



Volume 39—Spring 2020

Fr. Gerry Bechard:



Gerry Bechard was born in Detroit the oldest of five children. The family moved to Allen Park where he attended St. Frances Cabrini grade and high schools. While still a junior in high school, Gerry enlisted in the Navy Reserve and after graduation served on active duty for two years. During that time, he made two cruises off the coast of Vietnam aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid. In 1974, Gerry entered Sacred Heart

Seminary. It was, however, at St. John's Seminary where Gerry fell under the influence of some "questionable company", among whom can be numbered Msgr. Clem Kern and Fr. Ken Untener.

Fr. Gerry was ordained a priest by John Cardinal Dearden on June 21, 1980. In 1981, his first full assignment was at St William's Parish in Walled Lake, also home to Williams International, designer and manufacturer of cruise missile engines. It was at this time Gerry's peace advocacy began. In 1989, Fr. Gerry was named pastor of Ss. Simon & Jude Parish in Westland, Michigan. A position he has held for over 30 years. At the

Inside this issue:

<i>Purple Ribbon for Peace Award Winner Fr. Gerry Bechard</i>	1
<i>Young Peacemaker Award Winner Marie Adele Grosso</i>	2
<i>PCM Statement on Immigration</i>	3
<i>Our 39th Annual Conference</i>	6
<i>25th Annual Retreat</i>	8
<i>Local Group Updates</i>	10
<i>Announcements</i>	12

This Year's Purple Ribbon for Peace Awardee

State Council:

- State Coordinator and IT: Mary L. Hanna (Laingsburg)
- Chair: Bob Podzikowski (Oak Park)
- Secretary: Marilyn Lorenz (Alma)
- Treasurer & Assistant Coordinator: Pat Valaer (Lansing)
- Council Members: Marianne Bernard, Ed Lorenz, Jim Rauner, Kim Redigan, Fred Thelen, and Kathleen Zemcik

Pax Christi Michigan...

- *Meets the 4th Saturday of January/April/July/October from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Any PCM member may attend as a non-voting participant. ©*
- *Working committees include: Finance, Membership, and Technology.*
- *If you are interested in attending a meeting or serving on the State Council, please let us know, or contact us if you have any other questions.*

Fr. Gerry Bechard—Awardee (*continued from Page 1*)

priest's convocation in 2005, a comment made by Fr. Gerry during one of the sessions led to the creation of the **"Elephants in the Living Room"**. From that came an invitation to the advisory board of Future Church where he served until last February. There also came an invitation to sit on the board of the American Catholic Council which led to becoming one of the "Founding Fathers" of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests. Fr. Gerry is also a member of the International Catholic Renewal Network (ICRN). Apart from that, Fr. Gerry insists that he hasn't done much. But, God willing, he hopes to do more. We, Pax Christi Michigan, know that Fr. Gerry has devoted nearly forty (40) years to the causes of peace and justice, and accomplished much. We also deeply appreciate how he has opened wide the doors of Ss. Simon and Jude to welcome the Pax Christi State Conference. Fr. Gerry, staff, and parishioners have, for three of the last four state conferences, been warm, inviting hosts, active participants in the preparation of the conference, and supportive of the vision Pax Christi Michigan espouses.



Thank you, Fr. Gerry, for proclaiming Catholic Social Teaching and the Gospel as the foundation upon which our faith is built.

Congratulations! We are honored to present you with the 2020 Purple Ribbon for Peace Award!



MARIE ADELE GROSSO

Our 2020 Young Peacemaker Award Winner



Marie Adele Grosso starts and stops each day engaged in the people, world, and politics around her. Of course, as a high school sophomore at East Lansing High School, she prefers to gather the news via late night comedians, rather than early morning news shows. Marie Adele brings a passion for justice with her to school each day. She likes history and literature better than any other classes and looks forward to studying economics -- all of which are essential for a future political leader. Her involvement with Model UN helps too. She loves language and studies French and Arabic. She is a member of Student Council, and in student groups addressing international human rights (Amnesty), gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, student mental health, and racial justice. She has been raised to appreciate the world beyond the United States and has lived in Palestine, Mali, France, and Canada in her young life and maintains friendships in all those places. She volunteers with the Warren campaign and looks forward to doing more of this kind of work this summer. She loves choir and theater. She has been singing with the MSU youth choir program since third grade and acts in each production that comes her way. She is a big fan of the Meta Peace Team and its work: Marie Adele always seeks to integrate their work and wisdom in her activities at school. Pax Christi Michigan is proud to recognize Marie Adele Grosso as our 2020 Young Peacemaker Award winner, and looks forward to watching all the wonderful ways she plans to make this world a better, more just place. Congratulation, Marie Adele!

PAX CHRISTI MICHIGAN STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION

From the moment Donald Trump announced his entry into the 2016 presidential race in June 2015, he has revealed deep-seated religious discrimination and blatant racism. After he became president, two attempts to ban Muslims from the U.S. were invalidated by lower courts. Nevertheless, a third version of the ban, applicable to 5 majority-Muslim nations, was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018. In January 2020, the administration extended the ban to additional nations. In response, Democrats in the House of Representatives are considering a “NO BAN Act” that would repeal the travel ban and limit the president from imposing future restrictions based upon religion.



As he announced his candidacy, Trump stated “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best ... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” Thus began a campaign of cruelty against Mexican and Central American migrants.

For decades, asylum seekers have arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border for reasons like economic scarcity, war, gang violence, and persecution. More recently, turmoil has become particularly acute in the “Northern Triangle” nations, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.



The president responded by threatening to build a wall along the Mexican border, and in February 2019 announced he would utilize funds appropriated for other purposes to construct the wall. In April 2018, a “zero-tolerance” policy was adopted to deter illegal immigration. Under the policy, thousands of children were separated from their families, with the adults prosecuted and held in federal jails. In fact, family separation began well before the policy was announced, but no provision had been made to reunite separated families. The policy officially ended in June 2018. However, a House committee reported that by October 2019, more than 1,000 additional children had been separated from their families.

Other measures, aimed at drastically reducing immigration, have been initiated or significantly increased, including: an attempt to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) that provides legal protection for young people who come to the U.S. as children – the issue is now awaiting a Supreme Court decision; “Metering,” that is, severely limiting the number of

number of people who can request asylum at a port of entry each day; "Migrant Protection Protocols," requiring asylum seekers to return to Mexico to await the often long delayed start of the asylum process; a July 2019 "Asylum Transit Ban," eliminating asylum for those entering at the U.S.-Mexico border who "transit" through another country after leaving their home; the July 2019 intensification in enforcement of "Expedited Removal," by which low-level immigration officers deny entry and/or physically remove asylum seekers without the normal removal process involving hearings before an immigration judge; an increase in prosecutions, including targeting people like Scott Warren of the immigrant advocacy group **No Mas Muertes** (*No More Deaths*), who was acquitted in November 2019 for providing humanitarian aid to migrants; and, new "wealth test" rules – affirmed by the Supreme Court in January 2020 – making it easier to deny immigrants residency or admission to the U.S. because they have used, or might use, public-assistance programs.

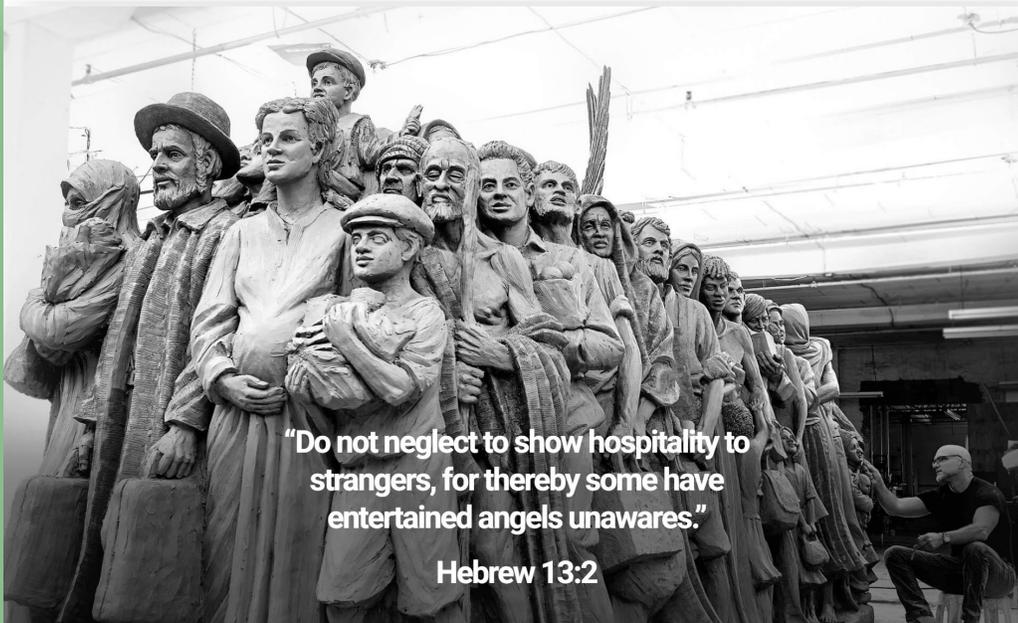


These measures have had a devastating impact. As Pax Christi USA Bishop President John Stowe has noted, "There has been one chapter after another of serious atrocities intentionally perpetrated on some of the most vulnerable people: family separation, loss of children in custody, two dozen deaths in ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) custody since 2017, children in cages, living under bridges in extreme temperatures, shielded from public view, assaulted and brutalized, underfed and without facilities for bathing or hygiene. Now we have raids targeting families who have fled situations of danger from gang violence, drug trafficking, and economic desperation, and changing rules about who qualifies for asylum right as people are fleeing for their lives."

Pax Christi Michigan (PCM) deplores the cruelty, intolerance and racism readily apparent in the words, actions and immigration policies of President Trump and other members of his administration. As Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego has observed, "Our government has weaponized fear – the fear being sown within our nation that refugees ... have now become the

enemy; and the even more reprehensible fear being unleashed on the hearts and souls of immigrant mothers and fathers that they will be separated from their children purely as an act of intimidation."

In the clearest possible language, Jesus instructs us to welcome immigrants, "I was a stranger and you invited me in." Today, when powerful forces in our nation urge anti-



"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Hebrew 13:2



“You cannot be a Christian without living like a Christian.”

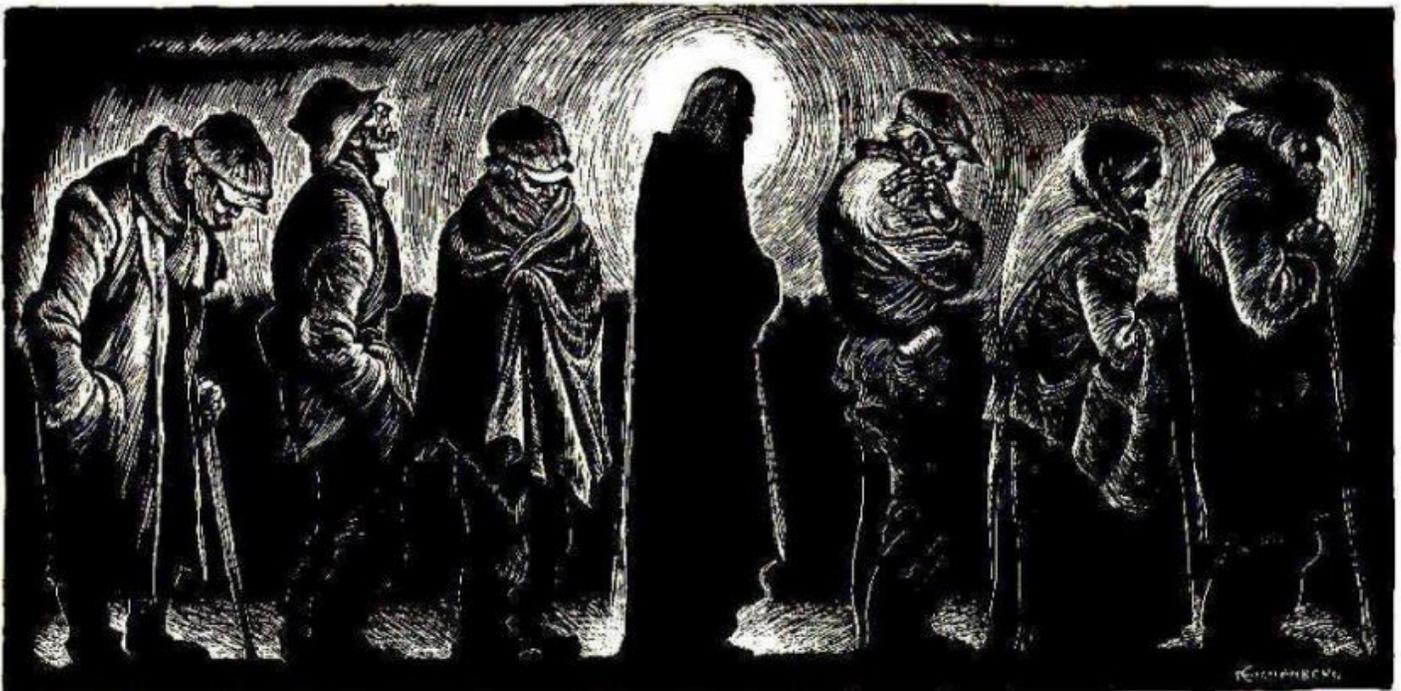
- Pope Francis

immigrant fear and deny help to the most vulnerable immigrants, it is our obligation to live our faith fearlessly. We must see support for aliens in our midst as an opportunity to model for fellow Americans, especially those who do not share our faith, the love and beauty at the core of the Gospels.

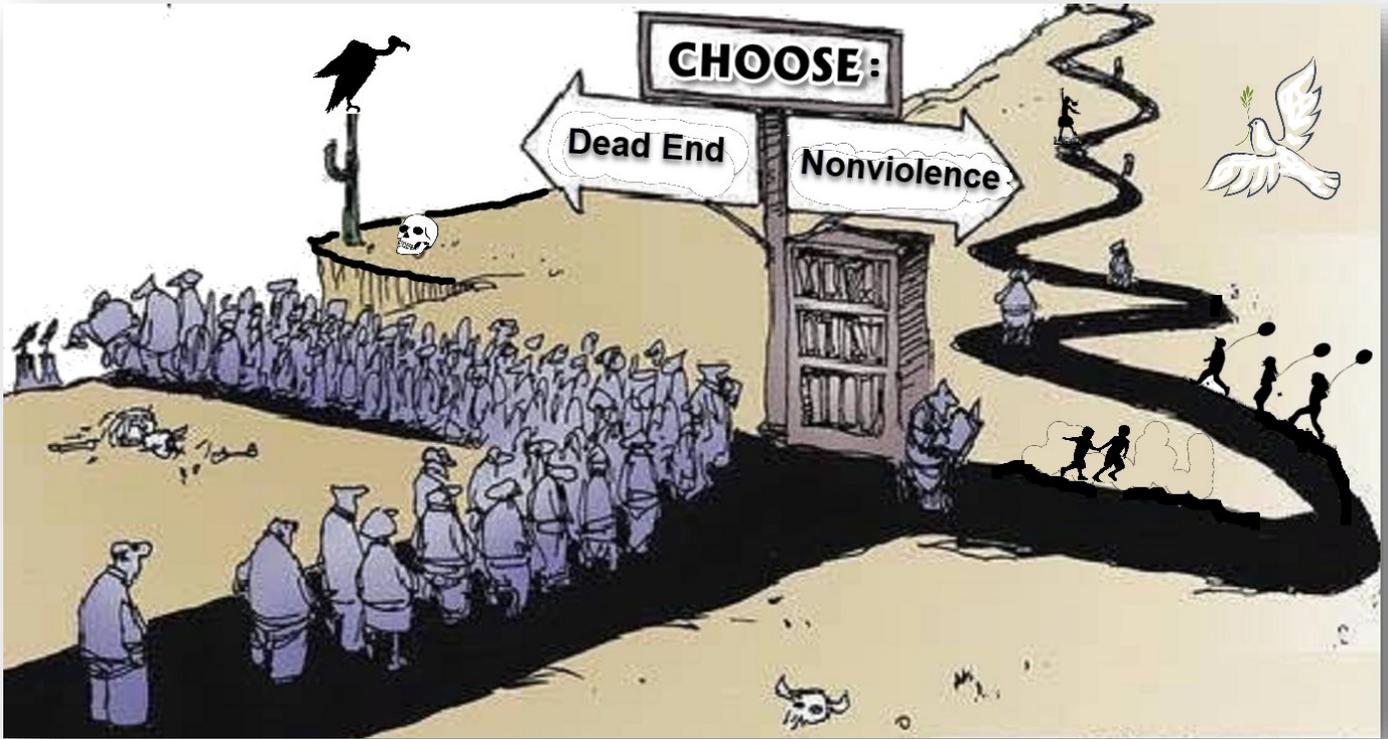
Echoing the Gospel challenge, Pope Francis has repeatedly urged that we “look to build bridges between people, bridges that allow us to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation.” Furthermore, “You cannot be a Christian without living like a Christian. You cannot be a Christian without practicing the Beatitudes. You cannot be a Christian without doing what Jesus teaches us in Matthew 25. It’s hypocrisy to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone

who is in need of my help. If I say I am Christian, but do these things, I’m a hypocrite ... All nations must focus on service to the poorest, the sick, those who have abandoned their homelands in search of a better future for themselves and their families. In putting ourselves at the service of the neediest, we will experience that we already are united; it is God’s mercy that unites us.”

Accordingly, PCM encourages our members and others to support the rights of asylum seekers, migrants and immigrants by urging Congress to: end family separation and the mistreatment of immigrant children; investigate and prevent additional deaths of immigrants in Customs and Border Patrol custody; provide adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care for all immigrants as the legal process unfolds; provide access to attorneys for asylum seekers and assure that asylum claims be processed promptly and justly; and, by means of legislative action, reverse the unjust immigration policies and practices of the Trump administration. ♦



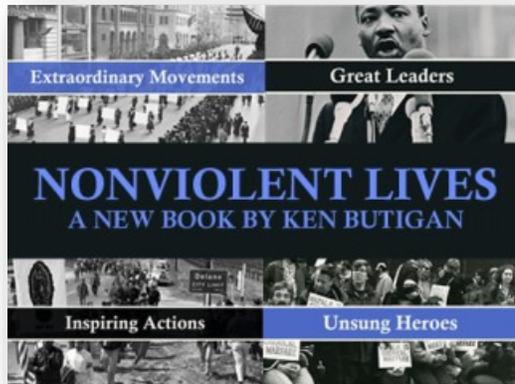
AT THE CROSSROADS: ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE IN A TIME OF CRISIS & OPPORTUNITY



Pax Christi Michigan proudly invites you to our **39th Annual State Conference**, to be held **Saturday, April 18th 2020** at Ss. Simon and Jude Church in Westland. We are thrilled to announce that our Keynote Speakers will be **Ken Butigan** and **Jean Stokan**. Our theme will hold accountable our church and our community in committing to nonviolence as our tool for change, carving out a future of peace with justice. The **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative** will be held up as an example of how to move forward with an agenda of creative peacebuilding and a humane justice system, espousing integrity and a reverence for each other, our earth, and all of creation.

Our speakers, Jean Stokan and Ken Butigan, are well-versed in this theme. Briefly, Jean is the vice-Chair for the *Pax Christi USA* and serves as justice coordinator for immigration and nonviolence with the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Ken serves on the executive committee of Pax Christi International's **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative**. He is a professor in the





Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies Program at DePaul University in Chicago, works with *Pace e Bene*, and co-founded *Campaign Nonviolence*.

As an added special event for this conference, Pax Christi USA will be honoring **Bishop Thomas Gumbleton** with the designation of **Bishop Emeritus of Pax Christi USA**. Per PCUSA National Chair, Bob Shine:

"I am pleased to announce on behalf of the National Council that Bishop Thomas Gumbleton has been named Bishop President Emeritus of Pax Christi

USA in honor of his decades-long commitment to the Catholic peace movement.

Bishop Gumbleton's involvement with Pax Christi USA dates back to his crucial role as a co-founder in 1972. He was one of the few U.S. bishops willing to condemn the Vietnam War at the time. In the intervening years, Bishop Gumbleton has advocated courageously for the cause of peace with justice, work rooted deeply in nonviolence. He has traveled the world to accompany peoples mired in conflict and violence, all the while condemning publicly the militarism behind so much of their suffering. He was instrumental in the U.S. bishops' 1983 peace pastoral.

Beyond the cause of peace, Bishop Gumbleton has been an advocate for many other justice issues. He stood against his own archbishop's decision to close parishes attended predominantly by communities of color, and has been a strong advocate for racial justice in his hometown of Detroit and elsewhere. He has been a healing presence to people harmed by the institutional Catholic Church, including to LGBTQ people and their families and to survivors of sexual abuse by clergy.

Pope Francis has expressed a need for more "credible witnesses" in our world, people who refuse to be indifferent and who choose to risk for the Gospel. I wrote recently, "Few Christians living today offer as credible a witness as Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, his life a masterclass in how to pursue justice even when it hurts . . . in the wounded church and the troubled world we inhabit, studying the credible witness of one who refused to be indifferent and risked so much for the Gospel is precisely what we need to be people of hope and action."

We will be honoring Bishop Gumbleton during Pax Christi Michigan's annual assembly on April 18, 2020. More information on that event and ways you can help honor Bishop Gumbleton will be forthcoming. For now, join me in a prayer of gratitude for Bishop Gumbleton and all that he has given to Pax Christi USA for nearly fifty years."

Please join us for the wonderful gathering and celebration that this 39th State Conference promises to be. Registration and brochures can be found on our website: www.paxchristimi.org ♦

The 25th Anniversary of our Annual PCM Retreat



Pax Christi Michigan celebrated the 25th Anniversary of our Annual Fall Retreat in mid-October at the Maryville Center in Holly. It was a time of comradery and faith-sharing, a chance to enjoy old friends and welcome new ones, and an opportunity to marvel at the beauty of God’s creation all around us!

It was a lively celebration of where we have been, and a recommitment to moving forward as a community of peace builders and justice advocates.

Fred Thelen and Bob Podzikowski facilitated the weekend with rich insights into the life and

works of Thomas Merton. Fred recounted his retreat experience at Gethsemani with photo illustrations, had us walk the paths that helped Merton define his life as a monk, pacifist, writer and staunch advocate for the total abolition of war.

Fred authored a moving poem—included at right—which highlighted how profoundly his retreat journey with Merton had affected him.

Bob guided us through the history of Merton’s evolution towards a commitment to peace and nonviolence. He

emphasized Merton’s affinity for Buddhist tradition and how its tenants could be incorporated into our practice of Catholicism.

Friday evening, we delighted in the music of Peter Dougherty and Tim Greenia, our ever-faithful “retreat troubadours”. Sadly, we missed Ray Kell’s piano wizardry as Vivienne Kell had taken a nasty fall and they were unable to attend.

As a special 25th Anniversary treat, we invited professional

musician and PCM friend, Julie Beutel, to provide our Saturday evening musical entertainment. What a joyful time we all had laughing, singing, and enjoying one another’s company. God’s spirit of love and joy abounded!

We invite you to join us this coming October as we enter the first year of our NEXT 25 years of retreat gatherings. You won’t regret it. In fact, you’ll be glad you did!.



Eight Pillars

Gethsemani Monastery

Eight pillars

pierce the skyward dome,
steel I-beams anchored
in the rough stoned floor,

half-circling the altars
of word and sacrament,
they stand silent as monks
holding up the heavens,

octave of grey columns
that appear thin as pencils
through the cavernous space
emptying from the loft.

Speak to me guardians of the hours,
of strength beyond my strength,
from my earthbound place
draw me to the heavens,

defy the gravity of life
weighing me down,
lift me from mud and dirt
skyward to cleansing clouds of rain.

Speak to me of memories of my father
hoisting an I-beam to support
the wide opening to the cattle shed,
steel support for a sheltering roof,

indestructible steel thick and heavy
marvel of engineering, its weight
bearing design, its load-bearing strength,
smelted iron from the ground.

We too are born of the earth,
elements of the universe forged
Into muscle and bone,
skin and skeleton,

to bear the load of love and laughter,
pain and death, hopes and dreams
crush of defeat, with strength
from beyond to carry it all

until the final surrender returns
us to mother earth and the refining
fire frees our soul,
shed of all slag.



Local Group Updates

Pax Christi Lansing—Dave Borzenski

Moved by the passionate and courageous witness of young Greta Thunberg at the United Nations and John Dear’s book *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change*, Pax Christi Lansing offered its 13th Annual New Year’s Day Prayer Service for Peace entitled



“Peace and Nonviolence in A Time of Climate Crisis.” We enjoyed an unusually winter-free day welcoming about 40 people, familiar faces and new ones, from as far away as Detroit, to St. Therese of Lisieux Church in Lansing. We viewed “The Beauty of Earth,” reminding ourselves of the magnificent gift of Mother Earth and her creatures. We called to mind our personal and corporate “ecological sin” against Mother Earth and each other. We expressed our sorrow. We listened to George Tsiattalos, John Dear, and Pope Francis encourage us that we can indeed turn away the crisis and discussed how we better follow “Mother Earth Rules” and effectively connect in active nonviolence with others in our neighborhoods and world-wide.

Throughout, Maria and Terry Cosper from St. Therese Parish led us in praise of creation and the Creator singing the “Canticle of the Sun” by Marty Haugen. And no New Year’s Day would be complete without a toast to the future. Everyone lifted a (recyclable) cup of (non-alcoholic) bubbly to personal expressions of hope for creation and for each other in 2020. We departed in hopeful commitment to change and make changes. We invite you all to join us for the 14th Annual New Year’s Day Prayer Service for Peace as the best way to usher in 2021.

Pax Christi Alpena—Carol Skiba

Pax Christi Alpena, a member of the Alpena Peace Coalition, celebrated their 13th “30 Days of Peace” last September thru October 2019. Mayor Matt Waligora made a 30 Days of Peace Proclamation at the City Hall to open the event. Most days included a Prayer for Peace and a Peace Liturgy. Other days were highlighted by guest speakers, dedications, and awards. Srs. Ardeth Platte and Carol Gilbert presented “A Time for Humanity”, which spoke to our need for nuclear disarmament, while two peace poles were dedicated at the Boys & Girls Club and the Senior Citizens Center. Several peace concerts were held, as well as a talk by Prof. Tim Kuehnlein on “Refugees and Criminals: A Look at El Salvador”. The month ended with awards presented to Peace Contest participants whose entries were displayed at the Alpena Mall.



Blue Water Pax Christi—Mike McCarthy

Choose
Nonviolence

JESUS IS BORN
He calls us to be
Merciful . . . and Just

PaxChristiUSA.org

This was the ninth year the Peace Billboard went up in our community at Christmas time and lasted thru the celebration of Martin Luther King Day. This year it was an electronic billboard, rotating through various locations in our community. Special thanks to our local church and community members for their ongoing support.

Pax Christi West Michigan—Gloria Switzer



Pax Christi West Michigan is presenting “How to Sustain Nonviolent Activism in an Atmosphere of Militarism and Corporate Greed”, featuring Dr. Mark Kane (aka, Marcos the Clown). Mark is a seasoned local and international peace activist who worked with the West Michigan field office of the AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) for IGE (Institute for Global Education). Along with being a retired psychologist, Mark has 20 years experience working with veterans suffering with PTSD. Dr. Kane, also known as Marcos the Clown, knows that WAR IS NOT FUNNY but that clowning can be healing for veterans. He will speak about the success of the clowning program and address the resolve to work nonviolently for peace and justice when challenged by our

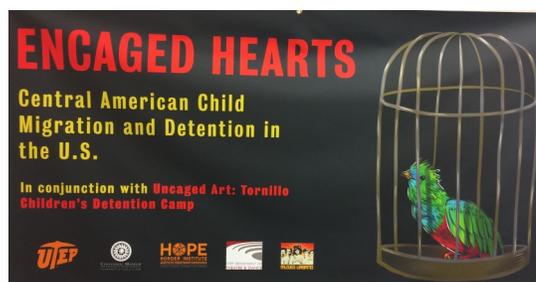
nation's government. This event will be on Sunday, March 15 2020 at 1pm at the Dominican Center in Grand Rapids. To RSVP, please contact Gloria Switzer at gloriaswitzer@gmail.com

Peace Seekers Pax Christi—Mary Seymour

The Peace Seekers of SS. Simon & Jude Westland are very grateful to Mary Hanna and Kim Redigan for coming to our meeting in January to talk about *What IS Happening at Our Southern Border?* Thanks to an advertising blitz about the event approximately 40 people from the parish, other parishes, local PC groups and other peace and justice groups were in attendance. The power point presentation with commentary from Kim and Mary was very informative and thought provoking and often tugged at our heartstrings. It is a desperate situation for so many. We are hopeful that this information will spur others to action on behalf of our migrant brothers and sisters.



From Ed and Marilyn Lorenz—From Wednesday, Nov. 6 thru Saturday, Nov. 9, Marilyn and Ed Lorenz



went to El Paso to gather updated information on conditions along the border. They made quick visits to both sides of the border and met with the Columbian Mission Center, Annunciation House, the Hope Border Institute, the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), Tabor House and attended a Diocesan Social Justice dinner, along with El Paso Pax Christi leaders. They visited UTEP because it was hosting at the university museum a display of Engaged Hearts [see photo] a display of art produced by Central American children held in detention under the family separation policy. The exhibit is one that it would be good for all communities in Michigan to

seek to bring to the state. They then visited Ciudad Juarez, where thousands of asylum seekers were stranded by the “Remain in Mexico” policy implemented by the U.S. government. The picture of Marilyn is at the base of the Santa Fe Bridge from the U.S. and shows in the background the make-shift shelters. The photo purposely does not show individual faces, but you can see the tarps covering places where families had carved



out a spot on the sidewalks and back streets to survive the coming winter. While there, the nighttime temperature was in the 30's. Ed and Marilyn also participated in the weekly Friday picket for peace outside the U.S. Court House in El Paso. Later, Ed and Marilyn went to the SOA-Watch protests in Columbus, Georgia. While numbers were less than a decade or more ago, there were many people there, including both Pax Christi and Veterans for Peace delegations, a number of delegations of religious sisters, and, most hopefully, a few Catholic college and university delegations.



Presentations by PCM Council Members

Over the past year, a number of members of the Pax Christi Michigan State Council traveled to the border to work in solidarity with asylum seekers there, then returned to convey in word and photos what they had witnessed, and how to get involved. Thanks to Kim Redigan, Mary Hanna, Fred Thelen, Ed Lorenz, Marilyn Lorenz, and Jim Rauner for their dedication to our immigrant brothers and sisters.

This graffiti was written on a concertina wire-topped border wall near the crossing in Tecate. The message translates roughly to:

The fear is so strong, it takes over our thoughts. Think bigger, and tell it to stop.



PCUSA/PCM Membership JOIN or RENEW NOW!

I believe that "peace is possible" and want to join Pax Christi USA – also giving me regional membership in Pax Christi Michigan:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

The regular membership fee for Pax Christi USA is \$40 per year—more if you are able—or whatever you can afford. We rely on the generosity of our members. Please consider enclosing a membership contribution to Pax Christi USA for.

___ \$40 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$500 ___ other

At this time I can only contribute _____

Check any of the following:

___ I would like more information about joining or starting a local group in my area or school.

___ I would like more information about the Parish Sponsorship Program.

MAIL TO: Pax Christi USA
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Washington D.C. 20017



www.paxchristimi.org
paxchristimi.wordpress.com/