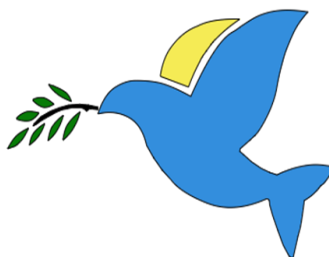


Board Members

- Sherry and George Simon (Co-Presidents)
- Jan Pipkin (VP-Community Relations)
- Tim Pruitt (VP-Operations)
- Sandee Haslauer (Secretary)
- Janie Kelley (Treasurer)
- Al Adams
- Darlynton Adegor
- Margaret Douglas
- Mary Hunt
- Rosalyn Pruitt
- Father Warren Harvey (Chaplain)

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Pax Christi
LITTLE ROCK

June 30, 2026
Volume 10 Issue 2
Quarterly News-
letter

Peace Offerings

2026 Speaker Series for May

Arkansas United: Building a Home for All



On Thursday, May 28 at Fitzgerald Hall on the St John Diocesan Campus, **Mireya Reith**, the Executive Director of *Arkansas United* (AU), spoke to the friends of Pax Christi Little Rock, updating us on the current plight of immigrants in Arkansas. Founded in 2012, *Arkansas United* is (from their website) “a nonprofit based in Springdale that is dedicated to empowering immigrants and their communities through immigrant rights advocacy and closing service gaps.” Those immigrants relatively new to our country, those on the path to legal status, the undocumented, those with temporary protected status, the Dreamers living under DACA, all have been living very uncertain and scary lives since the Trump Administration closed our borders and initiated mass detention and mass deportation as a “solution to our immigration problem.” Catholic Bishops (Special Message on Immigration) have called for an end to indiscriminate mass deportations. Reith told us that in recent days President Trump has hinted at using

banking regulations and conditions on home loans to further restrict immigrant rights, adding additional anxiety.

AU has worked tirelessly to support all immigrants. They have provided critical lifelines via nearly 200 Trusted Community Navigators and 11 regional Resource Centers, helped pass 9 pro-immigrant workforce laws over 4 legislative sessions, and built partnerships with community leaders to minimize the overall chilling effects from the governmental overreach that is causing families to avoid critical healthcare, food assistance, and even school attendance.

Reith issued a call to action for the PCLR group, seeking help with building up the partnerships that will lead to systemic change. Several initiatives aim to connect friendly employers and corporate allies with the ever expanding and increasingly skilled immigrant workforce. She encouraged us to build relationships one person at a time, discovering those values that unite us and inspire us to cooperate in bringing about systemic change.

Reith is truly a kindred spirit with Pax Christi Little Rock as she grounds her work in Matthew 25:35. “For I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” As she states: *We view immigration not as a partisan debate, but as a baseline test of our collective faithfulness to human dignity.* Find ways to support the work of Arkansas United at <https://arkansasunited.org/>.

Speaker Series for June 2026: **Brian Burton** with Arkansas Food Bank

On June 25, Mr. Brian Burton, executive director of the Arkansas Food Bank (AFB), was the featured speaker at the Pax Christi Little Rock Speakers Series, typically held each 4th Thursday of the month in Fitzgerald Hall on Little Rock 's St John Diocesan Campus, 2414 North Tyler St. Burton, a Little Rock native, assumed leadership of AFB in 2022 after a decade long stint as head of a regional food bank in Las Vegas to continue the work of alleviating hunger, this time in his home state. The Food Bank, with its central warehouse in Little Rock and branch locations in Warren and Lexa, serving 33 counties in central and southern Arkansas via a network that includes over 400 local partners, is our state's largest hunger-relief organization. Burton described the work of the AFB: getting donations of money and food from a variety of private, governmental, and business organizations, storing the food, then coordinating its distribution to partner agencies, with the partner agencies then getting the food to pantries, meal programs, senior centers, schools, colleges, and emergency shelters. The data for 2025 are truly amazing: 33.1 million meals distributed, 39.7 million pounds of food distributed (with 10.8 million of that being produce), over \$500,000 in food credits to partner agencies, with over 54,000 volunteer hours—greatly reducing staffing costs. This work is so important in Arkansas, given our dubious first-place ranking in our nation's food insecurity,



as evidenced by 1 in 4 of our children, 1 in 5 of our overall population, and 1 in 8 of our seniors all facing hunger.

Under his leadership, the AFB has been able to increase food distribution and increase its overall impact by developing new partnerships that lead to greater community engagement. As our country's Catholic Bishops have done, Burton encouraged us all to advocate for continuation and even increasing allocations for federal nutrition efforts, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

"Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless..." Isaiah 58:7.

Brief History and Update on Pax Christi Little Rock's Food Pantry Mission

For many years now PCLR volunteers have provided food boxes to those folks transitioning into permanent housing, this in support of Settled Souls, a 501 (C3) ministry founded in 2016 by the parishioners at Little Rock's Holy Souls Catholic Church. Volunteers working in 'move teams' provide essential home furnishings, including beds, furniture, housewares, and thanks to PCLR food supplies for the first few days in the clients' new dwelling.

The logistics for PCLR's contribution go like this. Team members periodically volunteer at their expense to provide 5 identical food items, such as 5 bags of rice or 5 cans of soup. Then other team members meet to load 5 pantry boxes with the donated items. For the more expensive items such as canned meats PCLR foots the bill. The "Fresh Team" members volunteer to supply fresh food (examples include milk, butter, eggs, cheese, vegetables) at the last minute just before the boxes are delivered during one of the "move ins." During this last quarter volunteer teams gathered once, on April 12, to load the boxes.

In 2021 an additional move team joined Settled Souls, a team from Christ the King Catholic Church (CTK),

to help with the growing needs of the community. In the ministry's early days the families being served were primarily identified by **Jericho Way**, a DePaul USA day resource center for the homeless in Little Rock. Now many of the referrals are coming from **Our House**, a local non-profit providing a safe haven and creating opportunities for families and individuals working to overcome homelessness. During this last quarter the CTK team moved three families and the Holy Souls team moved one.



The CTK Move Team after settling a family in their new place.

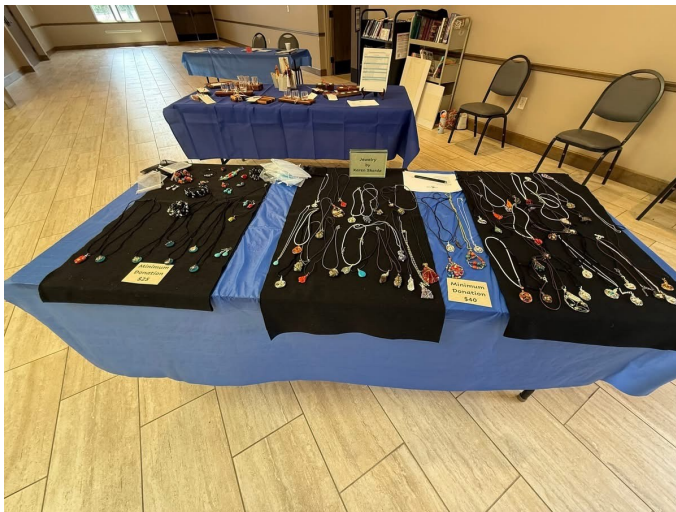
Catholic Social Teaching and Public Policy

The Issue: Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for approximately 350,000 Haitians in the US

Recent Developments: The U.S. Supreme Court in **Mullin vs Doe** overturned lower courts' decisions blocking the Trump administration's move to end TPS for roughly 350,000 Haitians and 4,000 Syrians. The U.S. House of Representatives, by a vote of 224-204, passed HR 1689, legislation that would extend TPS for qualifying Haitian nationals. Congressman French Hill voted "No" on final passage. As of early July, the companion bill, S. 4814, is currently pending in the U.S. Senate. Individuals who wish to express their views may contact Arkansas' two senators, John Boozeman and Tom Cotton regarding their position on the bill.

What our Church is saying: In a letter to his parishioners, **Archbishop Thomas Wenski** of Miami issued a public appeal to the U.S. Senate to join the House and grant a three-year extension of TPS for Haitians. His diocese is home to the vast majority of Haitians currently here under TPS. His argument: Haiti remains unsafe, disrupting the lives of 350,000 people living and working and raising families legally in this country would be inhumane, and a three-year extension will give our nation time to implement just and merciful comprehensive immigration reform. Archbishop Wenski's letter can be found on the Archdiocese of Miami website.

Local Artists Craft Items for PCLR Fundraiser



On Sunday May 17 following the 8:00 am, 10:00 am, and noon Masses at Christ the King Catholic Church (CTK), Pax Christi Little Rock held a fundraiser made possible by the generous donations from jewelry artist **Karen Skarda** and woodworking craftsman **Raymond Bertasi**. Board members provided coffee and refreshments as parishioners were given a chance to take home hand-crafted jewelry or an elegant wood creation for a minimum donation to PCLR. Over \$3000 was raised to support the PCLR School Supply project for 2026, providing school supplies to three schools: St Theresa's Catholic School, NLR Catholic Academy, and Washington-Carver Elementary. Special thanks to **Karen** and **Raymond** for providing the items, to all those who donated to the cause, and to CTK Pastor **Father Juan Guido** and Parish Moves Director **Betty Jo King** for providing the venue for this fundraiser.

Thursday Protests Continue

Pax Christi continues to sponsor a weekly peaceful (but not passive) demonstration that takes place on the corner of Markham and University in Little Rock every Thursday. We have been present for 72 weeks in a row expressing our concerns on issues such as the ongoing war with Iran, mass detainment and deportation of immigrants, the missing and redacted Epstein files, rising gas and grocery prices, ongoing misinformation given out by the administration, the cuts in healthcare for the poorest among us, gun violence, discontinuation of environmental policies that affect climate change, and many others. This nonviolent protest continues to attract around 50 people each week and is a great opportunity to meet others who share your concerns and witness the growing support for policy change. Due to the intense heat in the afternoon, we have now split the demonstration into two events as we did last summer, one at 7:30 am and one at 4:30 pm. It's a great opportunity to share our message with two different groups of people, those going to work as well as those returning home. If you find yourself in mid-town during these hours, please come by and let us hear from you! You will love being a part of the symphony of car horns!

Pax Christi Little Rock Shows Up for Juneteenth in Da Rock

In 2021 President Joe Biden made June 19th a national federal holiday: Emancipation Day for Black Americans. Known historically only as Juneteenth by African Americans, it commemorates the day in 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, to read General Order No. 3, effectively freeing the last enslaved people in Texas. This happened more than two years after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and two months after Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Slavery legally ended in Arkansas and the rest of the country with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on December 18, 1865.

The Mosaic Templars Cultural Center plays a major role in organizing the local Juneteenth Celebration, 2026 marking its 17th year here in Little Rock. A variety of events happen in and around the Historic 9th Street District where the Templars Museum is located. One such event is the 5K Walk/Run which started and finished at the MTCC and featured a route through downtown Little Rock's Black historical landmarks. PCLR Board Members **Sherry Simon**,

Margaret Douglas, Rozz Pruitt, and Janie Kelley participated in the race. The weather was perfect and they enjoyed being part of this celebration of Black history, heritage, music, and food.



"The Juneteenth Race has become an annual event for PCLR and we look forward to next year's race."

PCLR Chaplain Father Harvey Welcomes Second African American Priest to Arkansas

On Saturday May 30 Arkansas' Bishop Anthony Taylor ordained five new priests for the Diocese of Little Rock. The newly ordained included the second Black priest in the diocese's history: **Father Duwan Booker**. The first is PCLR's chaplain, Father Warren Harvey. Father Booker chose St Bartholomew Catholic Church in Little Rock to be the site of his first Mass, which occurred on Sunday May 31. Father Booker is a former college football player and Baptist convert and is currently serving as associate pastor at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Conway Arkansas.

His favorite Scripture is Romans 8:28:

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God."



Loving and Understanding Others Key to Ending Division

(Article Written by Dr. Sherry Simon for The Arkansas Catholic (Peace Offerings))

In the last few years, our world has become increasingly divided into broad, black and white, overly simplistic categories. And this categorization has become possible on a global scale in large part due to the current forms of communication and social media that enable us to take a side, give our opinion as truth regardless of the facts, and then blast the other side for being ignorant, misinformed, or even treasonous if they dare to believe anything different. Of course, the division is also reinforced by political agendas that will distort objective truth to sway the populace to believe that one party or the other has all the answers. It seems that we no longer even seek the truth, only those positions that reinforce what we want to believe to be true. Sadly, this has contributed to a culture of destruction where the human dignity of each person is no longer honored, unless of course they happen to be on “the right” side. People seem to take great joy in touting the superiority of their beliefs and the stupidity of others, even though no one side has ever successfully solved all the problems in the world.

How are we to disengage ourselves from this destructive spiral that only breeds increasingly virulent contempt and anger towards “the other,” who we don’t really even know on a more than superficial level? I believe that Catholic Social principles provide us with the answer to this dilemma. The central tenet inherent in these wisdom teachings is the understanding that ALL people are made in the image of God, so ALL life is sacred and deserves to be treated with the utmost dignity. Now, that is not an easy teaching to carry out. It requires that we get to know others on a more intimate level so that we can truly understand the value of their life. It means we must take our eyes off our screens, which very rarely display the beauty and integrity of life, and spend time talking to one another again. And it means that we do not treat people who think or look differently as less valuable, whether that be in interpersonal relationships, determination of immigration status, or decisions to initiate war.

What if we actually did as Jesus commanded? In John 13: 34-35, Jesus says, **“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”** This new covenant redefines love by the extent of Christ’s own sacrifice and grace. This is a tall order for us humans, and many have told me that it is not really practical when it comes to practicing nonviolence in our relationships, particularly when we are dealing with people who are “the other” (immigrants, people of other religions, people of other races). However, I believe Jesus was showing us the only path to survive and flourish in our world, especially as our ability to know and affect the rest of the world has increased with our technological advances. This type of love can only be accomplished if we receive Christ’s love first, allowing it to naturally overflow to others. Perhaps simply keeping this commandment in mind before our next encounter might make a difference in our messaging, and thus in the state of our heart, where Christ resides.



JULY SPEAKER SERIES

Sandy Decoursey

Scott Shellabarger

Past and Present Executive Directors

St. Joseph Center of Arkansas



Historic Past and Promising Future:

SJCA Rises from the Ashes

Thursday, July 23 @ 6:30 pm

Fitzgerald Hall, Rm. 101

2414 N. Tyler Street



Pax Christi Little Rock Membership Application

Pax Christi Little Rock is a chapter of Pax Christi USA, a Catholic peace and social justice movement rooted in prayer, study and action that works towards both personal and social transformation. We are committed to the peace, nonviolence, justice and compassion that are the heart of the gospel message of Jesus. More than ever, Pax Christi Little Rock needs people who are willing to help achieve this goal of nonviolence in our world. We invite you to join our efforts to build a sustainable peace in which each person is treated equitably, for it is only through achieving social justice that peace may be attained.

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City /State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address _____

Please mail your PCLR membership application to

Pax Christi Little Rock, PO Box 241074, Little Rock, AR 72223

Our only requirement for membership is that you pray for peace and commit to nonviolent solutions to conflict. We also invite you to join in our events with fellow peacemakers.

Please visit www.facebook.com/paxchristilittlerock for the latest updates.

In lieu of membership fees, we welcome donations, all of which go to support our many outreach programs. You may send your donations (checks made out to Pax Christi Little Rock) to our **PO Box 241074** or go to paxchristilittlerock.org and press the **DONATE** button. Questions and suggestions may be sent to paxchristilr@gmail.com

Welcome to PCLR membership. May the Peace of Christ be with you always.



Pax Christi Little Rock (PCLR) es una rama de Pax Christi USA, un movimiento católico por la paz y la justicia social arraigado en la oración, el estudio y la acción que trabaja hacia la transformación tanto personal como social. Estamos comprometidos con la paz, la no violencia, la justicia y la compasión que son el corazón del mensaje del evangelio de Jesús. Mas que nunca, Pax Christi Little Rock necesita personas que estén dispuestas a ayudar a lograr este objetivo de la no violencia en nuestro mundo. Los invitamos a unirse a nuestros esfuerzos para construir una paz sostenible en la que cada persona sea tratada de manera equitativa, porque sólo logrando la justicia social se podrá lograr la paz.

Nombre _____

Dirección _____ Teléfono _____

Ciudad/Estado _____ Código Postal _____

Dirección electrónico _____

Envíe por correo su solicitud de afiliación de PCLR a

Pax Christi Little Rock, PO Box 241074, Little Rock, AR 72223

Nuestro único requisito para ser miembro es que ores por la paz y te comprometas con soluciones no violentas a los conflictos. También le invitamos a unirse a nuestros eventos con compañeros pacificadores!

Por favor visite www.facebook.com/paxchristilittlerock para las últimas actualizaciones.

En lugar de las cuotas de afiliación, damos la bienvenida a las donaciones, todas las cuales se destinan a apoyar nuestros numerosos programas de extensión. Puede enviar sus donaciones (cheques a nombre de Pax Christi Little Rock) a **PO Box 241074** o vaya a paxchristilittlerock.org y presione el botón **DONATE**. Se pueden enviar preguntas y sugerencias a paxchristilr@gmail.com.

Bienvenidos a PCLR. Que la paz de Cristo esté siempre con ustedes.