



Pax Christi

LITTLE ROCK

Pax Christi Little Rock

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

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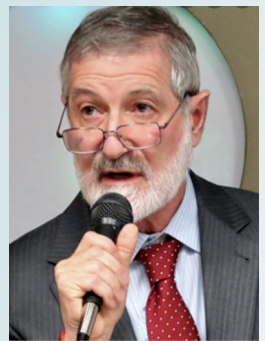
Dr. Ira Helfand to Present Seeds of Peace: The Case for Nuclear Disarmament

Pax Christi Little Rock will host a return of Dr. Ira Helfand via zoom on Thursday, June 17 at 6:30 pm CST. Dr. Helfand is co-President of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and past President of the Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), IPPNW's US affiliate. He has published studies on the medical consequences of nuclear war in the New England Journal of Medicine, the British Medical Journal and the World Medical Journal.

In September of 2015, Dr. Helfand addressed a special session of the United Nations General Assembly. In May of 2016, he led the session on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear war at the UN Open Ended Working Group meeting in Geneva.

Dr. Helfand was educated at Harvard College and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He was once introduced to an audience at a Red Cross lecture as the "quietest and scariest person on the planet" as he described in great detail the impact of nuclear war on our planet.

His approach has been extremely effective over the years as PSR, the antinuclear weapons organization that he helped



Dr. Ira Helfand

found, shared in a Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. In 2017, the daughter organization of IPPNW, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) also won a Nobel Peace prize.

Dr. Helfand described becoming active in nuclear disarmament 40 years ago when he and several other physicians became concerned about the public health threat posed by nuclear power and felt like they had a responsibility to address these health concerns. However, they quickly became aware of the far greater threat posed by nuclear weapons, realizing that this was the greatest threat to public health "in the history of the world."

In his article, "Nuclear Famine: 2 Billion People at Risk?," Dr.

Peace Offerings

Helfand describes a scenario in which even a limited nuclear war, one that might involve other nuclear powers like India and Pakistan, would in fact be a threat to the entire world. Several studies indicate that even in this limited engagement up to 20 million people would die in the first week as a result of the fires, explosions and short-term radiation effects. However, the extreme global consequences would come from climate disruption. With the explosion of 100 Hiroshima-sized bombs even in a limited area, approximately 5.5 million tons of soot would be thrown into the upper atmosphere. This would block out the sun, cool the planet, dry out the planet as less water evaporates from the ocean when the air is cooled to fall back as precipitation, shorten the growing season and expose the planet to greater levels of ultraviolet radiation. This would trigger a world-wide famine that would put up to two billion people at risk for starvation. Although Dr. Helfand doesn't believe that this would lead to the extinction of our species, he postulates that if this were to happen it would be the end of civilization as we know it, completely disrupting our economic and social systems. He said a large-scale nuclear war between the US and Russia, of course, would have consequences far more catastrophic and that the possibility of this type of war is ever-present. For these reasons, he has spent his life researching, writing and speaking on the threat of nuclear war and the necessity for disarmament. Join Pax Christi in this vital discussion on how we can work together to avoid the frightening consequences of nuclear war.

PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK SPEAKER SERIES

presents



Dr. Ira Helfand

**Seeds of Peace:
The Case for Nuclear
Disarmament**

Thursday, June 17

6:30 pm via Zoom

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89158450068>

SAVE THE DATE

**PAX CHRISTI LR
BOARD MEETING AND
POTLUCK AT THE
PIERINIS**

Thursday, June 10

6 pm

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

Peace Offerings

May Updates for the Pax Christi Little Rock Pantry Box Program

We made it to June and summer! It was a busy spring for Settled Souls and our Pantry Box Program. Our last report ended with Lucinda who moved into her own place on April 30th. She was so grateful to have her fridge and shelves so well stocked!

Our first move in May was to assist Charlotte and her daughter, who is expecting a baby. Charlotte is 42 years old, originally from Little Rock. After some issues with the management at her previous apartment, she had to move out for the family's safety. She tried Mississippi for a few weeks, but came back to Little Rock and applied for housing. Charlotte is so happy to have a place of her own again. When her grandchild is born, all three of them will share their new apartment. Charlotte enjoys reading and is looking forward to her new grandbaby.

The next move was Ronald (age 54) and Raymond (age 34). They had been homeless for about two months while they searched for affordable housing. Ronald is from California. He has five sisters and is close to his family. Ronald likes to read, to keep up with the news and to research topics of interest online. Raymond is originally from Arizona, has two brothers and is close to his family. Raymond enjoys listening to music and relaxing. They are so glad to be in permanent housing.



The following week

brought two moves! First we had Latanja Lewis, a 49-year-old woman from Kansas City. She moved to Arkansas in 2015 and

worked as a housekeeper. Unfortunately she got into some legal trouble and served four years in prison. Upon her release, she was homeless. She worked odd jobs but was not able to afford housing. After waiting almost one year Latanja is so happy to have a home. Latanja and her mate, Malcolm, have been together since her release from prison. Latanja enjoys cooking, writing and coloring. The second move was very out of the ordinary. A 90 year old woman had been dropped off for an appointment at UAMS, but no one came to pick her up. UAMS social workers and community advocates worked to find her a place to live, Settled Souls provided furnishings and our Pantry Box program provided food. It's so wonderful when all the different elements come together like that!



Our last move for May was James, a 62 year old man from Dumas. He lost his home due to arson and has been homeless for seven years. He had trouble getting back on his feet after losing everything. He has been staying at the Compassion Center and hotels. He recently started a new part time job hopes to be able to stay in his new housing. James likes to listen to gospel music and go to church.

Peace Offerings



We had a great packing meeting last Sunday and we packed six tubs to try to keep up with the demand.

Now that it is safer to be together, we encourage volunteers to come to the packing meetings. It's a great chance to meet other volunteers and to find out about upcoming Pax Christi events. It also means that we are able to go help set up the moves. If you are able to help with a move, please contact Lee Bass (lee.e.bass@gmail.com) or Jan Pipkin (minimite1@yahoo.com). Moves are usually scheduled on Thursday mornings at around 8am. Lindsey and Stephanie are so organized! It's great to see them in action.

As always, thanks so much for volunteering with our Pax Christi Pantry Box Program. You made a huge difference to all the people you just read about.

Peace and Blessings,

Susi Blanco



**Pax Christi USA
National
Conference**

Keynote Speaker:
Olga Segura



Save the date!

Friday July 30th
Saturday July 31st

Location:

Virtual Conference
Details to follow

The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country. Deuteronomy 15:11



PRAYER FOR HOMELESS "MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN"

Precious Holy Spirit, I come to You with a broken heart for all our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living with no security, no shelter, and no safety from the outside world. Please be with all the men, women, and children in our world who are homeless. Give them extra warmth, peace, and guidance like only heaven can send. Let angels hold their hands at all times, ease their worries, and provide opportunities for a better life. Give them hope where there is no hope and provide wisdom as they work through their trials. Lord, let them know they are loved, prayed for, and your precious children who will never be forgotten. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



ConnectUs



SAVE THE DATE

PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK SPEAKER SERIES

**DR. VICKI LOTT
JOYCE JAMES**

**RACIAL INEQUITIES AND
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: A REPORT
SUBMITTED TO THE CITY OF
AUSTIN EQUITY OFFICE AND THE
AUSTIN POLICE DEPT.**

JULY 15, 2021

6:30 PM VIA ZOOM

ZOOM LINK TO BE ANNOUNCED

Peace Offerings

PCLR Stands for Peace in the Middle East at the “Speak Up for Palestine” Rally



Pax Christi and ACPJ

Members of Pax Christi Little Rock attended the Speak Up for Palestine rally held on Saturday, May 22 at 2 pm in Little Rock.

The event started out on the grounds of the Clinton School of Public Service. Participants then walked about .5 miles over to the River Market area where several speakers provided information and personal experience related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.



Save the Children

Palestinian-Americans told stories about their parents and grandparents continuing to hold onto the

keys to their homes that were razed or occupied by force by the Israeli military police.

There was also information shared on the raid of the Al-Aqsa mosque during the 23rd day of Ramadan. Palestinian witnesses said the fighting began after the police entered the mosque compound and began firing rubber bullets. More than 330 Palestinians were in-



PCLR Stands for Peace



Clinton School Gathering

Sara Tariq and Sophia Said played major roles in organizing this event. It seemed to make a difference that the organizers were women. Early into the program at the River Market, a white male in the area began yelling incendiary remarks to the group. Although several Palestinian men began to respond in an equally hostile manner, Sara Tariq calmly asked them to stand back and not respond to the hatred. “Turn your back on the hate,” she said. And they did just that. The rally continued on in a peaceful manner.



Caroline Speaks

Over 400 people attended the rally. They were given the opportunity to hear the experiences of their people and to share with those in this country who have not heard the entire story.



The crowd grows

Peace Offerings

The Fraternal Order of the Eagles Generously Offers Support for Pax Christi Projects

The Fraternal Order of the Eagles has been a Peace Partner with Pax Christi Little Rock for many years. They provided funding for backpack pro-



Fraternal Order of Eagles

jects in 2017/2018 as well as two trips to Puerto Rico to rehab homes after Hurricane Maria. The Eagles have a history of providing whatever amount of money we have requested, with the simple requirement that the monies go directly to people in need.

So, this year Pax Christi has been blessed to have several sources of funds for our different projects. Raymond Bertasi has graciously built around 60 birdhouses and donated proceeds beyond expenses to our backpack project, currently approaching his personal goal of \$5000. This contribution, along with other funds raised, made it possible to provide supplies for four schools. We were very happy about reaching that goal. However, our wonderful committee chair and treasurer, Sherry Martin, has wanted to add a school each year to our project. Last year, we funded three schools and gave bulk supplies to several Pine Bluff schools. So this year, Sherry set a goal of serving five schools. We had just about given up on that possibility when the Eagles came

through once again.

The beautiful thing about the Eagles is that you hardly have to ask for the donation. George Simon was having an unrelated conversation with the Eagle's past president, Chuck Bajorek. Chuck asked about Pax Christi and the different projects currently underway. George told him about the 5th year of the backpack program and then also mentioned our pantry box program with Settled Souls and Jericho Way. At that point, Chuck invited us to come to their monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 8 at the Aerie to present our programs to their board. Even before Tuesday, however, Chuck called to let us know that the men had decided already to donate \$2500 to the backpack filled with school supplies project. When we showed up Tuesday night, the women's auxillary determined that they would donate an additional \$5000 to the backpack as well as the pantry program, bringing the total donation to \$7500! Funny enough, once again this was the exact amount of money we needed as Sherry had estimated costs to add an extra school at \$6500. The extra \$1000 will allow us to continue our work with Settled Souls and Jericho Way. Pax Christi buys the more expensive food items for the start-up pantries including chicken, tuna and chili while volunteers fund the other pantry items. We hope to take some of the financial burden off of our volunteers by now being able to buy more items with Pax Christi funds.

We are so very grateful to our friends over at Aerie 60! Thank you for all you do!

Peace Offerings

“Simon, do you love me? ... Feed my sheep” – A reflection on why denying communion to Catholic politicians is an act of violent coercion

Tom Cordaro

Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace

As a Catholic striving to be faithful to the call to nonviolence exemplified by the life and teachings of Jesus, I am scandalized by those bishops and priests in the United States who would deny the Eucharist to politicians who disagree with them on the best way to eliminate abortions and create a culture of life.



And now this scandal is in danger of metastasizing because the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops will consider voting on a document prepared by its Committee on Doctrine that would encourage all bishops to deny the Eucharist to all politicians who do not support their strategy of outlawing all abortions. The Church teaches that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. To deny access to the Eucharist is to deny fellow Catholics the spiritual sustenance they need to thrive. It constitutes an act of violent coercion – in effect starving those Catholics into submission who will not obey the dictates of the bishops.

Thankfully there are other bishops who are speaking out against this kind of

action. Bishop Robert McElroy (in [America magazine](#)) was right to say, “I do not see how depriving the president or other political leaders of the Eucharist based on their public policy stance can be interpreted in our society as anything other than a weaponization of the Eucharist ... to pummel them into submission.”

I find nothing in the life and teachings of Jesus that would support this kind of violence. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus not merely ministered to sinners but identified with them. Nothing more illustrates this point than Jesus’ practice of table fellowship. In the Middle East, table fellowship or sharing a meal is a particularly intimate form of association. Most would never eat and drink with a public sinner. The scandal Jesus caused in that society by mixing socially with public sinners (tax collectors, drunkards and prostitutes) can hardly be imagined today (c.f. *Jesus Before Christianity*, by Albert Nolan). In the parables he told and in his own behavior throughout his life, Jesus demonstrated that our fellowship table should be open to all (Mk 1:15-17, Lk 7:36-50, Lk 14:15-24, Lk 15:11-32, Lk 19:1-10). Even at the Last Supper, knowing he would be betrayed and abandoned by his own friends, Jesus broke bread with all of his disciples, including Judas.

Peace Offerings

Like many Pax Christi members I am very passionate about Catholic Social Teaching and the call to protect and defend the dignity of life from womb to tomb. At the same time I am often disappointed by the lack of commitment to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching by many of our Catholic brothers and sisters who hold positions of responsibility in politics, business and sadly even in the Church. But it would never occur to me to seek the exclusion of any of these members of our Catholic family from the Eucharistic Table.

After his resurrection Jesus asks Simon Peter to demonstrate his love for him by caring for his flock. Three times the apostle is asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter replies emphatically, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." And Jesus commands him, "Feed my sheep."

Jesus did not say, "Feed only those sheep who follow the rules." He did not say, "Feed only those who are free of serious sin." He did not say, "Feed only those who do what they are told."

For those who do not feel that the life and teachings of Jesus are enough reason to oppose these violent acts by members of the clergy, let me site some other reasons for opposing these actions.

1. Denying Communion to others is a counter-sign of the true meaning of the Eucharist.

Pope Francis teaches that the Eucharist is not a prize awarded for good behavior; it is a source of healing, mercy

and reconciliation. He goes on to say, "If we don't feel in need of God's mercy and don't think we are sinners, it's better not to go to Mass; the Eucharist is a celebration of Christ's gift of himself for the salvation of sinners, which is why the Mass begins with people confessing they are sinners and begging for the Lord's mercy."

The Church teaches that prior to receiving Communion individuals should examine their conscience and should refrain from participation if they are guilty of mortal sin. While this is true, it is a matter between God and the individual; not a matter of ecclesial policing.

The Eucharist should not be weaponized in order to punish or shame others because we all stand before the Lord as sinners in need of mercy, forgiveness and healing. Just before receiving the Eucharist we recall the words of the Roman centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Speak but the word and I shall be healed."

2. Denying Communion to those who disagree with the application of Church teaching further erodes the teaching authority of the bishops.

Bishops who resort to violent acts of coercion in an attempt to force a change in the behavior or beliefs of their brothers and sisters in Christ are abdicating their role as teachers. Their resort to violence is an admission of their failure to persuade their fellow Catholics of the validity of their strategy. By acting this way they show themselves more as inquisitors than instructors; more authoritarian than pastoral.

Peace Offerings

The failure of the bishops' teaching on abortion is evident in polling conducted by multiple sources — ranging from Pew Research to conservative Catholic media outlet EWTN — indicating that most Catholics in the U.S. believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases. And there is no evidence to show that punishing and shaming those who disagree ever resulted in changing hearts and minds.

Bishops and other clergy can preach and teach about the reasons the Church rejects abortion. They can lobby and they can participate in nonviolent direct action to stop abortions. They can encourage, support, and advocate for the rights and dignity of women and their children. They can condemn those social forces that promote the sexual objectification of women. They can fight against all the root causes of abortion in our society.

All of these avenues are open to the bishops to make clear what the Church teaches. But when Jesus disarmed his disciples from using the sword to protect him (Mt 26:52), he forever removed the option of using violent coercion as a means of protecting the faith.

3. Denying Communion to others based on a narrow reading of Catholic Social Teaching undermines the entire tradition.

In “Gaudete et Exultate,” Pope Francis warns against thinking that “the only thing that counts is one particular ethical issue or cause.” He reminds us: “Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of develop-

ment. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”

By reserving this violent punishment and shaming only for those politicians who reject the bishops' political and legal strategy to end abortion, the bishops undermine the totality of Catholic Social Teaching and risk making the Church social teaching a partisan political tool. It gives support to those Catholics who urge government intervention to stop abortions but reject government intervention to enact other aspects of Catholic Social Teaching that protect and defend the dignity of human life.

4. This action by the bishops will sow distrust and enmity in the Body of Christ.

The action being contemplated by the bishops' conference could have the effect of poisoning the bonds of community in parishes across the country. This Communion ban, directed at politicians, is based on the argument that because they are public figures, their punishment can take the public form of exclusion from the reception of Communion.

But why stop at politicians? Aren't Catholics who publicly support these politicians equally at fault? And what about Eucharistic Ministers, lectionary readers, sacristans and other liturgical ministers who attend rallies or volunteer for the campaigns of these politicians? Aren't they also acting in “public”? Shouldn't they all be banned from the Eucharistic Table?

Peace Offerings

This ban, in the hands of parish anti-abortion zealots, will be a weapon they can use to exact punishment on all those in parish lay leadership positions and ministries who do not adequately embrace the anti-abortion strategies of the U.S. bishops. Fear and forced silence will begin to dominate parish life as many parishioners are forced to live double lives; one in the church building and another as free citizens. In one life they will be free to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens and in their other life they will be forced to live a lie.

Pope Francis warned against clergy who “act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators.” He warned that parishes should not operate as “a toll-house,” but as a space with open doors “where there is place for everyone.” This ban will force pastors to become grand inquisitors, constantly worried about running afoul of the anti-abortion zealots in their parish who will report them to their bishops if they fail to properly police their flock.

Bans like the one being contemplated by the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Conference are a prime example of why our young people are leaving the Church. Some leave because they have lost their faith, but most leave in order to save what faith they have. Our young people are not leaving because they reject Jesus; they are leaving because those who profess faith in him have rejected what he taught, lived, died and rose to do.

5. None of us are worthy; that is why all are welcome.

The Eucharist is powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak: it is food for our journey. When we gather around the Eucharistic Table we do so not as conservatives or liberals; not as traditionalists or progressives; but as brothers and sisters in Christ. We gathered around the table in recognition of our sinfulness and our need for God’s mercy – this is even true for bishops and cardinals. How can anyone of us turn to our brother or sister and say you are not worthy to gather at this table?

As Pope Francis points out, “In reality, those who participate in the Mass don’t do so because they think or want to believe they are superior to others, but precisely because they know they are in need of God’s mercy.”

Speaking before a joint session of Congress, Pope Francis raised up the witness of three Americans that best exemplified the best of who we are. One of them was the Trappist monk Thomas Merton who wrote: “Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody’s business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy.”

What binds us together is our common recognition of the need for mercy and forgiveness. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.”