



Introduction to Pax Christi International October 31, 2012

Pax Christi is an international Catholic peace movement founded in France in 1945 to promote reconciliation between the French and the Germans following World War II. Part of the same impetus that won for the European Union the Nobel Peace Prize this year, our movement was recognized by Pope Pius XII a few years later as the official Catholic peace movement.

At the same time, Pax Christi has always been autonomous, with members of the hierarchy, clergy and laypeople working together as equals for peace and reconciliation in situations of violence and war around the world. Our presidency, for example, is now shared by a bishop, Bishop Kevin Dowling from South Africa, and a lay woman (myself), both of whom were elected by our member organizations. The Pax Christi movement is present in almost 60 countries on five continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia and the Americas), with over a hundred thousand members worldwide.

The work of Pax Christi is inspired by Gospel values and by the rich history of Catholic social teaching. We have a deep commitment to active nonviolence and a growing tradition of sharing our spiritual journeys and articulating the theological perspective that enable a nonviolent response even in the most complex, violent and destructive situations.

Pax Christi members incorporate a wide range of peace building practices into their daily work for a better world. Among them --

- a multi-year strategy to address deep-seated racism in the United States
- dynamic “sports for peace” programs in South Sudan and Haiti
- strategies to integrate former combatants back into their own communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- courses in preventive reconciliation using the principles of haikido in the Philippines
- efforts to address destructive mining practices in Colombia and Peru;
- advocacy and campaigning at a national and international level for the abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; for a meaningful Arms Trade Treaty; for an end to the use of depleted uranium in weapons
- “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
- collaboration with local partners to support active nonviolence in southern Mexico

- excellent grassroots peace education programs in England and the Philippines
- exchanges of experience between civil society from the Middle East and from Central Europe on their role in bringing about non-violent social change
- work with the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), our partner in Brazil, in response to growing conflict over land - and
- ongoing work with civil society groups in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, ...

Pax Christi International has had consultative status at the United Nations since 1979 and is working at the UN 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.

Everywhere, efforts to foster a culture of active non-violence; to insert moral and ethical principles on issues of war and peace into the public and political arenas; and to promote action for peace and social justice remain central to their mission. As a Faith-Based Catholic movement, Pax Christi pays special attention to both the positive and negative impact of religion in relation to violent conflict.

The primary objective of Pax Christi is to contribute to the prevention, demilitarization and resolution of conflicts; to the strengthening of human rights, democracy and international law; and to building peace. We combine activism with a strong spirituality, still inspired today by the original motivation of our movement: reconciliation – bringing opposite sides in a conflict together to create a new, positive, peaceful relationship.

Marie Dennis, Co-President
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