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**Blessed are the
Peacemakers, for
they shall be called
the children of God.**

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Dr. Vicki Lott and Joyce James Present Their Work on Racism Within Austin Police Dept

Dr. Vicki Lott and Joyce James, LMSW, founder and CEO of [Joyce James Consulting](#), will be presenting their evaluation of the Austin, TX Police Department regarding the presence of racial inequities and institutional racism at the Pax Christi Little Rock Speaker Series on Thursday, July 15 at 6:30 pm CST. The City of Austin Office of Equity engaged JJC to “help identify racial inequities [in the dept.] and develop immediate and long-term strategies to eliminate them.”

Dr. Lott has a Ph.D. in Education and more than 30 years of experience focusing on early intervention, retention and graduation of first-generation minority students. She also has experience with pre-college bridge programs for K-12 students and has taught classes in critical thinking. Dr. Lott is a leader in Pax Christi Austin, serves on the Pax Christi USA National Council and works on the PCUSA Anti-Racism team. She is also a Racial Equity consultant with Joyce James Consulting. Although currently retired from her 32-year career in higher educa-

tion administration at five historically black colleges and universities, Dr. Lott remains passionate

about addressing the causes of institutional racism. Since leaving academia, she has also worked as a trained advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline and serves as co-chair of the social justice ministry at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Austin, TX.

Ms. James began her professional career as a Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworker and has established an impressive 40-year-history working to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. For the past 24 years, she has led the charge in Texas and across the country in raising issues of institutional and structural racism in many helping systems. Her journey from CPS caseworker to Assistant Commissioner of Texas

**PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK
SPEAKER SERIES**

Presents



Dr. Vicki Lott Joyce James

**Racial Inequities and Institutional
Racism: A Report Submitted to the City
of Austin Equity Office and the Austin
Police Department**

**Thursday, July 15
6:30 pm via Zoom**

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86565528969>

Peace Offerings

CPS, to leader of the Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities and the Texas State Office of Minority Health at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is a powerful one. Ms. James is also founder and CEO of Joyce James Consulting (JJC).

Ms. James has served on local, state and national boards, bringing her expert knowledge and personal experiences in leading anti-racist work. She has been recognized nationally for her leadership, her courage to speak out on racial inequities and her role in creating a movement across Texas to increase the knowledge and understanding among systems leaders of institutionalized racism as the underlying cause of racial inequities across all systems. She is best known as a pioneer of the first real efforts to address racial inequities in Texas CPS, and above all, for her ability to effect positive change in systems by capitalizing on the strengths of leaders. JJC issued [this report](#) in November, 2020 detailing the evaluation and specific programs developed to address the issues of racial inequity uncovered in the Austin City Police Department. Please take the opportunity to read this document prior to the talk on July 15. [Here is the link](#) for our zoom meeting.

"White privilege is not something you ask for nor can you give it away. It is inherent in the design of our systems and institutions. You only have to be White to get it. But, you can use it for good."

-Joyce James

SAVE THE DATE

PAX CHRISTI LR BOARD MEETING

**HOME OF LEE
AND AGNES BASS**

Thursday, July 8

6 pm

**Zoom link sent to those who can't
attend in person**

PCLR Members Join Pax Christi Memphis for Picnic Social

Several members of Pax Christi Little Rock took a road trip to Memphis, Tennessee on Saturday, June 26 to attend a picnic organized by Janice Vanderhaar at her home. Janice kindly invited



Janice Vanderhaar

PCLR members to join her and our sister organization for food, fellowship and fun. The gathering was attended by approximately 30 people and was designed to gather members and grow the organization after the recent lifting of Covid restrictions. Pax Christi LR and Pax Christi Memphis maintain communications on a monthly basis to support one another's mission of peacebuilding.

Peace Offerings

June Updates for the Pax Christi Little Rock Pantry Box Program

Happy 4th of July, Pantry Box Volunteers and Friends of Pax Christi!

The Pantry Box Committee had some significant changes in June. My husband and I moved to NW Arkansas in early June to be nearer our daughters and grandkids, and we added two new members to the Pantry Box Committee. **Mary Dandurand** and **Carol Lantz** joined the Committee. Mary is the new Fresh Food Team Leader and Carol the new Canned Goods Team Leader. We are so grateful to them for joining! One of the first things Mary did on joining was put together an **informational handout** on how the Pantry Box Program actually works in conjunction with Jericho Way and Settled Souls. If anyone would like to receive a copy, please let me know!

These are the people you helped in June:

The first week of June brought us **Charles**, a 55-year-old man from Little Rock. Charles became homeless when health problems caused him to lose certification to be a truck driver. He was not able to pay the rent and his savings ran out. While he was on the streets and in shelters he began to work with a case manager to negotiate the housing process. After seven months he has finally been placed in housing and has a job. Charles loves the outdoors, fishing, archery and horseback riding. He also likes to go to the library and read and to spend time with his church family. He is very happy to be in permanent housing.

The next week we had two move-ins. **Fred**, a 65-year-old man, came to Central Arkansas to stay with friends. In September of last year, due to domestic issues with friends, Fred ended up bouncing between shelters and the street. He was highly motivated to

get into permanent housing and get himself stable, but it took him five months to get there. He was so grateful for the items he received that made his new place feel like a home!

We also assisted **Nikita** who is 56 years old. He became homeless about two years ago when he lost his job. Since then, he has lived some of the time with family members and the rest of the time at shelters. He worked as a cook at Our House and the Compassion Center for a while. Right now he is working part time with his nephew's tree cutting service, but he hopes to have full time work soon. He was very appreciative of the services he received and most grateful for his bed, TV and microwave!

The fourth person we assisted in June was **Charlesetta**, a 58-year-old woman from McGee, AR. She moved to Little Rock about two years ago to help out her daughter, who was pregnant at the time. She has lived with her daughter since then. She started attending Inspiration Day Treatment, and they helped her get on the waiting list for public housing.

After patiently waiting for two years, Charlesetta is so happy to have a place of her own where she can enjoy reading, watching TV and listening to music!

As always, thank you to all the volunteers who make this program possible. You made a difference to these four people this month and helped them get off to a great start in permanent housing. Thank you for all you do!!

If you are not already a Pantry Box Program volunteer and are interested in learning more, please contact me and I'll

Peace Offerings

send you our new Pantry Box Program booklet. We are also looking for volunteers to sign up to help with move ins. You get a chance to see the Settled Souls volunteers in action and meet the people we serve. To get on the list of volunteers for move-ins, please email Jan Pipkin (minimitel@yahoo.com) or Lee Bass (lee.e.bass@gmail.com.) Move-ins are usually scheduled on Thursday mornings and volunteers meet at the storage unit to caravan to the move in site.

Please make a note that our **next packing meeting is in the dining hall at St. John's Catholic Center on Sunday, July 11 at 3 pm.** We will be **packing 8 tubs**, which should get us through the summer. See you there!

Blessings,

Susi Blanco and the Pantry Box Program Committee

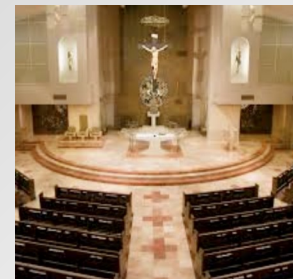
SHARING THE LOAVES AND FISHES

Sharing the loaves and fishes, you gave us an image of solidarity with the hungry, O Lord. Give me the hunger to be a part of the feeding and the healing of this world. Nourish me with your Grace, so I may work with joy to serve your children. Open my eyes and my heart to recognize those in poverty and increase my awareness of the structures and systems that need to be changed so we may all break bread together. In your name we pray for the end of hunger.

-[Education for Justice \(xavier.edu\)](http://xavier.edu)

Christ the King Catholic Church Donates \$2500 to Pax Christi LR

Christ the King Catholic Church generously donated \$2500 to assist Pax Christi Little Rock in fulfilling its backpacks filled with school supplies, pantry box for the homeless and several other missions that will take place throughout 2021-2022. Christ the King has supported Pax Christi for the past three years, increasing their donation each year as Pax Christi has grown. Many thanks to Fr. Erik Pohlmeier and the wonderful staff at CTK.



Christ the King

SAVE THE DATE

PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK AUGUST SPEAKER SERIES

Voices from Inside: Israelis Speak

Documentary film tracing Israeli evolution of consciousness from early Zionism, a Holocaust perspective and the seeds of militaristic nationalism to a positive modern perspective of conscience, honesty and reconciliation: the path to lasting peace.

August 19, 2021

6:30 PM VIA ZOOM

ZOOM LINK TO BE ANNOUNCED

Peace Offerings

BACKPACKS ARE BACK!



George happily unpacks

Each year around this time, Pax Christi Little Rock members look forward to one of their first established and what has grown into their largest outreach program to date: **Backpacks Filled with School Supplies.** This mission was initiated

in 2017, during Pax Christi Little Rock's first year of operation. At that time, school supplies for one school, our peace partner Rockefeller Elementary, were purchased and provided to the children in that school. Since that small beginning, Pax Christi has raised enough money each year to add new schools to the list. In our fifth year (2021-2022), Pax Christi will be providing supplies for 5 elementary schools throughout Arkansas: **Booker T. Washington (LRSD), Broadmoor Elementary (Pine Bluff), Carrol Smith (Osceola), St. Theresa's Catholic School (Little Rock) and North Little Rock Catholic Academy.** The total budget for this operation will be \$18,500. Many thanks to our peace partners



1082 backpacks to unpack



Sherry Simon counts



Mike from U-Storage Joins

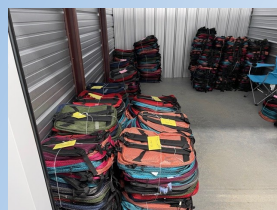
who made this possible with their generous donations this year. Major contributors who made our outreach possible include **James Browning, Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Raymond and Leslie Bertasi, Tony and Jan Pipkin, and Christ the King Catholic Church.**

This past Saturday, July 3, the first phase of the 2021-2022 mission began. One thousand-eighty-two backpacks were delivered to U-Storage in Maumelle. I mention this facility because of their generous support throughout this process. One of their employees, Mike, stayed for

hours helping unpack and organize the backpacks that were delivered in 44 boxes. He was so taken with the project that he is going to join our annual Packing Party. This year, the packing date has been set for Monday, August 9 at 6:30 pm. Location to be announced. As in years past, anyone who wants to be part of this event is encouraged to call or text Sherry at 501-258-8653.



Mike, George, Sherry M. and Sherry S.



Organized by school/grade

Peace Offerings

Pax Christi Little Rock Supports CHHS

Pax Christi Little Rock organized the Pilgrimage for Peace that was held on Sunday, April 18 this year. As part of this event, PCLR made the decision to donate the extra money raised via sponsorships or other means to the [Center for Healing Hearts and Spirits \(CHHS\)](#).

CHHS was created to assist victims of violent crimes and terminal illnesses and their affected families to improve the quality of their economic and social environment, transition back into the workforce and return to self-sufficiency. Joyce Raynor is the founder/executive director of this Arkansas based organization that serves clients throughout the state.

Mary Hunt, coordinator of the Pilgrimage for Peace, and Sherry Simon met with Ms. Raynor on June 17. They were given a tour of the facility and met the staff members that coordinate CHHS' many programs. Pax Christi Little Rock then presented Ms. Raynor with a donation totaling \$725.



PCLR Presents Checks

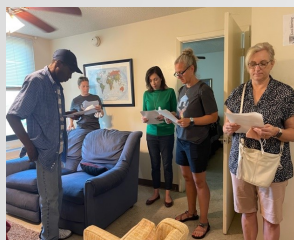
PCLR Members Attend Blessing of Roland's Home

Volunteers from Jericho Way, Settled Souls, and Pax Christi Little Rock who were involved in Roland's

move to housing after a long period of being unsheltered gathered to bless his new home on June 17. Steve Hoffman, board member with Settled Souls, organized the event. Representatives from the different agencies blessed each room in Roland's apartment.



Blessing of the Kitchen



Blessing of Living Room

Settled Souls and Jericho Way had housed Roland for the first time in Nov., 2016. However, he had money problems and lost his housing shortly afterwards. Roland moved into his current home on April 7, 2021 and Settled Souls/Pax Christi provided furnishings and food on April 15, 2021.

During the gathering before the blessing began, Roland stated over and over that he wouldn't lose this home and proudly offered everyone a chair to sit in. He sat on his couch, smiling, and welcomed all into his new home.



Roland and friends

Peace Offerings

PAX CHRISTI USA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021: FRIDAY, JULY 30-SATURDAY, JULY 31



The annual Pax Christi USA National Conference returns in July 2021!

When:

- Friday, July 30, 6-9 pm CST
- Saturday, July 31, 11 am-6 pm CST

Special pre-conference events on:

- Thursday evening, July 29, 7-9 pm CST EDT, sponsored by the Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus
- Friday afternoon, July 30, 12-4 pm CST, sponsored by the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

WHERE: This year's conference will take place via Zoom. Participants will receive special links to various events a few days prior to the conference.

Registration is free although participants are asked to consider a special donation to Pax Christi USA to help cover the costs of the conference and fund ongoing projects. [Use this link to make a donation](#) and please choose "2021 National Conference" on the dropdown menu by the "use my donation for" box. If you prefer not to donate online, you can also send in a check to Pax Christi USA, attn: 2021 National Conference, 415 Michigan Ave. NE, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20017.

[Click here to fill out the registration form.](#)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Olga Marina Segura

Olga Segura is the author of *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church*. Ms. Segura is a freelance writer and the opinion editor at *National Catholic Reporter*, previously serving as an associate editor at America Media, where she wrote and solicited articles on race and culture. She is co-founder and former co-host of the podcast, "Jesuitical." Her writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Latino Rebels*, *Shondaland*, *Sojourners*, *Refinery29*, and *The Revealer*. Prior to her work at America Media, Olga was an intern at the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations. She graduated from Fordham University with a BA in English and a BA in Italian Language and Literature. She speaks Italian and Spanish fluently and was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Ms. Segura will speak on Friday evening, July 30, 6-9 pm CST.

[Here is a breakdown of the entire schedule.](#)

Pax Christi Little Rock board and peacemakers, please consider registering for this conference. There will be breakout sessions dealing with several areas of interest that we have touched on in our speaker series. Olga Segura's talk on systemic racism should be quite enlightening. The breakout sessions on Saturday will address topics including nuclear weapons and intersectional justice, Pope Francis's challenge to cultivate "antibodies of justice, charity, and solidarity", defining Pax Christi and "does our reality match our tagline," advancing narratives and socio-political analyses concerning migration, and coming out of the pandemic into new life. Let's get to know our fellow peacemakers, learning how we can all come together to work for peace through social justice in our time.

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SOPHIA WISDOM: REDISCOVERING THE DIVINE FEMININE IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Sherry Simon

I pray and talk to Sophia everyday in the same breath that I speak to God, intertwined. I started to do this several years ago after I had a dream about a baby named Sophia that I found hidden in a closet.



Sophia Wisdom

She was not crying. Just very quiet and somber. But, she loved being found. She smiled and was playful when I would hold her. And she would talk to me without words. She provided me with so much food for thought. But somehow in my dream, she kept being put back in the closet. And I would have to go back there to find her, over and over again. It was then I realized that in my Catholic faith, I was actively putting the feminine aspect of God (Wisdom) in the closet even though I had directly experienced Sophia and her positive effect on my life. Instead of trusting in this feminine aspect of God, I continued to return to the patriarchy of the institutional Church to guide me on my path. But the answers, although often containing wisdom, were not complete for me as a woman. And so I continued to search for Sophia.

Sophia has been described by Thomas Merton in his book, *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, as “the diffuse Shining of God. Sophia is Gift, is Spirit, Donum Dei. She is God-given and God Himself

as Gift. Sophia in all things is the Divine Life reflected in them.” My favorite passage describing Wisdom (Sophia) is in the book of Proverbs 8:24-30. “When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there was no fountains or springs of water; before the mountains were settled into place, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet the earth and fields were not made, nor the first clods of the world. When he established the heavens I was there, when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above, when he fixed fast the foundations of the earth; when he set for the sea its limit, so that the waters should not transgress his command; then I was beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while.”

As a woman, I can relate to this feminine side of my God. Not gender feminine, (God is so much more than gender-specific) but spiritually, psychologically and philosophically feminine. The regenerative, receptive, creative, peaceful, nurturing, loving and giving aspect of God. God is All, so God is more than the masculine attributes we have historically and culturally assigned.

So, I have long wondered about what might happen in my beautiful yet scarred Church if the feminine were placed side by side with the masculine and both allowed to speak reciprocally with one another. It sounds like a good marriage, doesn't it? A conjunction of

Peace Offerings

masculine and feminine energy that has the potential, through love, to heal our world. This would require women being given the same respect as men, their different thoughts and processes being considered on par with men. Unfortunately, our Church has some roads to travel before this can be a reality.

In my search for Sophia, I began to read Wisdom literature. Historically, authors began referring to Sophia between 33 B.C. and 4-5 A.D. It is interesting that there are only four other figures mentioned more than Sophia in the Old Testament: Yahweh, Moses, David, and Job. So why don't we hear much about Sophia (Wisdom)?

Sophia was not always obscure. In fact, the early church knew Sophia quite well. However, many Greek and Egyptian goddess cults still existed during that time and there was some concern among Christians that worshipping Sophia would be associated with these cults. This fear of the goddesses was one reason why the early Roman church gradually disconnected from Sophia.

During that same time, Gnosticism was also growing. This early Christian sect had a special devotion to Sophia, crediting her with the creation of the universe. The Gnostics were eventually charged with heresy, not because of their devotion to Sophia, but because they rejected the material world. In their passion for the inner life, the Gnostics valued only the spiritual and intellectual realms. They taught that Jesus was never incarnated and that salvation was only to be attained through knowledge of the inner self. As the Church drew away from the Gnostics, it also turned away from devotion to Sophia for fear of appearing to approve gnostic beliefs.

I believe that Sophia is a lost treasure of our Christian faith that is in need of recovery. In biblical literature, Sophia is

revealed as having great depth and being full of mystery. Although she is "readily seen by those who seek her" (Wis 6:12), she is in the same moment hidden in mystery and needs to be discovered. Sirach 15: 20-22 notes: "Happy is the person who meditates on Sophia,



**St. Sophia Holy
Wisdom**

who reflects in one's heart on Sophia's ways and ponders her secrets, pursuing her like a hunter, and lying in wait on her paths."

I have noticed when attending Eastern Churches (both Catholic and Orthodox) that there is much emphasis placed on being attentive and alert in order to understand the messages that God is delivering. These traits are also prerequisite for discovering Sophia (Wisdom). In our busy modern lives, it is so easy to lose sight of our path. We discover Divine Wisdom by paying attention in each moment, and she is always available to guide us in our lives if we are open to her presence.

So, in addition to paying attention, how can we find this lost treasure? We must look for her. By her very nature, she is relational, present in the world, interacting among us all in our very ordinary lives. By praying to her, reading about her in scripture, desiring to know her better, and opening our minds and hearts, her wisdom and radiance will shine through our lives. Sadly, we need Sophia now more than ever in our broken world. It is past time for Christians to recover the richness of this legacy of divine feminine that has been lost as we are in dire need of her compassionate presence, wisdom, and love.