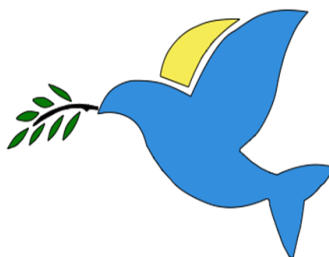


Board Members

- 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)

Contact Information

- Website:
www.paxchristilittlerock.org
- Facebook: <https://facebook.com/paxchristilittlerock>
- Address: PO Box 241074
Little Rock, AR 72223
- Phone: (501) 258-8653
- Email: paxchristilr@gmail.com



Pax Christi
LITTLE ROCK

September 30, 2026
Volume 10 Issue 3
Quarterly News-
letter

Peace Offerings

2026 Speaker Series for July

Sandy Decoursey and Scott Shellabarger

St Joseph Center of Arkansas:

Its History and Its Promising Future



On Thursday July 23 PCLR hosted its monthly Speaker Series, featuring **Sandy Decoursey** and **Scott Shellabarger**, past and present Executive Directors of The Saint Joseph Center of Arkansas (SJCA). SJCA is an independent, non-profit organization which teaches young and old to garden, to grow food for eating and sharing, to become urban farmers and in the process build and strengthen community.

Decoursey started things off with an historical overview of SJCA. It was founded as an orphanage in 1910 by Arkansas Bishop Morris and served that role until its closing in 1978; its centerpiece was a huge building with 56,000 square feet in North Little Rock. The orphanage was run by the Benedictine Sisters from the St. Scholastica Convent in Fort Smith.

The Sisters maintained an active farm as a way to support the orphanage. Following its closure, SJCA was formed to revitalize the property, establishing a community garden, a hunger relief garden, a retirement home garden, a pollinator garden, three high tunnels, a pasture of cattle and a farm stand. Decoursey has guided SJCA for the past 17 years since its repurposing as a community outreach farm. She recently handed the reins to Scott Shellabarger. A tragic fire in 2025 led to its closing on the NLR site and the loss of its lease with the Little Rock Catholic Diocese.

Shellabarger described the Center's vision for another renewal, a vision currently in its early stages but already showing great promise. The core mission,

building community around gardening and growing food to eat and share, remains central to its plans. SJCA wants to develop urban farmers who are able to earn a living wage.

The Little Farm Stop in West Little Rock is scheduled to open in October. The team is actively seeking access to land suitable for farming so it can build on its momentum for building community through farming. They already have a significant presence at the West Little Rock Farmer's Market and the Argenta Farmers Market in NLR. Scott encouraged us to pray, to give, to shop, and to volunteer. Find ways to do all four at <https://www.stjosephcenter.org/>

For the past 10 years, the Center has sponsored an annual Lettuce Grow Fundraising Dinner, and this year many of the friends from Pax Christi Little Rock joined in. On Friday, September 11 at the Sherwood Event Center, folks gathered in solidarity to celebrate the many accomplishments of SJCA and to cheer Scott and Sandy on as they put the next face on the center. Every year Pax Christi Little Rock joins arm-in-arm with so many fellow Arkansas organizations working to build up justice and peace in our state. SJCA is now part of our cohort of peacemakers.



Pope Leo XIV has repeatedly connected food, human dignity and peace. In his address to the Food and Agriculture Organization, he said, "If hunger is defeated, peace will be the fertile ground from which the common good of all nations will spring." And more recently, speaking about the experience of sharing a meal, he observed that whenever we gather "around the same table," we are "building a different world: a world of hope."

Speaker Series for August 27, 2026

Errin Stanger, CEO of Providence Park



In August, Pax Christi Little Rock welcomed Errin Stanger, the founder and CEO of Providence Park, a community in Pulaski County with individual dwellings and support for our neighbors who have a chronic history of homelessness. It all began when Stanger visited the prototype for such a venture in Austin Texas. There she saw firsthand the positive impact the Community First! Village was having in addressing homelessness. After meeting founder Alan Graham and his team she decided to replicate the Community First Village model in Central Arkansas. Voila: Providence Park in Mabelvale. Following their groundbreaking in 2024, the first group of neighbors became residents earlier this year. From their website:

In partnership with Pulaski County, we are creating a 50-acre master planned community that provides affordable, permanent housing and a supportive community for individuals coming out of chronic homelessness.

Individual residents (there are now 8 and soon to be 11) live in tiny homes, fully furnished, with a front porch and easy access to neighbors and the community support services. As long as they meet the membership requirements, the home belongs to them. Stanger described for us the “holistic wraparound services” including a KBL (kitchen-bathroom-laundry) facility, a sizeable administration building for gatherings, a community garden, an onsite medical/dental clinic, basic amenities, life skills training,

home chapel, a meditation labyrinth, and a mailing address (so important for folks coming in off the streets).

There are also working or perhaps retired individuals, some with families, who choose to live at the Park. These are folks who pay rent like their neighbors do and are there to be good neighbors, providing the social capital so important for thriving communities. These folks are called “missionals” and Stanger hopes to have a missional for every 5 neighbors.



Stanger plans to grow the 11 homes into 25 by the end of this year, reaching a total of 100 homes for Phase 1. Ultimately, three other phases will grow the whole community to 400 homes. The volume of applications coming in now indicates that future need may exceed that number. As she and her Board make decisions about the day-to-day operations and the future, they are guided by a set of core values: integrity, dignity, abundance, hospitality, and compassion-love. It was evident that the design and implementation of Providence Park are very good examples of many of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching, including human dignity, relationship, and solidarity.

Ms. Stanger described for us the path she took in answering God’s call to serve the chronically unhoused in Central Arkansas. As she moved through her presentation that evening, it became apparent that she was truly a kindred spirit; everything she was doing was about spreading peace for Arkansans. The only word we heard more often than “peace” was “joy”. You can find out so much more about the Park at their [website](#), including ways to volunteer with this amazing organization.

Ms. Stanger was kind enough to offer friends of Pax Christi Little Rock a tour of Providence Park on September 19. Several board members were present, including George and Sherry Simon, Tim and Rosalyn Pruitt, Tony and Jan Pipkin, Mary Hunt, and Margaret Douglas. Margaret Douglas, the Director of Helping Hand of Greater Little Rock (HHGLR), has helped many unsheltered people in



Little Rock and, as it happens, one of those clients of her is now a resident at Providence Park. He, along with Sherry and Margaret and HHGLR friend Alan Carlson are shown in this photo. PCLR plans to continue working in partnership with Providence Park, with an initial goal of raising money to build a tiny home (\$50,000).

Pilgrimage for Peace 2026

Sunday September 20



Much of the work that Pax Christi Little Rock focuses its energies on each year is collaborative in nature, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with like-minded groups in our community working for peace and justice. Sometimes we join them, sometimes they join us. One example of the latter, PCLR organizing and friends joining us, is the annual Pilgrimage for Peace (P4P) walk and memorial service. The walk begins near the Clinton Center in Little Rock and ends at the Beacon for Peace and Hope on the north side of the River, where a memorial service is held. This year marked the 12th such walk, which has occurred each year since 2014— save the pandemic year of 2020.

It's worth reminding ourselves of the history of the Beacon for Peace and Hope, built in 2009. From the Encyclopedia of Arkansas:

The 36-foot steel tower was conceived as a monument to the universal desire for peace. It was developed through a partnership between the Arkansas chapter of Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) and the maritime museum, with the idea of honoring efforts toward peace alongside exhibits representing military service. The tower's design incorporates nautical symbolism, including elements inspired by a sextant, while its paired lights represent peace and hope, emphasizing that hope supports the pursuit of lasting peace.

Surrounding the monument is a Peace Garden, dedicated in 2011. From the North Little Rock website:

The adjacent Peace Garden was dedicated in memory of Frederick "Sandy" Phillips, one of the victims of the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing. The garden was created as a place where families and children can gather to celebrate peace and reflect on its importance.

From the beginning, the driving force behind the P4P was Caroline Stevenson, the mother of Sandy Phillips. She worked with a fellow member of St Michael's Episcopal Church, Deacon Sam Loudenslager, in finding a prayerful way to "speak their names", recognizing the individual human person behind the name in the newspaper recording of a tragic violent death. Since violence affects people of all faiths, they soon made the service an interfaith one. In 2019, PCLR agreed to organize and coordinate the event. Since that time, Mary Hunt, board member and former board president, has taken on the leadership role, working with others to make this event a reality each year.

Following the Sunday afternoon event this year, Sherry Simon wrote:

The 12th Annual Pilgrimage for Peace was held today, culminating in a Remembrance Service where all those who were killed by the hand of violence in Pulaski County in the past year were memorialized beneath the Beacon for Peace and Hope in North Little Rock. It was an emotionally impactful day, from walking in the intense heat with dear friends to hearing the ecumenical prayers and all the names of victims read in such a reverent way. I suppose I was mostly moved by all these people from all different faiths who came together to make this event possible. They are friends, and they are all people who are constantly striving to make the world a better place. All proceeds from the Pilgrimage will go to Center for Healing Hearts and Spirits, an organization that works with families and individuals who have been victims of many forms of violence. We have been Partners in Peace for many years and this group does amazing work in our community.



You can see the program for this year's service at <https://www.pilgrimageforpeace.com/remembrance-service/>

This year's Pilgrimage for Peace Walk and Memorial Service in Pictures
Tony Pipkin and Raymond Bertasi





PCLR Provides School Supplies Again This Year

For 10 years now, Pax Christi Little Rock has organized a school donation mission, raising funds, procuring school supplies (including, in many years, backpacks), packaging those supplies, and delivering them to local schools in time for the Fall opening. Early on, PCLR treasurer Sherry Martin spearheaded the effort. For the past three years that role has been ably filled by Board Member Jan Pipkin.



This year, her team included George and Sherry Simon, Paula and Jeff Kalina, Raymond and Leslie Bertasi, Avery Duff, Libby Martin, and Jan's husband, Tony. Much of the funds came from generous donations by Christ the King Catholic Church, Raymond Bertasi's woodworking projects, and handmade jewelry by Karen Skarda. The Ladies of Charity of Arkansas, plus an anonymous donor, also made significant contributions. These donors made possible our handing out approximately \$12,000 in school supplies this fall, making possible Jan and her team impacting more than 50 around 1,000 students in Little Rock.



The majority of the supplies, which included a host of standard student needs (e.g. pencils, notebooks, crayons, backpacks) were ordered through Walmart and Amazon. Then, these supplies were organized for distribution to three elementary schools: St. Theresa Catholic, Carver-Washington Steam, and North Little Rock Catholic Academy. The team delivered the supplies to Carver-Washington, the Bertasis delivered to NLR Catholic Academy, and the Simons along with the Bertasis made the delivery to St Theresa's School (see the photo below).



2026 Taste of Faith in Little Rock

This year, the Catholic Diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development sponsored five *Taste of Faith* events across our state, raising \$950,000 for seminarian education. One of the larger fundraisers occurred in Little Rock on the evening of August 8 at the Statehouse Convention Center. Pax Christi Little Rock showed up and joined more than 850 fellow friends in celebrating those who said YES to God's call, and saying THANKS to all our priests—past, present, and **future**.



Food Baskets for the Third Quarter

On August 16 of this year, the PCLR team responsible for loading the food tubs used in support of Settled Souls of Our Lady of Holy Souls and Christ the King Catholic Churches met for their periodic packing party. Five tubs were packed that day. These food baskets are housewarming gifts for those unhoused families transitioning into permanent housing.

Vigil to End All Wars

Sunday September 28 at Bernice Gardens at 6:00 pm

Pax Christi Little Rock turned out in force to support the Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice (ACPJ) and an end-of-Peace Week vigil at Bernice Gardens on Little Rock's Main Street. Bob Estes of ACPJ updated us on the number of wars now raging in our world and the number of casualties from them. He also pointed out that the US is being the aggressor in some of these conflicts. Then, Hamid Ebrahimifar put a human face to the devastating effects of the US attacks in his native Iran. A student working with the Arkansas Culture and Dialog Center (ACDC) in Little



Rock read a poem. Then PCLR leaders Mary Hunt and Sherry Simon concluded the formal program with a poem by Sandy Phillips who died in the 1988 Pan Am plane bombing over Lockerbie Scotland and a powerful prayer for strength and hope in our crusade to end violent conflict. A candlelight moment, along with our Father Harvey leading us all in the singing of *Peace Flows Like a River*, brought the vigil to a close.

On the Horizon



PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK
SPEAKERS SERIES

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Criminal Justice and Community Engagement

KEYNOTE SPEAKER **Pulaski County Sheriff Eric Higgins**



Building trust through dialogue, accountability, and shared commitment.

DATE & TIME

Thursday, October 22

6:30 PM

LOCATION

Fitzgerald Hall

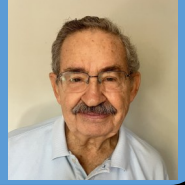
Catholic Diocese of Little Rock

Presented by **Pax Christi Little Rock**

October 22, 2026

Let's resume nuclear disarmament talks, not a nuclear arms race

Al Adams



As a baby boomer and a retired physicist, I take notice each year in August when we commemorate the 1945 atomic bombing of Japan, ending the war and officially opening the age of nuclear warfare. Coming of age in the 1950s and 60s I think of the call for “duck and cover” exercises in our schools, the protests mobilized by Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement leading to an end of the mandatory readiness drills, as a high school student at Subiaco Academy debating whether nuclear weapons should be banned, the build-up of nuclear arsenals in America and Russia with new states joining the Nuclear Club (now with 9 members), wondering in 1980 if the Damascus (Arkansas) Titan II silo missile accident would lead to a detonation of a thermonuclear warhead just miles from me, and the 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev Reykjavik Summit ultimately leading to a significant reduction of the two countries' stockpiles.

Since those early days of the Nuclear Age most Americans have put this issue of impending doom on the back burner, and understandably so. Pondering nuclear holocaust is difficult, putting that genie back in the bottle seemingly impossible, the growing number of threats to human dignity demanding our immediate attention, and the apparent success in the 80-year strategy of deterrence as our basis for security all suggest benign neglect of this threat to life and planet the reasonable option. Yet, throughout this time there have been voices loud and clear calling deterrence a false security, asking all of us to work toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament; as a lifelong Catholic it heartens me to discover that the loudest of those voices were (and continue to come) from our Catholic clergy and laity.

Since *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 our Bishops have been steadfast in rejecting nuclear weapons as a moral option. In the 1983 Pastoral Letter *The Challenge of Peace* the US Bishops called for the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons, and only reluctantly accepted the deterrent justification as a temporary path toward total elimination. And as recently as 2022, our own Bishop Taylor has amplified for us the message from Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe New Mexico whose pastoral letter calls all Catholics to reject the peace through strength argument

of deterrence, to recognize that since nuclear weapons are an assault on human dignity, solidarity, the common good, and care for God's creation, their use is never justified, thus not even their very possession. Bishop John Stowe of Pax Christi USA regularly echoes Popes Francis I and Leo XIV in their call for conversion to a spirituality of nonviolence. The Holy See has consistently argued that nuclear disarmament is “a moral and humanitarian imperative.”

Is there any hope of success in further reducing the stockpiles or ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons completely? Here we have a glimmer in the knowledge that the world's nuclear arsenal fell from more than 70,000 warheads at the Cold War peak to about 12,000 today. Also, the United States has agreed to ban all chemical and biological agents which lead to indiscriminate and catastrophic mass destruction. Why not nuclear weapons also? The Doomsday Clock, now at 85 seconds to midnight (nuclear catastrophe), has moved back away from midnight a few times since 1945. Let us not forget: we are a resurrection people. Humans have created this march toward the brink; humans can decide to move back from the brink.

Given the recent public statements threatening use of nuclear weapons by President Trump and Premier Putin, the breakdown in international agreements limiting nuclear proliferation, and plans to modernize nuclear arsenals, let's resume our civic conversation about the nuclear elephant in the room and employ the principles (Catholic Social Teaching) and strategy (the synodal spirit) to build a consensus toward nuclear disarmament. Peace advocates are calling for greater education initiatives so the generations that came after us boomers truly understand the history, the threats to human life and all of God's creation, perhaps most importantly gifting others with a vision of hope that dialogue, cooperation, and negotiation can still lead to a verifiable disarmament, the total elimination of nuclear stockpiles, and a just peace built on mutual trust. And perhaps we as the People of God today should prioritize nuclear disarmament as a working goal and move it to the top of our prayer-study-act Pax Christi directive.

Catholic Social Teaching and Public Policy

The Issue: The War in Iran and Iran War Powers concurrent resolution 93

Recent Developments: This concurrent resolution directs the President to remove U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities against Iran unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or a congressional authorization for use of military force against Iran. Directing the President pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution to remove United States Armed Forces from unauthorized hostilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This concurrent resolution passed in the House of Representatives on September 15 2026 by a vote of 220-204, with each of Arkansas' Representatives voting NAY.

What our Church is saying: The Holy See has been very consistent in condemning armed aggression and in recommending nonviolent solutions to political differences through dialogue, negotiation, compromise, and mutual trust. It also is suggesting that the Church's current understanding of “just war” is outdated and needs revisiting.



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.