auguste Charlot
Patricia Lally Dunne
Richard E. Honeck
Marie Jackson, MCA
Paul Kozmoski
Lida Popeniuk
Romeo Pizzutiello
Sr. Ardeth Platte, O.P.
Patrick Quinn
Fr. John Seymour, ST



Please remember them in prayer.

Kerux No. 125

2021 Winter

“Kerux” is the Greek word meaning “herald”. As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God’s nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

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In Thanksgiving: Remembering Sr. Ardeth Platte in this Season of Peace

by Mary T. Yelenick



The night of September 29, 2020, Sr. Ardeth Platte – having spent the hot summer working daily in her garden at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House in Washington, D.C., supplying people in need with fresh produce; and having, just two days, earlier delivered a rigorous online presentation for a school of theology; and the previous day having stood on the street corner holding a sign calling for the end of nuclear weapons – curled up on her mattress on the floor of the tiny room she shared with her longtime co-activist, Sr. Carol Gilbert.

When Carol tried to rouse Ardeth a few hours later, eager to share news about the most recent ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (“TPNW”), she was stunned to discover that Ardeth – who was still wearing the radio earphones she usually wore when retiring to bed, in order to keep up with global news – had quietly slipped away.

At the age of 84, Ardeth Platte had lived a life of selfless devotion to the cause of peace. Over the course of her 66 years as a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Michigan, she had been a teacher, school principal, director of alternative education, member of the City Council, and Mayor pro tem of Saginaw Michigan. Sr. Ardeth had served the poor and had advocated for local environmental issues. She worked for more than a decade as coordinator of the Home for Peace and Justice in Saginaw. Eventually, she and Sr. Carol turned their focus to issues of nuclear abolition, and joined the Catholic activist community of Jonah House, in Baltimore, Maryland.

While living at Jonah House, Ardeth participated in four “Plowshares” actions at various nuclear-weapons facilities, including Andrews Air Force base, seeking symbolically to transform “swords into plowshares,” pursuant to the admonition set forth in the biblical Book of Isaiah. Each of those four Plowshares actions drew its inspiration from one of the various aspects of creation threatened by nuclear weapons: water, air, space, and land.

In recent years, Sr. Ardeth was an active member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (“ICAN”), spending weeks as an ardent campaigner at the United Nations in New York working to advance the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (“TPNW”), which was approved in July of 2017. After ICAN was awarded the Nobel Prize for its work on the TPNW, Ardeth and Carol traversed the country, addressing student and community groups, displaying a replica of the Nobel Peace Prize medal, and explaining the significance of the TPNW. They also visited global military bases – from Colorado to Buchel, Germany –hand-delivering to base commanders a copy of, and explaining the significance of, the TPNW....

At the time of her death, Ardeth was eagerly awaiting the crucial 50th ratification of the TPNW...which occurred, with the ratification by Honduras, just three short weeks later. A number of anti-nuclear advocates only half-jokingly attributed that ratification to Sr. Ardeth’s advocacy in higher places.

Ardeth Platte was indefatigable. Purpose-driven. Creative. Inspirational. As she told “The Denver Post” in 2017, “I refuse to have an enemy. I simply won’t.”

(To read more, go <https://paxchristiusa.org/2020/12/05/in-thanksgiving-remembering-sr-ardeth-platte-in-this-season-of-peace/>.)

Mary T. Yelenick is a member of the Pax Christi International delegation at the United Nations. She is also a member of the Pax Christi USA Anti-Racism Team.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Despite the on-going covid-19 pandemic, Pax Christi Metro New York (PCMNY) is planning a full schedule of events to be offered either via Zoom or in person as the pandemic allows. Please see below and keep in touch with the PCMNY office to know how things develop.

Peacemaking through the Arts, 2021 We are pleased to offer you a presentation of *The Odyssey Project*, either via Zoom or in person as the pandemic allows, on Saturday, February 13th, with the Magis Theatre Company, artistic director George Drance, S.J. *The Odyssey Project* is the Company's outreach to incarcerated persons, taking Homer's myth and focusing on the journey "home" and all the things in life that pull us off course, an experience we all share, incarcerated or not. Stay in touch with PCMNY for further details.

Ash Wednesday, 2021 Our tradition on Ash Wednesday is to offer a Lenten Reflection to the faithful outside St. Patrick's Cathedral. Pandemic permitting, we will do so again on February 17th at noon. Join us to help spread our message of peace and reconciliation.

Retreat 2021 If possible, we hope to present our retreat with Sr. Cathleen Murtha, DW, that had to be cancelled in 2020. The theme remains "Becoming Ambassadors of Reconciliation." Again, stay tuned to see what develops in terms of time and place.

Good Friday Way of the Cross, 2021 Our Witness Committee is already planning for our 39th consecutive Good Friday Way of the Cross, Way of Peace on Good Friday, April 2nd. The hope is that it will be live and in person, but there are also plans to have an on-line option. Details will come much closer to the date when more is known about what is possible.

Annual Appeal: If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY, especially in the current political climate, and respond as generously as possible to our annual appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region: Visit <https://www.nfggive.com/guidestar/13-3424349> to donate online. Also support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork OR <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

"Gifts of Peace": Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday, a birthday, anniversary, jubilee, or new baby, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5 each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Matching Gifts: Ask your company if it will match your gift to PCMNY.

Bequests: Please remember PCMNY in your will. Our legal name is Pax Christi Metro New York and our tax ID number is 13-3424349.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Dec. 29th: Board Meeting, ZOOM
Jan. 4th: Peacemaking through the Arts Mailing, PCMNY office
Feb. 13th: Peacemaking through the Arts, TBA
Feb. 17th: Ash Wednesday Leafletting, St. Patrick's Cathedral, noon, check with office to confirm
Feb. 18th: Good Friday Mailing, PCMNY office
Apr. 1st: *Kerux* Deadline for Spring Issue
Apr. 2nd: Good Friday Way of the Cross, ZOOM, details TBA
Retreat Mailing, PCMNY office, Date TBA
Retreat, TBA

For future Board meetings, contact the PCMNY office.

Contact the office for all updated information on all events:
info@nypaxchristi.org, 212-420-0250, or www.nypaxchristi.org.
Also visit us on Facebook and Twitter.

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