



PEACE

Connections



Celebrating our 43rd Annual State Conference:

On April 18, 2026, the Pax Christi Michigan conference was held at University of Detroit Mercy, in the Student Union Ballroom. A large group of participants attended the event, with the theme of the conference **“Be Not Afraid: Living in Hope and Resistance.”** We began with our morning prayer, led by Julie Beutel in song. Our keynote speaker was a special treat: **Charlene Howard, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA**, agreed to come back to Detroit (having had a great experience here when Detroit was the venue for the 2025 national conference!). She gave us a rousing presentation that encouraged us to keep hopeful in times of fear.

Charlene’s presentation went back in history, then came forward to current times. She began by reminding us about the genocide of Native Americans. From a population of ten million a few hundred years earlier, their numbers had dwindled to 300,000. It is rightly called a genocide. The Catholic church played a role, blessing the land grab with their *“Doctrine of Discovery.”* These atrocities were followed by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. As U.S. history unfolded, not only were African Americans denied their rights, but Irish, Italian, French, Polish, Chinese and Japanese peoples experienced discrimination. Today, Christian Nationalism claims to represent the message and values of Jesus, but instead use religion as a weapon against various vulnerable people.

Charlene then looked back to the time of Jesus. In his time, there was also war, oppression, and violence. Some people would rather get rid of Jesus than to have to hear his true message. Her insight was that Jesus’ suffering didn’t stop oppression, but it did transform people. People created “Beloved Community”, and nurtured faith to make it



through difficult times. All present appreciated Charlene Howard's insights and her enthusiasm for the work of Gospel peace and justice.



In addition, three other knowledgeable and dynamic speakers shared their expertise regarding aspects of our current challenges to peace and justice.

Elly Jordan spoke on advocacy for immigrants. She is a lawyer working for the *Michigan Immigrant Rights Center*. She began by sharing her own family's

immigrant history, noting that her family benefited from practices of white privilege all too common in the U.S. Coming from Germany to the Michigan Thumb in 1882, her parents were able to enter the U.S. at the same time that immigrants from China were excluded due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. Before that Act, immigration was unregulated. Our country then saw a string of exclusionary immigration laws that were benefitting wealthy and white people. She shared the concern that the goals of our current immigration system are to ensure that there is a vulnerable population willing to work for low wages. She recounted stories of immigrants desperately fleeing violence in their home countries even as asylum seekers are denied entry. She talked about families where parents are picked up by ICE and separated from their children, who have no appeal rights until they are 21 years old. Elly works tirelessly to keep family members united. She encouraged us to reach out to our elected representatives to ask them to protect refugees and asylum seekers.

Jesse DeerInWater spoke about on-going harm to the environment and indigenous communities, and gave innumerable examples of the toxins and waste being dumped onto our land and into our water. He raised up the work of women environmentalists like Wilma Mankiller and other Clan Mothers - - Relentless advocates for the planet. Jesse also opened many eyes with his information on small modular nuclear reactors being built that were bypassing environmental impact statements, resulting in more waste, and some of which are near bomb grade, making them even more dangerous.

Jesse also spoke of the need for reconciliation over those harmed in "Indian" boarding schools. The Saginaw Chippewa uncovered a gravesite near the Mt. Pleasant boarding school, revealing the high death rate among students there. Many of those children also suffered sexual assault. 12 of the 13 tribes involved are calling for thorough investigation of these crimes to be reopened. Jesse did a wonderful job of enlightening us on the ongoing concerns of Michigan's indigenous communities, and the need to continue the reconciliation and reparation process.

Our third distinguished speaker, **Saeed Khan**, shared accurate information and insights into the ongoing Middle East conflicts (Gaza, the West Bank, Iran, etc.).

Dr. Khan is *Associate Professor of Teaching in Near Eastern Studies* and a Research Fellow at the *Center for Study of Citizenship, Wayne State University*. He spoke about the need to uphold an international rules-based order. The State of Israel's insistence that it has a right to defend itself does not mean that both the U.S. and Israel can ignore moral and legal guidelines, both in Palestine and in Iran. Clear documentation shows that children, hospitals and schools were targeted. The death toll is frequently undercounted, and over 250 journalists who risked their own safety to report on the conflict have been killed. Khan quoted Pope Leo XIV, calling him a "beacon" drawing attention to the atrocities of war. He also was grateful for Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur. In the Iran context, Iranians known as peacemakers have been targeted and killed, exacerbating any attempts at avoiding further war. One bright spot, from Khan's perspective, is that public opinion is beginning to change about Gaza.



There was great music throughout the day! After a delicious lunch, **Julie Beutel** sang along with **Michael and Ande McCarthy** of *Blue Water Pax Christi* (Port Huron).



In the afternoon, attendees were engaged in **small group discussion** around tables, reflecting on what they had heard during the talks, and how they thought they might respond to the issues and challenges they had just heard about. Charlene Howard came back and had some further talks with us, sharing about her own family's modeling of Catholic justice activism. She talked of the importance of "**peace pairs**" – where young and old peace activists can come together, share insights and support each other.

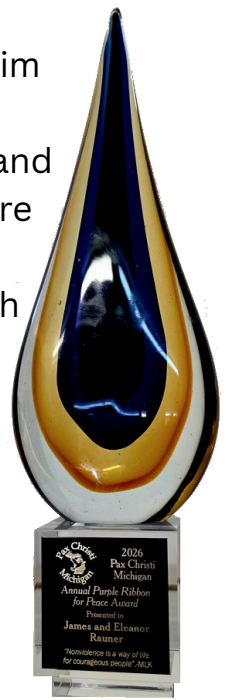


An exciting part of the afternoon is always the announcement of the peace awards. **Marquise Williams** won the *Young Peace Activist Award*. Well deserved! He is a counsellor at Detroit Cristo Rey High School. He helps 12th graders plan their lives beyond high school. Before that, he worked ten years at Covenant House. He also is a Peace Team member of the *Mobile Peace Team* (formerly *Meta Peace Team*). He challenged us all to meditate on the unhealed parts of ourselves, and create a welcoming space for this healing within ourselves.

The **Purple Ribbon of Peace award** went to **Jim and Elly Rauner**. Since 1961, Jim Rauner had been warning all of the danger and the immorality of nuclear weapons. Trained in applied physics at UCLA, and after working for Lockheed and others, he quit that job, and studied moral philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. A Deacon (in Kalamazoo) and a high school teacher, he and Elly were activists for anti-nuclear causes and for peace in Central America (working with *Witness for Peace* and spending two years in Panama).



After a closing prayer service, people left with a new enthusiasm to continue the work of peace and justice. Thanks to **Fr. Charles Oduke** and the *Office of Mission Effectiveness* for support, as well as *The Carney Latin American Solidarity Archive (CLASA)* and many peace friends who made the conference possible! As is always the case, we must thank **Pat Valaer, Mary Hanna, Fred Thelen (and Gail Presbey!! 😊)** for all of their help in organizing and supporting the annual conference, as well as other members of the State Council who helped find speakers and plan the day's schedule and prayer services. I encourage you all to attend next year's conference!



• **Gail Presbey, PCM State Council**



PCM MEMBERS AT BALDWIN DETENTION CENTER

May 23, 2026 - Saturday of Pentecost weekend - some 30 members of Pax Christi Michigan gathered in prayer and protest at the ICE Detention Center in Baldwin. Over 1400 people detained by ICE from across the Midwest are held at the North Lake Detention Center in Baldwin, owned and run by GEO group, a private business.

PCM members came from across the state, including Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint, Detroit, Goodrich, and Muskegon along with local protesters. Our biggest banner read: **"Come Holy Spirit: Set Your People Free."**

We prayed and sang as we watched workers go in and out, wondering what they think and feel about working in such a repressive place. But even more praying in solidarity with the 1400 detainees in this facility, in Baldwin, the biggest in the Midwest. Baldwin is a very small town in a remote area, about 2 ½ hours NW of Lansing. They are brought there after being detained by ICE, with nothing more than the clothes on their back. Many have no family close enough to visit them. They have to pay GEO for any personal needs, toiletries, toothpaste, an extra shirt in cold weather, for phone calls, etc. GEO gets paid by the US government \$2,500 per month for each detainee. It is big business for them.



We stood at the entrance gate together with a small group local protesters who are there faithfully every week. We talked to **Cliff and Bonnie Demos**, who are doing an amazing job of coordinating help and support for the detainees. They drive to Baldwin from the town of Luther 20 miles away. They are often there 4 times a week. They are able to deposit donations into accounts inside so detainees can pay for personal needs, phone calls. They coordinate people to go in to visit those who have nobody to visit them. And regularly go in to visit detainees themselves. While we were there Bonnie came out from making a visit and was emotionally shaken from listening to the pain and distress she heard from the person she visited that day. Many of those inside feel alone, scared, depressed, apart from their family and community, people who came to this country trying to care for their children and escape threats in their country of origin. Sometimes people are released. When someone is released, they are sent out by GEO without any resources in this very remote area. Local folks have organized to help them with rides and connect them with family members and whatever they need. I am in awe at what they are doing so faithfully day in and day out.

- Fred Thelen, PCM Chair

PCM recently sent a \$500 check of donations collected to Bonnie and Cliff, who make it available for detainees' needs, placing it in commissary accounts for them and helping those released.
You can send a donation directly to them at: 7046 E. Old M-63, Luther, MI 49656

What is joy

A poem by Fred Thelen

What is joy but
to hear birds sing
in the treetops
at the edge of dawn
calling to one another
giving cadence to the day

what is joy but to step
outside in freedom
as the sun ascends
to paint the horizon

but what is joy
for those crowded
in ICE detention centers
for the crime of caring
for their children

when will they hear
birdsong, when
will they breathe
the crisp cool air



You're Invited!

Fr. Peter Dougherty's Retirement Celebration

WHEN: Saturday, October 10 | 2:00 – 5:00 PM EST

WHERE: Cristo Rey Church, Lansing, MI

(Please pre-register)

At the age of 91 and after 30+ years of dedicated service as co-founder of MPT, **Peter Dougherty** is retiring. When asked about MPT's work, he shared:

"We are helping folks put the power of love, nonviolence, and strategic de-escalation skills into practice... and when the problem is big, we need to dream big to solve it."

Peter's enduring gift to this world has been MPT: Creating Peace Teams to stop violence.

Celebrate this legacy and
Join us on October 10th!

If you'd like to help sustain Peter's life work as he transitions into retirement, make a donation to MPT in his honor. He is so grateful for your support. 💖



TO REGISTER and/or make a gift in honor of Peter,
 please scan the QR code at right, OR VISIT:
<https://givebutter.com/peter-doughertys-retirement>



A huge
thank you
 to our PCM community!

We are only able to pay the rent and keep the lights on because of your generous support of the work of Pax Christi Michigan.

We can't thank you enough!



PCM 2026 RETREAT: Oct. 23-25th



Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI
with
Bill Wylie-Kellermann
and Denise Giebler

See our website for details



PCUSA/PCM Membership JOIN or RENEW NOW!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

____\$40 ____\$50 ____\$100 ____\$500 ____other

At this time I can only contribute _____

Check any of the following:

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

____ I would like more information about the Parish Spon-
sorship Program.

MAIL TO: Pax Christi USA
415 Michigan Ave. NE, Suite 340
Washington D.C. 20017



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Matt Redigan, (*Dearborn Heights*)



Pax Christi Michigan....

- Meets on the 4th Saturday of January, April, July, and October from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. ANY Pax Christi member is welcome to attend as a non-voting member.
- Working Committees include Finance, Membership, and Technology.
- If you are interested in attending, in joining a committee, or serving on the State Council, please let us know, or contact us if you have any other questions.