

BAPTIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2014

At the end of Beethoven's passionate cry of faith, the Missa Solemnis, the soloists and choir desperately plead with God for peace, while the rumbles of artillery echo threateningly round the orchestra, ominously almost drowning out the prayer. By the time Beethoven wrote this work Napoleon's guns had long been silenced but they still seemed to resonate through the composer's fragile frame. At much the same time in brighter mood he set Schiller's optimistic Ode to Joy as the crowning movement of his last symphony with its rather rosy eyed and sentimental aspiration replacing the desperation of the *dona nobis pacem*:

*"Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder – überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen."*

*"O you millions enfold one another in one embrace
blow this kiss across the globe,
For brothers, above the starry canopy of heaven
There has to be a loving father to us all."*

I find it easier to weep with Beethoven at the end of the Missa, than to exult with him at the end of the symphony. WH Auden's cynical lines come nearer to real life:

*"You shall love your crooked neighbour
With your crooked heart".*

As Auden expressed in another poem:

*"For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone."*

For universal love is either too difficult or too easy. It is easy to express in an ecstatic statement of faith – as a vision or an aspiration, but it breaks down the first time your neighbour parks his car across your drive, let alone when your house is burgled or race riots thunder down your streets. For love is commitment and most of us find that difficult enough to keep even to the ones with whom we live. Breathtaking commitment to the brotherhood of mankind is largely pious wishful thinking.

The evangelical Baptist church of my upbringing recognised neither Schiller nor Auden. There the overriding attitude was of quietistic, internalised, spiritual escapism as expressed in the hymn,

*"Peace perfect peace in this dark world of sin,
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."*

This was essentially the prevailing attitude that allowed Christians including Baptists as well as Catholics and Lutherans in Germany to concentrate on their churches' so called spiritual growth and well-being while leaving the nation to go literally to hell: this attitude so affronted Bonhoeffer that he called for religionless Christianity. For, to enjoy a kind of easy peace within our souls at a time when so much of the world is consumed by hell, seems to put the cross on a different planet.



As members of the Baptist Peace Fellowship we recognise that all three of these responses are in fact escapes from our Christian obligation to extend the kingdom of God: escapes into wishful thinking, cynicism and internalisation of the gospel. We recognise that it is our responsibility to be fellow workers with God to bring his justice to the world in which we live. But we also acknowledge that to do that we have to start where we are in our own communities. How can we bring peace to the world if we cannot even bring peace to the Christian churches of our own neighbourhood – or denomination? Jesus warned us that it would be by our love for one another that the world would recognise that we were

Christians. Much nearer the mark was Caryl Micklem in his hymn, I have a dream:

*Fierce persecution, war, and hate
are raging everywhere;
God calls us now to pay the price
through struggles and through sacrifice
of standing for the right.*

*So dream the dreams and sing the songs,
but never be content:
for thoughts and words don't ease the pain:
unless there's action, all is vain;
faith proves itself in deeds.*

*Lord, give us vision, make us strong,
help us to do your will;
don't let us rest until we see
your love throughout humanity
uniting us in peace.*

So the Baptist Peace Fellowship exists to provide support and encouragement for all those engaged in this world-changing programme of reconciliation at all levels of human relationship.

This, too, though can easily slip into platitudinous rambling. How, given the fractured nature of our Baptist world can we even begin to attempt this task? In the past we sought to do it by making contact with the denomination through the BT and at Assembly. Though the printed BT is no more we are still trying to be in touch with the denomination through the

Online BT and Together as can be seen in the current issue. But the inability to have a meeting and an exhibition stand at the assembly really does hamper our efforts.

In our latest committee meeting we discussed these issues and this led to discussion on the future of BPF. Three possibilities for the future were considered:

1) Remain as we are, with the hope that future Baptist Assemblies will again give opportunity to promote our message.

2) Unite with the Methodist & URC Peace Fellowships as partner denominations in the Joint Public Issues Team.

3) Be absorbed into the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

It was felt that new structures meant Regional Association meetings might give more scope than national Assemblies, and that it was important to reach ministers, especially those undergoing Ministerial Formation and Refresher courses. So it was agreed to write to Paul Goodliffe and Stephen Keyworth at BUGB offering resources and encouraging thinking about peace and reconciliation issues. It was observed that BMS Catalyst Live events might be another opportunity. While the BPF will continue to be closely connected to the Fellowship of Reconciliation it was felt that for the time being we needed to keep our Baptist identity.

What needs to happen is that our members share their views and their news more openly in the Baptist family. Use the BPF facebook forum: it can be accessed simply by logging on to facebook and then type Baptist Peace Fellowship into the search box. Please keep Paul Hobson, editor of the BT, informed of any peace news by emailing him short articles:

phobson@baptist.org.uk. Please be prepared to share copies of our newsletters and materials at regional and association meetings. Please contribute articles to the newsletter: they can be sent to bobgardiner@yahoo.co.uk. The newsletters appear in April and October and the deadline for articles is usually around the 15th of March and 15th September.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus bequeathed us the Kingdom. If we do not seek to bring it in we continue to betray him in our own day.

Bob Gardiner (chair of BPF and editor of the newsletter)

A CALL FROM PAX CHRISTI :

PRAYER, FASTING AND ACTION FOR PEACE

re Palestine & Israel, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya...

"why couldn't we drive the spirit out? Jesus replied 'This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting'" Mark 9 v 28

Join us in solidarity with others to fast and pray for one or more 24-hour period between 8 September – 7 October

We hope that this simple gesture will

- offer prayerful encouragement to the many peace talks and negotiations that are taking place
- support peace actions during these days, listed below
- be a small act of solidarity with those lives are destroyed by war

Choose one or more days to fast and use the Prayer for Peace in the Middle East. If you wish to, tell us which day, and where you are from, and we'll add that to our Prayer and Fasting calendar.

info@paxchristi.org.uk or 0208 203 3884

In August, together with other Pax Christi sections we wrote to the Foreign Secretary on Iraq, You might use part of this for your own letters to the Government. See more here.

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/news-reports/august-2014/>

You can find faith-based statements on Gaza here

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/campaigns/israel-and-palestine/resources-and-documents/>

Drone Wars: Out of Sight. Out of Mind. Out of Control.

The use of unmanned drones to launch so-called 'risk free' attacks in remote areas of the world has rocketed over the past



decade. While manufacturers and operators insist that drones are precise and pinpoint accurate, researchers have documented hundreds of civilians deaths in drone strikes – and there are likely to be many more. Drones are portrayed as giving us the ability to easily and cleanly take out the bad guys without any risks. Technology, we are told, can control the chaos of war. The reality is that

armed drones make it much easier for governments to opt to use lethal military force rather than engage in diplomatic or political solutions to crisis. Drones, in short, are simply making war more likely.

Transparency

Echoing the calls of senior UN official who continue to investigate the use of armed drones, the Drone Campaign Network is calling for much greater transparency from the UK government on its use of armed drones. In particular the details of UK drone strikes in Afghanistan need to be released in order to assess the impact of these new weapons systems on the ground.

Accountability

The use of current armed drones and the development of future combat drones by the UK continue without any proper public debate or accountability. In particular there needs to be parliamentary approval and debate before any future redeployment of armed drones by the UK.

Proliferation

Armed drones are rapidly becoming the 'must have' weapon of today. There is increasing pressure from drone companies to 'relax' what controls there are to prevent the spread of such systems. The UK must work to ensure that proper controls are in place to prevent the proliferation of armed drones.

An end to the use of armed drone

Ultimately the Drone Campaign Network is seeking an end to the use of armed drones. Far from increasing security, the use of armed drones is undermining long-term counter-terrorism efforts and making the world a much less safe place.

For news of future action in the campaign against drones see:

<http://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com/week-of-action-events/>

Manchester on Saturday 11 October 2014.

Didsbury Baptist Church, School Lane, Beaver Road, Didsbury, M20 6SX

10.30am to 3pm. Donation, includes lunch

Book at www.wagingpeacedidsbury.eventbrite.co.uk or email

Brian Haymes: brian.haymes@ntlworld.com

Exeter on Saturday 15 November 2014.

Exwick Parish Church, Exwick Road, EX4 2AA

From 10am to 4pm. £20/£10 con, includes lunch

Book at www.wagingpeaceexeter.eventbrite.co.uk or email

Martin Parkes: mr.m.parkes@gmail.com

Debate

Wednesday 12th November 2014 07:00 pm

Who would Jesus shoot

A debate between **Tom Yoder Neufeld**, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies (New Testament) at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo and **Nigel Biggar**, Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford University.

Tom is the author of **Jesus and the Subversion of Violence**;

Nigel is the author of **In Defence of War**. This debate, co-

sponsored with Ekklesia, the Anabaptist Network and

Greenbelt, will be hosted by Union Chapel, · Compton Ave, London, N1 2XD,

[Tickets available on Eventbrite](#)

Flyer: [Who would Jesus shoot](#)

<http://menno.org.uk/event/who-would-jesus-shoot/ical/>

The Rethink Trident statement

September 10, 2014



As Britain faces the deepest public spending cuts in living memory, the country can ill-afford to be spending in excess of £100bn on replacing Trident with a new generation of nuclear weapons.

Britain's security needs are not met by nuclear weapons which can do nothing to combat the threats posed by terrorism, climate change or cyber warfare. If countries like Britain justify their retention and replacement of nuclear weapons on the grounds of an uncertain future, it increases the likelihood that non-nuclear states will seek to use the same rationale to justify developing their own weapons systems. Instead of wasting over one hundred billion pounds on new nuclear weapons, there are many forms of socially useful spending to which the funds could be put: combating child poverty and youth unemployment; providing affordable homes; investing in education and the NHS, as well as putting serious resources into renewable energy, to name just a few. It is clear that it is Trident replacement which should be cut – not these vital areas.

We believe the Government should cancel the replacement of Trident. This would allow for the existing skilled manufacturing base to be re-orientated towards providing for

the needs of a post-carbon future, with the potential for significant investment in green jobs.

The Government must be a leading participant in current global initiatives to significantly reduce holdings of nuclear weapons, with the aim of achieving a nuclear-free world. Cancelling the programme to replace Trident would have a transformative effect on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty process, greatly boosting the chances of agreeing a timetable for multilateral global disarmament.

Our security does not exist in a vacuum: we must work for genuine global security which can only be achieved through the abolition of nuclear weapons. Cancelling plans to replace Trident would be a momentous step in this direction, for Britain and the world.



Stop poem for Eddie Linden of Pax Christi by Blake Morrison
Urgent talks having broken down, the peace will be intensified
through war. These are safe bombs, and any fatalities
will be minors. The targets are strictly military
or civilian. Until our aim is achieved we will continue
missing. Anomalies may recur, but none
out of the ordinary. This release has been prepared by
official Stop

First reports indicate a major break through
hospital roofs. The bombs were strictly targeted at
personnel. The hated dictatorship is over
the moon. Any errors are a mere blip
on the radar screen. We anticipate a stepping up
of funerals. Reporters are free to file copy which we Stop

We can confirm that many personnel now enjoy peace,
underground. Several terrorist leaders have been
created overnight. In modern war, mistakes are never made
official. Our smart bombs are subject only to
intelligence errors. Certain one-off tragic events
will regrettably recur. There are no reporting restrictions
other than Stop

In another time-zone, the bombs fall unsafely.
There are reports of urgent talk under the rubble.
Countless children lie unaccounted for in morgues.
Events are strictly dictated by random dictators.
Regrettably, we are unable to offer regrets today.
This poem has been subject to certain restrictions. Stop.

TELLING IT AS IT WAS

Helped by the Heritage Lottery Fund, this year Leicester CND has been running a project to collect local "Memories in Conflict", including conscientious objectors. As one such, born and brought up in Leicester, I told my story as part of the oral history archive to Penny Walker (who lives in Highfields, Leicester and was previously at the Coventry Peace House). I could remember a tiny amount from my father, injured in France in 1917 (did the German sniper deliberately aim at his leg rather than his head or his heart?), and went on to my awareness of the outbreak of war in September 1939. My Christian conversion in 1950 led on to my being challenged by another Christian teenager when it was time for my medical examination for National Service: "How can you as a Christian train to kill others?" So I applied to be registered as a C.O., and remember my parents' reactions (not hostile), the proceedings at the tribunal held in Birmingham (I still have my written statement), my eventual exemption from National Service, and the 'quiet' period when I did no more about my convictions in this area.

After several years I joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Baptist Pacifist (now Peace) Fellowship, and then went on to seek to be practical about the issue of war by joining the Campaign Against Arms Trade when it began, sending letters to M.P.s, proposing resolutions at Baptist Assemblies, promoting white poppies, supporting the Coventry Peace House, etc.

But my final reflection was – I never did as much campaigning for non-violent peace-making as I could. Nor did I pray for peace within communities and between nations as much as I should. In

the end this Leicester project is not for me a grand heroic tale of great deeds done! However I have sought to be clear that my ounce of influence on the scales of history is on the side of seeking peace, and never on the side of violent conflict.

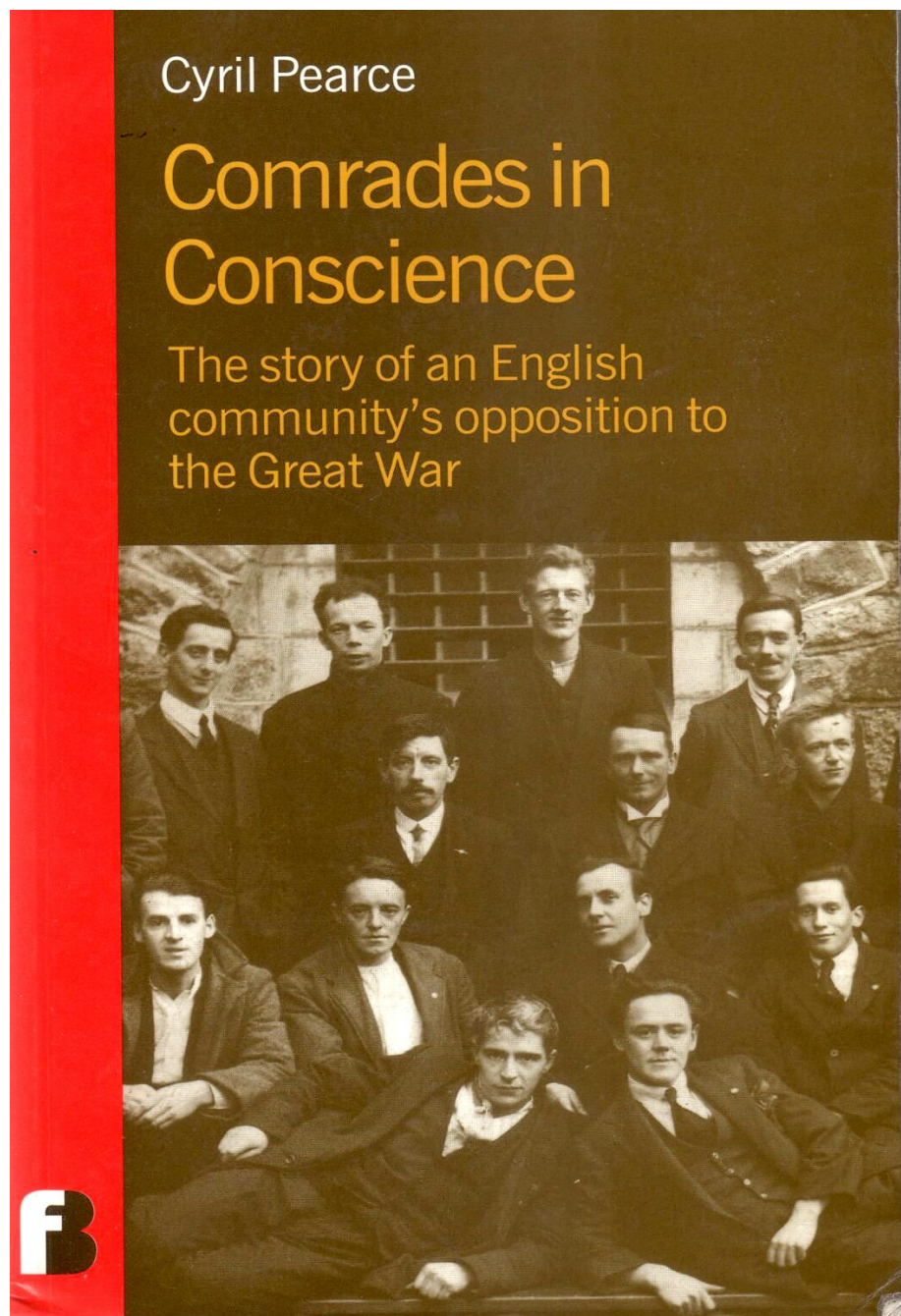
Alan Betteridge (Coventry)

For more information or to share Leicestershire memories with the project, contact Penny Walker pennywalker@riseup.net

England Arise

In 1914 the young men and women of Huddersfield Socialist Sunday School believed passionately in a better world. Inspired by the revolutionary art, music and literature of the times, Arthur Gardiner and Percy Ellis refused to take arms against their fellow workers and fight in the First World War.

Buoyed on by the support of their community,



both at home and abroad, they took on the military in a momentous battle. They suffered prison and brutality, and were taken to breaking point in a war of wills. It cost them everything - except their conscience. Yet the community supported them so much that it soon became known as a 'hotbed of pacifism'!

Inspired by the book 'Comrades In Conscience', by Cyril Pearce, and using first hand source material, **England, Arise!** brings to life a world of young people full of ideas, good humour and optimism for a brighter tomorrow. For them power came from knowledge, not a gun. This is a story of hope.

Written by Mick Martin. Directed by Jude Wright.

24 & 25 October LAWRENCE BATLEY THEATRE
Huddersfield

30 & 31 October KARDOMAH 94 Hull

1 November CARRIAGEWORKS THEATRE Leeds

4 November CAST Doncaster

7 November Royalty Theatre, Sunderland

9 November SQUARE CHAPEL Halifax

10 & 11 November MECHANICS THEATRE Wakefield

14 & 15 November PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM Manchester

18 & 19 November PIONEERS MUSEUM Rochdale

Situations vacant

Tina Parsons is unable to continue as our representative on FoR. Norman Kember is also unable to be our representative on NCPO. Volunteers to fill these positions are urgently required.

Officers of BPF

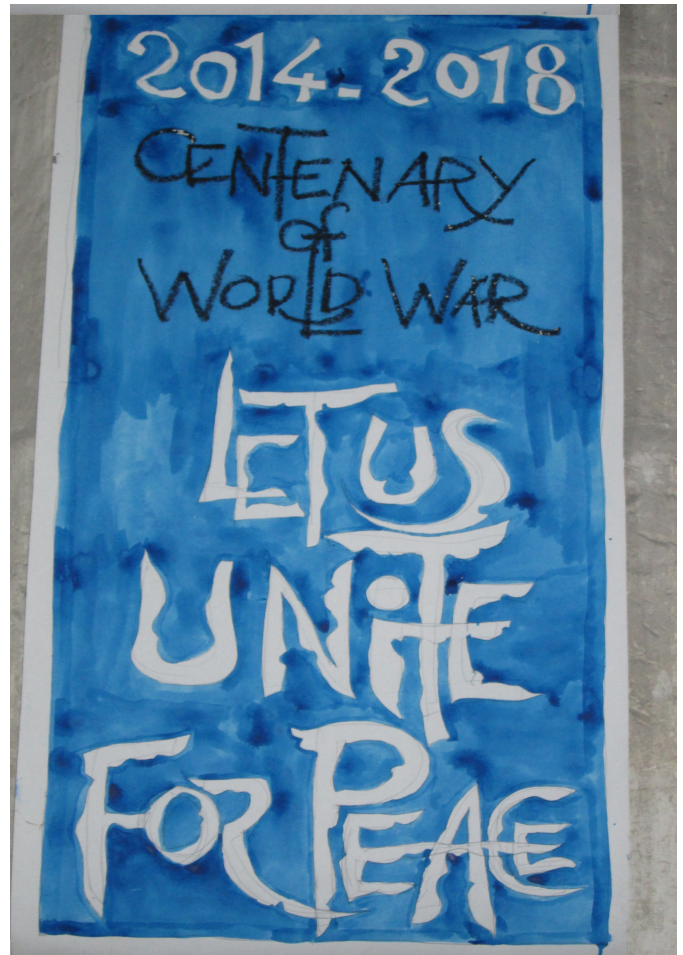
- *President* Revd R Gardiner, 21 Kingshill, Cirencester, GL7 1DE.
bobgardiner@yahoo.co.uk
- *Secretary* Revd Paul Henstock, 355 Stroud Road, Tuffley, Gloucester, GL4 0BB.
ph005a4900@blueyonder.co.uk
- *Treasurer & Membership Secretary* Mrs Tina Parsons, 17 Vicarage Close, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4PL.
t.parsons.oxford@btopenworld.com

poster seen by Norman
Kember in Beauvais Cathedral

Please contact Tina Parsons if
you are happy to receive your
newsletter online rather than as
a printed copy.

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Gardiner

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BPF website

<http://www.baptist-peace.org.uk>