

Pax Christi Massachusetts Newsletter



Violence Ends Where Love Begins

Volume 33, Number 1, Summer-Fall 2026

Nuclear Challenge Persists at 81

By Pat Ferrone.

Since the first use of atomic weapons 81 years ago, resistance to the insanity of war and the potential annihilation of humanity by nuclear weapons has grown. An AI overview suggests that “global polls show general moral rejection of nuclear use exceeding 65%. And yet, the major world powers continue to manufacture and upgrade these products of “extermination technology,” which keep us on the fearful “brink” of nuclear genocide. Adding to the fear is the rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence, especially as it is integrated into military strategies and nuclear command and control systems, human control is sidelined, and we edge toward disaster.

Imbued with moral and ethical insistence, remembering the unconscionable human-engineered tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Popes have condemned the nuclear pursuit. In 1948, Pope Pius XII called the atomic bomb “the most terrible creation of the human mind,” and in 1955 said, “...in the aftermath of a nuclear conflict, there would be no celebration or victory cry, only the deep sorrow of a

broken world.” John Paul II insisted that “humanity must undergo a moral transformation.” Pope Paul VI cried out in the name of all humanity for a “total ban on nuclear weapons.” Pope Francis repeatedly decried them as immoral, illegal, and a crime not only against the “dignity of human beings,” but “against any possible future for our common home.”



(image courtesy of TheWay.ie)

And Pope Leo, a citizen of the country that unleashed the fury of nuclear disaster on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, now holds us to the task of abolition by saying, “Above all in the atomic era, the affirmation of truths must push through: it is not atomic weapons that generate peace, it is disarmament.” In May, his excellent Encyclical Letter, *On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, was released. It elucidates the crises we face and speaks of the “ambiguity of the tools that can cause harm when not oriented toward the good.” “Where are we

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PCAN Steps Up Efforts to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

By Mike Moran, Editor

As promised in the last issue of this newsletter (page 1), PCAN (the Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) had a busy spring and summer, organizing, presenting, and following up on our virtual Faith Leaders’ Summit Dialogue on Nuclear Weapons Abolition.

The four sessions of that series, held between May 16 and June 14, drew over 500 total registrants. Each session featured 5-7 Catholic and other faith leaders, who spoke briefly, exchanged ideas, and fielded audience questions and suggestions on activating Catholics to work for the global abolition of nuclear weapons.

We asked each speaker to answer these three questions in 10 minutes or less: 1) how can we best inform and mobilize Catholics to work actively for nuclear abolition?;

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NOTE: To promote a greener future with a leaner budget, print copies of this newsletter are mailed only to our readers who have no access to email.

Nuclear Challenge...

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going?” he asks. “What is our goal in this world of rapid transitions? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?”

As part of a discernment process, the Vatican hosted a conference in July to address the dual threats of nuclear weapons and the intrusive power of A.I. Present were 200 Nobel laureates, scientists, religious and government leaders, who “called for the coordinated slowdown in development of frontier A.I., the verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, and international cooperation.” Together, they signed the “Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace in the Age of Artificial Intelligence...” In an address, Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Ira Helfand, of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and Back from the Brink (BftB), succinctly summarized the challenge with “DON’T LET A.I. GET THE BOMB.”



Dr. Ira Helfand (image courtesy of Pressenza IPA)

As people of faith led by the spirit of the nonviolent gospel of peace, we have our role to play in this human dilemma. I think of all those who model witness and resistance, holding on to visions of communities free of the scourge of violence while working for peace

and justice; I am encouraged by the work of Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, who wrote, *Why Civil Resistance Works*. In their research, they found that if 3.5% of a population engages in nonviolent civil resistance campaigns to unconscionable policies, and a critical mass of participation is reached, change will come. To help, I include below a few suggestions:

* Watch [“Don’t Let AI Get the Bomb.”](#) - an interview of Dr. Ira Helfand

* Watch “An Ordinary Insanity,” featuring Daniel Ellsberg: <https://www.anordinaryinsanity.com/>

* Watch PCAN videos (below).

-Pat is a PCMA board member.

PCAN Steps Up...

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2) how can your organization most effectively address this goal?; and 3) what resources, if any, can you recommend as teaching/learning tools? You can see all 4 sessions and link to further information on PCAN’s new YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/@PCAN-t4r>

To summarize the powerful comments of 20 panelists and 4 moderators in a brief newsletter article is a daunting task, but what follows is my best effort (with help from summary notes by our Zoom master, David Andersson, my own notes, and maybe even a little Pope Leo-approved AI?) to distill their wisdom into concrete actions that all of us can take toward building a world without nuclear weapons.

Session #1 (May 16) was moderated by PCAN chair **Peter Metz**, who reiterated the action-focused goals of the Summit and introduced the panel. **Marie Dennis**, co-director of the Catholic Institute for Nonviolence, next argued that nuclear weapons abolition requires a “paradigm shift” from security through violence to a culture of active nonviolence. She emphasized formation, spirituality, creativity, and training as essential tools for this shift and cited Pope Leo and Cardinal Robert McElroy as advocates for building a “new world order of nonviolence.”

Dr. Ira Helfand, a leader of ICAN, IPPNW, and Back from the Brink, and self-styled “Jewish atheist,” called nuclear weapons the greatest threat to public health and safety. Noting that most people know intellectually the danger of nuclear war but don’t viscerally believe it will happen, he pointed to the 1980s “nuclear freeze” campaign as proof that public pressure can work. He urged framing abolition as an extraordinary “opportunity” to help literally “save the world.”

Giulia Bordin, Advocacy Officer, Pax Christi International, saw

Grants from PCMA to Local PC Groups

Local groups may apply for grants of up to \$250 to support projects which are in keeping with Pax Christi’s mission by asking PCMA treasurer Nancy Carapezza for an application form: Pax Christi MA, Good Shepherd Parish, 99 Main Street, Wayland, MA 01778; or npez@comcast.net

nuclear abolition as a question of conscience, stressing intergenerational responsibility, the need to amplify survivors' voices, and Pax Christi's role as a bridge between grassroots communities and international advocacy. She urged everyone to "break the silence" and start one conversation about nuclear danger.



Maria Udalova
(photo courtesy of Maria)

Maria Udalova. Students for Nuclear Disarmament organizer, George Washington University, described her concrete advocacy work as a youth, like helping pass a Back from the Brink resolution in Brookline, MA, lobbying at the Massachusetts State House, and letter drops at the US Congress. She emphasized a "relational" approach for young people (connecting nuclear weapons to related issues like climate change or social justice).

Additional points made during the panelists' discussion and responses to audience Q&A ideas included: the courage needed for nuclear abolition work is best developed in community; K-12 education via films (e.g., "The Day After"/1983: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOPaaHSjMcw>) and age-suited curricula (e.g., from PBS: <https://thinktv.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/nuclear-weapons-and-security-policy/>) are key; success in the 1980s is cause for hope;

social media can share information quickly; highlighting the human and medical consequences of nuclear war is most effective.

Session #2 (May 31) was moderated by **Tom Countryman**, board chair for the Arms Control Association, who stressed the need to learn from each other today. **Claire Schaeffer-Duffy**, co-founder of the Saints Francis and Therese Catholic Worker, in Worcester, MA, emphasized the importance of nonviolence, collaboration, and education in combating "the abominable heresy of nuclearism," Noting the value of firsthand contact with "bomb-affected" people, she offered as tools the Nuclear Truth Project (<https://nucleartruthproject.org/>) and "Bringing Down a Dictator" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7dNLt5mC1A>).

Ken Butigan, co-director of the Catholic Institute for Nonviolence, focused on the Nevada Desert Experience, started in 1982 (<http://nevadadesertexperience.org/>) as an example of the "mega nonviolence" needed to abolish nuclear weapons. He urged attendees to find our "local node" of this global movement. Noting the challenges of learning the trade-off costs of nuclear weapons and of mobilizing young adults, **Michele Dunne, OFS**, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network, then suggested an intergenerational "twinning" project, with older adults supporting younger adults in their nuclear abolition efforts.

Michael Martin, a retired US Marine Corps major general, stressed the need to become fully informed about the dangers of nuclear war and to contact elected officials at all levels of government. Recalling resistance by Dorothy Day and Catholic

Workers to civil defense drills in the 1950s, **Frida Berrigan**, of the War Resisters League, urged us to "practice resurrection" by finding equivalent opportunities today for nonviolent direct action in support of nuclear abolition.



Jerry Powers
(photo courtesy of Jerry Powers)

Jerry Powers, a University of Notre Dame professor, noted a growing interest among his students in the nuclear weapons debate, to which he sees the Catholic Church as adding morality and democracy. He hoped more bishops and Catholic scholars might publish "white papers" to follow up on Archbishop John Wester's 2022 pastoral letter *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace* ([PDF](#)). He cited the recent anthology *Forbidden* (<https://press.georgetown.edu/Book/Forbidden>) as an informative source.

Additional points made during the panelists' discussion and responses to audience Q&A ideas included: Tom's recommendations of the PBS film "Bombshell" (<https://bombshellfilm.com/>), about media coverage of the 1945 US atomic bombings of Japan, and Paul Jay's film "How To Stop a Nuclear War," based on Daniel Ellsberg's book Domsday Machine (<https://stop-nuclear-war.org/>), as useful resources.

Session #3 (June 6) was moderated by **Danny Hall**, lead Capitol Hill representative & faith

community outreach coordinator for Back from the Brink, who cited the strong potential of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics to change nuclear weapons policies. **Bishop John Stowe**, Bishop of Lexington and Bishop President of Pax Christi USA, saw the growing risk of nuclear war as "a spiritual crisis" best resolved by "cultivating a spirit of nonviolence" through small communities which build hope.



*Maryann Cusimano Love
(photo courtesy of Dr. Love)*

Maryann Cusimano Love, a professor at the Catholic University of America, pointed to Pope Leo's definition of "just peace" in his new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, as ruling out nuclear weapons, and to parish discussion groups and "pulpit notes" for priests as ways to generate public demand for their abolition. **Dan Moriarty**, senior program officer for peace and nonviolence at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, stressed the need for Bishops and the USCCB to speak out for nuclear abolition, for seminarians to study the issue, and for "ecumenical" partnerships and a "synodal" approach to this work.

Kevin Ahern, a professor at Manhattan University, cited Dorothy Day as a model of Catholic opposition to nuclear weapons, an embodiment of

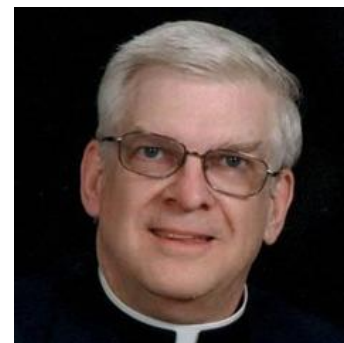
Catholic social teaching against them, and an inspiration to his students. **Archbishop John Wester**, Archbishop of Santa Fe and co-founder of the Partnership for a World without Nuclear Weapons, emphasized the importance of conversations, including "active listening," about nuclear disarmament and building a "critical mass" of opposition to nuclear weapons by hearing from "Downwinders" in New Mexico and others harmed by them.

Additional points made during the panelists' discussion and responses to audience Q&A ideas included: Bishop Stowe and Archbishop Wester want the USCCB to frame nuclear weapons abolition as a "life issue;" a good pressure point on makers of nuclear weapons is "Don't Bank on the Bomb" (<https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/>); young people can learn from examples of past success (e.g., Cold War nuclear arms reduction); peace is the "default" state of the world (Dr. Love).

Session #4 (June 14) was moderated by Ann Suellentrop, vice chair of PeaceWorks Kansas City (MO) and retired pediatric nurse, who described her experience opposing local production of nuclear weapons parts and visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki with Pax Christi USA several years ago. **Nick Mele**, of Pax Christi International's Nuclear Disarmament Working Group and based in Washington state, stressed the importance of one-on-one and small group conversations on abolishing nuclear weapons. He noted the value of using games and short videos as educational tools to engage the public.

Sr. Bridget Bearss, RSCJ, associate director for

transformative justice at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, noting LCWR's longtime commitment to nuclear disarmament, emphasized the need to cross "lines of division" and "build bridges" for social change and to involve young adults in this effort. **Fr. Stephen Newton**, executive director of the Association of US Catholic Priests, stressed the value and relative ease of engagement and action at the local level, from parish to municipal government, and suggested some homily points for Sunday, August 9 [which were widely used in PCAN parishes].



*Fr. Stephen Newton
(photo courtesy of Fr. Newton)*

Camila Perez, a project coordinator for Pax Christi USA, cited the importance of involving young people in discussing this issue (as in the Pax Christi Young Adults Caucus) and of older peacemakers mentoring them (as in PCUSA's Peace Pairs program). **Joseph Gerson**, Campaign for Peace, Disarmament, and Common Security president, encouraged us to "step outside the box" in creative ways, like "track 2" diplomacy across borders by private citizens, in working for nuclear weapons abolition.

Additional points made during the panelists' discussion and responses to audience Q&A ideas included: Don't hesitate to "get out there"

and broach the often uncomfortable topic of nuclear weapons, with family and friends, then in ever-widening circles.

Each session ended with a call to action that urged attendees to promote support by their US representatives and senators for two BftB bills in Congress - [H. Res. 317](#), in the House (60 co-sponsors), and [S. Res. 323](#), in the Senate (10 co-sponsors).

As the PCAN team begins writing a comprehensive report on the Summit Dialogue, we have also invited a wider circle of faith leaders than could participate in the four virtual sessions to answer the same three questions we asked our speakers, as we seek to expand our circle of experienced leaders.

Thanks to all our readers who participated in this project to date. Watch for more opportunities to get or stay involved with PCAN.

Local Parish Honors Children Killed in Gaza

By Jeannie Connerney

Members of [Saint Susanna's](#) parish in Dedham are taking part in the [GazaChildren'sShroud](#) project. Originating in Italy and organized in the US by [Priests Against Genocide](#), [Doctors Against Genocide](#), and [Justice for All](#), parishioners inscribed the names and ages of some of the 21,000 children murdered by Israeli forces since 2023 on swaths of fabric.

These will be joined with other pieces inscribed around the country before the shroud is presented both outside the United Nations in New York City on September 16 and on the National

Mall in Washington, DC on a date to be announced.

“We send this shroud forward in the world this day to bear witness to these lives lost. We send it today with our own resolve to bear witness to the light begun in these lives cut short,” read Linden Jenkins during the August 9 Mass at Saint Susanna’s.

As parishioners held the shroud in front of the altar, a thurible containing incense was waved above it, a ritual often performed at funerals as a blessing and sign of reverence for the dead.



St. Susanna parishioners inscribe the Shroud (photo from Jeannie)

“Keep the light of these innocent 21,000 children alive,” prayed Father Stephen Josoma before the shroud was carried down the central aisle during the closing processional. “May their grieving families know they are not alone but come to know their consolation through the witness we bear. May their silenced voices be heard in hearts darkened by violence and war, death and destruction. May their memory inform us of the need to speak truth to power.”

-Jeannie is a member of Pax Christi and MA Peace Action.

A Year of Prayer for Peace *By Sioux Mont*

Peace is not a one-time intention, but rather a discipline of faith. For the past year, Pax Christi Newton at the Sacred Heart and Our Lady’s Collaborative has held monthly gatherings to pray for peace and to remember those affected by war, violence, division, injustice, grief, and fear. Beginning with a Novena for Nuclear Disarmament for the 80th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 2025, Pax Christi members lead the community in prayer, singing, in meditation, and reflection, responding to the violence in the news, to suffering in distant countries, and to conflict here in the US, to pour out our grief before God, and to be renewed in hope.

A monthly prayer service for peace will not solve every conflict, but it will form people who refuse to give up on peace. We have been teaching our community to bring the wounds of the world before God, to stand with those who suffer, and to ask what peace requires of each person. After a year, we have created a habit of prayer, a language of compassion, and a shared commitment to becoming peacemakers in the world God loves.

Our monthly services continue with the 2026 Novena for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (Aug 1-9th on Zoom), and A Night of Prayer for Peace at Our Lady Help of Christians on September 25th at 7:00 PM. See the schedule at tinyurl.com/SHOLPAXChristi. For more information, contact Sioux Mont. All are welcome.

-Sioux (smont@sholnewton.org) coordinates PC Newton.

Pax Christi at Walk for Life in Attleboro

By Linda Taylor

May First was a beautiful spring day in Attleboro—clear skies and a few fluffy clouds. With our hand-painted pro-peace posters, my friend, Elaine L'Etoile, and I joined in the Diocese of Fall River's Walk for Life at the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette in Attleboro.

Elaine and I are members of the local Pax Christi chapter hosted at the shrine. Our appearance at the Walk was an outgrowth of our group's meeting with Most Rev. Edgar da Cunha, Bishop of Fall River, in March. Bishop da Cunha encouraged our work and supported any efforts to give our group (and its message) a more significant profile in the diocese. When we asked, he said our presence at the walk would be a good idea and affirmed that messages of Gospel nonviolence (in all its forms) were suitable.

The Walk was organized by the Respect Life Office of the Secretariat of the New Evangelization within the diocese. This office mainly supports efforts to avoid the violence of abortion, so we were a little uncertain about how our presence and our messages would be accepted.

There was a large crowd, including several busloads of high school students, and soon we were on our way up Park Street (Rt. 118) to Angell Park, close to a local clinic that offers abortions. We didn't know many people in the crowd, but we were praying the rosary as we went so conversation was not the point. We knew folks were reading our signs, but we didn't

really get much feedback. The petition and reflection prayers woven into the Rosary were focused on avoiding abortion.

As we returned to the shrine and entered the parking lot, Elaine said, "Let's turn around so the people behind us can read our signs." So, we moved to the side and faced the remaining walkers entering the parking lot.

That's when the positive feedback began. Walker after walker gave us a thumbs up. Many "bless you's" were exchanged. We felt seen. We felt our message was heard. And we blessed the impulse against violence that animated their prayers and efforts. We were all embracing the idea of integral human development.



Linda Taylor and Elaine L'Etoile
(photo courtesy of Linda)

We finished our witness by asking some of the high school students, from St. John Paul II High School in Hyannis, to take our photo together (see above). The students, including some from the school's competitive baseball team, were friendly, helpful, and open to our message that war is a life issue.

A few weeks later, Father Flavio Gillio, the shrine director, led a

morning retreat for our Pax Christi group. He encouraged us to reach out to the Laity Group at the shrine, and we did. We look forward to overlapping with them on some actions and drawing deeper into reflection on reconciliation—the theme of the La Salette message—and renewed appreciation for our spiritual home at the shrine.

-Linda is a PCMA board member.

“Franz Stepped Out of the Boat”

Fr. Christopher Malatesta, Vicar General of the Springfield Diocese, celebrated the annual Mass on August 9, 2026, co-sponsored by Pax Christi Western MA in honor of Blessed Franz and Franziska Jagerstatter and gave this homily, which has been edited.

Today, as we gather for this Mass, I have to admit that preparing for this celebration taught me something. I knew the name of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, but as I spent time with his story, I found myself deeply moved.

Blessed Franz was not a bishop, a theologian, or a famous preacher. He was a husband, a father, and a farmer from Austria. He lived a simple life. Yet when the Nazi regime demanded his loyalty and military service, Franz faced a choice. He could follow the crowd, protect himself, and avoid conflict. Or he could follow his conscience, formed by his faith in Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel tells the story of Peter stepping out of the boat and walking on water. The key line is: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." That was Franz's life. Most people stayed in the boat.

They followed the crowd. They chose safety. Franz stepped out of the boat because he trusted Christ more than public opinion.

Most people told him he was wrong. Friends, neighbors, even fellow Catholics urged him to comply. They argued that one man's refusal would change nothing. But Franz understood that discipleship is not measured by success; it is measured by faithfulness. He believed he could not participate in something he knew to be evil, even at great personal cost.



Newlyweds (denvercatholic.org)

In 1943, he was executed for refusing military service to Hitler's regime. His final witness was not one of anger or hatred but of fidelity to Christ.

What moved me most was not simply his courage. It was his conviction that faith must shape every part of life. Franz understood that following Jesus is not something we do only on Sunday. It is something we do when decisions are difficult, when standing for truth is costly, and when our conscience calls us to a path others do not understand.

His witness reminds us that peace is more than the absence of war. Peace begins in the human heart. It begins when people choose truth over convenience, conscience over compromise, and love over fear. That is the peace Pax Christi seeks to promote—the peace of Christ.

Blessed Franz also teaches us that

saints are not fearless people. They are people who trust God more than they trust their fears. Franz worried about his wife Franziska and their daughters. He knew the price of his decision but entrusted himself and his family to God.

In our own day, we may not face the dramatic choices Franz faced, but we encounter opportunities daily to witness to Christ. We are called to stand up for human dignity, to reject violence and hatred, to defend the vulnerable, and to follow our conscience even when it is unpopular.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask Blessed Franz Jägerstätter and his beloved wife, Franziska, whose support sustained his witness, to pray for us. May they help us grow in courage. May they help us seek peace rooted in justice and truth. And may they remind us that even one faithful disciple can shine a light in the darkness.

For in the end, Franz's life teaches us a simple but powerful lesson: it is better to lose everything for Christ than to gain everything without Him. Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, pray for us. Amen.

Hiroshima Day 2026 in Holyoke

By Mike Moran. Editor

On Thursday, August 6, 2026, at 4:30 pm, threatening weather and the quick thinking of Sr. Annette McDermott, SSJ, when our original site became unavailable drew 120 people to a large meeting room in the Mont Marie Senior Residence in Holyoke to observe the 81st anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan on August 6 and 9, 1945, the only use of nuclear weapons in warfare, and to work

toward the global abolition of these weapons.

The annual event was sponsored by Greater Springfield Campaign Nonviolence (CNV), Pax Christi, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, and five other local organizations, and co-hosted by lead organizer, Sr. Annette, and CNV chair Jane Virgilio.



Partial audience view (photo by Sr. Annette McDermott)

After a welcome from Jane and an opening prayer by Sr. Annette and Sr. Jane Morrissey, SSJ, Sr. Annette introduced the interfaith panel of four readers as the characters in Thomas Merton's powerful 1961 prose poem "Original Child Bomb," the Japanese name for the atomic bomb: commentator (Muslim – Hanan Sarrar); reporter (Jewish – Barbara Stechenberg); the bomb (Christian – Jeanne Allen); and hope (Bahai – William Grohe).

Keynote speaker Dr. Ira Helfand, Pax Christi MA's 2022 peacemaker awardee, warned that even as the world is "closer to nuclear war than we have ever been," such a conflict, now fought with weapons 6 to 50 times more powerful than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs and the risk of AI, would likely kill hundreds of millions in the first half hour. Survivors would find a world incapable of recovery.

But he noted that initiatives for multilateral nuclear disarmament,

like the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the U.S. grassroots campaign Back from the Brink (BftB), are gaining political traction, with local BftB endorsers including the Holyoke and Springfield City Councils and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield.

And on July 31, the Massachusetts Senate passed a BftB bill co-sponsored by area Sen. Comerford, while similar bills co-sponsored by Reps. McGovern and Neal and Sens. Markey and Warren in the U.S. House and Senate have gained 70 and 10 co-sponsors to date respectively.



Sr. Jane, Dr. Ira (back), Deacon Bill (photo by Jeanne Allen)

Deacon Bill Toller of CNV next presented a citation to Sr. Jane as CNV's "founding mother" in 2014, which she accepted with her usual grace and humility. Bill then described a project sponsored by Mayors for Peace (MfP), an international organization with 8,584 member cities and towns in 166 countries (local members include Agawam, Chicopee, and Holyoke), to plant seeds from hibaku trees which survived the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs around the world (for more information, contact MfP New

England Rep, Bruce Stedman: brucestedman1@gmail.com).

Sr. Clare Carter and a group of monks and other members of the New England Peace Pagoda in Leverett closed the event with music, prayer, and drumming in the Buddhist tradition. Attendees,



Peace Pagoda members (photo by Jeanne Allen)

who ranged from 50 teen-aged campers from social-justice-focused Camp Kinderland in Tolland to 15+ retired Sisters of St. Joseph, departed ready to accept Dr. Helfand's challenge to "save the world" from the growing threat of nuclear war.

Rent Control Ballot Struck Down

By Nancy Sosnowski

The ballot question called "An initiative To Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases" would have limited rent increases by the cost of living as measured by the consumer price index with a cap of no more than 5%. The Superior Court decision dealt a blow to dedicated affordable housing nonprofit groups, agencies, and citizens across the state.

My fellow ECCO (Essex County Community Organization) volunteers and I, with much enthusiasm from affordable housing groups and citizens across

the state, worked diligently to obtain over 124,000 signatures to place rent control on the ballot by the November 2025 deadline.

One common refrain heard was "Something has to be done to curb the unfair rent increases happening across the state, which are prompting young people to leave the state for less expensive areas because rents are so high here."

The ballot initiative was dismissed by the court based on an exemption granted for units in religious and nonprofit institutions. The court declared the specific ballot petition unconstitutional because of its religious exemption clause, which violated Article 48 of the Massachusetts Constitution. Rent control itself was not ruled on by the court.

The petition to the Supreme Court against the ballot question was put forth and supported by real estate and businesses interests, landlords-citizens, special interests, and political groups. Devastated and disheartened by this action as we are, we will begin again in 2027 with a new initiative to provide rent stabilization relief to our state.

-Nancy is a PCMA board member.

Book Review

By Mike Moran, Editor
Benjamin T. Peters, *Catholic Pacifist* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2025)

In calling this "primarily an intellectual biography," author Benjamin Peters, professor of religious studies at the University of Saint Joseph, risks downplaying the wealth of personal data that he

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St. Francis Day 2026

800th Anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi

Saturday, Oct. 3rd, 10AM-4PM

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE



Shane Claiborne
Author
and Activist



Marysol Castro
Immigration
Attorney



Maritza Cruz
Anti-racism
Activist



DAY INCLUDES:

- COMMUNAL PRAYER
- SONGS OF SOLIDARITY
- FAITH-BASED
NONVIOLENT
DIRECT ACTION
- RADICAL NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE
- GAZA PHOTO DISPLAY
by noted photojournalist
Skip Schiel

Co-Sponsors

• MA Catholics for Indigenous Rights • Pax Christi MA • Nehemiah Ministries • Spirit of Life Community • Just Faith
• End Palestine Genocide Task Force

Bring a lunch! Potluck Dinner. Please RSVP for accommodations to Peace@AgapeCommunity.org
Agape Community - 2062 Greenwich Rd. Hardwick, MA 01082 | 413-967-9369



Pax Christi Assembly *in person and via zoom*

October 24, 2026

Featuring Kevin Glauber Ahern, Ph. D.



Bridging the divides: Catholic Peacebuilding after Magnifica Humanitas.

Kevin Glauber Ahern, PhD is a public theologian, parent, educator, and organizer. He is a professor and chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Manhattan University, New York, where he also directs the Dorothy Day Center for Social Catholicism. An award-winning author, Dr. Ahern has written extensively on the role of social movements, Catholic educational and institutional ministries, and the history of student organizing. He is the author of *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good* and the editor of several books. Dr. Ahern has been a leader in several national and international organizations and serves as the chair of the Guild for the Canonization of Dorothy Day. From his studies and his long experience in social action, Kevin will challenge us to better understand the power and possibilities of Catholic Social Action and our commitment to Peace, especially with the contributions of Pope Leo's recent Encyclical, *Manifica Humanitas*.

ALSO, members of the National Pax Christi Team and some National Council Members from Washington DC will be with us. COME JOIN US FOR THIS VERY FULL DAY!

**St. Susanna Parish Hall
262 Needham Street,
Dedham MA**

**Registration/Coffee at 8:30 am
Program 9:00 am to 3:30 pm**

Parish Mass at 4:00 pm for those who wish to remain.

Co-sponsored by

Agape Community

& St Susanna Parish, Dedham

Registration Form

Name _____ Street Address _____

City/State _____ Phone/E-mail _____

Donation \$45.00 at the door but please register by mail or email by October 9th. (Lunch Included)
Students are free with ID.

To register online: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SRTccjLBhWY70YVomVpfeKvDI9k0X2rld9VdkukuDI>

For those attending via Zoom, it is free. Email paxchristima@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link.

I would like to be an Assembly Sponsor and will donate an additional tax-deductible gift of \$_____ to help defray the cost of the Assembly.

Mail Registration to:

Pax Christi Massachusetts, Good Shepherd Parish, 99 Main Street, Wayland, MA 01778

*Scholarships available

www.paxchristima.org

For information: paxchristima@gmail.com

Book Review

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also shares in this life of Gordon Zahn, co-founder of Pax Christi USA and Pax Christi MA, often called the “dean of the US Catholic peace movement.”

Having read all of Zahn’s books and met him once in person at a Pax Christi conference, I knew the broad outline of his life but learned many new details from Peters about Zahn’s humble origins in Milwaukee, WI, his alternative service at Camp Simon in New Hampshire as one of 135 US conscientious objectors during World War II, and, especially, the roots of his “sociotheological” approach to sociology as an activist academic at Loyola University Chicago and, later, at UMass Boston. Peters also offers much insight into the writing and reception of Zahn’s seminal 1964 book *In Solitary Witness* about Austrian World War II conscientious objector Franz Jagerstatter, Zahn’s interactions and occasional disputes with other Catholic peace activists, like Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and his influence on Vatican II and on the US Catholic Bishops’ 1983 pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*.

Deeply researched, extensively footnoted, but eminently readable, *Catholic Pacifist* brings the source of my own Catholic pacifism to vivid life and should stand as the definitive biography of Gordon Zahn for the foreseeable future.

Retreat: Gospel Nonviolence in a Perilous Time

By Jeanne Allen, PCMA board

From the opening prayer renewing our Vow of Nonviolence to sharing nonviolence resources as we closed the day, the Pax Christi MA spring retreat was a time of education, reflection, challenge, and conversation on Gospel nonviolence.



Marie Dennis at PCMA retreat (photo courtesy of Jeanne Allen)

Marie Dennis, a woman on an ever-deepening journey to the heart of gospel nonviolence, led us in a day of prayer and reflection. Reminding us of Pope Leo’s claim that “Peace is unarmed (i.e., not through strength) and disarming” (reaching out to the ‘enemy’), and his Easter message that “The power of the Resurrection is completely nonviolent,” she led us through living in an era of contagious violence, where we invest in weaponry that allows violence and death to pound people all over the world.

She called us to consider personally, “What does **violence** look like in my life?” As we contributed such aspects as bombs and drones, abuses of

power, food deserts, lack of health care, gun violence, language that minimizes or demonizes others, she added some other facets to consider: fear orchestrated to drive society to a more violent place; emotional deprivation, especially of a child, is violence whose effects last a lifetime; cultural violence, such as racism, personal and structural, both rampant in our society

She then challenged us to ask ourselves, “What is **nonviolence** to you, where do you see it most regularly?” After sharing in our small groups, she added some other ideas: the “neighborism” seen

(Editor’s note: read Jeanne’s full retreat report here: <https://paxchristima.org/spring-retreat-2026-features-marie-dennis-pax-christi-international-on-gospel-nonviolence/>)

Pax Christi MA Board of Directors 2026-2027

Coordinator: Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.x 101 Summer Street Holliston MA 01746 202-997-8049 rmdpsx@hotmail.com	Secretary: Jeanne Allen 10 Sutton Place Easthampton MA 01027 413-270-5880 jallen10sp@gmail.com
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Treasurer: Nancy Carapezza 13 Red Barn Road Wayland MA 01778 508-740-4500 npez@comcast.net	Newsletter Editor: Mike Moran 135 Shearer Street Palmer MA 01069 413-283-5716 moran3@comcast.net
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OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

Sr. Linda Bessom	(Somerville)
Irene Desharnais	(Jamaica Plain)
Pat Ferrone	(Needham)
Kathy Hubert	(Walpole)
Linden Jenkins	(Cambridge)
Bob Shine	(Boston)
Nancy Sosnowski	(Swampscott)
Linda Taylor	(North Attleboro)
Bill Toller	(Springfield)

QUARTERLY BOARD MEETINGS

are held virtually on Saturdays at 9:00 AM and are open to all PCMA members. The next two will be held on Sept. 12th and Dec. 12th.

Local Groups

Berkshire P.C.

Carolyn Zabloutny
P.O. Box 14
Mill River, MA 01244
berkshire.pax.christi@gmail.com
Contact for meeting info

Boston (Citywide) P.C.

Sr. Rita Raboin, SNDdeN
Paulist Center, 5 Park St
Boston, MA
rita.raboin@sndden.org
Contact for meeting info

Cape Cod P.C.

Francoise Rocher
77 Old Post Road
Centerville, MA 02632
(508) 771-6737
paxchristi-cc@comcast.net
Our Lady of Victory
Centerville, MA 02632
Contact for meeting info

Central Mass P.C.

Brian and Samantha Ashmankas
52 Mason Street
Worcester, MA 01610
Brianashmankas86@gmail.com
Contact for more information

Fatima Shrine P.C.

Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.x.
101 Summer Street
Holliston, MA 01746

(202) 997-8049
rndpsx@hotmail.com
Mtgs 2nd Friday, 4:00 PM
Upper Room

College of the Holy Cross P.C.

1 College St, Box 16-A
Worcester, MA 01610
Mary LaVigne-Greeley
(508) 793-3480
mlavigne@holycross.edu
Meetings and activities geared to
college calendar

Metro West P.C.

Jan Leary
janleary@aol.com
Contact for meeting info

National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette P.C.

Sheila Matthews, 199 Maple St.,
Somerset, MA 02776
(508) 674-8220
sheilmatthews@aol.com
Mtgs 3rd Tuesday, 10:00 AM
*may be virtual if bad weather
Welcome Center, OLLS Shrine,
947 Park St, Attleboro, MA 02703

Newton P.C.

Sioux Mont
573 Washington Street
Newton, MA 02458
(617) 527-7360
smont@sholnewton.org
Mtgs 1st Tuesday, 7:00 PM

Rhode Island P.C.

Margo Murphy
(401) 861-6988
margomurph@aol.com
Madeline Labriola
(845) 691-8015
mlabriola@mac.com
Mtgs last Sunday, 7:00 PM*

St. John's Prep P.C.

St. John's Preparatory School
72 Spring Street
Danvers, MA 01923
Danielle Poché
978-774-1050 Ext 350
dpoeche@stjohnsprep.org
Prayer for Peace, Tuesday
mornings, 7:45-8:00 AM

St. Susanna Parish P.C.

Pat Ferrone
262 Needham Street
Dedham, MA 02026
(781) 752-9722
parferrone@gmail.com
Contact for meeting info

Western Mass P.C.

Jeanne Allen
10 Sutton Place
Easthampton, MA 01027
(413) 270-5880
jallen10sp@gmail.com
Mtgs 2nd Friday, 7:00 PM*

*(NOTE: Virtual meetings are
noted with an asterisk*)*

If you belong to a Pax Christi group that is not listed above, please let us know so we can add it to our list. If any information above is incorrect, or if you would like to be added to a list of Pax Christi "friends" and receive current messages from the Board, please send changes or additions to Mike Moran: moran3@comcast.net (135 Shearer Street, Palmer, MA 01069)

Pax Christi Massachusetts
Good Shepherd Parish
99 Main Street, Wayland, MA 01778

paxchristima@gmail.com
www.paxchristima.org