Around the World for Peace

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Do you want the good news or the bad news? I am developing in my mind a sort of Doublethink in respect of developments in the peace movement.

First the good news which you must always read first because it’s the optimist’s way of coping with the bad news. The pessimist views the bad news first and is therefore predisposed to say “I told you so” which is not an option for a person of faith, let alone the Christian whose life is based on the triumph of good over evil through the Resurrection.

There is no doubt that there has been a sea change in world affairs since President Obama took over the leadership in the White House. The Russians seem keen on talks about reducing nuclear weapons and the Americans want to compromise on the proposed ‘shield’ in Poland. The British and the Americans are in the process of withdrawing from Iraq and the White House wants to open significant negotiations with Syria and even Iran. Meanwhile the President of Sudan is indicted in the World Court for war crimes.

On the other hand, there is to be a further build-up in Afghanistan where the British are plainly not coping especially in Helman province; the Taliban/Al Qaida have taken over the northwest of Pakistan and introduced their own version of Sharia law, so the world has to view the prospect of a nuclear power almost at the mercy of extremists and terrorists. Britain, against all the odds, seems determined to maintain and develop its so-called independent nuclear deterrent, despite the horrendous cost and the pointlessness of it all.

The behaviour of Israel in Gaza, as well as Hamas, demonstrates both the desperation of the Palestinians and the absolute confidence of the Israelis in unconditional American support (whether justifiable or not). Meanwhile, the seemingly endless agony of Zimbabwe grinds on and, if anything, worsens.

My Doublethink stems, I think, from the fact that I believe that everything is interlinked. Tackling world poverty, the universal consequences of the recession, climate change, torture and the death penalty, human rights, dictatorships, the blind, leprosy, caring for the injured, the disabled and the bereaved, and a thousand other charitable causes, are all issues to do with peace.

Peace is not just the abolition of nuclear weapons, or even war in general, but justice and equality for all, ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness’. In other words, self-fulfilment both individual and corporate, free persons in community.

The Very Reverend John Methuen
Formerly Dean of Ripon
Patricia and I will be representing Christian CND in New York at the NPT PrepCom. We hope to meet a range of delegates and develop links made here resulting from contacts with embassies in London. At the United Nations we will have the explanatory leaflet printed below, in several languages. These have been much appreciated in the past. Ploughshare is something else that vanishes quickly from the display tables.

We will also arrange a multi-faith prayer vigil for each morning by the Isaiah Wall opposite the UN building.

We are lucky to have been invited to stay with a Servas member in Manhattan. Servas is an international organisation which began out of a desire to build peace by encouraging relationships between people living in different countries. The founders met at the end of World War II.

Members of Servas stay for two days with a host member, sharing their lives (& household chores) as far as possible. In order to join, one has to be interviewed to make sure you have the right attitudes and open mind towards people of other cultures and life-styles. People can be hosts or travellers or both. There’s a list of members available so travellers can make contact prior to organising their trip. Friendship, co-operation and understanding are essential to the ethos of Servas, and we have found being part of this organisation quite inspiring.

If you would like to find out more contact info@servas.britain.org or Servas International website: www.servas-international.org

Michael Pulham

What is the PrepCom?

The States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) meet every five years at a Review Conference (RevCon) to assess the implementation of the treaty. There is a Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) conference that meets for two weeks in the three years leading up to the Review Conference. During the PrepComs, many working papers are tabled, and the Chairman drafts a Final Summary statement, but none of these documents are binding. Rather, these statements, working papers, summaries, and reports are to be used as assessment tools at the Review Conference. This year’s PrepCom of the NPT will meet at the UN in New York from 5 - 19 May 2009.

In recent years, NGOs have provided invaluable insight and expertise to the conference, and their influence is growing. In order to continue and build on this influence, committed NGOs attend the PrepCom, to insist states parties make use of their time and devote their energy to progress.

CCND, as a UN-accredited NGO, will be represented and will organise a daily prayer vigil by the Isaiah Wall opposite the UN building. Our representatives will meet and lobby the delegates, attend the various fringe meetings, and network with the other groups in attendance.
Forthcoming CCND Events

Aldermaston Vigil

“It is better to light a candle ... ... than to curse the darkness”

As we indicated in the last Ploughshare Plus, Christian CND will be at Aldermaston for Easter Monday, 13th April.

We will meet at Tadley Gate, at midday. Tadley Gate is on the A340, parking opposite.

There will be a Liturgy followed by a walk around the base, with prayers at each gate. We will break for a picnic lunch after about an hour; bring your lunch plus something to sit on!

Do check the weather forecast and wear clothing suitable for all weather conditions (there was snow at Easter last year!). Parts of the walk may be very muddy so you may need suitable footwear. The nearest public loos are in Tadley.

You could bring candles, or flowers to leave at each gate. You could also carry a Bible or Scripture quotes. All faiths are welcome. Please do join us!

Contact on the day will be 0797232 7482.

Round the World for Peace

On Monday 27 April, Christian CND will once more be walking around the London Embassies of Nuclear Weapons States and the New Agenda Coalition. We have, in the past, built up good relationships with some of the Embassies, including the more surprising ones, such as China and Israel, but we have given it a miss over the few years (Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom did it a couple of years ago). It would be a shame to let these relationships lapse, so we decided we must ‘resurrect’ the Embassies Walk!

We will be celebrating the founding of the UN in April 1945. The Embassies meetings will also help prepare for the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in May 2009.

There will be two separate walks (as the Embassies are too far apart for one group to comfortably do in one day!) and we hope that many of the Embassies will invite us in for a short meeting with staff, at the very least we aim to hand in a letter.

All are welcome to join us.

We will meet at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square (Dick Sheppard Chapel) at 11am for a short service. The walk begins at 12.15pm. A detailed timetable will be available on the website by 15 April for those wishing to join during the day, or contact the office for an information pack after that date. If you cannot join us, you could collect sponsorship money instead - every little helps!
Repent - the annual call of the Ash Wednesday Witness at the Ministry of Defence was repeated in several different ways.

We recognised our own need for repentance as we were marked with ashes on our foreheads in the Embankment Gardens; the word was spelt out in ash on a piece of sackcloth that was laid out in front of the main door of the MoD, and attempts were made to mark the walls with blessed charcoal, though only the first letter was written before the police intervened.

This was the 27th year that CCND have joined Pax Christi and Catholic Peace Action for this witness at the beginning of Lent.

How many more years will it be necessary?
During World War II, I was sent away to relations in Canada and spent my holidays in a place even more beautiful than Iona.

A remote village far up the Ottawa river, a land of lakes and trees, deep snow in winter and hot sun in summer, moose to be seen at the edges of lakes and wolves to be heard howling in winter. The river, still half a mile wide a thousand miles from the sea, froze in the winter. Sleds and people crossed it without fear. Until the spring came. Then you could hear strange pingings and groanings. Sometimes sharp cracks as bits of the ice broke away.

With a few weeks of these strange noises the ice, which had looked so solid and immovable, broke up and vanished down the river.

This is a parable as you will have guessed.

The ice of the nuclear weapon river has been frozen for a long time. Now there are cracks. Public opinion and official thinking is going through the time of breaking up.

The only good thing to come out of the disaster of the Iraq war is the growing conviction amongst ordinary people that war is not only costly and dangerous but it does not even work. It does not solve problems - it creates them.

What a loud crack we hear when Henry Kissinger finally admits that global nuclear weapon elimination is the only sensible step forward. We have long waited for such words from such a person.

That was not the sort of thing that we used to hear not so long ago.

'The United States must possess the ability to wage nuclear war rationally' said Colin Gray of the US National Security Council in 1980. 'Accidental nuclear war is not possible' said our Foreign Office in its Peace and Disarmament leaflet in the 1980s.

Mrs Thatcher had no doubts. Would she fire Polaris? 'Of course' was her immediate reply in 1983.

In theory of course the nuclear weapon states were meant to be going in another direction. At least from the time of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty they were all supposed to be heading for nuclear weapon elimination. A great game was being played and is still played today. The nuclear weapon states did their best to look as if elimination was their goal while making certain that they held onto their own nuclear arsenals into the distant very blue yonder while doing their best to deny them to others.

Things are changing. There is now a detailed 100 page long treaty in draft with the UN which covers every aspect of the nuclear weapon elimination process from inspection, verification and de-alerting to policing and criminality. Getting rid of nuclear weapons will certainly mean a revolution in out thinking about so called sovereign nation states. Yet it becomes clearer all the time to everyone that absolute sovereignty was always an illusion. We live in one small world and we all share the common conditions of humanity.

We are not there yet. It was Einstein who long ago said that ‘The splitting of the atom has changed everything except our modes of thinking and thus we drift to unparalleled catastrophe’.

‘Our modes of thinking.’ Many still live in the days of castle security. More weapons, bigger walls, a good drawbridge, more boiling oil and we will all be safe. But we do not live in castles but together in a rather run down boarding house with poor drainage and no fire escapes. We in the rich world have taken over the West Wing. It makes no sense to imagine that the West Wing can fight the East, North or South wings without bringing disaster down on everyone.
We need new ideas about security. Not really so new since at street and town level they are there already. Common security based on justice, community spirit, economic security and political rights as the foundation. Courts and the rule of law as their underpinning. Policing when it comes to enforcement. All normal ideas in relation to our immediate neighbours but too often ignored in the jungle of interstate relations.

Christians, who were told the ‘Our Father’, their common prayer, must be at the front of this change process. Some have always been there. I remember in admiration the Dean of St. Albans Abbey who refused to ring his Abbey bells in 1945 to celebrate the surrender of the Japanese. He would not, he said, celebrate the end of a war achieved by acts of barbarity. That took courage.

Christians in Scotland have always been much clearer on these matters than their counterparts on the other side of the wall. I urge Scots to support your Government’s call to be given at least observer status at the 2010 NPT negotiations. Scotland’s support for the many non-nuclear countries who have endlessly voted for elimination will be of the greatest help. Serious negotiations have to start and the treaty is there on which to start.

But do not wait till then. We need a great campaign of public education. Most people do not think about the dangers, are not aware of the costs and do not realise that there is a way out.

This is a moment of great opportunity. All those of a One World mind know already that the great problems facing our common humanity - poverty, environmental damage, global warming, war and nuclear catastrophe all interconnect. This is the time to work in partnership together, not in the isolation which often so weakens the world of social change.

Bruce Kent

Reprinted from ‘Coracle’, the magazine of the Iona Community.
Christian CND received an invitation from a Roman Catholic secondary school in Bermondsey to lead a workshop on ‘War and Peace’. It was part of a GCSE Enrichment Day organised by the RE Department for year 11 pupils (15-16 year olds), with five simultaneous workshops on various humanities subjects. The groups of students would go through each workshop - God willing! As for the workshop leaders, their presentations would be repeated for the five different groups.

This was planned for Monday 2nd February, but, as you may remember, it snowed ... and snowed... and the school was shut along with most of London. The photo was taken by one of our team who managed to get there. The new date was Friday, 13th March when we expected better luck, and indeed it all went ahead as planned except that it was reduced to three one-hour workshops spread over a long morning.

In preparing for our session we were greatly assisted by Anna Liddle, CND’s Peace Education Officer. Anna would have been part of our team on 2nd February and we were glad of that because she was much nearer the age of the students and well acquainted with powerpoint and other gadgets that scare us oldies. On the rearranged date, however, Anna was not available and our presentation was left in the hands of Patricia and Michael Pulham and myself.

It was made clear to the school that we would make nuclear weapons the main focus, though not the only one. After an introduction we showed an extract from a very moving Japanese animated film, ‘Barefoot Gen’, of which we now have our own copy on DVD. This is about a small family in Hiroshima at 8.15am on 6th August 1945. After the film, we displayed photographs of the devastation and led a discussion on Britain’s Trident system and the destruction that would occur if a modern 100 kiloton nuclear bomb were dropped in the vicinity of their school. We pointed out that Britain has 160 such weapons out of a world total of about 11,500 nuclear warheads ready for deployment. We explained why we oppose the Trident system and work for full nuclear disarmament. The class then divided into groups for a team quiz based on written questions covering points of information on nuclear policy, church statements and bible quotations. Points were awarded but everyone got prizes.

At the request of the school we included a session on the Just War tradition with handout papers for exam revision and this was followed with discussion and information on what action schools might undertake on peace issues. We ended the session with the peace prayer.

About 75 pupils attended. We found it very stimulating and worthwhile, and hope they did too. Keeping to the time constraint was probably the hardest part. We now have a useful format to use and adapt if other opportunities arise for Christian CND to make presentations in schools, and let us hope that we get the chance.

Bob Russell

... but the school was closed!
Campaigning in the Churches

Synod news

Christian CND has tried to have a presence at major church meetings for a number of years. This February, the Synod of the Church of England took place in Church House, Westminster.

We decided not to have a stall this time. In recent years the few stalls run by outside organisations have been tucked away in a side room that few people enter. Instead, we took a specially produced leaflet asking for individual support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention and stood outside the two entrances to meet people as they entered or left at lunchtime. As well as conversing with several friends of our movement, including Bishop Peter Price of Bath and Wells, we distributed a number of leaflets. Sometimes the simplest activities are the most productive.

How to join CCND

Annual membership subscriptions are:

- Waged, individual: £12 (£15 household)
- Unwaged individual £6, (£8 household)
- Group affiliation: from £10
- I/ we wish to be a member of CCND
- Please send a standing order form
- I enclose a cheque/ PO (payable to CCND) to include the following:
  - Membership: £
  - Donation: £ (Thank you!)
  - TOTAL: £

Name………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Address……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Telephone……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Email:……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Denomination/ church position: ……………………………………… (Optional)

To help with local campaigning, I agree that my contact details can be passed on to other CCND members.

CCND will never pass members’ details to anyone who is not a CCND member.

Please return form to: Christian CND 162 Holloway Rd, London, N7 8DQ
T his opera, by John Adams, who composed Nixon in China, has been playing at the Coliseum. Patricia and I went and found it deeply absorbing.

Drama, moral dilemma and powerful music combined to make the story of the Manhattan Project a moving experience. The staging was also effective, being both simple and imaginative.

J. Robert Oppenheimer and the team of scientists were well contrasted with the military, all being broodingly overshadowed by the bomb itself.

The Trinity test site was named by Oppenheimer from John Donne’s Holy Sonnet; ‘Batter my heart, three-person’d God’. Agonising as the detonation drew near was fully apparent. After the climax, all we were left with was the tape-recorded voice of a Japanese woman asking for water for her children.

Michael Pulham

[The initial draft of the scientists’ petition to the President (printed in the opera programme) is reproduced below]

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A Petition to the President of the United States

3 July 1945

Discoveries of which the people of the United States are not aware may affect the welfare of this nation in the near future. The liberation of atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander-in-Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan.

We, the undersigned scientists, have been working in the field of atomic power for a number of years. Until recently we have had to reckon with the possibility that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war and that her only defense might lie in a counter-attack by the same means. Today, with this danger averted, we feel impelled to say what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and the destruction of Japanese cities by means of atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such an attack on Japan could not be justified in the present circumstances. We believe that the United States ought not to resort to the use of atomic bombs in the present phase of the war; at least not unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan after the war are publicly announced and subsequently Japan is given an opportunity to surrender.

If such public announcement gave assurance to the Japanese that they could look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuits in their homeland and if Japan still refused to surrender, our nation would then be faced with a situation which might require a re-examination of her position with respect to the use of atomic bombs in the war.

Atomic bombs are primarily a means for the ruthless annihilation of cities. Once they were introduced as an instrument of war it would be difficult to resist for long the temptation of putting them to such use.

The last few years show a marked tendency toward increasing ruthlessness. At present our Air Forces, striking at the Japanese cities, are using the same methods of warfare which were condemned by American public opinion only a few years ago when applied by the Germans to the cities of England. Our use of atomic bombs in this war would carry the world a long way further on this path of ruthlessness.

Atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. The atomic bombs at our disposal represent only the first step in this direction and there is almost no limit to the destructive power which will become available in the course of this development. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition that you exercise your power as Commander-in-Chief to rule that the United States shall not, in the present phase of the war, resort to the use of atomic bombs.

Leo Szilard and 58 co-signers

This version of Leo Szilard’s petition was more strongly worded than the final version. It was also more specific in identifying the moral issues that he believed were involved. The version of 3 July was not submitted to the President in this form. Szilard sought to broaden support, and rewrote it into the final version of 17 July 1945.
Meet the Members

We have already mentioned (Ploughshare Plus) the recent ‘Meet the Exec’ meeting held in West London recently. We are hoping to hold a couple more meetings with members which will be reported in Ploughshare in due course.

Don’t be shy! If you think you would like to meet local members but don’t know how to go about it, get in touch with the office. We will find out where your local members are and if there are more than three who could reasonably make it round your place, you can organise a small meeting! You will need to provide a sitting room with a few chairs/ bean bags/ stools, cups of tea and coffee with biscuits and we will do the rest! You could also pen a letter of invitation which we will distribute on your behalf.

After the last successful meeting, we are hoping that more members will want to do this, and, who knows, more local CCND groups could ensue!

We're not halfway through 2009 yet, but 2010 is looming large on the agenda! We want to do something really special for our 50th anniversary next year and are open to ideas. Put your thinking caps on and share your inspiration with us.

Perhaps the Review Conference of the NPT will really achieve something in May next year. This is why we have re-started our contacts with the London Embassies, which will help our visit to the PrepCom this year to be a good preparation for next.

The Decade for Non-Violence ends next year. How can we mark it?

These plans will cost over and above our usual running costs. We are so grateful for the generosity that enables CCND to keep going even during a difficult economic period.

We are asking any of you who can, to see if you can undertake any small money-raising activities to increase funds.

You will find a sponsor form with this Ploughshare for the Embassies Walk - this might be one way to contribute - or what about a ‘Pennies for Peace’ jar for your odd coppers? Maybe you could organise a coffee morning or a cake-sale in your home. Car boot sales can raise quite a lot, or selling unwanted items on eBay.

Don’t feel that anything you can send is too little to be appreciated - and if you want any items from the office just let us know.

A big thank you in advance for everything you do - and most of all for your constant support.

Patricia Pulham

Prayer Diary

During these early summer months we reach the peak of the Church’s year, Easter, Ascension & Pentecost - a time for praying and working for the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. Please remember the following people and events in your prayers.

April
25 Anniversary of the UN. CCND’s preparations for the PrepCom.
26 Anniversary of Chernobyl disaster. Support for Mayors for Peace.
27 Members of CCND walk round the embassies.

May
4 - 9 CCND members at the PrepCom (4 - 15 May) in New York.
15 Conscientious Objectors’ Day, and all against war and those who suffer from war.
31 Pentecost. For the work of the Holy Spirit.

June
Members of all peace organisations. All who witness for peace. All in authority who work for conflict resolution and all in the churches who proclaim peace.

July
Nuclear states; that reliance on these weapons be replaced.
World co-operation; that peoples work together.
World religions and cultures; for understanding, acceptance and friendship.
The suffering; that want is recognised and addressed.
3 - 4 April: Join CND in Strasbourg at the international demonstration marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of NATO. More details, including transport information, to follow. Visit CND’s No to NATO campaign page.

13 April: Easter Vigil at Aldermaston. Christian CND will be at Aldermaston on Monday 13th April. Meet at Tadley Gate, midday. There will be a Liturgy followed by a walk around the base, with prayers at each gate. All are welcome.

18 April: Essex CCND AGM with speaker and bring & share lunch. 10.00 at Brentwood Quaker Meeting House, 49 Hutton Road, Shenfield. Details: 0127 735 3450.

18 April: Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) Concert for Peace. With Tony Lamb (clarinet), Pal Banda (cello) and Julian Jacobson(piano). Rosslyn Hill Chapel, NW3. MANA Administration, 71 Greenfield Gardens, London NW2 1HU. 020 8455 1030.

24 - 25 April: Movement for the Abolition of War Peace History Conference. Imperial War Museum in London. More details later: www.abolishwar.org.uk


4 - 20 May: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee in New York. www.reachingcriticalwill.org/

There will be a commemoration in Tavistock Square, London at 12noon.

27 April: Round the World for Peace. Join us on a sponsored walk visiting London Embassies of Nuclear Weapons States and the New Agenda Coalition. To celebrate the founding of the UN in April 1945 and to prepare for the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in May 2009. Meet at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square in the Dick Sheppard Chapel, at 11am for a short service. Walk begins at 12.15pm. Detailed timetable available on website by 15 April for those wishing to join during the day.

29 - 31 May: ‘What can I do for Peace?’ At work or at school, in my church or local community... in my world. Fellowship of Reconciliation in Scotland Residential Conference. St. Drostan’s Lodge, Tarfside, Glensk, Angus D 9 7 YX. The venue is suitable for the less mobile and disabled. The venue is family friendly and the conference programme all age. All accompanied children come free - students half price. The cost for adults is £65 for the weekend (Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime); camping is possible - which costs £45. To reserve a place, send a non-refundable deposit of £10 to: FOR Scotland Annual Conference, 9, Castle Street, Brechin, Angus D 9 6 JW. Queries: contact David Mumford on dmumford3@btinternet.com 01356 622708.

Thursday 25 June: Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) Concert for Peace. With the Fitzwilliam String Quartet. St Cyprian’s Church, Clarence Gate Glentworth Street, NW1 6AX. MANA Administration, 71 Greenfield Gardens, London NW2 1HU. 020 8455 1030.

4 July: Annual 'Independence FROM America' day at Menwith Hill. Organised by Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB), 9 Swarcilffe Road, Harrogate, HG1 4QZ. Tel no: 01423 884076 http://www.caab.org.uk


Sunday 6 August: Hiroshima Day.

Hiroshima Day Commemoration, Tavistock Square, London, 12noon. Contact London Region CND. 0207 607 2302 david.lrcnd@cnduk.org www.londoncnd.com/

9 August: Nagasaki Day.

Peace Walk from Westminster Cathedral (7.30pm) to the London Peace Pagoda followed by the Floating Lantern Ceremony at sunset. Nipponzan Myohoji, the London Peace Pagoda, Battersea Park, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4NJ 020 7228 9620.


CCND goods

Pack of 24 A4 sheets of Interfaith quotations on peace as used at the Creation Conference £1 a pack

Legacy leaflet Free

Churches’ pack Free

T-Shirts £12 each.

Cotton bags £3 each.

Picasso Greetings Cards. £2.50 for six.

Christmas Cards, £2.50 for six.

Other CCND items available: badges, enamel brooches, window stickers, pens and a history of CCND.

See your membership insert for details and an order form.

Send orders to:
Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
162 Holloway Road, London N 7 8DQ
Tel: 020 7700 4200 Fax: 020 7700 2357
Email: christians@cnduk.org Web: http://ccnd.qm.apc.org/