

# DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

*The Journal of Pax Christi Australia*

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## WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION STATEMENT ON PALESTINE

**I**f you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Bishop Desmond Tutu

*As we are writing this, bombs are falling over Gaza, where 24 people have just been killed in the past hour only, increasing the numbers of those murdered to 103 (including 27 children) and injuring over 580 and flattening many multi-story buildings to the ground, and wiping out whole families.. One soul lost is too many."*

*Excerpt of the Statement from the Palestine Youth Ecumenical Movement (PYEM)*

The World Student Christian Federation is highly concerned by the new escalation of violence against the Palestinian people, which includes women and children. The images we have seen and the testimonies of our Palestinian student brothers and sisters fill our hearts with pain and call us to continue acting for justice and peace for the right and self-determination of the Palestinian people.

**Context:**

This latest Israeli military operation against Gaza comes as a continuation of Israel's strategies to silence Palestinians who are fighting for their freedom, dignity, right to exist, self-determination, and worship in their sacred places.

In Sheikh Jarrah, at the gates of the old city of Jerusalem and at Al-Aqsa mosque, protestors were bru-



tally repressed by the Israeli military with, stun grenades, tear gas, rubber-coated metal bullets, batons, assault, skunk water. The use of excessive force, arbitrary arrests and aggressive attacks for the past days, have been the strategy of the occupation forces, wounding hundreds, some very severely, where three young men lost both of their eyes.

Some other 600 Palestinians, at least, got arrested by the Israeli occupation forces including 6 journalists. We have also witnessed, during the past days and nights, the brutal attacks of settlers on unarmed Palestinians in Jerusalem, Lydd, Haifa and all-over historical Palestine.

Twenty-eight families of some 500 people are under the threat of eviction from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood for the sake of colonial settlers in a brazen violation of the International Humanitarian Law. This is not a separate event; it is a continuation of Israel's ethnic cleansing strategies. It is a continuation of the Nakba, which started in 1948 and still ongoing every day. At the Gaza Strip, the military operation already took

103 lives -including 27 children- and injured over 580, and flattening many multi-story buildings to the ground. Those are not mere numbers. Those are people, children, men and women each with their own hopes, fears and dreams.

This ethnic cleansing, and apartheid system is being funded and supported by the USA, Canada and European countries who are almost all complicit in the oppression of our people. They do almost nothing to hold Israel accountable to its obligations under the International Humanitarian Law as an occupying power and have not made real attempts to push for just peace.

This apartheid system is the by-product of the national supremacy doctrine that Europe, the United States and most of the central nations allow Israel to get away with. For decades WSCF has been struggling for justice and peace in the

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# DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

## PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

*is an Australia-wide*

*Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.*

*Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.*

*We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.*

*As an ecumenical Christian movement*

*Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.*

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Holy Land and joined the cry of hope of the Palestinian people. The General Assembly in 2015 held in Bogotá Colombia, passed a policy paper to support and advocate for the Palestinian communities based on international law, Human Rights perspective and the theology of liberation perspective on the preferential option for the poor and those who are oppressed

The World Student Christian Federation joins the Palestine Youth Ecumenical Movement and demand and urgently call:

To churches, the ecumenical movement and civil society:

#### **1. To use the right terminology.**

Start calling things by their actual names. It is not a conflict. It is ethnic cleansing. Israel is a settler colonial regime that enforces a structure of apartheid from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

#### **2. To drop "both sides" narrative.**

This narrative disregards the power dynamics by portraying the image of equal parts. Those are not equal parts, unarmed occupied protestors vs. heavily weaponised settlers, colonialists and soldiers, oppressors and oppressed, occupiers and occupied.

#### **4. To stop funding companies and corporations that are complicit and profiting from the apartheid and human rights violations.**

Actively support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. If you stand against colonization, apartheid, occupation and ethnic cleansing, then stop funding it.

#### **5. To self-reflect on positions and affiliations.**

Revisit, challenge and defy theologies that justify injustice, colonialism, apartheid, and oppression.

#### **6. To actively advocate for Decolonizing Palestine.**

Our fight for justice is international. No one is free until we are all free.

#### **7. Active participation and actions of our churches and our Christian brothers and sisters around the world is a prophetic must.**

Being silent renders you complicit in the oppression, colonialism, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing of Palestine. s and UN Parties,

#### **8. To fully implement and com-**

**ply with international law.** The WSCF and the Student Christian Movement actions are based on the Human Rights and the international law approach and is saying nothing but to respect the UN Conventions and enforce the UN Resolutions on Palestine;

#### **9. To affirm that the annexation of East Jerusalem or any other part of Occupied territory is illegal under International Law.**

The eviction of the Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah is a war crime.

#### **10. To recall the importance of the rights of the peoples to self-determination under international law**

UNGA A/RES/37/43 the right to resist colonialism and the respect and granting of Human Rights of the Palestinian people.

We pray for all the families that have been suffering through the ongoing, oppression, military operation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and occupation of Palestine.

We pray and act for Peace and Justice,

Marcelo Leites, General Secretary,  
World Student Christian Federation  
Mira Neaimeh Regional Executive –  
Middle East Region WSCF

Yasmina Rishmawi

WSCF – Executive Committee member  
Palestine Youth Ecumenical Movement

*The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) is a worldwide youth and student organization that brings together more than 107 affiliated and associated student movements in more than 90 countries.*

*As a Federation of student movements, the WSCF empowers and connects activist youth and students around the world on their journey towards the transformation of the future. The WSCF fosters a democratic culture for the mobilization of proactive youth in society, promoting positive change through dialogue and action among different traditions and cultures.*

*The WSCF is a Non-Governmental Organization with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).*

## FRATELLI TUTTI RELIGION AT THE SERVICE OF SOLIDARITY IN OUR WORLD Sr Jan Barnett, RSJ,

One of my most vivid memories as a teenager, was of a day when our family was driving past the Bahai temple on the Northern Beaches of Sydney. Dad stopped the car, and (at a time when visiting other Christian churches was frowned upon) he gave us a short tour of this amazing place.

Inside, around the walls, there were symbols of the major world religions. Dad explained that the Bahai teaches that the temple is a space for all religions and that the nine doors opening onto the grounds signified the unity of all. It was a lesson I've never forgotten – about my father, and about the Bahai. A lesson for all of us, I believe, as we reflect on the message of Fratelli Tutti, and especially Chapter 8.

The description of Fratelli Tutti as something of an extended meditation on the call for religions to influence political and economic life in the 21st century is a telling one. It taps into the one of the overriding themes of Francis' whole pontificate and his longing for religions to lead the way in healing the divisions and polarisation that beset our world. These fundamental lessons are simple and decisive (even if we have to admit that the encyclical is incredibly long, not easily digestible and often dogged by exclusive language).

The essential messages of the first 7 chapters underpin those of Chapter 8. And they call us as Christians, over and over, to collaboration and solidarity – to say no to building walls; to say yes to building bridges. To strengthen the seeds of peace and justice, with dialogue pivotal and the central tool for resolving conflict and confrontation.

Because we're all in the same boat, we know also that in a globalised and interconnected world, only together can we be saved. Only together can we learn to reverence each person, only together can we come to respect the differences of each, and utilise these to strengthen collaboration, not confrontation. We must, Francis exhorts us, dare to care.

Chapter 8 picks up all these themes

– explicitly and absolutely. And I'd like to focus on 3 aspects.

First of all, as people of faith, in all our diverse religions, we hold common fundamental values and are called by these, beyond the material, to what is at the heart of our beliefs, to what is transcendent.

Secondly, we are summoned unambiguously by our religions, as sisters and brothers in faith, to build solidarity and community.

Thirdly we are impelled, by these very religious beliefs and values to witness to, and build together, justice, peace, and authentic community in our world.

It is our religions, Francis insists, that impel us to move beyond the private sphere to public involvement.

We can't remain on the sidelines in the building of a better world, but we're driven by our religious beliefs to speak and work together for a life-giving and wondrously astonishing planet. Not in a party political or ideological way, but all the same (and this is one of my favourite emphases in the encyclical) – engaging politically to strengthen dialogue, cooperative sharing, solidarity and action. And as Francis points out, and his close collaboration with Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib in 2019 demonstrates, this dialogue is central to collaboration and underpins all our efforts to nurture the seeds of peace and justice.

And so, because of, and not in spite of, our faith traditions, we're called to join in dialogue, to share our values and establish the bonds spoken of over and over in the encyclical. Emphasising this – one of his favourite themes, we know – Francis describes dialogue as the way we'll come to recognise and reverence our common values, learn to appreciate and respect differences, and build friendship and action. It's out of this dialogue, he believes, that we will build bridges, strengthen the culture of encounter, establish the seeds of peace, and promote the common good across all of society.

These convictions underpin Francis' concerns about religious prejudice

and hostility – his underscoring of the truth that violence doesn't have any basis in our fundamental religious convictions, but only in their distortion – in the erroneous interpretations of religious texts. Hence his deep apprehension about religious extremism and aggression.

Here we see Francis' most ardent entreaty: his yearning for an enhanced consciousness of our common identity and for a greater appreciation of the solemn and universal duty to solidarity and action.

It is this, we know, and hold – that's at the core of the gospel message. It's at the heart of all that is taught across all major religions. But, as Francis points out, it's also at the heart of some of our greatest challenges today.

The message and implications of Fratelli Tutti reflect the central messages of Francis' whole pontificate. As so many scholars have pointed out, it's the natural companion to *Laudato Si'*, expressing in concrete terms his deep yearning for collaboration, not confrontation, in our care of Earth and of each other.

For me, as I think Francis intends, Fratelli Tutti raises specific questions for us as Church right across the world, and also specifically for us in Australia. And as I've reflected on these in the past few weeks, if we really take them to heart, the Pope's words are both challenging and inescapable. They relate to solidarity (religious and social) and to the inclusion that Francis insists must be at the heart of our lives – politically, economically and socially.

As I've looked around at the Australian church, I've actually wondered about the real impact of this encyclical on our church here – in our dioceses, parishes, our Catholic organisations, our media? How have our bishops and priests responded to this call of Pope Francis – in their homilies, in their public statements, in their advocacy and action? How have we as Church, witnessed explicitly – to solidarity and collaboration with our Muslim sisters and brothers?

One example really stands out for

me. Two days after the NZ Royal Commission into the Christchurch massacres, Australia launched an enquiry into extremism, specifically right-wing extremism. A late intervention by the Home Affairs Minister, however, shifted its emphasis and it ended up focussing specifically on Islamic extremism. So, we moved from viewing Muslims as victims to seeing them first of all as suspects.

I've been asking myself ... what did I/we do to express solidarity with the Islamic community in this moment? And how did we, more broadly as Church, express and witness to our solidarity and support? A question, as Patrick McInerney points out, is demanding much more public witness from us as a Christian community.

A second example also troubles me. I keep wondering about our response as Church to the refusal of the Australian Government to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons? The treaty, signed by 86 countries, came into effect in January, and bans signatories from testing, developing, producing, stockpiling or threatening to use nuclear weapons. In light of Francis' strong appeal to religions to work for peace, the challenge to us as Church in this country is clear, I believe.

The final example I'd like to reflect on (and you might have guessed

this one) is the Pope's call for inclusion. To me there's an intriguing irony in Francis' appeal for inclusion, in a document where the language clearly contradicts this. The sexist title of the encyclical, the constant references to man and mankind, and even the references to God as Father, and the use of fraternity, trouble many women (myself included) across our Church. And as well, in Chapter 8, all the examples given are those of men – Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi, and Charles de Foucauld. They clearly cut across the overall longing of the encyclical for concrete inclusion. It's a shame that language has at times undermined the power of the document and taken from its needed impact.

Of course, I need to keep reminding myself, when I become disturbed by these realities, that Francis, like all of us, is human, and the fact that he is male, South American and a Catholic cleric, help us to understand his perspective. And while I think that this is a reality that, yes, must be acknowledged by us, it must also be challenged. Additionally, though, even if he is verbose, and not as inclusive as I'd like, it's also a reminder to me, to look at the plank in my own eye, and to continue the dialogue and its resultant action to which we're

all called.

Nonetheless, this incongruity aside, I think this pope has been amazing in his witness to the gospel. I've loved his commitment to earth, to those who are poor, to those who have been marginalised in our world, to those who are victims of violence. In his humanity, his acknowledgement of his own limitations, he has been courageous, and a voice and witness for this time.

He is truly a prophetic leader, who can teach all of us the meaning, not only of the Good Samaritan, but also of the miracle of truly washing one another's feet.

I'd like to finish with the very real appeal and deep yearning of Francis in his prayer at the conclusion of this encyclical:

*May our hearts be open  
to all the peoples and nations of  
the earth.*

*May we recognize the goodness  
and beauty*

*sown in each of us,  
and thus forge bonds of unity,  
common projects,  
and shared dreams. Amen.*

*Sister Jan Barnett is a Sister of St Joseph and member of the Josephite Justice Network*

**This paper was given at the Pax Christi Zoom seminar on April 18 2021**

## UNIVERSAL FRATERNITY, AUSTRALIA AND THE ASIA PACIFIC

Andy Tiver

Thank you for the invitation to reflect on Australia, our relationships within Southeast Asia, and the Papal encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

The encyclical calls us to a universal fraternity, which I would rather refer to as a universal solidarity. I understand why 'fraternity' was chosen and its gesture towards the epistle of St Francis. Still the sound of this gendered word clashes in an unfortunate way with the urgent social and ecclesial task of embracing gender justice.

Gender justice must be a central part of this universal solidarity, which as the encyclical suggests, is

where there are no "others," no "them," there is only an "us" (FT 3). This can only be possible if we relinquish patriarchal and other forms of hierarchic power.

The themes of the encyclical: new forms of social friendship, the centrality of dialogue, the importance of openness, the need for a different kind of politics, and the continual movement to include those who have been excluded, are all critical for the future of our global human community.

*Fratelli Tutti* sounds one theme that is louder and more clarion than all the others. Self-interest (individual or collective) and the exclusionary

defence of national interests, is a dead end. Real hope is to be found in "ekstasis" – going outside of 'ourselves' in openness and love to encounter the other (FT 3:88)

Australia has failed in our relationships with our Southeast Asian neighbours to realize the vision of neighbourliness that the encyclical invokes. I focus on three areas: how we fail to welcome the stranger, how our national self-interest has distorted our outreach to help others, and how we have become less open, more security conscious and put militarism at the core of our national life.

core of our national life.

I acknowledge that as I speak today, I stand on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations. Like all land in Australia this land has never been ceded by its traditional owners. I live and make my living on stolen land. No Australian can walk away from this and still with integrity speak of justice.

This failure of solidarity is at the core of our national identity. If we gather up the accounts of settler wars and massacres against the first people of this land, the destruction of culture and language, and the injustice that continues to be perpetrated against aboriginal people ... the conclusion is impossible to ignore, that our nation is founded on an ongoing and continuing crime against humanity.

We should not be surprised that we find it difficult to establish relationships of respect and mutuality with our Southeast Asian neighbours when colonial practices and paternalism continue to be entrenched in the relationship between first and second people in Australia.

***Over the last 22 years Australia has hardened its heart against the stranger in need.***

This is seen in how Australia treats asylum seekers. For the last 22 years Australia has contravened international law and has denied the basic human rights of people who have come to this country to seek asylum. Australia has treated innocent people like criminals.

This failure is not just a failure to welcome and protect the most vulnerable. We burden and abuse asylum seekers further by putting them in indefinite detention, which goes against every international norm of what is legal and just.

We see the same lack of hospitality in how we have treated international students, the majority of whom have come to this country from the Asia Pacific, seeing them as a lucrative source of income to sustain our education sector. When Covid struck, and they were no longer of any economic benefit we abandoned them. It was left to migrant community organizations in cooperation with local food banks and pantries to provide the necessi-

ties of life. Being involved in delivering some of this support I saw how hungry many of these students were. When they received food, they would find a hidden spot and consume it immediately.

While the senseless and cruel detention programs of our Government consume huge amounts of resources, and generate shonky and suspect contracts, there is a decline in resources available for meaningful migrant settlement and inclusion programs.

These asylum seekers, new migrants, and students tell family and friends of this experience of intentional cruelty and neglect. Our reputation as a mean-spirited self-interested nation consolidates in the region.

***Our national self-interest distorts our outreach to help others***

Before 2014 Australia was held in high regard internationally, especially among our neighbours in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, as a country that had a development assistance program responsive to their real needs, which was participatory, and was supported by skilled people within what was then AusAID. For over a decade conservative political parties consistently sought to undermine the confidence of the Australian people in our Aid program. In 2013 the Abbot government scuttled Australia's aid program, disbanded AusAID as an entity and integrated it with DFAT with its vastly different agenda.

The development program that remained was directed towards butressing our own national self-interest. The amount of aid plummeted from around 0.32% of GNI in 2014/15 to around 0.2% this year.

The continual undermining of development assistance has not only allowed us to become one of the lowest Aid contributing nations in the OECD, it has made us a mean-spirited people. Most Australians hold a negative view of development assistance. 80% of Australians oppose increasing the overseas aid component of our national budget.

In the past a disinterested aid program has been critical to building

relationships of understanding and trust with our neighbours. Now whatever aid is provided comes with the assumption that this is self-serving. Even this most recent Covid support to PNG and other Pacific countries is primarily to secure our porous borders from Covid transmission.

The grotesque expression of Australian self-interest in regard to Timor-Leste cannot be overlooked. Australia prided itself on the engagement with international peace keeping operations in the wake of Timor-Leste independence, and then in 2004 sent ASIS to bug the prime minister's office to gain economic advantage in the Timor gap negotiations.

Such ruthless and criminal action against one of the poorest countries in Asia which we were pretending to assist is unconscionable. The scandal continues to play out in our courts as the absurd charges against Witness K and his lawyer Bernard Collaery continue.

***Australia has become less open, more security conscious putting militarism at the core of our national life.***

The situation in Southeast Asia at this present moment is incredibly complex. So much of the internal political dynamics within countries is overshadowed by the posturing and military muscle flexing of the two imperialist powers; China and the US.

Last week we heard the sabres of war rattling over our region. There is rhetoric over potential war with China over Taiwan and the myriad of actual war games currently in the region.

The US has renewed its strategic agenda of a 'pivot to Asia'. This was an Obama era policy that was never realized because of US engagements in the Middle East. Now after the Trump interlude Biden is renewing this strategic agenda. It has engaged the same cast of characters. The architect of the Pivot under Obama, Kurt Campbell was appointed "Asia co-ordinator" on the first day of the Biden administration.

The pivot to Asia was always a China containment strategy with a

hearts and minds gloss over everything. We can expect more of the same but now the stakes seem to be much higher, since China has used the period of US lack of focus to significantly expand its hard and soft power across the region and beyond.

Australia is blindly bound by our attachment to the US alliance and follows where the US leads or fails to lead. US interests are however not Australian interests, neither are those of China. We should not blindly follow the US, and neither should we diminish or ignore the imperialist ambitions of China or gloss over their human rights abuses.

The choice has never needed to be binary, and Australia has had opportunities in the past to do what Pope Francis is calling for in his encyclical, to enter into solidarity with our neighbours and engage in dialogue over our shared concerns. Our past conduct leaves truly little reason for our neighbours to trust us.

The Philippines is an example of populist regimes that the encyclical refers to that has a "lack of concern for the vulnerable" and "exploits them demagogically" (FT5:155).

President Rodrigo Duterte was catapulted to office in an electoral victory in 2016 that was massively influenced by social media. It has since been shown how the now infamous organization Cambridge Analytica played a key role in targeting social media messaging. Foreign actors running troll farms pumped out targeted social media propaganda.

Even before he took office Duterte had launched a propaganda campaign to undermine the discourse on human rights. When he came to office through clandestine state agents and paid goons, he embarked on a campaign to summarily execute thousands of drug suspects. From the beginning of the Duterte regime there has been abuse, harassment and extrajudicial killing of activists and civil society organization leaders. This has dramatically increased after the introduction of the Anti-Terrorism Act in July 2020 (Republic Act No. 11479).

In the face of gross human rights abuses by the Duterte regime, some reliable sources suggest up to 30,000 people may have been summarily executed in his so-called 'war on drugs'. There is currently a preliminary investigation being conducted by the International Criminal Court into President Duterte for crimes against humanity.

Australia has been worse than silent. The draconian anti-terror laws which are now being used against civil society activists, were drafted with the aid of the Australian government, and modelled on our own anti-terror laws. Australia has also continued to provide significant support and training to the Armed Forces of the Philippines despite the AFP's appalling human rights record. Through its Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines, we continue joint military exercises.

This gross failure by Australia contrasts with the appropriate action taken in response to the military coup in Myanmar which has seen the termination of all military aid and support.

Halvorson and West in a recent article examined the history of the Australian-Philippine political and security relationship. They concluded that Australian engagement has been consistently self-interested and directed at how the relationship can serve Australia's wider strategic interests in the region. This is clearly the case in the present moment when Australia is willing to stay silent on these gross human rights abuses in exchange for the advantage it perceives in the Philippines in balancing Chinese influence and in the so-called 'war on terror' in the southern Philippines.

In *Fratelli Tutti* there is much that is said about war, but two sentences that particularly captured my attention. "We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a "just war". Never again war!" (FT7:258)

Australia's relationships in Southeast

Asia are overdetermined by the possibility of armed conflict between China and the US or their proxies. Yet as the encyclical points out, such war is in no one's interest, least of all that of the planet itself. Yet over recent decades war has come increasingly to define Australia as a nation.

There are a couple of interesting essays in the latest edition of *Meanjin* by Mark McKenna and Paul Daley that look respectively at Canberra as a spiritual centre for the nation and the Australian War Memorial.

On the axis which is now marked with the Australian War Memorial at one end and parliament house at the other, Walter Burley Griffin in his vision for our national capital had a community precinct with restaurants and amusements such as a zoo and opera house set in gardens. The First World War intervened, and the War Memorial was planned and constructed. The axis now runs between parliament house and the War Memorial.

Under the Australian War Memorial's recent former director, Brendan Nelson (a previous minister for defence in the Howard government), the War Memorial has been expanded and financially fortified by corporate sponsorship from armaments corporations and defence contractors. There are increased government funds to reconfigure the memorial to expand the display areas. This will effectively transform the memorial into a theme park of military hardware. Nelson has now gone to work for a weapons manufacturer, but while still director he touted the war memorial as the spiritual centre of the nation. A sentiment echoed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison who identified it as 'the nation's most sacred space'.

The symbolism of a prime minister who has outdone all others in publicly identifying himself as a Christian, describing this memorial to death, as the most sacred space in our nation is sad and obscene. The Australian War Memorial is not simply a monument to fallen soldiers. It is an enterprise that gathers and preserves all things to do with Australia's military engagements. It is

not democracy that represents the soul of our nation but war!

For a Christian to claim the memorialisation of death rather than the celebration of life as the most sacred space is deeply disturbing. I will not begin to comment on what this means for indigenous people and their understandings of sacred space.

Over the recent decade Australia has become a significant global arms and military equipment exporter, a \$2 billion dollar a year industry, supported by billions in government funding, and shrouded in secrecy. There was limited public discussion, yet while we slept our country became a significant global dealer in death.

The recent reports of the US and Australian withdrawal from military engagement in Afghanistan are

good news, but the legacy of that conflict continues. The Brereton Report exposed war crimes committed by the Australian Defence Force during the War in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016. The report is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive but identifies among the many alleged war crimes it discovered, the murder by Australian forces of 39 civilians and prisoners of war, at least 2 of whom were children. At the same time, the Australian government continues to prosecute the whistle blower David McBride who exposed these horrendous crimes.

As the revelations around Australia's Afghanistan war crimes unfold, the refrain that is heard from politicians and the upper level of the military is the comment "this is not who we really are" ... but unfortunately this is who we have become! When na-

tional self-interest becomes the measure of what is right and wrong, this is who we have become!

As I have outlined, in what has become a lament about our country, as a nation Australia is a long way from the vision of a justice and inclusive community that is articulated in *Fratelli Tutti*. We urgently need to dislodge our national soul from its identification with war and open it to a new kind of relationship to our neighbours, a relationship not constructed of fear and self-interest but of openness and love. This is where the challenge of *Fratelli Tutti* is for us. *Rev Andy Tiver is a Uniting Church Minister who served in the Philippines*

**This paper was given at the Pax Christi Zoom seminar on April 18 2021**

## TIME TO SILENCE THE DRUMS OF WAR

Joseph Camilleri

*For many familiar with the excesses of Cold War rhetoric and the hyped-up fears used to justify our ill-fated interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the current China bashing is a case of déjà-vu. But the latest bout of politically contrived anti-China hysteria is especially troubling.*

Over the last few weeks, we have seen the extraordinary spectacle of Australian ministers and senior bureaucrats beating the drums of war, blissfully unaware of the consequences of their words and actions. How can we best characterise such conduct? The proverbial bull in a China shop readily comes to mind, though the comparison may well do a disservice to the bull's judgment and sense of decorum.

In a keynote address delivered on 15 April to India's premier geopolitical conference Prime Minister Morrison stated that Australia was seeking to build "a strategic balance that favours freedom", leaving his audience in no doubt that freedom was codeword for the West generally and the United States in particular. A strategic competition, he went on to say, was under way between authoritarian regimes (read Russia and China) and liberal democracies (read the United States and its allies

and friends).

These prime ministerial utterances reflect the thinking of the newly invigorated Quad which brings together the United States, Japan, India and Australia.

At their first ever summit held in March, the four Quad governments made it clear that their objective was to contain China's rise. They pointedly agreed to collaborate in maritime security "to meet challenges to the rules based maritime order in the East and South China Sea". Which order, one may ask? The order which a dominant America had created in the aftermath of World War II, and which has sustained its dominance ever since.

Another clear signal of what was to follow was given by the Pentagon in early March with its submission to Congress requesting more than \$27 billion over the next six years to bolster capabilities across the Pacific region.

This expansion of what is now known as the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, or PDI, uses the language of deterrence to mask an increasingly antagonistic containment policy based on forward-deployed long-range weapon systems. These will include armed ground-based cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missiles,

more advanced missile defence systems, new space-based and terrestrial sensors, and enhanced access to airfields, ports and other facilities needed to support these deployments. The undisguised aim is to acquire highly survivable, precision-strike networks along the First Island Chain", a wide area across China's immediate maritime periphery that includes the disputed South China Sea and the increasingly tense Taiwan Strait.

It is now known that Australia and the United States have been consulting closely about contingency plans in relation to Taiwan. Against this backdrop of heightened tensions, former defence minister Christopher Pyne made a surprising intervention, describing Taiwan as the most likely next flashpoint.

Leaving little to the imagination, he spoke of the prospect of a "kinetic war", offering the following graphic description:

*"Not a cyber war, but a real one involving loss of life, destruction of military platforms, with aggressors and defenders on different sides."*

*This isn't rhetoric, this is something that you and I may well have to confront in the next 5 to 10 years."*

On reflection this was not an altogether surprising foray into the public arena. Having occupied the defence industry and then defence portfolios between 2016 and 2019, Christopher Pyne was well versed in the mindset of the security establishment. Upon retiring from Parliament, he has reinforced these connections by establishing a lobbying firm that advises several defence industry clients, as well as by serving as a director or advisory board member of multiple defence related companies. Within days of Pyne's carefully timed intervention senior government figures issued a series of broadsides with China as the implicit and often explicit target.

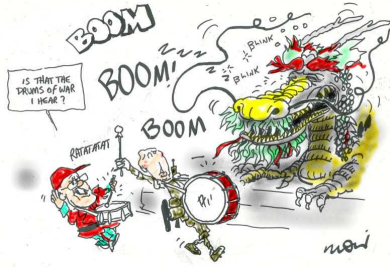
Following Morrison's intervention noted above, Assistant Defence Minister Andrew Hastie told military personnel their "core business" was "the application of lethal violence", a position closely aligned with the directives which newly appointed Defence Minister Peter Dutton had issued to the ADF's top brass.

Interviewed on ANZAC Day on the ABC program *Insiders*, Dutton spoke of the possibility of conflict erupting between China and Taiwan. He based that assessment on "the rhetoric that is coming out of China, from spokesmen particularly in recent weeks and months" and the "significant amount of [military] activity", which one must assume was a reference to China's military exercises near Taiwan.

On the same day came the intervention by Home Affairs Secretary, Mike Pezzullo. Reminding his audience that this was the 70th year of Australia's principal military alliance, he left little doubt that China, though not mentioned by name, was the target of his comments:

"In a world of perpetual tension and dread, the drums of war beat – sometimes faintly and distantly, and at other times more loudly and ever closer. . . We must search always for the chance for peace until we are faced with the only prudent, if sorrowful, course – to send off, yet again, our warriors to fight the nation's wars."

Two days later during a visit to Darwin the Prime Minister unveiled the \$747 million spending package on



four key training bases in the Northern Territory. This, we were told, was not a signal to China. But since its primary purpose was to enable more joint exercises with US forces in the region, how else could it be interpreted?

Adding further grist to the mill in his latest comments to *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Peter Dutton has now declared that Australia is "already at war" in the Cyber world. From this hypercharged premise he went on to argue that Australia "needed to be in a position to defend its waters in the north and west as a clear priority." For added dramatic impact we were told the ADF was prepared for action. .

This is but the latest in a long series of highly publicised and suitably choreographed denunciations of China's conduct at home and abroad. What is perhaps most revealing about what Australian ministers, senior civil servants and security agencies have had to say on the subject is how little new hard evidence of Chinese misdeeds they have added to what is already on the public record.

In any case, China's alleged efforts to wield political influence in Australia and elsewhere are but a pale imitation of what the United States has been doing for decades. The reach of its defence establishment, security agencies and other institutions within Australia is hardly denied and seldom questioned

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that what drives Australia's megaphone antipathy to the Chinese Government is not so much its commitment to so called liberal values, as it is to America's continued predominance in the Asia-Pacific region. And this helps explain why Australian criticism of China's Taiwan policies has become increasingly vitriolic.

Yet, little in China's stance on Taiwan has changed over the years. Ever since October 1949, Beijing has

steadfastly proclaimed that there is but one China, and that Taiwan is part of China. The projection of US military power right across the Pacific rim has been the principal obstacle to the achievement of that goal.

Not surprisingly, US-China tensions over Taiwan have simmered for the best part of seven decades, reaching crisis point on three occasions – in 1955-56, 1958, and 1995-96.

What makes the present situation especially dangerous is the rising level of US military and diplomatic support for Taiwan, which may in turn incline a Taiwanese government to miscalculate and take a more assertive step towards a declaration of independence. Such a step would almost certainly invite Chinese military intervention.

What can the United States and its allies do to resist the "curse of war"? The prevailing orthodoxy in US defence circles is that the flexing of military muscle and expansion of the US military presence is the only path to peace.

A safer and more effective response would be to honour the spirit and letter of the [Shanghai communiqué](#) agreed to by China and the United States during Nixon's historic visit to Beijing in February 1972. The United States acknowledged that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. It undertook to abide by this position and reaffirmed its support for a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.

Translated into the present context, this would mean that the US and its allies, including Australia, would restate their support for the one-China policy and strongly discourage Taiwan from taking any unilateral moves towards independence. For its part, China would be expected to reaffirm its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question.

In addition, Australia, together with ASEAN or particular middle powers in the region, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, could convene regional discussions that include China to explore confidence-building measures, including active collaboration on climate change, the Covid pandemic,



and other transnational challenges to security. Over time, these efforts could pave the way for concrete steps towards regional demilitarisation.

This is the only sane response to our current predicament. Sadly, it is not the path that those who presently navigate the ship of state will wish

to follow. If there is to be movement in this direction, it will not come from political parties, at least not in the first instance.

It can come only from a reinvigorated civic engagement. This means a wide-ranging, well organised and sustained intervention into the national conversation by thoughtful,

well informed citizens, using all the personal and collective channels at their disposal.

*Joseph Camilleri is Emeritus Professor at La Trobe University in Melbourne, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences.*

*This paper first appeared in "Pearls and Irritations."*

## Book Review

**AT HOME IN THE LAND: THE PLENTY YARRA CORRIDOR**, by Geoff Lacey

Reviewed by Catriona Devlin

Geoff Lacey is a scientist who loves the land, especially the land around Melbourne. He has traversed the landscape; he has noticed and reflected amidst the flora and fauna; he has come to experience the land as a living entity that has a yesterday, a today and a tomorrow. Out of this wealth of experience, he has written and published many articles and books. This latest work is further evidence of his intimate knowledge and relationship with the land.

From the outset in *At Home in the Land* the author claims that a profound change in consciousness, even a new sense of what it means to be human, is necessary, if we are to awaken to and address the current climate crisis, the pollution of our airways and waterways and the rapid loss of biodiversity. He insists that for us to live sustainably, we need to learn to know and love Earth intimately, and we need to start from our local place. This is why he takes us on a reflective and informative journey down the Plenty – Yarra Corridor.

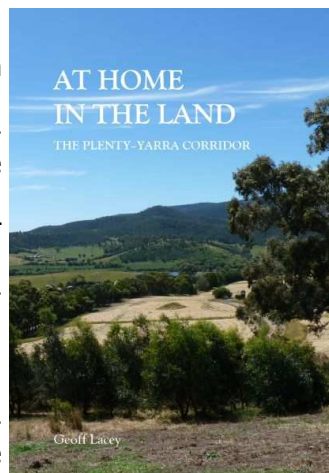
This book demonstrates that the author has already embraced such a change in consciousness because he has integrated his knowledge of disciplines such as geology, flora and fauna identification and agriculture, bringing them into conversation with his acute sensory ability to listen to and to see his environs. He knows the needs of so many species, be it hollows for nesting birds in old trees, grassy slopes, or shaded nooks for particular plant species and the nutritional soils for a diversity of vegetation.

Part 1 functions like an introduction outlining the author's plan for the book: a comment on technology and its dubious value in achieving

a profound change of consciousness; then a reflection on the relevance of indigenous wisdom with its organic vision as an avenue for changing consciousness. 'This organic view', writes the author, 'looks at the world in all its diversity: the elements, soils, plants and animals including ourselves. The natural world is at once familiar yet evoking wonder. Thus it has a quality of wildness: it is given to us, it is not something we own. Ultimately, it is beyond our management'.

In Part 2, we are taken into two ecological networks: one in Central Victoria, the Coliban main channel, the other in Western Victoria, *Connewar-ran*, a family property along the Hopkins River. Using these two examples of intricate networks, the author invites us to see patterns in the land; how the soils, the vegetation, the trees, the waterways and all the biodiversity interrelates and is essential to human wellbeing.

We are then taken in Parts 3 and 4 on a journey down the Plenty River corridor, through to its confluence



with the Yarra. The author notes the historical, cultural and spiritual significance of this area to the indigenous people and also in terms of the early European settlement of Melbourne. The important work of several dedicated local conservation groups is also mentioned here.

We then return to the city in Part 5, and using the examples of various regenerative projects, the author argues for a fundamental shift in our thinking about the economy and the built environment. He calls for a more imaginative approach that implies a deeper engagement with nature and an effort to live within the ecological network.

In the final section, Part 6, the author draws strong connections between ecology, justice and ancient wisdom. He leaves us with the insights of indigenous wisdom - that the practice of *Dadirri* – deep listening to land and quiet still awareness, is the way we will be drawn into the profound change of consciousness that is so urgently needed today.

This little book contains also a short but useful glossary as well as notes on sources. The maps and photos provided are clear and really enhance the text, and there is a wealth of further material in the bibliography, for those who wish to follow up on this journey.

The book is available for \$24 at Readings Carlton or from the author (03 9489 4784;

[glacey@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:glacey@unimelb.edu.au).)

CATRIONA DEVLIN

*Sister Catriona Devlin is a member of the Brigidine Order and Co-convenor of Pax Christi Victoria*

## *Two longtime members of Pax Christi have gone to God. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.*

### *Sr. Ann Laidlaw, DC*

**T**he life of Sister Ann Laidlaw, Daughter of Charity, was remarkable! Ann had an enquiring mind and a passionate enthusiasm for our Vincentian apostolate. For some twenty-five years of her sixty-engaged in education. It was her vision, as give the best service possible. All Ann's endeavours for the apostolate, the mission and in answer to the needs of Sydney, thus representing the Daughters of Charity. It was through her work at the Justice and Peace Commission, that Ann became an active member of the international Catholic Christian peace movement. Then, in 2002, she was appointed Executive Director at the Catholic Immigration Office. As such, she had a vital role in the Mission of the Church in the Sydney Archdiocese. Ann was insightful and quick to recognize injustices. She was passionate about all aspects of justice and peace and never tired of discussion numerous issues. However, she had no patience with words only and was serious about following words with action. It was her driving passion to work for justice, peace and equality, that fuelled her commitment to organizations such as ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), Pax Christi, and the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Social Justice where she was also Spiritual Advisor. It was these very commitments which gave her a knowledge of the truth of suffering, which further drove her passion, in those areas.



of Charity, was remarkable! Ann had an enthusiasm for our Vincentian apostolate. For two years as a Daughter of Charity, Ann was a Daughter of Charity and as an educator, to her surprises had a solid basis. They were always to a need.

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Sr Joan Chittister OSB, another passionate advocate of justice, peace and equality says: *Knowledge consists in seeking truth and light. Enlightenment is when truth and light are found.* Ann passionately sought knowledge, with its truth and light, but not just to keep it for herself. In a spiritual sense, she sought enlightenment, so that she could bring truth and light to her mission and the mission of the Daughters of Charity.

Now, at last, Ann has found the fulness of truth and light. On Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021, after just a week of devoted care in Greenwich Palliative Care Hospital, she slipped gently into unconsciousness. May her soul rest in the peace that surpasses all understanding and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen.

*This is an edited version of a eulogy by Sr Celine Quadros*

### *Lynn Fry*

**L**ynette Nancy Blackman, elder child of a staunchly-Anglican Australia-cultured Adelaide, and fathered by a wife, mother and grand-mother. After several years when Lyn had been in a disturbing environment in Broadmeadows, per editor in Melbourne's western suburbs, I in Rupert Murdoch's imperil takeover proffer for AVA service, and in 1991 Papua New Guinea That opened a new era of challenge and made significant contributions to community Guinea, its breakaway state of Bougainville, In Alotau for three years at Hagita Catholic College and in Port Moresby for two at a government high school she was not only a key teacher. Her natural affinity for Papua New Guineans made her a mentor to staff and students. She helped me establish the country's first tabloid newspaper, the Eastern Star, subediting, training the young journalists in English, and being called on by the churches and community groups to help in various ways. While other expats barred their homes and feared the local community Lyn earned their respect by using public transport and supporting local community groups.



voured with a privileged education, proved mother without peer.

teaching at a very rugged high school with a and I had been an influential local newspaper became very angry at becoming a small cog in the program, and, on Lyn's initiative, we decided to go to New Guinea beckoned.

opportunity in which Lyn blossomed and services and education in Papua New Guinea and then Jakarta.

In 1996 Lyn was recruited to serve as District Development Officer in Buin, a central town in Bougainville, and for 6 months in 1998 in an AUSAID-funded program of post-civil war reconstruction and community resource development. She liaised with the Peace Monitoring Group, facilitated funding applications for school reconstruction, worked directly with women's groups, organized district workshops, and lived in very primitive conditions with the people she was assisting. She showed no fear of the locals and their support helped secure her safety. Two years later, in 2000, she accepted an RMIT secondment to an affiliated college in Jakarta.

During those years Lyn consolidated her reputation for independence, community support and concern for the 'unlovable.' In an earlier phase of our married life that she had established her status as an exemplary mother and community worker. It was triggered by my decision to accept a position with Mobil Chemical International in 1970,

barely a year after we moved from Essendon to our new home on five acres of undeveloped land at Sunbury. That position required me to spend one third of my time in each of Melbourne, New Zealand and other parts of Australia. Andrew was seven, Kenneth five and Warwick two. With that handful Lyn suddenly became mother, father, educator, carer, school taxi and total household and property manager. That generated an unbreakable bond between Lyn and the boys who were totally dependent on their mother and could virtually forget they had a father for very long stretches and who was virtually redundant when he was home. In addition Lyn had joined the Red Cross, become a very dependable officer, organizer of training programs, a very active member of our church, and very well known in Sunbury.

An invitation by the World Council of Churches to take part in a special consultation on the crisis in the Middle East in October 1975 and the opportunity for research visits to nine countries in the Middle East and Africa aggravated the situation. It meant that I was away for three and a half months and was not home for Christmas. That was no way to recover a bond with the boys, but it also caused Lyn much distress for a time. Our relationship was strained for a time, but Lyn came to appreciate the reality and validity of the situation, gave me great support and our love and relationship have been stronger for the twenty years since the events of 9/11 than at any time since the early years of our near-59 year marriage.

During those twenty years, although she had given up leading walks, as we made up for lost time Lyn's eagerness for walking still influenced our selection of travel plans: 2002, India, Belgium and Florida to visit Ken's US family contingent; 2005, Turkey, China and Colorado; 2010, Jordan and Syria; 2012, Peru, Chile and Colorado Springs (the US contingent keeps moving); 2013, Nagaland ; 2014, Broome and the NW; 2016, with Lilly, Bella and Luca to Milne Bay; and finally 2018, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Unfortunately, for much of that time we had to consider Lyn's health status but she always wanted to attempt physically challenging walks and maintained her courageous struggle against cancer as it struck repeatedly, first in 2004, then 2008, then 2012 and finally when it physically conquered her last week. For all that time, while she accepted the inevitability of her fate she resisted it as best she could but with calm resolve that there should be no fuss. She did not fear death. There was to be no effort to keep her alive with chemotherapy. What she valued most was the presence, the company, of the grandchildren she loved so dearly.

*This is an edited version of the eulogy given by Lynn's partner Ian*



## Back to School with ICAN

The nuclear-armed states are talking big and spending up with no intention to disarm. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides a pathway out of this mess, and it's up to us to get our governments on board.

Ban School is for anyone in Australia and the Pacific who wants to learn more about this movement and be part of history in the making.

**Enrol in the full program or pick and choose your classes.**

While ban school is free, we invite you to help us cover costs by [chipping in for Ban School](#)

**CLASS 1: ALL ABOUT THE BAN,**  
MONDAY 28 JUNE AT 5-6:30pm  
AEST / 7-8:30pm PACIFIC

What motivated this movement? What does the Treaty actually contain? What is the Pacific's role in shaping the treaty, and what are the obligations to support victims and remediate impacted environments all about?

**CLASS 2:  
RESISTANCE IS FOREVER,**  
MONDAY 19 JULY AT 5-6:30pm  
AEST / 7-8:30pm PACIFIC

The land and bodies of First Nations people in Australia and the Pacific carry the damage and devastation of decades of nuclear testing. Far from being silent victims, First Nations people have fought back. This session will dive into this rich and living history of resistance.

**CLASS 3:  
HOW TO END NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE,**

MONDAY 9 AUGUST AT 5-6:30pm  
AEST / 7-8:30pm PACIFIC  
Nuclear deterrence is getting in the way. It's a theory, it's an idea, yet it is deeply entrenched in our minds, dissociated from the reality of these weapons, and is blocking the path to disarmament. We'll learn about the origin story of the deterrence concept and how to dismantle it.

**CLASS 4:  
BANNING THE BOMB,  
SMASHING THE PATRIARCHY,**  
SATURDAY 28 AUGUST AT 12-1:30pm AEST / 2-3:30pm PACIFIC  
Director of Reaching Critical Will, Ray Acheson, and former Senator and ICAN Ambassador, Scott Ludlam, know how to fight for a better world. They will share insights, tactics and stories from their new books; "Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy" and "Full Circle".

**CLASS 5:  
THE ROAD TO A NUCLEAR FREE FUTURE,**  
MONDAY 20 SEPTEMBER AT 5-6:30pm AEST / 7-8:30pm PACIFIC  
Now we know what we're talking about, let's take a look at the status quo and look ahead to map the movement that wins. We'll talk political advocacy, local government, superannuation funds, education, direct action and more.

**We need you**

Details of speakers and enrolment: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/ban-school-2021/>, [gem@icanw.org](mailto:gem@icanw.org)

# NOTICE BOARD

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Pax Christi Meetings

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

**Contact: Claude Mostowik**  
**(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953**

The venue: 209A Edgeware Road, Enmore.

## QUEENSLAND

### Pax Christi Meetings

Pax Christi Queensland

#### Contact:

**Pam Nair** 07 3711 3273

pamnair@hotmail.com

## VICTORIA

#### Contact

**Harry Kerr** 03 9077 6464

ahmkerr@hotmail.com

**Pax Christi National Council  
Meets on Zoom for national  
issues**

#### Contact:

**02 9550 3845**

**0411 450 953**

## PAX CHRISTI NATIONAL CONFERENCE

*Spirituality for Peace  
Building:*

*Learning from  
First Nations peoples.*

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

**Dr Anne Pattel-Grey**

Dr Anne is an Aboriginal woman who is a descendant of the Bidjara/Kari Kari people in Queensland and she is a recognised Aboriginal leader with Australia - nationally and internationally.

**6th to 8th August 2021**

**Location:** Padua College, 80 Turner Road, Kedron, Queensland

### ACCOMMODATION

A range of accommodation is available close to the conference venue. There are also some limited billeting possibilities.

### REGISTRATION COST:

Whole conference: \$120 (conc.\$100)

Friday & Saturday only: \$100.00

(conc.\$80)

Saturday only: \$80.00 (conc \$60)

### Contact Persons:

Fr Joe McKay OFM (Co-ordinator):

[joegmckay@gmail.com](mailto:joegmckay@gmail.com)

Sr. Claire Cooke (Treasurer):

[ccooke@holyspiritsisters.org.au](mailto:ccooke@holyspiritsisters.org.au)

Ms Pam Nair (Secretary): 07 3711

3273 | [pamnair@hotmail.com](mailto:pamnair@hotmail.com)

You are invited to the June  
Agape

**Sunday June 27<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**@ 12.30 for 1.00 pm**

**PLEASE BRING SOMETHING  
TO SHARE FOR LUNCH**

Presentation will begin at 2.00pm

All welcome to both

**TRUTH TELLING  
IN AUSTRALIA**

**Kildara Centre, Rear 41 Stan-  
hope Street, Malvern, Vic**

The Victorian Government's

**Yoo-rook Justice Commission** is the first indigenous truth telling inquiry into historical and ongoing injustices against Aboriginal Victorians since colonisation.

**Sherry Balcombe** will speak on its significance to First Nations' peoples, and non-indigenous Australians.

Sherry has been with the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria since 2003, and its Coordinator since 2015.

**To register:** Contact Caesar D'Mello 0451911941 or Harry Kerr 0424950852 [ahmkerr@hotmail.com](mailto:ahmkerr@hotmail.com)

### AUGUST AGAPE

### ECOLOGY:

### VISION AND PRACTICE

Sunday 22nd August

Shared meal 1 pm

Presentation 2 pm

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement -  
Pax Christi Australia.**

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

**New South Wales Members** please return your membership application/renewal to  PO Box A 681 Sydney South 1235 NSW

**All others:** please return your membership application/ renewal to 13 Mascoma St, Strathmore, Vic 3041 . Direct transfer to Pax Christi Victoria Inc **BSB 063-161 Account number 00900935**

**Please Advise Ally Pender** [penderally@gmail.com](mailto:penderally@gmail.com)

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

**ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)**