

DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

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'WE LONG FOR PEACE, BUT NOT ANY PEACE.' REFLECTIONS ON AFGHANISTAN

Deborah Storie

If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and right, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. (Ecclesiastes 5:8 NRSV)

Australia is weary of Afghanistan, our longest war on foreign soil. Australia's overt military involvement began in October 2001, part of a multi-faceted international intervention. Although Australia's contribution officially ended in 2013, Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel continued to be deployed in a range of roles into 2021. In October 2013, then Prime Minister Tony Abbott addressed a gathering at the Australian base in Uruzgan: 'Australia's longest war is ending. Not with victory, not with defeat, but with, we hope, an Afghanistan that is better for our presence here'.

Is Afghanistan better for Australia's military presence? The answer is not certain. It depends on whom you ask. Sharp differences of perspective reflect deepening demographic and cultural divides within Afghanistan. We Australians most often encounter formally educated urban or diaspora Afghans, yet half the population are illiterate and three quarters live in rural areas. Less than



four percent of Afghans use the internet, yet some live on social media. The answer also depends on the willingness to risk a straight answer. As Afghans say, 'Look at the sky, and choose your turban'. In other words, do and say whatever reassures whichever planes, drones or satellites, soldiers or spies, are watching.

I was fortunate to first live and work in Afghanistan before Australia was an occupying force when Afghans still welcomed us as guests. I spent most of those early years in rural villages. That shaped my perspective. During later seasons, I moved through urban and rural regions working with humanitarian organisations that were intentionally impartial in the conflict. That shaped my perspective too. As an outsider, I do not speak for Afghanistan or any of its people. Yet, I hope that sharing these

fragments of remembered conversations might help other Australians cultivate a more empathetic and intuitive sense of the experiences, courage, hopes and fears, of some Afghans whose voices are too rarely heard.

Hazarajat, Central Afghanistan, Spring 1997: *Evaluating a community development program in Afghanistan's central highlands, I walk through remote mountain valleys, asking groups of people to describe their lives, the good times and the bad times, what they dream of and what they fear. Over and over again, this is what I hear: 'During times of peace, they take half our grain, the best of our animals, our rugs and yoghurt, our wood and trees. They take our sons as labourers and our daughters as maids. They take all we have, give no-*

Contents

Afghanistan: We long for peace..	P 1
Spirituality for Peace Making, Pax Christi National Conference.....	p 4
Lament.....	p 5
A Cosmic Walk.....	p 6
Taiwan, a war that must never be fought.....	p 8
Book Review, Cloud Climbers	p 10
End military Extremism.....	p 11
Notices.....	p 12

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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• *nothing back, and expect us to be grateful. During times of war, the government cannot tax us, landlords cannot collect. If we are unlucky, we may be looted, our crops burnt, our sons killed. But perhaps the fighting won't come our way. We may lose one or two sons as soldiers but, God willing, will feed and clothe our other children. During peace time, the cities grow fat while we grow food and starve. In war time, no-one is fat but we starve last. We long for peace, but not any peace.'*

• **Kabul, Spring 2002:** *Journalists swarm over the city. Over a thousand International Non-Government Organisations, registered since January, compete to move quickest, spend biggest and act most visibly to most dramatic effect. English displaces local languages at coordination meetings, silencing Afghans fluent in other languages. Rentals increase ten-fold within a month. A senior colleague observes, 'We've overlooked a major security risk. Families evicted from rented houses will rise up against the foreigners. Why blame landlords for exorbitant rents? Identify the root cause!' The conversation moves to other disasters caused by the plague of expatriates. The water table is falling fast. Wealthy families invest in deeper wells and, as public wells run dry, the children of the poor walk further and further for water. Hydrologists warn that when Kabul's aquifers are exhausted, the city will run dry.*

• **Faryab, Spring 2006:** *Evaluating a community development project, I learn that tenant farmers pay 75 percent of their produce to absentee landlords. They work the fields all year to feed their families for three months – if rain falls and if other obligations and misfortunes do not extract their produce first. 'Our land is not irrigated. The snows and rains are less reliable than they were: good seasons are less frequent; droughts and floods are more severe and come more of-*

ten.' How do you survive? 'The travel agents [people smugglers] save us. We send men. The money they send home sustains us. If Iran and other countries close their doors, we are finished.'

• **Balkh, Spring 2006:** *A village elder remembers grapes, pomegranates and almonds, fruits his grandchildren have never tasted. Theirs was a land that flowed with milk and honey once. 'In the time of our grandfathers this country was green: trees, gardens, fruit and vegetables, sheep, cows and goats, chickens and ducks. That was before the road was built, before the city, before the aqueduct. As the city grew it drank more and more water and left us with less and less. Our river ran more slowly, it became a trickle, then it stopped . . . We hear that people in the city grow flowers, that some people have so much water they swim in it . . . When our water dried up, we dried up. We are scorched, burnt-up people.'*

• **Nangahar, Spring 2009:** *Visiting recently resettled valleys, I ask returnees, 'Why did you leave?' This is what I hear: 'There was peace of a sort under King Daud, but not since then. It's always the same. Those in power hold the cities and the plains, the resistance, mujahedeen or insurgents, hide in the mountains. We're caught in between. We get shot when we go out to plough, tend our sheep or collect water. Women and children are not safe inside or out. And young men? The army conscripts them by day; the mujahedeen or Taliban take them by night. When we moved our families to Pakistan, men returned to plant our fields in Spring and to harvest in Autumn. With no one to care for the land and the irrigation canals, our orchards died. With no one to protect the forests, they were pillaged and plundered.' Women lead me to an orange grove. Fifty ancient citrus trees concealed by crumbling mud walls survived the years of exile fed by an under-*

underground stream: sweet oranges, sour oranges, lime and other fruits whose English names I don't know. Treasured stock from which new trees are cultivated. Some replanted trees bore fruit this year. The forests – cedar, oak, juniper and pine – tell a less hopeful story. Their remnants are still being plundered.

The ADF claims that Australia's mission in Afghanistan was 'to support the Afghan Government help contain the threat from international terrorism'. How and why did those who authorised this mission imagine that a military intervention would do anything but exacerbate that threat? How and why did they ignore the inevitable human and ecological consequences of war?

Ethicist Margaret Somerville believes that we suffer from selective historical amnesia: failures of human memory, a reluctance to tell stories and over-reliance on reason as *the* 'way of knowing'. She advocates other ways of knowing that engage our bodies, hearts and spirits, as well as our minds. Reason, when used alone is ethically inadequate because

it operates within and is constrained by the conceptual and categorical constructs of the dominant culture. As Carol Fontaine puts it, reason is 'captive to socialization, teaching us *not* to see what needs to remain hidden for ideological purposes'.

Might Australia's intervention in Afghanistan be a consequence of 'the widespread failure of empathetic imagination' that Somerville laments? Are we captive to an ideology of war that renders failure invisible, even inconceivable? Might other ways of knowing enable our leaders to acknowledge that escalating cycles of violence will not and cannot bring peace? Will they learn the humility to respect and learn from those whose lands and lives their decisions have blighted?

Imagination is one other way of knowing. Walter Brueggemann defines 'prophetic imagination' as 'the human capacity to picture, portray, receive and practice the world in ways other than it appears to be when examined through a dominant, habitual, unexamined lens'. Jean Paul Lederach understands the 'moral imagination . . . as the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real

world yet giving birth to that which does not exist'. This capacity 'emerge[s] from and speak[s] to the hard realities of human affairs [yet] finds a way to transcend [and] move beyond what exists while still living in it'. The moral imagination perceives things beyond and at a deeper level than is immediately visible or audible and attends in an embodied way – sensually, spiritually and intuitively – to present and past realities. It senses how everything relates.

The challenge presses in upon us. Will we, collectively and with our leaders, muster the courage to recover the ancient discipline of repentance and turn away from self-seeking destructive ideologies and habits? Will we, collectively and with our leaders, cultivate the moral imagination needed to seek more just and peaceful ways of being in the world?

This essay first appeared in *Cloud Climbers: Declarations through Images and Words for a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace* (edited by Anne Elvey; with artwork by William Kelly and Benjamin McKeown; Palaver Press, Armadale, Vic: 3143),

PAX CHRISTI CONFERENCE

WHERE DOES AUSTRALIA'S SECURITY LIE?

Saturday February 19, 2022 (*provisional date*)

Do defence alliances and increased weaponry make us truly secure? Why is Security considered instinctively as a focus for Militarisation? How robust is Australia's engagement in "good diplomacy" to help defuse tensions? What is the cost of *not* pursuing non-violent approaches for preventing or transforming conflict? How deft has our foreign policy been towards China? Does our Overseas Aid serve the people of the Asia-Pacific region or Australia's interests? These and related questions are crucial to Australia's future and are significant in the context of the upcoming Federal Election. They will be explored by the Conference. *Please mark the date in your diary.* For more information: Caesar D'Mello: caesarmdm@gmail.com 0451911941; Rita Camilleri: camrita44@gmail.com 0448701877; Harry Kerr: ahmkerr@hotmail.com 03 9077 6464

Pax Christi Australia invites you to view

A Moment to Dream:

Pope Francis' Pathway to a Better Future

The vision of Fratelli Tutti -

Fr Kevin Lenehan, Master, Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzVvuXZ-LEg>

Collaboration, not Confrontation among faiths

Sr Jan Barnett, RSJ, Josephite Justice Network <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJVj5AYdauw&t=48s>

Reflecting on Australia's Relations in Southeast Asia

Rev. Andy Tiver, Uniting Church in Australia, Co-Chair Philippine-Australia Solidarity Association (PASA)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo0q5h2Nw6g>

Pax Christi National Conference 2021

A SPIRITUALITY FOR PEACE BUILDING: LEARNING FROM FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

Conference Report. David Tutti

Pax Christi Queensland is grateful and blessed to have had the opportunity to organise this year's biennial national conference. For us, it was a journey at a number of levels. Our small group had not contributed in this way since 2002 and we found the process a steep learning curve because of the context in which we were holding the conference and the decisions we had to make.

The conference theme was in itself a journey. The Pax Christi International focus on peacebuilding was in our mind as we discussed and discerned what theme to choose that took the Australian context seriously. We felt it was important and necessary that we look at ourselves and the need to build peace in this land. The decision to focus on listening to First Nations' voices was then very easy and logical.

We came to see that peacebuilding in our context requires we take our history seriously and learn to grieve that we have not listen to First Nations voices. Our decision to invite Anne Pattel-Gray and Cynthia Rowan to be our speakers was a step towards hopefully beginning a new journey of healing country. This new journey begins with see-

ing ourselves as descendants of invaders and beneficiaries of the theft of land, self-determination, human labour and human beings themselves. To be able to speak credibly about empire and imperial militarism elsewhere, we need to face that reality in the history of this land. Matthew 7:5, I think, is very pertinent here. The British invasion, theft and ongoing colonisation of First Nations' peoples of this place is the plank in our own eyes.

Pax Christi Queensland was asked to include a panel discussion in the conference program and we decided to add a West Papuan voice to the mix. Within the limited time, Yamin Kogoya shared his Papuan First Nation experiences. His voice and his insights into invasion and colonisation help us glimpse what was the reality here over the last 250 years. Alongside this, Claude Mostowik and Caesar D'Mello offered non-Indigenous reflections how First Nations' insights and Catholic teaching challenge us and help us to respond to empire.

Our small group in Queensland have yet to meet and unpack the implications of our listening to First Nations' voices. We would hope

that each Pax Christi group throughout Australia also commits to ongoing listening, grieving and actions in alongside First Nations' peoples in their own areas.

We are very aware of the age range and limitations of Pax Christi members. Our small Queensland group is a microcosm of this. The conference journey put significant pressure on some of our members and care of each other grew over time. Though we knew it already, we learnt again that peacebuilding always includes care for each other as we collaborate on a bigger task. We are also very aware that Covid restrictions significantly shaped what we were able to do. While technology was a challenge we managed to solve, the biggest disappointment is the inability to have the face to face meetings and informal conversations to get to know each other better. Collaborative work needs the personal connections to sustain it.

Finally, Pax Christi Queensland thanks the National Council for the opportunity to experience this conference journey. We have grown because of sharing this experience and we hope those who participated have also.

THE OLDEST LIVING CULTURE: WHAT A QUESTION?

A reflection on the Pax Christi National Conference. Harry Kerr

Anne Pattell Gray's question to the conference: *What does it mean that Australia is home to the oldest living culture on Earth? What emotions does it raise in you?* reminds me of something a teacher friend said a long time ago: *A child needs to learn three basic things: to read, to count and to know that the world is a holy place.* So called Western Civilisation has come to emphasise the first and the second and ignore the third.

My immediate reaction is that now is the time to keep silent and to learn to listen. *We don't comprehend who First Nations People are.* At an intellectual rational level we think we do. So we look for rational responses to deep spiritual issues. We want to take action, make plans and strategies. We are bewildered when they don't seem to make a difference. We do not listen and so we don't comprehend First Nations People. We do not comprehend what our colonial forbears have done to First Nations

people so we have no idea how to repair the damage.

Anne reminded us that First Nations have a deep knowledge of the land and the universe to which we do not listen and do not take seriously. In desperation some people seize on First Nations burning practices. But we do not set these in the context of First Nations understanding. We seek to integrate them into our mechanised and rational methodologies. Anne reminds us that every part of life is centred in the world of the

spirit where humanity connects with the spiritual world through the ancestors who are present with us. Their rituals and ceremonies connect with particular sacred sites, maintain connection with ancestral narratives. Their stories, passed down through the generations embody fundamental truth rooted in the environment. They tell of the creator's acts. We cannot think of the Creator, the source of life apart from the earth which binds us to herself.

Anne offers the First Nations' knowledge and experience as a gift, offered to all the nations and identities which make up contemporary Australia as we seek ways of living together in communion with the spirit of this land.

We must begin by listening, by seeing First Nations not as a quaint survival but as pioneers who know the way and can help us find the way. So we listen, not to understand but to know at the deepest level.

Some years ago I attended a national Anglican conference in Canberra. The conference included a workshop session when we were invited to meet with First Nations delegates. For over an hour we sat and listened as each person told us stories of pain which they had suffered at the hands of the whitefella world, pain which most of them would carry for the rest of their lives. They invited us into that pain. It left me speechless. We can't take it away but maybe there are ways

we can walk beside them and take it into ourselves. Is the first step to lament, to lay on the table and own the suffering which our colonial ancestors inflicted. We are not personally to blame but we are responsible for what happens now. After lament comes repentance, turning in a new and life giving direction to commit ourselves to walking and working with the First Nations people. And there is hope. In spite of the pain we inflicted we are invited into a shared future in which all races and cultures can build together.

As we listen, those of us who are Christians realise that we do not know who *we* are. We have repressed an important dimension of our own tradition which can open up a meeting place with First Nations people. The Hebrew Scriptures emphasise the connection between humanity, the Creator and the life of earth.

In the book of Job, Job takes God to task for his own suffering. God replies:

*'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding,
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
when the morning stars
sang together
and all the heavenly beings
shouted for joy?
'Or who shut in the sea with doors*

*when it burst out from the womb?—
when I made the clouds
its garment,
and thick darkness
Its swaddling band,
and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
and said, "Thus far shall you come,
and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves
be stopped"?'*

You have failed to enter the mystery of life which happening around you and which sustains your own life and opens the mystery of who you are.

St Paul in the Letter to the Romans writes: *We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

In spite of all we do to destroy creation, the Spirit is working to lead creation and all of humanity to a new shared future. We begin by patiently listening.

Harry Kerr is co-convenor of Pax Christi Victoria and retired Anglican Priest

Lament

David Tutti

We gather here today, Pax Christi members and friends

We gather as people of faith, people seeking peace

Yet we gather almost wholly as people enabled to be here by empire

We live, work and flourish on land forcefully taken from First Nations' Peoples

We are here because of empire, we continue to be complicit with empire

While First Nations' peoples of this land are unable to determine their own futures

We grieve that we did not listen to First Nations' voices

We remember our Christian churches' complicity in the whole colonial invasion story

Beginning with Pope Nicholas V's blessing to Portuguese invasion, theft and enslavement

Reinforced by Pope Alexander VI's Doctrine of Discovery, of white Christian Discovery

Christian nations given the right to invade, overthrow, pillage, kill and convert heathens

The British institutionalised in law and policy this Doctrine of Discovery

Continuing our churches' long tradition of being a pillar of empire

We grieve that we did not listen to First Nations' voices

We remember the heroic myths told about the Empire's settlement of this land
Glorified actions building the country amidst harsh conditions
Not told of the invasion of First Nations' countries, the violence and their spirited resistance
Not told of the massacres, the deliberate terrorising, the murders to evict, the genocides
First Nations' peoples were but part of the flora and fauna that needed clearing
The Empire does not want the truth. The actual truth is not heroic, glorious nor honourable

We grieve that we did not listen to First Nations' voices

We remember the constitution of the new colonial nation called Australia
Invitation for New Zealand to join but no recognition of First Nations' peoples
A new manifestation of empire was born, a new white nation in the Asia Pacific
We remember the 1967 Referendum counting First Nations' peoples in the population
Still no recognition of pre-invasion sovereignty, of their need to recover self determination
The empire continues to impose and oppress. Those on the side of empire continue to benefit

We grieve that we did not listen to First Nations' voices

We remember how the Uluru Statement from the Heart was quickly dismissed
Malcolm Turnbull rejected the invitation to walk with First Nations Peoples
After having 'carefully' considered the 2017 National Constitutional Convention's call
A voice to Parliament was seen as not desirable, not able to pass in referendum
For the Federal Government just an advisory voice to government is enough
Easy to establish and disestablish, easy to listen to and to ignore

We grieve that we did not listen to First Nations' voices

We remember that we are made in God's image and likeness
Called to grow shaped by the Magnificat, the Beatitudes, and God in the least
Called to risk kenosis, the way of the cross, for the sake of love, peace building and justice
Called to let go of empire, let go of assumptions we know better, that we are better
Called to let go of power over First Nations Peoples so that self-determination is recovered
Called to repent, grieve and learn to be the more that God calls us to enflesh

We pray we have the humility to listen to First Nations' voices

We remember we are people of hope, hope we can be the change needed in this land
Hope that this country will accept the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart
Hope that the voice of so many First Nations peoples will be respected and valued
Hope that a voice to Parliament is realised, truth telling is facilitated, Makarrata is life-giving
Hope that this nation called Australia learns to respect country in all its interconnectedness
We hope and pray we have the humility to listen to First Nations' voices and to make treaties
We pray we have the humility to listen to First Nations' voices And so be it. Amen.

STORY OF THE UNIVERSE: A COSMIC WALK

Catherine Hutchison

How can we know who we are if we don't know where we came from?

This is the challenging question Margaret Hill presented us with at the start of an Eco-Spirituality Retreat held on 27 February at the Brigidine Centre in Albert Park, Melbourne. The retreat was organised by members of the Pax Christi Eco-Spirituality book club, as an opportunity to look in more depth at the wonderful story of our universe and where we figure in it. Eighteen of us embarked on this journey.

Margaret, who lives in the Gariwerd/Grampians Region of Victoria, describes herself as an artist and writer of spare poetry. She is regenerating sixteen acres of native bush-

land and works closely with the local Moyston community. We were reminded of the land that has been stolen from our Indigenous brothers and sisters, the debt we owe them and how much we can learn from them.

As she became more involved in evolutionary spirituality and teaching the Universe Story, Margaret found there was a lack of teaching material applicable to Australia. Most of the teaching material available originated in the United States, with images of deer, foxes and rabbits. At this point Margaret committed herself to producing an Australian version of the Universe Story, which she felt "she absolutely had to do". The result of this work was visible

on the walls of the meeting room – laminated copies of Margaret's beautiful art work relating the evolution of the Universe from the Big Bang to the present day. There are forty five pictures (which are also available in a hardback book form), reflecting our continent and Indigenous culture. Copies of these pictures, each with a short description, were also placed face down on the floor. We were invited to choose one of these pictures, read its description and find the corresponding picture on the wall. This gave us our 'point of entry' into the Universe Story.

Three strands run through our evolutionary journey; **story, connection and time. Connecting,**

not only with other humans but with all beings, is essential for a harmonious and sustainable existence. As humans we have become increasingly disconnected from other species. Margaret invited us to select another picture from the floor and see if there was a connection to the first one we had selected. It was interesting to discover connections across gaps of millions of years.

The huge evolutionary time scales in the Universe Story are difficult, if not impossible for us to comprehend and 'get our heads around'. Some of us take the easiest solution i.e. to switch off. But there are other more constructive alternatives such as, wonder at the magnitude of it all, reflection, and opening ourselves to possibilities. In other words, is it necessary to comprehend the science in order to experience the Universe Story?

We learnt that our evolutionary journey is ongoing. Margaret introduced us to the concept of compulsion i.e. repulse in order to propel evolution. In fact, the universe is constantly evolving and this is a phenomenon that cannot be stopped or reversed. A section of Professor Brian Cox's DVD, *Wonders of the Universe*, was shown to link the notion of the three strands and introduce the concept of destiny. Professor Cox reminded us that our universe began with the Big Bang, 13.8 billion years ago. Our universe is so immense that to complete a journey around the Milky Way would take a million years to achieve. We humans are part of the universe so its story is our story. If we can see ourselves as a species we are more likely to connect with other Earth species.

A fundamental part of the universe story is time, which is woven into the fabric of the cosmos, a relentless journey that is our destiny. When we see stars in the night sky, we are looking into the past because star light takes so long to reach Earth. This is called deep time. The moment that stars were born is the most important event in the history of the cosmos, marking the end of the Primordial Era and the start of the great Age of the Universe. Each day is different from the next. Stars are born and die. The cosmos is dy-



namic, never static and within the universe everything is inevitably changing, with events occurring in order, never going forward or backwards. This phenomenon is scientifically described as 'Arrows of Time' and renders the notion of eternal an illusion. The DVD left us with even more challenging questions:

What drives these evolutionary changes? Why is there a difference between the past and the future? Why is there an 'Arrow of Time' at all?

One of the challenges of the Universe Story is language. We need a new language to accurately describe cosmic events such as sunrise and sunset. At this point we were given extracts from the writings of the late cultural historian, Thomas Berry, and asked to identify the passages that 'spoke' to us most strongly.

Before breaking for lunch, we participated in a ritual where, when prompted, we placed the pictures we had chosen at the start of the morning session, at the appropriate point of the Universe Story, which was marked on a long rope spread over the floor. This gave us a visual sense of the enormity of our universe's evolutionary journey and the brief time that humans have appeared in it.

The afternoon session was based on Andrew Cohen's book *Evolutionary Enlightenment* and explored the concepts of cosmic consciousness and evolutionary impulse. Cohen suggests that whilst matter relates to the exterior of the cosmos, consciousness or spirit forms its interior. The concept of *being*, which is taught in Eastern meditation practices and other traditional spirituality, is insufficient to meet the evolutionary changes we are facing. We need to develop a cosmic conscience. This requires an evolutionary impulse to move us from a state of *being* to one of *becoming*. Cohen proposes four ways in which this can

be achieved:

1. Clarity and teaching. This first way requires us to make the intention to evolve beyond our human egos, which is the cornerstone of all things.

2. Unconditional responsibility for ourselves. In order to move on a deep time evolutionary journey, each individual needs to accept that 'I am who I am' and that I can make relevant choices.

3. Facing everything avoiding nothing. We need to free ourselves from the influence of our egos. By denying evolutionary change we strengthen our egos.

4. Conscious process perspective. This involves us seeing every aspect of our life as part of the cosmic process and that we no longer live for ourselves, but rather for the good of the whole.

Both being and becoming are necessary states. Being creates a space to make us available to becoming, which allows evolutionary spirituality to occur.

Evolutionary spirituality is the impulse behind the formation of our universe; it takes us beyond time, matter, energy and light. This evolutionary spirit or impulse stretches from before the beginning of our Universe Story, through its different stages, and is still working in all of us today. Becoming needs to be the greater part of who we are at a conscious and unconscious level. This part of us, that is free, whole and complete, has been fractured by the duality within us, which prevents us finding our greater Self. By becoming aware of our own cosmic identity, we will learn to care more about the future of that process than about ourselves.

Cohen's work was new material that Margaret has not presented widely, and for many of us, was difficult to absorb at first exposure, requiring more reflection. We left the afternoon session and this stimulating workshop with the strong message that:

Every aspect of our human existence is an expression of the evolutionary process.

Catherine Hutchison is a member of Pax Christi Victoria.

TAIWAN: A WAR THAT MUST NEVER BE FOUGHT

Joseph Gerson

Taiwan has become the most dangerous flashpoint of the emerging new Cold War between the U.S. and China. Neither side wants war, but accidents and miscalculations—like those that triggered the First World War—can happen.

Miscalculations being what they are, we now know with greater detail how in 1958 the Pentagon and President Dwight Eisenhower prepared for the possibility of nuclear attacks against China in response to its shelling of offshore islands, despite the fact that Mao Zedong had no intention of seizing Taiwan. Today, amidst the Pentagon's exaggerated claims that within five to six years Beijing will have the military capacity to reconquer its "renegade province," Daniel Ellsberg, who recently released a long-secret report on the 1958 nuclear crisis, has joined others in warning Taiwan cannot be militarily defended. Ellsberg stresses that, as in 1958, the received wisdom in Washington is that U.S. threats of a first strike nuclear attack remain the greatest disincentive for militarily enforced Chinese reunification.

Despite right-wing and Pentagon exaggeration of an impending Chinese invasion of Taiwan, the reality is that unless Taiwan crosses the red line of declaring *de jure* independence, China is unlikely to embrace the danger of a devastating—potentially nuclear—great power war. In addition to the immediate, unpredictable, and devastating costs of such a war, Beijing is not about to embrace the massive disruptions to its economy and armed resistance by Taiwanese that would inevitably follow an invasion of Taiwan.

"Preventing accidents or miscalculations (political as well as military) that could trigger armed conflict that could easily escalate to nuclear war is now an urgent priority."

But there is that red line, and Taiwanese support for independence is growing, especially among younger generations. First Donald Trump and now Joe Biden have been playing

with fire. At the close of his disastrous reign, Donald Trump exacerbated U.S.-Chinese tensions over Taiwan by approving more than \$3 billion in new arms sales and sending high level administration officials to the quasi-independent Chinese entity which China sees as a last vestige of its century and a half of colonial humiliations.

Joe Biden and Anthony Blinken have made matters much worse. In January, for the first time since the renewal of U.S.-Chinese relations in 1979 based on the One China policy, Taiwan's functional ambassador to the U.S. was invited to participate in a presidential inauguration. Contrary to the decades-old "strategic ambiguity" policy regarding possible U.S. military intervention to defend Taiwan, Blinken has repeated Washington's "rock solid" commitment to Taiwan's defence. Biden has repeatedly dispatched warships to the Taiwan Strait, and in April they dispatched an "unofficial" delegation of former top officials to meet with senior Taiwanese officials, sending what a White House official termed a "personal signal" to Taiwan, not to mention Beijing. Guidelines that long restricted U.S. diplomats from meeting their Taiwanese counterparts are being revised to encourage such meetings, and some have already begun. Discussions are proceeding for the likely deployment of a permanent U.S. naval presence in waters near Taiwan and for possible negotiation of a U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. Refusing to be intimidated, the People's Liberation Army has engaged in repeated shows of force, sending warplanes into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone and its warships into Taiwanese waters, increasing the opportunities for accidents and miscalculations. In marking the Chinese Communist Party's 100th anniversary, Chairman Xi stressed the importance of "peaceful reunification" with Taiwan under the one-China principle to China's "national rejuvenation." Pressure toward that end has included preventing ship-

ments of Covid-19 vaccines to the isolated island.

It is a truism that we ignore history at our peril, and like most border lands Taiwan's history is tortured and complex. Its indigenous population, Formosans, whose ancestors first settled the island five thousand years ago are now only 2% of its population. In the 17th century Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch, soon followed by significant immigration from the Chinese mainland and then the island's integration into the Chinese Qing empire. With China's defeat by Japan in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan became a Japanese colony and was modernized to serve Japanese imperial interests. With Japan's defeat in 1945, the Kuomintang (KMT) Chinese "nationalist" government assumed control over Taiwan, and it was to Taiwan and its associated offshore islands that Chiang Kai-shek and his defeated nationalist forces retreated in 1949. With murderous brutality they established a dictatorship which was committed to re-establishing KMT rule over all of China.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, President Truman dispatched the 7th Fleet to prevent a possible Chinese Communist invasion of Taiwan. One-sided nuclear crises followed in 1954 and 1958 in response to Chinese shelling of offshore islands. Another crisis ensued in 1996, when Taiwan held its first direct presidential election. Warning Taiwanese voters against opting for the independence oriented Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), China bracketed Taiwan by launching rockets into the seas north and south of the main island. The Clinton Administration responded by sending two nuclear-capable aircraft carrier fleets through the Taiwan Strait, panicking Chinese leaders, triggering Beijing' military modernization which now includes potent area denial capabilities, including the possibility of sinking U.S. aircraft carriers and their supporting fleets. Today the DPP, with support from younger generations is the dominant party in

Taiwan, while the KMT has reversed course by having encouraged massive investments in China and is more closely associated with support for mainland reunification.

In addition to the still open wound of foreign conquest and after more than a century of division and Western support for democratic values, two geostrategic realities lie at the heart of tensions over Taiwan. Like long-colonized Cuba, just 90 miles from Florida where the 1962 introduction of Soviet missiles sparked the Cuban Missile Crisis, Taiwan is just 100 miles from the Chinese mainland and is seen as a source of Chinese military vulnerability. Secondly, Taiwan has become the world's leading source of advanced semiconductors, on which both the U.S. and Chinese economies depend, transforming the island into one of the world's most coveted strategic prizes.

Returning to history, since the renewal of U.S.-Chinese relations in the 1970s, Taiwan has remained a dangling thread by which the nuclear sword of Damocles continues to hang. Pulling at that long-stressed thread—calling the one-China policy into question—carries the potential of catastrophically unravelling the diplomatic fabric that has served as the foundation of U.S.-Chinese ties. In the run up to President Nixon's historic and strategically calculated 1972 visit to China, after a two-decade hiatus in relations, the president withdrew the Seventh Fleet from the Taiwan Strait and began the gradual withdrawal U.S. military forces from Taiwan. U.S. commitment to "One China"—i.e., that Taiwan is Chinese and to Taiwan's eventual reunification with China—was established with Nixon's visit in the 1972 U.S.-PRC Shanghai Communiqué, and reaffirmed in the 1979 agreement to resume formal diplomatic relations. Deng Xiaoping reluctantly tolerated U.S. insistence on retaining the right to continue supplying Taiwan with defensive weaponry as the cost of securing the tacit U.S. alliance targeted against the Soviet Union.

The establishment of U.S.-PRC relations required ending those with Taiwan. The island's Congressional allies in Washington responded by

legislating the Taiwan Relations Act which remains in force. It requires the U.S. to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons and to maintain U.S. capabilities to prevent reunification by force of arms or coercion. The American Taiwan Institute has since served as the functional U.S. embassy in Taipei, with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office serving the reciprocal function in Washington, D.C.

The U.S. is not alone in acting in support of Taiwan. In June, for the first time, members of the G7 expressed concern for Taiwanese as well as Hong Kong human rights. Japan, long the United States' lead Asian ally followed up with Yasuhide Nakayama, Defense Minister of a country that has had one-party rule since 1955, stated "we have to protect Taiwan as a democratic country." Foreign Minister Kishi, grandson of Nobusuke Kishi who was charged as a Class A war criminal before being promoted to prime minister with CIA assistance in 1957, followed by saying that "the peace and stability of Taiwan is directly connected to Japan." And Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Aso declared that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would trigger a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan.

Part of the U.S. imperial calculus is that if China exerts more control over the Taiwan Strait it will have significant impact on Japan and other nations. In addition to its impacts on Taiwan's 24 million people and the world's supply of advanced semiconductors, Chinese dominance would impact the Luzon Strait which is critical to the shipping lanes that carry oil for Japan's and South Korea's economies.

To prevent this and other threats to U.S. regional hegemony, the Biden Administration is increasing the Pentagon budget, including billions for its "Pacific Deterrence Initiative." In the face of debilitating domestic political polarization, it is also seeking to build national unity with the anti-Chinese rhetoric and dimensions of the Senate's Strategic Initiative and Competition Act and its House EAGLE Act equivalent. And, as Daniel Ellsberg predicts, lest Biden be charged with issuing Beijing an invitation to invade Taiwan, we should

expect that powerful forces will be at play to prevent the Biden Administration from adopting a risk reduction No First (nuclear) Use doctrine during its nuclear posture review which is just beginning.

Preventing accidents or miscalculations (political as well as military) that could trigger armed conflict that could easily escalate to nuclear war is now an urgent priority. Taiwan has become the most dangerous flashpoint for great power and potentially nuclear war, followed by the South China/West Philippine and Baltic Seas. With the contradictory forces of popular Chinese support for Taiwan's reunification with China and growing support for Taiwanese national independence and the inevitable tensions between the U.S. and China as declining and rising powers an undisciplined sailor who pulls a trigger or Taiwanese political leaders making reckless statements believing that they are fully backed by the U.S. Pacific Command could serve as the spark that ignites a World War.

The Philippine anti-imperialist scholar/activist Walden Bello has written that "while Hong Kong and Taiwan are indisputably part of China—a fact not disputed by the international community... it must be cognizant of the right of the peoples of these areas to have a say in the way they are governed, especially given the unavoidable issues of national identity created by their long separation from the rest of the country by colonialism." How then to proceed?

The one-China formula must be honoured and preserved.

All sides must halt provocative and dangerous military shows of force.

Arms sales with offensive capabilities to Taiwan must be ended.

In the end, the U.S., China, and the regions nations must commit to pursuit of Common Security diplomacy and encourage Chinese-Taiwanese negotiations. It is the safest path to maintaining peace in the region.

Joseph Gerson is President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, Co-founder of the Committee for a SANE U.S. China Policy .

CLOUD CLIMBERS,

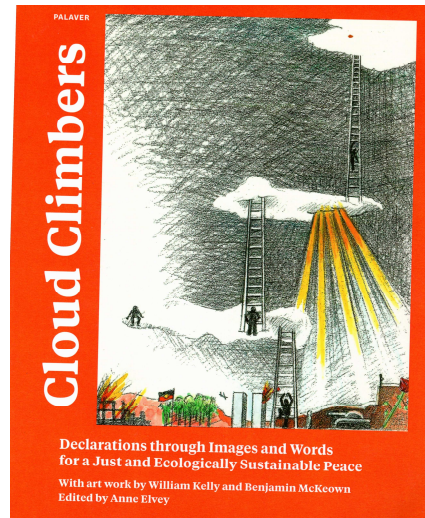
Declarations through Images and Words for a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace,
Reviewed by Harry Kerr

Anne Elvey (Editor), William Kelly (Illustrator), Benjamin McKeown (Illustrator), Published by Palaver, Melbourne 2021. AUD 29.95 (Readings) - AUD 36.99,
www.booktopia.com.au.

This book was born out of the Earth@Peace conference, a cooperative effort between Pax Christi Victoria and the University of Divinity in April 2019. It is a unique reflection on the biblical ideal of *Shalom*, peace which goes far beyond the absence of war and includes creative and mutually beneficial relationships between nations, peace within nations which includes mutual appreciation of different ethnicities and minorities, peace and mutual understanding between different faith communities, peace and love within families, between women and men, recognition and appreciation of different sexual orientations, peace of mind body and spirit and above all peace with earth itself and a mutually supportive relationship between humanity and creation.

Cloud Climbers recognises in a unique way that contemplation of a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace (JESP) is a spiritual matter. We will not comprehend it through rational and scientific ways of think-

ing



alone. The book consists of several short, easy to read reflections on various aspects of JESP. What makes the book unique is that these are "framed" by the artwork of William Kelly, artist and pacifist and former Dean at the Victorian College of the Arts and Ben McKeown, Indigenous artist of Wirangu and Kurna and non Indigenous ancestries. A number of contemporary poets respond to the artwork with specially written poetry. The reflections include *Truth Telling, First people's Assembly of Victoria* by Jason Kelly, Deborah Storie's reflections on Afghanistan (see p 1 of this DT), Ruth Mitchell a paediatric neurosurgeon, and co-chair of ICAN. Two

particularly moving contributions on Kelly's picture "The Arrival:" Environmental theologian Deborah Guess reflects on the picture of two tied hands pointing to humanity's need to limit ourselves for the sake of the planet. Mick Pope follows this with a reflection on St Paul's notion of self emptying. Monica Maher teaches gender, violence and human rights in Quito Ecuador reflects on how Feminist Liberation Theologies contribute to imagining and enabling another society in Latin America. The book concludes with a *Prayer of Confession in the Face of Ecological Catastrophe; For us by Settler Churches* by Garry Worete Deverell, a trawoolway man from Northern Tasmania and Vice Chancellor's Fellow in Indigenous Theologies at the University of Divinity.

Congratulations to Anne Elvey on bringing together art, poetry theology, spirituality and history in this remarkable vision of a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace which encourages us to believe that another world is possible and to discern another world taking shape. This is not a book to be parked on a bookshelf but to be opened and referred to regularly by all who look for "the things that make for Peace

Harry Kerr is Co-convenor of Pax Christi Victoria and Anglican Priest.

You are warmly invited to the
Launch of Cloud Climbers
Declarations through Images and Words for
a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace

Featuring art works by **William Kelly**
and **Benjamin McKeown**

Editor Anne Elvey with contributions from
poets, scholars, activists

Speakers Moira Rayner and Angela Costi
With readings & responses from
William Kelly, Alex Skovron, Freya Mathews
& more.



Angela Rayner



Angela Costi

Tuesday 28 September 2021 6:30–7.30pm

ONLINE

Booking Essential;

To Book go to <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/cloud-climbers-book-launch-zoom-stream-tickets-165699061353>

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 (Secretary): 07 3711 3273 pamnair@hotmail.com

FAITH 4 CLIMATE JUSTICE GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION

Join with people of faith all over the world by being part of a massive global multi-religious 'Faiths 4 Climate Justice' Day of Action, two weeks out from the crucial COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow. Join us by organising an action with your religious organisation or community on 17 and 18 October!

Contact ARRCC <https://greenfaith.controlshift.app/calendars/faiths-4-climate-justice/>

*You are invited to an
online Zoom Forum*

CHINA'S RISE THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY?

**Sunday 19 September 2.00 pm 4
00 pm AEST**

**Emeritus Professor Colin
Mackerras AO**

one of Australia's leading China
historians

In conversation with Emeritus
**Professor Joseph A Camilleri
OAM**

Addressing China's remarkable transformation over the last 40 years, the resurgence of one of the oldest and richest civilisations, and what this means for Australia and the world

Register here [us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZercumogTwtEtPYFKqHdi-lad3aK4WesgC](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/64811222222)

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VICTORIA

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**“A New Heaven and a
New Earth”
is it possible?**

Anne Boyd, Brigidine Sister, is an experienced educator. In recent years she has studied, presented and facilitated various courses and workshops in the field of ecological spirituality.

Harry Kerr, Anglican priest will outline a theological perspective:

As we look for Peace on Earth and Peace with Earth we discover the Life and Love of God at the heart of the universe and present and active in all created things

**Sunday November 21 2021
@ 12.30pm for 1.00pm**

Kildara Centre, Rear 41 Stanhope
Street, Malvern

**PLEASE BRING SOMETHING
TO SHARE FOR LUNCH**

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 Terry Byrne t.byrne15@optusnet.com.au

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

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END MILITARY EXTREMISM BY ENDING WAR

William Astore

Today's extremism feeds on war, anger, aggression, fear, hatred, and racism. To end it, we must first abolish war, reject lies, and embrace one another without rancour.

War is an extreme condition. Twenty years of seemingly endless war in response to the 9/11 attacks is an extreme situation, especially for a self-avowed dem that long wars favoured autocracy, eroded individual rights, and fed corruption, which would weaken democracy. A weaker democracy means that ordinary Americans have less say. They perceive a government that is beyond entreaty and suasion. Citizens may then look for answers elsewhere: to cult-like demagogues promising to make America great; to fringe organizations dedicated to "taking back" America from someone, some enemy, often an enemy within (perfidious Democrats, undocumented immigrants), sometimes an enemy without (China, Russia)—and at times, both.

In the latest report on military extremism which I helped author, we uncover a harsh truth: America's 20-year global war only spreads terror further. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were based on lies. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There was no way to bring freedom and democracy, or a "government in a box," to Afghanistan. Military leaders knew the "surges" in these wars had no staying power ("fragile" and "reversible," General David Petraeus then said). So it proved. More than 6 trillion was wasted. Thousands were killed; tens of thousands were wounded in body and spirit—and that's only counting American casualties.

and that's only counting American casualties.

A constant state of war—shrouded in mendacity, rife with profit for a few—created the conditions for extremism in America. Troops alienated by official lies and unwinnable wars predictably became bitter and

cynical. With the mainstream media selling corporate-driven happy-talk and featuring senior military generals presented as unbiased experts, veterans sought answers elsewhere, in some cases joining or following QAnon, the Oath Keepers, and similar organizations espousing false or fringe ideologies, including white supremacy. Lies begat more lies, but the original sin was war.

If the first casualty of war is truth, the persistent casualty of endless war is the very integrity of democracy.

Nearly one in five rioters charged in the protest at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, were veterans. Many of these same protesters also faced financial difficulties and Covid-related debt. The Air Force veteran killed at the Capitol, Ashli Babbitt, was one of them. She was also a fervid supporter of Donald Trump. Military service values action and commitment to a cause perceived to be larger than oneself. Veterans like Babbitt believed they were "stopping the steal," urged on by a civilian commander-in-chief who was eager to exploit their energy and anger (and gullibility) for his own selfish purposes. But let us not blame Trump alone. Wars fought for false causes, wars in which harsh truths were so often suppressed, created the estrangement and anger that an aggrieved and petulant leader tapped into and so cynically exploited.

Stopping extremism within the military won't be done by creating "woke" warriors. More diversity training and celebrations of LGBTQ accomplishments

aren't enough. Militarising the police, isn't the answer, nor is domestic surveillance and suppression, manifestations of the war on terror brought home to American soil. Endless foreign wars, endemic militarism, insidious lies: these are the root causes of extremism. The solution is to stop the wars and end the lying.

It's also about stopping forces within American society that prosper when

Americans are kept divided, distracted and downtrodden. "Divide and conquer" is a time-tested stratagem. To succeed as a democracy, America must overcome the forces of division and come together. This includes class division, the yawning gap between the haves and have-nots, and the deepening chasm between those two groups and the have-even-mores (think Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates).

"Canceling" extremists won't achieve this. What works is instilling common purpose, banding together, restoring America's democracy by rebuilding it equitably and inclusively. Unite Americans behind the ideal of a nation guided by a Constitution to which all are citizen-believers, for which all are willing, if necessary, to die defending.

Extremism in the pursuit of a more democratic, more united America is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of ending wars and the violence and profiteering they breed is no virtue. It's time for Americans to become a new kind of extremist—extreme in their love of democracy, of justice, of virtue, of honor, of peace.

Today's extremism feeds on war, anger, aggression, fear, hatred, and racism. To end it, we must first abolish war, reject lies, and embrace one another without rancour. We must acknowledge our anger, pursue more diplomatic courses, embrace cooperation and collaboration and especially compassion, as we care for those who have borne war's burdens. Achieving a just and lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations, will end extremism. Nothing more than this—and nothing less—will suffice.

William Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF), who has taught at the Air Force Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School, and now teaches History at the Pennsylvania College of Technology. First Published in Common Dreams. Article provided by Claude Mostowik