

DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

The Journal of Pax Christi Australia

Vol 41 No.13

September 2016

CHILCOT - THE COSTS OF WAR & SILENCE

by Dr Sue Wareham OAM

The long-awaited **Chilcot Inquiry Report** into the British government's involvement in the Iraq War provides an exhaustive and damning indictment of the Blair administration's ill-conceived decision to join the US-led invasion.

Among key finding, apart from a litany of intelligence abuses, was that British Prime Minister Tony Blair ignored warnings on what would happen in Iraq post-invasion, and had no strategy to manage this period, nor tried hard enough to keep a tally of Iraqi civilian casualties.

The report also found the British government risked the mental health of thousands of troops by breaching guidelines designed to avoid excessive deployment and overstretch.

An editorial published this week in the British Medical Journal warns that the long-term consequences for UK service personnel remain unknown, especially for those they term 'unexpected survivors' — injured troops who may previously have died from their wounds but were able to be saved due to advances in battlefield treatment. The authors write:

No matter how good the short term care, nothing will remove the enduring effects of the deaths and the physical and psychological injuries. The true legacy of the conflict for individuals and wider society in both the UK and Iraq may not be evident for many years to come.

The report has renewed calls for a similar enquiry in Australia, where Prime Minister John Howard followed the US into Iraq on a similarly flawed

basis to Britain and with the same disastrous outcomes.

Activists have banded together under the banner *Chilcot Oz* to demand a Royal Commission into Australia's decision to go to war in Iraq.

Dr Sue Wareham OAM writes:

The Chilcot report into the UK's involvement in the 2003 invasion of Iraq was long overdue when it finally saw the light of day last week. Even so, the UK is streets ahead of Australia; we have had no such in-depth examination of the process by which our nation helped launch this catastrophic war, and none is on the horizon. Accountability is virtually zero, there are no lessons learnt, grave errors are repeated, and countless lives are destroyed as a result.

The fact that the human cost of the war was huge is rarely disputed, although estimates of the numbers of dead or maimed, or lives otherwise ruined, vary. This is not surprising given the enormous obstacles to collecting such data in a war zone, and the fact that the "coalition of the willing" doesn't even try.

The 2015 report "Body Count" by affiliates of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, estimated that the "war on terror" has killed, directly or indirectly, around a million people in Iraq (and 220,000 in Afghanistan and 80,000 in Pakistan).

The Costs of War project at Brown University in the US estimated that, from 2001 to April 2015, the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq caused

the deaths of 370,000 people – fighters, civilians, aid workers and others – due to direct war violence. However, the report said, it is likely that many times more than this number have died indirectly, as a result of malnutrition, damaged health infrastructure and environmental degradation as a result of the wars.

Australia has unquestioningly supported all of these wars, including by the role of the Pine Gap facility in the Northern Territory in facilitating drone attacks in Pakistan.

The problem of refugees also cannot be separated from the problem of war. On 20 June this year, UNHCR reported that an unprecedented 65.3 million people globally were displaced as a result of conflict and persecution.

Part of the tragedy of the 2003 Iraq War was that the humanitarian impacts were all predicted before the war started, but the predictions were

Contents

Chilcot, the Costs of War and Silence.....	p 1
How Disunity among UN agencies is failing Syria.....	p 3
Australia Attempts to Derail Plan to Ban Nuclear Weapons.....	p 4
Book Review, <i>Empire Baptized</i>	p 5
SalamFest, Muslim Festival...p	6
Spirituality of peace.....	pp 7-11
Footprints in the Sand.....	p 11
Notices.....	p 12

DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

is an Australia-wide

Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.

Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.

We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.

As an ecumenical Christian movement Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.
www.paxchristi.org.au

Disarming Times is compiled by a team of Pax Christi Australia members:
Joe Camilleri, Rolf Sorenson, Harry Kerr, Rita Camilleri and Barbara Hadkinson (Vic)
Claude Mostowik and Maggie Galley (N.S.W.)
Pancras Jordan and Claire Cooke (Qld)

Pax Christi Victoria

P.O. Box 31 Carlton Sth Vic. 3053
Tel: 03 9893 4946
Fax: 03 9379 1711
email: pax@paxchristi.org.au

Pax Christi New South Wales

P.O. Box A 681 Sydney Sth 1235,
Tel: 02 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953
Fax: 02 9519 8471
email: msejust@smatchat.net.au

Pax Christi Queensland

PO Box 305
Carina QLD 4152
Tel: 0415 461 620
email: pancrasjordan@gmail.com

Unsources material in *Disarming Times* may be copied with due acknowledgement. A copy of the publication would be appreciated. Not all views expressed in this journal are equally shared by Pax Christi Australia.

Disarming Times is printed by Arena Press
2-14 Kerr St. Fitzroy 3065 Ph 03 9416 0232

ignored. Among many such warnings was the November 2002 report **Collateral Damage: the Health and Environmental Costs of the War on Iraq** which was published by Medact in the UK and had its Australian launch by the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia) in Parliament House on November 12. The introduction to the report stated: The threatened war on Iraq could have disastrous short, medium and long-term consequences not only for the Iraqi population and its neighbours, but also further afield.

These dire predictions were based partly on the much-degraded state of Iraqi infrastructure as a result of the 1991 war and the most comprehensive economic sanctions in history.

To justify a war after the event, as former PMs Blair and Howard have attempted to do, those who led the charge need to be able to look into the eyes of every maimed or orphaned child, every grieving parent, every family whose house is a heap of rubble, every breadwinner who can no longer work, and assure them that it was all worth it, there was no other way.

A refusal to even acknowledge the extent of human suffering simply compounds the lies and blinkered vision of 2003.

Health care professionals have an essential advocacy role to play in exposing the costs of war, especially for civilians, for it is the civilian suffering that is – apart from low levels of humanitarian aid that are dwarfed by the amounts spent on fighting – ignored by governments.

War is not just a matter for prime ministers to decide, and generals to implement. And despite the importance of the law and the monumental folly of Bush, Blair and Howard in ignoring the almost universally agreed “illegal” verdict in 2003, nor is war just a matter for the lawyers.

Not everything that is lawful is wise, as many would argue the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan demonstrates. Warfare is about destruction, often

on a colossal scale. It threatens whole populations, whose welfare must be an absolutely key consideration before any armed intervention.

If we are to learn anything from the invasion of Iraq – a huge “if” in the case of Australia, as we continue to send troops to unwinnable wars in the Middle East – the need for humanitarian concerns to be central to any such decision is a lesson sorely needed.

There are many questions that must be asked and answered, such as the expected civilian deaths and injuries, the likely impact on health care facilities and personnel and on clean water supply, the provisions that will be made for injured civilians, the number of refugees expected and the resources that will be available to care for them.

War is full of unintended negative consequences. This is precisely the reason that the likely or certain consequences – such as widespread civilian suffering – must be part of the debate before hostilities commence, in the knowledge that things will usually turn out worse than expected.

And finally, the issue of debate. Generally there is none in Australia before we go to war.

In 2003, PM Howard made the decision; there was no opportunity for questions in parliament about the military strategy, expected human and economic costs, likely duration, post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, regional consequences, the likely environmental destruction, or any other critical issue.

Going to war is the most important decision that a country can make. We should treat it as such, with full parliamentary debate and vote, and with the human impacts taking their rightful place among the key issues on which the decision is made. Health care professionals have a vital role in demanding nothing less. Dr Sue Wareham OAM is the vice president of the [Medical Association for Prevention of War \(Australia\)](http://www.mawar.org.au) of [Australians for War](http://www.austliansforwar.org.au)

HOW THE DISUNITY AMONG UN AGENCIES IS FAILING SYRIA

by Roger Hearn

Roger Hearn is the former head of UNRWA in Syria.

First published by Al Jazeera English Online on 5 July 2016, see link:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/07/disunity-agencies-failing-syria-160705073104363.html>

The UN doesn't have to change ... the system isn't broken, it's simply broke."

This quote comes from the head of the United Nations' humanitarian office (OCHA). It was met with outrage by anyone who has witnessed first hand the UN relief effort in Syria. Despite the billions spent to date, the humanitarian response within Syria is beyond broken.

The United Nations and other aid agencies working out of Damascus cowered under the Syrian regime and have allowed their relief efforts to be sabotaged. As a consequence, aid, largely under the control of the regime, is now a vital component of its repression and control tactics.

There was a series of events in early 2011 that set the trajectory for the severely compromised aid programme we have in place in Syria today. The Syrian uprising was a few weeks old, and already the extreme brutality the Syrian regime deployed to suppress innocent demonstrators was becoming clearer by the day. Daraa, the restive southern city that spawned the first demonstrations, was under lockdown by security forces.

At the time, as I was the director of the UN agency responsible for half a million Palestine refugees living in Syria, this was of enormous concern to me given the large number of staff and refugees caught up in the security closure. Looking back, the lockdown was mild compared with the sieges now in place that affect, at times to the point of starvation, nearly a million people across Syria. As the first significant challenge posed by the uprising, the heads of the various UN agencies were faced with a clear choice; to band together as one United Nations and demand access to the area or to allow ourselves to be divided by the regime. An operation

was prepared to provide essential medicines to patients with chronic conditions and other critical services.

Crucially, with only a couple of exceptions, the vast majority of UN agencies kept their heads down, allowing the regime to silence any critique of its outrageous behaviour. The heads of agencies allowed the regime to block the distribution of aid and stood by while those agencies that dared challenge them were punished with the threat of expulsion or other tactics of intimidation.

Silencing of the UN

As the months rolled on, the silencing of the UN intensified. Another moment in August 2011 - after failing to secure permission for a human rights delegation to Syria, a delegation of OCHA representatives was assembled along with the heads of UN agencies to tour the country. The basis of the delegation was perverse given that Syria was in the midst of a human rights crisis rather than a significant humanitarian situation which would come later.

Not aware of the nuances of the UN system, the local population came out in their thousands to demand action from the delegation on a range of issues including disappearances and torture of family members and more general calls for democracy. In Homs, some locals greeting the delegation were shot dead just after the UN vehicles drove past. This incident was one of the thousands captured on YouTube footage.

While acknowledging the consequences of the deadlock in the Security Council, the UN agencies were too quick to play along with this charade. As with later delegations, nothing was achieved by this road show except allowing the good offices of the UN to be sidetracked and ultimately compromised by the Syrian regime. The consequence of these early moments of weakness has contributed to the systematic failure of the UN-led response. Rather than basing its response on need, it has developed into a billion-dollar response programme that is largely controlled by the regime and its proxies.

Simplistic view

Why has this been able to happen? A consistent argument in defence of the silence has been that the work would be jeopardised or potentially closed down if a more robust position was enforced. Again UN agencies banding together with a clear policy of "one for all and all for one" would provide a compelling presence. Would the regime really be willing to see a multi-billion-dollar operation close down? Instead we now have a UN system that is at the mercy of a discredited regime, with little or no control over what aid goes where and to whom.

After leaving the UN I was involved in the development of a multi-million-dollar cross-border response for Save the Children out of Turkey and other surrounding countries. For years these operations were seen almost as a direct competition by the Damascus-centred response, despite the Security Council resolutions that called for the UN to provide aid across the country. We are left with a fragmented and disjointed collection of interventions. A fair share of the chaos that we see across the humanitarian community can be traced to our early failures in 2011.

For those outside the UN system, there is a simplistic view that the UN operates as a single powerful entity during conflict and disasters. In fact, in a situation such as Syria there are often 10 or more UN agencies operating with different mandates (sadly often in competition with one another) all with a different director. Under this system global leadership is absent. Security Council recommendations can be ignored or undermined by different agencies. At the country level, leadership in the UN system has been a systematic failure for decades.

This situation is deplorable. There needs to be a United Nations that can develop and implement immediate and critical decisions that focus on saving lives, not careers or the competing interests of different UN agencies. *The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera'*

AUSTRALIA ATTEMPTS TO DERAIL UN PLAN TO BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Sunday 21 August 2016

Australia has attempted to derail a ban on nuclear weapons at a UN meeting on disarmament, by single-handedly forcing a vote on a report that had been expected to pass unanimously.

The report, which recommended negotiations begin in 2017 to ban nuclear weapons, was eventually passed by 68 votes to 22. An Austrian led push for a treaty had reached a milestone on Friday, when the report was presented to representatives of 103 nations in Geneva. Moves towards a ban have been pursued because many saw little progress under the existing non proliferation treaty, which obliges the five declared nuclear states to “pursue negotiations in good faith” towards “cessation of the nuclear arms race ... and nuclear disarmament”.

The proposal recommended a conference be held next year to negotiate “a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

The Text was carefully negotiated, and compromise was attempted on contentious paragraphs.

Anti-nuclear campaigners involved in the process expected the report would pass without objection. But Australia surprised observers by objecting and forcing a vote.

The vote was accepted by an overwhelming majority, with 68 voting in favour, 22 against and 13 abstaining. The next step will be for the proposal for negotiations to begin in 2017 will be tabled at the United Nations general assembly, after which it is likely formal negotiations will begin.

In an opening statement the Australian diplomat Ian McConville told the meeting: “A simple Ban Treaty would not facilitate the reduction in one nuclear weapon. It might even harden the resolve of those possessing nuclear weapons not to reduce their arsenals.” The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said on its

website that it opposed a ban on nuclear weapons because although it “might seem to be a straightforward and emotionally appealing way to de-legitimise and eradicate nuclear weapons,” it would actually “divert attention from the sustained, practical steps needed for effective disarmament”.

But in 2015, documents obtained under Freedom of Information revealed Australia opposed the ban on nuclear weapons, since it believed it relied on US nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

“As long as the threat of nuclear attack or coercion exists, and countries like the DPRK [North Korea] seek these weapons and threaten others, Australia and many other countries will continue to rely on US extended nuclear deterrence,” said one of the briefing notes for government ministers.

The documents revealed however that Australia and the US were worried about the momentum gathering behind the Austrian-led push for a ban nuclear weapons, which diplomats said was “fast becoming a galvanising focus for those pushing the ban treaty option”.

Japan’s ambassador to the UN conference on disarmament expressed disappointment that a vote was required.

“We are deeply concerned that the adoption by voting will further divide the international disarmament community and undermine the momentum of nuclear disarmament for the international community as a whole,” he said.

Tim Wright, Asia-Pacific director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), said it was thought that Australia’s foreign minister, Julie Bishop, instructed her diplomats to disrupt the international gathering late on Friday afternoon by forcing a vote. While others then joined Australia to vote against the report, Australia was alone in forcing the vote to happen.

“Australia is resisting the tide of history. A majority of nations believe that nuclear weapons are unacceptable and must be prohibited. And now they are ready to negotiate a ban,” Wright said.

“Australia’s attempt to derail these important disarmament talks was shameful and outrageous. It provoked strong criticism from some of our nearest neighbours in Asia and the Pacific, who believe that the world should be rid of all weapons of mass destruction,” he said.

The acceptance of the report was seen as a major milestone by anti-nuclear campaigners.

“This is a significant moment in the seven--decade--long global struggle to rid the world of the worst weapons of mass destruction,” said Beatrice Fihn, executive director ICAN. “There can be no doubt that a majority of UN members intend to pursue negotiations next year on a treaty “We expect that, based on the recommendations of the working group, the UN general assembly will adopt a resolution this autumn to establish the mandate for negotiations on a ban on nuclear weapons in 2017.”

A Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman said: “Australia called for a vote on the report as it was the most effective way to register our opposition to a recommendation to start negotiations on a ban treaty. “Our efforts must be directed to strengthening the NPT and implementing what countries have already agreed to under its various review conference documents including the 2010 action plan.

“Ban treaty negotiations will not reduce nuclear weapons, and have the potential to divert focus and further divide countries on disarmament. Proceeding with ban treaty negotiations without states which possess nuclear weapons will not further nuclear disarmament.”

Source from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/>

Book Review

EMPIRE BAPTIZED by Wes Howard Brook

Reviewed by Harry Kerr

Empire Baptized: How the Church Embraced What Jesus Rejected.

Wes Howard-Brook. *Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2016.*

Wes Howard-Brook teaches theology and scripture at Seattle University and at churches and gatherings around the Pacific Northwest and the U.S.

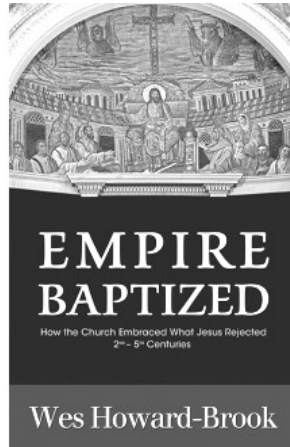
In his previous book, “Come Out My people,” he invited us to read the Bible as a struggle between two competing religious visions: a “religion of empire” and a “religion of creation” embraced by the prophets and Jesus.

In “Empire Baptized,” Howard-Brook examines how the “People of the Way,” we encounter in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul, a network of communities following the way of Jesus, became the official religion of the Roman Empire. This is a detailed and well researched study. It is a challenging read which takes us into unfamiliar territory. However it is an important book, because it takes us to the roots of the authoritarian and hierarchical church institutions of to-day. It also warns all of us who seek to follow the Way of Jesus to-day of the pressures, within and without, to “love this present world.” (*II Timothy 4.10*)

Howard-Brook takes us into the lives of churches which were growing and finding their place in a complex multicultural, multi-racial and multifaith world, held together by the dominant and often unstable Roman Empire. Before we become too critical of the accommodations they made, we remember that they suffered what we in the comfortable churches of the West have not suffered, periods of brutal persecution. The experience of Christians in the Middle East and parts of Asia to-day is very different.

“Empire Baptized” focuses on the two cities of Alexandria and Carthage, centres of Greek and Latin cultures within the empire and explores in depth the thinking and ac-

tivities of the Christian communities and their leaders. Howard Brook takes us into the thinking and influence of some of the “Fathers” of the church: Clement, Origen, and Athanasius in Egypt and Tertullian, Cyprian and



Augustine in North Africa.

As the church adapted to new circumstances and surroundings, its message and its self understanding changed. Jesus proclaimed the “reign of God” which abolished distinctions of race, class, sex, wealth and religion. He proclaimed “Good News to the Poor,” attacked the dominance of temple and empire healed the sick and included the outcasts and responded to state violence by laying down his own life. His followers formed a community around his resurrection from the dead which sought to live out his way in an often hostile environment. It grew and spread throughout the empire.

As it grew, the message began to change. We see signs of this in the later books of the New Testament. Instead of changing people’s lives and challenging the structures of oppression, the message became spiritualised. The combined influence of Greek philosophy and Roman imperial social structures shifted the emphasis from fostering egalitarian relationships and transforming the world to the goal of saving one’s “soul.” Influenced by the Gnostics, the emphasis was on the soul which connected people to the divine, separate

from mind and body. Instead of a community dedicated to changing the world, the emphasis was on the individual living a moral life. Instead of a community of equals having all things in common, we find an organisation of individuals directed by strong and dominating leaders who demanded obedience. Instead of an inclusive community, women become second class citizens. Instead of a focus on living the praxis of Jesus, the emphasis is on right “doctrine”, often derived from Greek and Roman philosophy. Instead of openness to all humanity, barriers go up between Christian and Jews and “pagans.” Instead of a standing apart from the structures of empire, church leaders turn to empire as the preserver of law and order and support for their own power. Instead of dedication to non violence Augustine introduces the “just war doctrine.” Instead of an appreciation of the presence of God in nature we find the familiar claim of human superiority.

After Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of empire and the foundations were laid for the development of “Christendom” in which the world of nations and peoples was assumed to be Christian as long as it was presided over by an increasingly imperial church. In spite of a steep decline, Christendom and the attitudes to faith and life that go with it, are still with us. For Howard-Brook, this explains why for many Christians, *Christianity is relevant almost exclusively to the afterlife. Most Christians to-day do not to hear their preachers challenge this relationship to the great systemic evils of unjustly distributed gifts and wealth, war and violence, racism and sexism and environmental destruction.* (page 295) Where they do, they are ignored or silenced. This book is as an opportunity for Christians to become aware of the forces that shape us and to critique our own cultural contexts against the gospel of Jesus. It is a call to us to “come out” and embrace the

Way of Jesus which leads to life in abundance for all people and all creation.

This is a book to be taken seriously, though perhaps there is room for a simpler popular version. Howard Brook himself admits that most people do not know about the early church and the fathers. "Come out My People" is based on the Biblical narratives with which most readers are familiar. They are not familiar with the material in "Empire Baptised" and it is not easy material with which to come to grips. Yet it is surely necessary that these issues be wrestled with by Christian communities.

Howard Brook's analysis raises some interesting questions. The first is to examine how it is Christians so easily succumb to the temptation to be "conformed to this world" (*Romans 12.2*). Despite the almost overwhelming power of Catholic (and later Protestant) Christianity, communities which seek to live the Radical Way of Jesus have never disappeared. Through history they keep reappearing. We remember the early Celtic monasteries, the Franciscans, the Waldensians in Italy, the "third stream" of the reformation: the Quakers, the Mennonites and the Anabaptists, the Methodists, the Anglo Catholic movement, the Base Christian Communities and the "Emerging Church" movements of the present day. These are only a few. These communities were to be found living out The Way among the

poor and marginalised. They themselves were marginalised and persecuted by the established churches. Over time however, most of them too began to love the things of this world. Their alternative community life became organised. Hierarchies of Bishops councils and elders developed. Because of their effectiveness working with the poor and the marginalised, their members prospered and easily accommodated to the world around them. Instead of transforming the lives of the poor and marginalised, they did "good works" and offered charity. (We speak here of the Western Church. The churches in West Papua, the Middle East and many parts of Asia live in much sharper tension with empire.)

So what happens?

The work of Walter Wink and others have given us a deeper understanding of the *Principalities and Powers* (Ephesians 6). The Powers represent the powerful forces which have an almost overwhelming power and influence in shaping our lives. These powers are not just out there. They are so effective because they are within us as well as without. They interact with and attract the very individuals they oppress. More often than not, we choose to be dominated by them. They appear to meet our basic and not so basic needs and so we collude. The early Christians were no different. The writer of Ephesians reminds us: *For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the*

cosmic powers of this present darkness ... Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day (Ephesians 6) This implies Christian Jihad waged within with the love and support of communities of the Way. It would be interesting to know whether collusion with empire relates to the transformation of Communities of the Way into church organisations and the resultant loss of spiritual energy.

What of Pax Christi Australia? We are an aging Christian Peace Movement which has done some remarkable things but which struggles to maintain its early vision and s to renew itself. Are we in danger of succumbing to organisational routines, of doing things and planning programmes because we have always done? Have we become a group of members which holds meetings and lost the sense of being a community in the Way? We never seem to come together simply for the sake of coming together, to build community, to get to know and care for each other and provide spiritual support for each other? Is this why we are not attractive to younger members of the peace movement who may see an organisation which exists because it exists? Is this why energy is difficult to sustain? The insights of "Empire Baptised" properly understood could be a much needed wake up call to us to "Come Out" to take up Christian Jihad."

Harry Kerr is a retired Anglican Priest and chair of Pax Christi Victoria

SalamFest

The Islamic Council of Victoria's SalamFest is a unique and enlightening offering for the people of Victoria. It includes Whirling Dervishes, Sufi Singing, Rumi Recitals, Contemporary Sufi Recitals, Fusion Instrumentals and films.

**Day 1, Saturday 1st October 2016, 4-10 pm Victoria State Library
MUSLIM FILM FESTIVAL.**

This will showcase films from Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Pakistan and UAE and many other countries

**Day 2, Sunday 2nd October 2-4.30 pm and 6-9 pm Melbourne Town Hall
MUSLIM ARTS FESTIVAL**

Whirling Dervishes, Sufi Singing, Rumi Recitals,
Contemporary Sufi Recitals, Fusion Instrumentals and films.

For more information see www.salamfest.eventbrite.com.au

SPIRITUALITY OF PEACE

By members of Pax Christi

In response to a request from Pax Christi International, Pax Christi Australia invited members to share their own thoughts about the spirituality that inspires them as peacemakers. Many thanks to those who responded. Here are what they offered. The invitation is still open and we invite others to submit their own reflections on Spirituality of peace

Fr. Claude Mostowick MSC

I feel somewhat inadequate in addressing some of these questions because we do not face the conflict, violence and war that exist in other parts of the world. I first got involved in Pax Christi in 1998 towards the tail end of the Indonesian presence in East Timor, after its 1975 invasion, and the violence perpetrated by militias that were sympathetic to the Indonesians which created immense violence and destruction. At the time as East Timorese people engaged in hunger strikes in Sydney to call on the Australian government to send peace keepers to the country, Pax Christi joined the hunger strikers in solidarity outside the UN offices in Sydney by having a Eucharist (sometimes ecumenical) on the footpath each afternoon as people finished work and passed by to draw attention to the plight of East Timor. The intention was to continue this action until the government capitulated and sent peacekeepers to East Timor – which it finally did. This continued for some months as other organisations rallied for the same reasons.

In recent times, though personally involved with refugees and asylum seekers for 43 years, I have joined a movement called *Love Makes a Way* where people of different faiths gather non-violently at the office of a Government minister or the Prime Minister to protest the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers in this country and detention of children, women and men in overseas detention centres. I have now engaged in six of these since April 2014. Four times, we were arrested for resisting these inhumane asylum seeker policies through prayer and nonviolent love in action. The last time was in November and we now have to face court. We were arrested for 'breach of the peace'. This movement operates throughout the country. The aim was to draw attention to the plight of children in detention but also to seek through prayer and witness to the challenges of Pope Francis and the Australian Catholic Bishops, the Uniting Church leadership and other denominations of the harm (violence) being perpetrated in our name. The publicity and support has been phenomenal. In all, Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, Uniting Church, and Metropolitan Community Church denominations were represented in these sit-ins of prayer and song. Some may question such actions but these make up a long tradition of civil disobedience when it becomes imperative to standing again injustice in the community or in the church. It is not possible to just talk, and write but also somehow put one's own body on the line and risk arrest. In recent weeks, the sanctuary movement has been revived by many churches to offer sanctuary to asylum seekers.

As we have just marked the centenary of the beginning of World War I, the focus in Australia has been on the centenary of Gallipoli invasion in 1915 where we once again invaded a country that was no threat to us. The war to end all war has been nothing of the sort, with regional and international and hostilities as well as interpersonal violence reported such as the abuse of children in many institutions and domestic violence, inordinate incarceration of Indigenous people usually young, poor and people with disabilities.

One of our concerns in Australia is the close ties that Australia has had, and continues to have, with the USA, which we see at a threat to peace in our region. Though we have not had a war on our land, apart from the wars of invasion of Indigenous land, we have joined in, and often been the first to join, in foreign conflicts when called upon by the USA which has many bases in our country. As people continue to treat each other and the environment in brutal and destructive ways, the challenge for us is to listen to the stories of struggle to defend the earth and the rights of people to land and water, forests, seeds and biodiversity from the indigenous people with their wisdom and openness. More and more we hear that individual people and governments resort to violence or even perceived threats or to promote economic and trade interests rather than taking the long and mature way of listening and sharing. Living in a continual state of poverty or fear or racial or gender prejudice does not constitute peace. Violence is not just physical as in murder but for a person who is hungry or needing medical care, violence is evident when these are ignored or not addressed. Psychological, emotional and economic abuse as well as abuse of the environment or creation are also violence. Peace must be connected with the pursuit of justice whether it is personal or social or environmental. Unfortunately, we focus very much on violence from below, the poor, and neglect or fail to see that which is caused by the industrial-capitalist complex.

The challenge for Pax Christi is to seek in all communities that it finds itself listening to the stories of struggle to defend the earth and people's rights to land and water, forests, seeds and biodiversity. A paradigm shift is required - a shift towards an earth-centred economics, politics and culture. For those not fearful of the word – we need a 'new spirituality of peace' that steers away from conflict to one that is earth-centred.

The growth miracles in various countries are based on a kind of war that is deepened by inequalities and erosion of democratic ideals and principle; the rich biodiversity and cultural diversity is destroyed through ecological destruction and imposition of monocultures; and millions of people lose their livelihoods so that a few global corporations and billionaires can control markets and resources. We have to show the neo-liberal model of economic globalisation which is based on the assumption that there is no alternative, that there are alternatives everywhere. These alternatives are found in indigenous cultures and local economies where people from the Amazon to India are defending with their lives. The alternative is growing in developed countries as people work together to form community gardens.

The paradigm shift, the spirituality of peace, must begin with the recognition that we are part of nature. We do not own it or its masters. We must see ourselves as members of the earth family, with the responsibility of caring for other species and life on earth in all its diversity. It creates the imperative to live, produce and consume within ecological limits and with our share of ecological space, without encroaching on the rights of other species and peoples. We need to go beyond the popular but artificial false categories promoted by those in politics of perpetual economic growth, free-trade, consumerism and competitiveness. To have peace we need to develop a consciousness of the rights of the earth, of our duties towards earth, our compassion for all beings on the earth. It means challenging the capitalist patriarchy on which capital, corporations and growth are founded and which unleash destructive forces upon the earth. It means that we need to make peace with the earth, or face extinction as we humans push millions of other species to extinction. We need them as much as we need other humans! We need to overcome the illusion of separateness of humans and nature. We are part of nature and earth, not apart from it. We are one with the earth as the web of life is woven through interconnectedness. *Fr Claude Mostowik is president of Pax Christi Australia*

SPIRITUALITY FOR THE SEA CHANGE, Peter Herborn

Like Pax Christi itself my spirituality of peace originated in Catholicism but includes elements of other religions and spiritualities. At university I studied geography and planning and my career involved professional and academic work in both fields. I am sustained by the beauty and wonder of both the natural world and the city and feel compelled to conserve the environment and work for peace and justice. I am inspired by the love and dedication I have observed in students and colleagues in the environmental and social sciences.

*Accelerated climate change resulting from human activity is something I became aware of in the eighties. I have been shocked and dismayed by the intransigent opposition to science and effective action by vested interests, but encouraged by a resurgent environmental movement and by a growth in environmental awareness in the churches as evidenced by *Laudato Si'* and other documents. With my family I experience the multicultural richness of Sydney and I travel to World Heritage sites in different countries to reflect on and experience their beauty.*

As an earnest young university student I joined the Newman Society of which Ted Kennedy was the chaplain. Ted died in 2005 after becoming famous for his work in the Aboriginal community in Redfern and for a more inclusive and reforming church. That was the start of my exploration of the spirituality of peace, nonviolence and ecumenism. It has been an exploration shared with family, friends, colleagues and my local community.

As an older baby boomer I grew up with a worldview in which the 'enemy' was atheistic and the environment would sustain never-ending economic growth. Over the years a sea change has occurred in public consciousness. We have become more aware of the dangers of religious fanaticism and the endgame of environmental change. Unfortunately, although we have the technology to mitigate these problems, we lack a spirituality and ethic of peace with justice. Pax Christi is one of many organisations working to fill the spiritual and moral vacuum.

While there is evidence of sea change in public consciousness it has not penetrated some parts of the political establishment. The war in Vietnam was well under way before the protest movement gained traction. By contrast it is a measure of a new critical attitude towards war that there were massive public protests before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However the government of the day ignored the protest and committed to a long-running war. A better educated public has also become more aware of the seriousness of climate change but valuable time has been lost by governments pandering to vested interests. Advocates for peace with justice and environmental sustainability have had much work to do. Such advocates are at risk of burnout and cynicism from work that produces no visible results.

Spirituality can help us keep going with the hope for results that are deeper and perhaps not immediately visible. The bases of spiritualities are values which can be religious, humanitarian or a mix of both. Peace and justice are both value-laden concepts that transcend the immediate self-interest of the individual. Such values are found in a great variety of religious traditions and humanitarian philosophies. Where we start is largely a matter of chance but over time we can make choices and develop a personal philosophy and a spirituality of peace. If we look at the winners of the Sydney Peace Prize, for example, we will find diverse spiritualities underpinning their work and achievement.

For me the spirituality of peace is action informed by contemplation. Action is engagement with the world here and now. Like waves crashing into the rocks at the seashore, engagement with the world is turbulent and unpredictable. I admire Mohandas Gandhi. Although he was in the thick of political struggle he engaged in it in a very principled way. He developed a personal spirituality based on Hinduism but with elements from Christianity, Tolstoy and many other sources. He was critical of the caste system and creative in his leadership. Nelson Mandela as a prisoner on Robben Island never gave up hope and when in power practiced forgiveness rather than revenge. Contemplation is the stillness that can come from prayer, meditation, yoga and other practices. Like the rocks weathering the storm, contemplation and spirituality are the stillness within.

A sea change is occurring in public consciousness of the effects of war, poverty, climate change and environmental degradation. These days more people are travelling and getting firsthand experience and sharing it with social media. However many people feel like helpless spectators or guilty bystanders. We all need to do what we can in the light of a spirituality of peace and justice. We can start with the values we have been taught and begin a spiritual journey of discovery and action. I believe that there is a peace and justice dimension in the life of every human being. We can all seek truth and practice active nonviolence. This empowers us all.

Peter Herborn is a member of Pax Christi New South Wales; the Parramatta Diocese Commission for Ecumenism; and the Council for Peace with Justice at the University of Sydney.

A Spirituality of Peace to address Australis's & New Zealand's thinking about the 'War on Terror?' Margaret Tonkin

J'm assuming that the PXA's National Council is expecting a Bible based study to support our Christian peace making attitudes to conflict and war as a solution.

I disagree with the PXA National Council's recommendation that 'we' develop a spirituality of peace to address Australia's & New Zealand's thinking about the 'War on Terror'.

I haven't found the headings helpful, either: - to understand who we are; getting to know the face of the other; recognizing and celebrating diversity; violence to be acknowledge in our society; revolution of tenderness. It is important that the emphasis should be on 'what we have in common' as people, no matter where we live.

Is a Christian Peace Spirituality the approach to 'combat' the War on Terror? Might not a Muslim Peace Spirituality; a Hindu or Buddhist Peace Spirituality be just as appropriate?

How is a religious Peace Spirituality the answer to our national and international conflicts; is this the only way to assess the reasons for the many religious, ethnic, political world-wide instability?

I'm not wanting to deny the place of our revered texts and the scholarship that provides interpretation for today's application.

This is an opportunity to include a cross-disciplinary approach to our peaceful deliberations: to embrace the concept that Pope Francis wrote about in his recent *Laudato Si: on care for our common home*.

- That we have a responsibility to God [the Divine], our neighbour and the earth itself.

- "that the true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach, it must integrate the questions of justice in the debate on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*". p 44.

As well as protecting our human rights, it also includes the concept of Earth Jurisprudence and the rights of nature which suggests a rethinking of humanity's place in history – (ideas of Thomas Berry 1999, 2002; Thomas Berry & Brian Swimme 1992). Earth Jurisprudence – Wild Law – is the legal platform of Berry's *New Story*, winter 1978. These ideas are not new.

In gathering my thoughts to, I picked up a publication from early 1992 – transcripts of six lectures/discussions presented by Peter Mares on ABC Radio National: *Whatever Happened to the New World Order?* The geo-political scenario was the gulf war & George Bush snr's presidency. What has changed in the twenty-five years since?

While all papers are relevant to our concerns, my particular interest is in the pieces of Susan George, “*Who gives the orders in the New World Order?*”; Chandra Muzaffar, “*The New World Order: God or Gold?*”; Vandana Shiva “*Does the New world Order have trees?*” The final lecture by Benedict Anderson concluded that the world is in fact not moving towards order at all, but towards disorder. He highlighted the connection between capitalism and peace. . . . that the ‘free market’ is in control to command the economy and war; that there is an increase of mass migration and the re-grouping of ethnic groups.

Paul Rogers, emeritus professor of Peace Studies University of Bradford, has just published a book - “*Irregular War: ISIS and the new threat from the margins*”, 2016. I B Taurus – up-dating these earlier themes .

These ‘secular’ facts must be considered.

At the *Edward Said Lecture* on 5th May, 2016, in London, Naomi Klein , in her paper ‘*Let Them Drown*’, quotes from Eyal Weizman’s book “*The Conflict Shoreline*” August, 2015. He uses the word ‘othering’ when the other doesn’t have the same rights, the same humanity as those making the distinction. He describes a so-called ‘aridity line’, where there is on average 200 millimetres of rainfall a year: the desert areas the Middle East and Northern Africa. He gives examples of ‘*the connection between water and heat stress and conflict [which] is a recurring, intensifying pattern all along the ‘aridity line’ . . . from Libya, Palestine, to Pakistan & Afghanistan.*” He also discovered . . . ‘*an astonishing co-incidence*’ . . . [when] *you map the targets of western drone strikes . . . many of these attacks are directly on or close to the 200 mm aridity line*. *The Middle East has 2 natural resources (oil in abundance)and water (because of its scarcity) Klein continues, ‘Just as bombs follow oil and drones follow droughts, so boats follow both; boats filled with refugees fleeing homes on the aridity line ravaged by war and drought’.* p 7.

Two very challenging books that I’ve read in the last eighteen months emphasize a different approach to peacemaking - the personal/group reflective approach on the ‘how’ of peace-making: “*Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism*” by Allan Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul de Young Orbis Books 2012 and “*The Book of Forgiving: the Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our world.*” by Desmond M Tutu and Mpho A Tutu, 2014, William Collins.

Many years earlier at a Pax Christi Victorian conference, I was introduced to Matthew Fox – “*The Original Blessing*”. A Primer in Creation Spirituality presented in four Paths, Twenty-six themes and Two Questions. 1983, Bear & Co.

Those two questions are just as appropriate today:-

- In our quest for wisdom and survival, does the human race require a new religious paradigm?
- Does the creation-centred spirituality tradition offer such a paradigm?

Biblical principles have been my inspiration. But where have the practical steps been available to be comfortable with being a ‘sacred activist?’ - (Andrew Harvey : “*Hope – A Guide to Sacred Activism*”. 2009, Hay House.)

Where are the affinity groups to be able to role play and plan action e.g. Peace convergence activities? The many guided meditations and group activities for personal empowerment as in Joanna Macey - *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* , 1983 ? Where is the training for developing an inner peace?

What role do we have in promoting UN Conventions to be upheld in Australian law? Eg - UN Security Council 2005 declaration - Responsibility to Protect.

Do we lack *A Dream* as per Martin Luther King Jnr. or be able to *Imagine* as did John Lennon?

Margaret Tonkin is a member of Pax Christi Victoria

A Spirituality for Just-Peacemakers. Fr. Brian Johnstone

These reflections were written on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Long Tan (Vietnam) which took place on 18th August, 1966. In Australia this is also Vietnam Veterans’ day. 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1972. 521 died as a result of the war and over 3,000 were wounded. It was estimated that the total deaths due to the Vietnam conflict totalled 2,450,000 from 1954 to 1975. The estimates of civilian casualties range from 195,000 to 430,000. Lachlan Wilson, an Australian Vietnam veteran, composed a musical reflection on the war, entitled “Echoes of Conflict,” which veterans have chosen as their theme music. They have said that it expresses their emotional experience of the war. It is very different from the usual martial music of parades; it has an elegiac quality to it that evokes spirituality. This link between the Australian experience of war and spirituality suggested that our culture would now be open to the discussion that follows.

“Spirituality” has many meanings for our contemporaries. Many would now say that it is not “religion” that gives value and meaning to their way of life but their spirituality. “Spirituality” in this article will mean an account of what gives a transcendent value and meaning to one’s life. By transcendent I mean that which enables us to see beyond our immediate, day to day concerns and conflicts. It lifts our gaze above the merely useful and enables us to appreciate what is ultimately worthwhile in life. It is a way of imagining, feeling, thinking and choosing by which we give a cohesive and stable consistency to our lives. Spirituality is expressed in the beliefs we hold and live by, the stories we tell, the music we play, the songs we sing, the rituals we perform and in the ways we relate to others.

The term “pacifism” can also have multiple meanings. Critics have sometimes misinterpreted it as a readiness to accept peace at any price. The term just-peace-making serves to counter this charge. True peace must be based on justice.

Furthermore, this kind of peace cannot be assured by the passive acceptance of evil. To affirm this requirement, we speak of active peace-making. Peace, of course, was required by classic just-war doctrine as the ultimate purpose which justified war. But in this doctrine peace was invoked to justify violence. In the pacifist view, truly just peace cannot be attained by violent means; to claim that violence can be a means to true peace would be a contradiction. Thus, genuine pacifists insist that peace-making must be non-violent. How might we describe a spirituality for this kind of pacifism?

In 1965 Dorothy Day was asked by a Catholic pacifist to write a clear, theoretical, logical, manifesto of pacifism. She responded: "I can write no other than this: unless we use the weapons of the spirit, denying ourselves and taking up our cross and following Jesus, dying with Him and rising with Him, men will go on fighting, and often from the highest motives, believing that they are fighting defensive wars for justice and in self-defence against present or future aggression." Dorothy's reply does not provide arguments for pacifism. She gives an account of what shapes and sustains her way of life. In other words, she witnesses to her spirituality. She believed that this witness could challenge and transform the minds of those who believed they were fighting for justice.

In the place of the weapons of war, guns and missiles, Dorothy takes up the weapons of the spirit; which means taking up the cross. It is noteworthy that she does not self-righteously judge those who believe they are fighting against aggression. Rather she acknowledges their good motives; they believe that they are fighting for justice. It is because she recognizes the sincerity of those engaged in war that she can hope that they will ultimately be open to her witness. To die with Christ and to rise with him means for her to undergo a radical death to one's past and a conversion to a new life. Jesus accepted death at the hands of soldiers who were only obeying orders. But in so doing he transformed the meaning of death and made it a way to new life. What has to be done, Dorothy believed, is to manifest the possibility of such transformation as dramatically as one can in what one does and what one says. This was the driving conviction that inspired her participation in many demonstrations against war. It also impelled her opposition to the political and religious authorities who continued to support the war.

We can clarify the meaning of a spirituality of genuine pacifism by comparison with other varieties. For example, we can consider the spirituality of the warrior. This is ancient, but it is also very contemporary. It is clearly manifest in the religious aura that we in Australia are encouraged to associate with ANZAC. This spirituality requires self-sacrifice, even to the point of offering up one's life for one's people and nation. We dedicate shrines to the memory of the fallen. The warrior exercises the virtues of courage and loyalty to a high degree. Dorothy Day acknowledged the sincerity of the beliefs of warriors and their genuine virtues, but she condemned the wars they were compelled to fight and their violent actions. Her strongest condemnation was directed against the ideologies that justified violence and the misguided policies of the politicians who were entrapped by such ideologies.

Dorothy Day offers a spirituality that is deeply Christian but which enables Christians to collaborate with those of different faiths. Furthermore, it draws on and sustains constant action for peace. For these reasons, it is an appropriate spirituality for Australians who are committed to active just-peace-making.

Fr. Brian Johnstone is a Redemptorist moral theologian who has taught at Yarra Theological Union (Melbourne), the Alfonsian Moral Academy in Rome and at Catholic University in Washington. He is a member of the PXV Committee

Dr. Bill Williams

Pax Christi Australia joins with The Medical Association for the Prevention of War and the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons in expressing our sorrow at the sudden death of Dr Bill Williams. For decades, Bill spoke out passionately against nuclear weapons, nuclear power and uranium mining. He cared deeply for those in Australia, the Pacific and elsewhere in the world who have suffered from these horrific weapons and toxic industries. He was a man of great vision, passion and compassion. His belief in a world free of nuclear weapons and untethered from the nuclear fuel chain fired our work. His energy, intelligence, humanity and humour inspired all his friends, colleagues and fellow travellers.

In addition to co-founding ICAN, he was a leading figure in MAPW and International Physicians for the prevention of Nuclear War, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985 for helping bridge the Cold War divide, and educating decision-makers and the public about the medical consequences of nuclear war and the imperative to eradicate these weapons.

Amongst all this he was also a general practitioner in his beloved Torquay, on the Victorian surf coast, with ongoing regular work in the remote Aboriginal communities in the Western desert region of the Northern Territory. He loved life, he loved a good wave, he loved his family and friends and the work.

We share with you this quote from one of his many articles on the unparalleled danger of nuclear weapons: "We need a determined worldwide movement to outlaw and abolish nukes. To get there in this generation, we need to build the wave of public opinion into a mighty crescendo: a massive, surging, irresistible force which carries us all the way to absolutely zero nukes. Without it, even the most inspirational of leaders will falter on the way." **May he rest in Peace and Rise in Glory** (Harry Kerr taken from the ICAN Tribute)

NOTICE BOARD

**NEW SOUTH WALES
Pax Christi Meetings**

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

**Contact: Claude Mostowik
(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953**
The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 21 Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station

**THE ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY OF
WAR AND PEACE**

**Looking behind the headlines....
Saturday 4 March 2017
9.30am-4 pm**

Peace Connections Victoria will hold a one-day conference, exploring the economic and ecological contexts, causes and consequences underlying wars and violence preventing the search for a just & lasting peace.

The Conference will be *conversational* with a minimum of keynotes and plenary sessions; rather, the intention is to engage in deepening lying *behind* media and 'official' reporting and commenting

**QUEENSLAND
Pax Christi Meetings
Pax Christi Queensland**

**Pancras Jordan OP
0415 461 620
pancrasjordan@gmail.com**

**Clare Cooke SSpS
mccl@holyspirit.com.au**

**VICTORIA
Agapes and Public Forums**

October Agape

**PINE GAP AND
THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE**

Richard Tanter
Senior Research Associate at the Nautilus Institute and Professor in the School of Political and Social Studies at the University of Melbourne.

**Sunday 23rd October
12.30 for 1 p.m.**

at Kildara, near 39 Stanhope Street, East Malvern.

**Please Note
THIS IS THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE MONTH**

JCMA FRIENDSHIP WALK

COME ALONG & SPEND AN AFTERNOON
WALKING TOGETHER
IN FRIENDSHIP & GOODWILL
BETWEEN A CHURCH, A SYNAGOGUE & A MOSQUE.

**SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2016
2.00PM- 4.30PM**

DEPARTING FROM ST PETERS EASTERN HILL ANGLICAN CHURCH
15 GISBORNE STREET (CORNER OF ALBERT STREET) EAST MELBOURNE



Registration: 03 9287 5590 E: executiveofficer@jcma.org.au

**Sunday 4 December is
MELBOURNE
OPEN MOSQUE DAY**

**Visit a local Mosque
See what goes on
Meet people,
learn about Islam.
FIGHT PREJUDICE!**

**Pax Christi Victoria
Annual General Meeting**

**Sunday 19th November
12.30 for 1 p.m.**

at Kildara, near 39 Stanhope Street, East Malvern.

**Evaluate 2016
Have visions for 2016!**

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement - Pax Christi Australia. (Membership is from January to December)
(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of Disarming Times by e-mail)**

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

**ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)
Please return to: (New South Wales) P.O. Box A 681 Sydney Sth 1235,
All others: P.O. Box 31 Carlton Sth Vic. 3053**