



PEACE LINKS

News and Views
from the
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Summer 2026



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PEACELINKS

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***“We are one in Christ
and can never be at war.”***

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Print and Digital edition.

A Heart for Peace

Director's Diary

On the day that Andy Burnham became the Prime Minister we posted him a letter - with many friends in the Peace movement - to welcome him and ask him to change direction from the last administration and to focus on peace. Please take a moment to read it (page 4) and allow yourself to dream, about what you would do to help orientate our world towards one more focussed on peace.

As a Fellowship we travel together through times when our message is popular and when it is unpopular, yet needed and it's unclear yet what this new era will bring. In the coming days you'll receive news of opportunities to get more involved in the Fellowship including

* Standing as a Trustee /offering onto working groups

* Welcoming our visitor from Palestine.

Regardless of the political wind, our faith-shaped message is the same: we are called to be Peace Builders, Justice Seekers, Hope Spreaders. Our work for Peace and Reconciliation is grounded in a message of Good News and our impact changes lives.

20th September is Peace Sunday. This year we'll be exploring a heart for Peace: my heart, your heart, God's heart. We'll be thinking about what makes and breaks that heart and providing a chance to celebrate local people whose heart for Peace inspires you. This year we're offering a digital booklet of material to help you put your service together, plus donation envelopes and posters. We also have special certificates you can print and present to local people who you recognise as showing a real heart for Peace.



John Cooper

Methodist Peace Fellowship Co-ordinator's Report

My name's Liddy and I've been in post since January as the Coordinator for the Methodist Peace Fellowship.

Over the past six months, my focus for the few hours I work each month has been building relationships and getting out and about to talk about peace. I've had the joy of speaking at the connexional Wholehearted Monthly webinar, as well as at Newcastle District Synod. I've chatted with members of the connexional justice team, Methodist young adults at discussion sessions about the situation in Palestine, and have also been liaising with this

year's British representative for the World Methodist Council's Peace Pilgrimage, whose place we are supporting through the RJ Barker Fund.

I have also spent a lot of time organising our AGM, and creating content for social media and print resources behind the scenes.

The next big thing in my diary is Greenbelt, so do come and say hello at the Fellowship of Reconciliation stall if you're around.



Liddy Buswell

Explore a Heart for Peace

Peace Sunday, 20 September



On Peace Sunday, congregations across the UK will unite in worship, reflection and action for a more peaceful world, standing together in the tradition of Christian nonviolence.

Register your interest today to receive our free worship resources, sermon notes and campaign materials as soon as they're ready. To request resources, please complete the online form at <https://for.org.uk/peacesunday>.

We have available options for you to request:

- ☐ Peace Sunday worship material (digital)
- ☐ Peace Sunday envelopes (post)
- ☐ Details of peace sunday webinars
- ☐ Special certificates you can print and present to local people who you recognise as showing a real heart for Peace.

We live in an era of increasing division and conflict. We invite you and your church to spend more time exploring a heart for peace. What makes or breaks your heart for peace? How can God's heart for peace be reflected in our community?

Join hundreds of churches around the country writing a new story for peace, based on God's love, justice and non-violence, and one that speaks a different language to much conversation today.

Peace Sunday is a chance for the church to pause and reflect on what it means to follow the Prince of Peace today. We encourage churches to have a service on the Sunday closest to the UN International Day of Peace (21st September) but you are free to schedule it for the Sunday that fits your calendar.

Wednesday 16 September: 7.30 pm, webinar
What does Pope Francis's *Magnifica Humanitas* mean for War, Peace and Artificial Intelligence?

-featuring Dr Anna Blackman (Affiliate Lecturer in Catholic Religious Education, University of Glasgow and board of Pax Christi England and Wales), Chris Cole (Drone Wars) and more.

This event is supported by Fellowship of Reconciliation and Pax Christi (Scotland).

Register now at www.for.org.uk/events

Ukraine: torture, detention, and denial of alternative service

On 7th July, the **European Bureau of Conscientious Objectors** condemned the torture and death in military custody of Ukrainian conscientious objector Dmytro Koval and called on Ukraine to immediately end the persecution, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of conscientious objectors, adopt legislation guaranteeing alternative civilian service in wartime, and ensure accountability for all abuses committed during mobilisation.

EBCO called on the Ukraine government to:

- immediately stop arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of conscientious objectors;
- release imprisoned conscientious objectors and prisoners of conscience;
- adopt legislation guaranteeing genuinely civilian alternative service during wartime in accordance with international standards;
- fully implement recommendations of the Venice Commission, UN human rights mechanisms and Council of Europe bodies.

EBCO called on the European Union to:

- ensure that accession negotiations with Ukraine include scrutiny of compliance with international standards on conscientious objection;
- guarantee access to asylum and humanitarian protection for conscientious objectors facing persecution;
- urge to withdraw the recent proposal of European Commission not to grant humanitarian protection "to newly arriving persons who are not authorised by the Ukrainian authorities to leave Ukraine in view of their military obligations".



You can find the full statement at: <https://www.ebco-beoc.org/press-release/2026-07-04-ebco-calls-to-stop-torture-and-imprisonment-of-conscientious-objectors-in-ukraine>

Dear Prime Minister

We were one of nine different Christian Networks and churches that wrote to Andy Burnham on the day he took office as Prime Minister. The other signatories were representatives of the Religious Society of Friends, the Community of Christ, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, the Methodist Peace Fellowship, the Iona Community Peace Common Concern Network, Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, and Ekklesia Network. It reads:

We write to you at the start of your premiership. This time in office will be tested by real and gathering pressures, including war continuing to reshape Europe and the Middle East, summer heatwaves making plain the climate emergency as a present reality, and communities around our own nation feeling increasingly fractured, anxious, and pulled toward division rather than solidarity.

How you choose to respond will define your time in office more than any single policy decision. We write to draw your attention to three shared priorities that we think can make a real difference to your premiership and the long-term well-being of this country.

First, we ask that you make peace and diplomacy the guiding principle of your foreign policy. Not an afterthought to military might and deterrence. That means renewed investment of time and diplomatic weight to the institutions built precisely for moments like this - chief among them the United Nations - rather than allowing them to be starved of funds and influence just when they are needed most. Multilateral diplomacy is slow, unglamorous, and easy to underfund, but it remains our best tool for de-escalation and long-term stability, and a Prime Minister willing to champion it would be doing something genuinely inspirational. This year will see the new Secretary General of the United Nations appointed and the UK will have a key role in voting through candidates and then enabling them to be successful in their role

Second, we ask for a change in economic direction. Research has shown that an arms industry-led model of growth is a dead end, not a strategy. An economy built on weapons production ties our national prosperity to the persistence of armed conflict elsewhere; it is not a sustainable foundation for the country's future. We need an economic system that works for us, not against us, through the climate crisis. We

urge you to prioritise activities that contribute to the common good and are less reliant on fossil fuels or military might to secure access to fossil fuels - industries like clean energy - and public health, education and sustainable infrastructure.

Third, at a time when it would be easy to scapegoat migrants and refugees for our national anxieties we ask you to write a different story. Britain is stronger, not weaker, for its diversity. We need a Prime Minister who says this clearly and often. By doing so, rather than ceding political ground to those who would divide us, you will help hold our communities together rather than let them fracture further. We know the roots of much division is in fact economic inequality and your progress on that will help stop the further spread of this language.

We write to you as faith leaders and leaders of faith-based movements who share a vision of a better world - one built on peace and justice for all. We will continue to play our part in building it, in our communities and beyond, and we invite you to do the same in the office you now hold.

Yours sincerely ...

Rule Out Conscription

On International Conscientious Objectors' Day, May 15th, FOR was one of a coalition of thirteen peace organisations that launched a new petition calling on the UK Government to rule out military conscription.

Some politicians and military figures are calling for 'national service'. Conscription is on the rise across Europe, so we must clearly and loudly oppose any future introduction of military conscription in the UK.

Now is the time to raise our voices against this growing threat. Please sign and share the petition now!

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-to-military-conscription-1> (or ask for a paper copy).

Healing from Conflict diary

Over 100 people gathered for our joint peace conference over the 24 - 26 April weekend at Kent's Park Conference Centre in Milton Keynes. It was an enriching, creative and thought provoking weekend. The conference had been in the planning for several months with a team brought together from FOR, Church and Peace, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Pax Christi, and the Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS).

Reports of the keynote speeches and a diary for the weekend appear on the next two pages.

At the start we wrote on post-it notes what we thought *Healing from Conflict* would look like. We found that it differs from one individual to the next. It could be summed up by a set of four large canvases, on loan from South Bedfordshire Craftivists. Each panel shows the same urban scene but in different stages as it journeys from looking like a war zone towards peace, starting with Devastation, then Despair, Healing, and finally Hope. A dove of peace is always present. See them at: <https://www.southbedsmethodist.org.uk/southbedfordshirecraftivists.htm>. There was also a large 4-panel exhibition from the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship. After locating our rooms, we gathered for worship, dinner, and introductions by the sponsoring organisations. We also hosted FOR's weekly online Prayers for Ukraine. We played a game of getting-to-know-you bingo too.

Saturday was a full day with two keynote speakers (both of whom were also live streamed), as well as worship and shared meals. There was a choice of 12 excellent workshops provided by expert speakers from the main organisations and from outside. It was difficult to choose just two:

- Finding Peace and Healing in Darfur
- Courage for Peace in Warlike Times
- Role Playing For/Against Nuclear Weapons
- The Art of Reconciliation
- Responding to Militarism of Faith & Society
- Finger Labyrinth for the Right to Peaceful Protest
- Exploring the two hands of Nonviolence in Challenging Times
- Supporting Survivors with complex PTSD
- Creating Psychological Space for Healing
- Connecting Compassionately, in spite of our differences

- The Role of the Body in Individual & Collective Healing Processes
- Insights of a Protective Accompaniment Volunteer in Colombia

I opted for Martin Tiller's workshop on nuclear arguments. Later I went to Rike Flämig's outdoor practical introduction to the role of the body in healing processes because I wanted to add consideration of peace to my whole being, outside of my intellect.

In the evening, Pax Christi led prayers, and then CHIPS served us mocktails and organised us into using acrylics to paint individual ideas on the theme of 'the peace I receive'. It was an excellent and creative way to relax.

On Sunday morning, we walked over to nearby Christ the King Community Church, a modern ecumenical partnership that hosts both Protestant



and Roman Catholic congregations. The pastor, Ian Pearce, led the worship and preached on the theme of 'who is my



neighbour?' drawing on the parable of the Good Samaritan. APF member Tony Kempster sang some peace songs. Afterwards we joined the local congregation for refreshments.

Our closing session after lunch included a service and prayers, time to recap, evaluate and give thanks and to share about other upcoming events.

Dave Pybus



80 Years and Bust?

Where now for the United Nations in Keeping the Peace

In the two keynote speeches, our first speaker was **Jane Kinninmont, Chief Executive of the United Nations Association - UK**, who joined the conference online (via zoom, see right) to reflect on the future of the United Nations and the vital role that civil society will play in shaping it. Drawing on her own experience - including supporting The Elders (an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet) - she offered insight into how global institutions are evolving, and how faith groups and grassroots movements can influence change. She challenged us to consider our own parts in building a more just and peaceful world.

Although the preamble to the UN Charter which states '*We the peoples ...*', the UN is largely a state based organisation. However there is room for people to act as was demonstrated by the success in 2017 of the UN's adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was an initiative of the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons; it won the Nobel Peace Prize that year.

Jane pointed out that while people in the Western world have experienced 80 years of peace, this has not been the case worldwide. The Global Peace Index 2025 shows that general conditions for world peace are at their lowest level since 2008. \$2.7 billions were spent on arms and war in 2025. This is many times more than the UN budget. Could some of this be spent instead on the UN Sustainable Development Goals? The amount spent on the Iran War could have saved 87 million lives (so far). There are 59 active state-based conflicts. Negotiations tend to be about obtaining ceasefires rather long-term peace-building.

There is a hunger for peace. Politicians know this. However the UN is in an existential crisis, having suffered 20% cuts in income. Possible future scenarios include it becoming a 'zombie' organisation; or it might collapse completely; or its leadership could change from USA to China; or it could rise like a phoenix, a reset with a different leadership supported by the UNA and others.

The first **UN Peacebuilding Week** was to take place over 22-26 June 2026, to recognise and strengthen partnerships for peacebuilding. Jane explained that this was a way for the UN to highlight that peace



"We need a people's movement for peace"

does not only depend on heads of state shaking hands, but is a process to which citizens contribute and which needs to be anchored in civil society.

Global peacebuilding is more than a short-term drive for peace in Palestine, Iran and Ukraine, i.e. the wars that are in the news currently. There are other, neglected conflicts which need to be considered too. Jane drew attention to the UN crisis and the politics of a multilateral world order.

During the Q & A session with Jane, we discussed what we see as the UN's fundamental purpose, how it can be renewed and revitalised amid cuts and threats, and what ordinary people in civil society can do. We need a people's movement for peace. Whilst current conflicts should be actively opposed, that is not enough. President Trump's Board of Peace cannot replace the UN and it should focus on its original remit to bring peace to Gaza.

Can we find ways to stop fuelling wars via the arms trade? What is our role as Christians?

Jane cited other examples where civil society had been effective such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches after the overthrow of President Mugabe, and in Libya where women calmed down the male fighters after the President Gaddafi. She suggested that we write letters to support appointing a woman as the new UN Secretary-General to take office from January 2027.

If you wish to follow up on Jane's suggestion, check out the '1 for 8 billion' campaign <<https://1for8billion.org>> or contact the UNA-UK, or write to your government or MP.

(Part of this report is derived from a Church & Peace press statement)

I am Abel, but Cain lives within me

Our second keynote speaker was **Siniša Klem**, a **Church and Peace** board member and a Baptist theologian from Croatia. His talk interpreted the biblical story of Cain and Abel (in Genesis 4) as a lens for understanding human violence. The story is a foundation for all its following variations in violence down to the present time. Siniša said that people almost always identify themselves as Abel—the innocent victim—while projecting the role of Cain on to others.

Why did Cain murder Abel? He was the first-born to Adam and Eve, and Abel had nothing that he needed. Yet God blessed Abel, so Cain desired it: rivalry and desire escalated into conflict.

If we take on the logic of violence, we sometimes may feel that is the way to achieve justice or to stop a greater threat, as one of Cain's descendants, Lamech, asserted (Genesis 4: 23). He self-justified being violent as a means of defence or revenge.

We say we are a new creation and may want to rise above the story of Cain and Abel. Yet sometimes we feel hatred towards others. Look at the examples of Peter who felt it was alright to use violence when feeling under attack in Gethsemane, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer who felt that violence was possible in some circumstances during World War 2. Today, do we project the role of Cain on to others? For example, we may want to be non-violent ourselves but also wish that somebody else would issue Ukraine with enough weapons to successfully fight Russia. It is possible for a Christian country to commit violence against another country that it sees as evil.

This self-perception justifies violence as defence or revenge. Siniša proposed that the concept "I am Abel, but Cain lives in me," shows that both victimhood and the potential for violence exist within every person. Victims may become victimisers. We have the potential to become Cain.

God's response to Abel's murder challenged the logic of vengeance. God had warned Cain beforehand, confronted him afterward, but then protected him from revenge through the mark



of Cain, which gave and made him a physical testimony to other people. God had thus mediated against violence. This divine action criticises the cycle of violence rather than endorsing it.

Similarly, Jesus tells his followers, "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" (Matthew 5: 41).

Ultimately, reconciliation requires recognising one's own capacity for violence and seeking solutions beyond revenge, reflecting God's non-violent approach to justice and peace.



Colombian Elections, The Christian Right and Politics

“People believed that Gustavo Petro had demobilised... but they find it hard to believe that Abelardo de la Espriella [sic] has converted [to Christianity]. It’s curious how some people believe that a guerrilla fighter can convert, but not that God could transform a heart.” (a Colombian Whatsapp ‘viral’ message)

Peter Cousins writes:

Following my stint at election observation in Sincedejo during the first round of the Colombian presidential elections at the end of May, I reprised the initiative for the run-off between **Abelardo de la Espriella**, a Miami-based Colombian lawyer standing on a far-right platform with his new party ‘Defenders of the Homeland’, and **Iván Cepeda**, a left-wing senator and former exile who was representing the party of the outgoing president, the ‘Historic Pact’. Thus, at that stage in proceedings, Colombians were faced with that staple choice of elections the world over – either ‘steady as she goes’ or ‘time for a change’. Twelve other presidential and vice-presidential candidates had been eliminated in the first round, and the ‘lions’ share’ of those votes were expected to travel to De la Espriella, self-styled as “The Tiger”.

On this occasion my own involvement centred on Barcelona, where I had spent the previous week. The Consulate General of Colombia - responsible for facilitating the election for its nationals in Catalonia - sits a couple of blocks away from the square named for the same region, but larger premises were required, so operations were transferred to the Barcelona Archdiocesan Seminary. I arrived in time for the final count.



Peter outside the seminary

The novices studying there must have been instructed to see the sights of their city that day, as there was not a robed figure to be seen! No sooner had I entered, someone was emerging in

the opposite direction – involuntarily, a fact he expended little effort at concealing. The seminary doesn’t hold extraterritorial privileges, so the *Mossos d’Esquadra* - literally translating as the ‘squad boys’, a slightly unlikely-sounding name for the official Catalan police - had been summoned to remove him, following some contravention. The *Mossos* deposited him a little way away, and presumably their presence ‘on the block’ made sure he did not return.



Although the premises themselves were not under Colombian law, the election was held according to the same procedures as I had witnessed in the country three weeks before. Voting ended at 4pm and anyone intending to exercise their suffrage must at least have handed over their ID to an official by then. There was good-natured banging on the tables as some compatriots came running in with minutes to spare, hastily seeking their assigned ballot box. At 4pm sharp the gates to the seminary were closed and the Colombian national anthem sounded. It was all rather unifying – although one tardy soul was reduced to listening in from outside, having just missed the deadline.

Such concord was hardly reflected in the final result. Although some polls were predicting that De la Espriella would take in excess of 50% of the vote share, participation was up on the first round and it proved a much closer affair, with Cepeda coming in at less than 1% (some 250,000 votes) behind. (Interestingly, the count at the table I observed hemmed closely to the overall national figure: 50 votes each for both candidates, with two null ballots.) Nevertheless, only a plurality was required, so that De la Espriella, who

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celebrated his victory from behind bulletproof glass (as he had been his wont throughout the campaign – the optics conveying a subtle message of insecurity), was the one invested on 7 August, a date that commemorates an important victory over the Spanish at Boyacá Bridge in the wars of independence two centuries ago. To his credit, but also perhaps to some scepticism, De la Espriella toned down his rhetoric against his opponents; he promised those who did not vote for him that they would continue to enjoy all their rights – an improvement on the prospect of being “disembowelled” that he announced during the campaign (the word he used in Spanish, *destripar*, has echoes of the Spanish translation of Jack the Ripper).

In truth, De la Espriella’s campaign was loaded with masculine, militaristic imagery. He promised to build ten mega-prisons to contain gang members, as in El Salvador. It is true that some indices of violence have again been on the rise in recent years, leading once more to a generalised feeling of insecurity, but such places are a travesty of justice. Nevertheless, the president-elect successfully tapped a mood (and not just in his country – Latin Americans are turning to the right across the continent, such as in Chile towards the end of last year; and, more recently, the wafer-thin difference in the results of the Peruvian presidential election tilted in favour of the former dictator Fujimori’s daughter, Keiko – at her fourth time of trying!).

In other ways, though, De la Espriella’s victory is perplexing. His plans to pivot away from the peace deal with the FARC and other negotiations presently underway mean that more people will certainly die. He lived abroad; he had not so much presided over a neighbourhood committee, let alone a country; and, working as a lawyer, he has represented certain shady characters, including some of the henchmen of the deposed Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro. Naturally, everyone has a right to a defence, but it is more than a little unusual given the frequency with which those on the political right in Colombia invoke the prospect of a Failed State à la Venezuela, should the left be given access to power. Well, the left was in power over the last four years, and of course, Colombia’s institutions remained intact.

That said, one could certainly inveigh against aspects of Cepeda’s campaign. He failed to

distance himself sufficiently promptly from the incumbent’s pet project of re-writing the constitution (unachieved, thanks to Colombia’s solid separation of powers, and an unnecessary undertaking anyway, as the country’s 1991 *magna carta* is recognised as rather progressive, so that it should just be allowed to mature as a political document; and indeed, arguably an own goal, in that it afforded De la Espriella’s team the opportunity to claim that they were the ones upholding the political settlement). Furthermore, the shadow of the former-president, Petro, – at times not an easy figure even for his allies to handle – loomed too large over the campaign, so that Cepeda arguably did not get the chance to fully portray his more measured character.

A further frustrating aspect of De La Espriella’s victory – at least, for those likely to be reading these words – points to the epigraph at the top of this article. This text was shared in the Whatsapp chat of an informal Catholic grouping to which my Colombian wife belongs – containing, it should be said, lovely people of all political persuasions (although throughout this campaign, the supporters of De la Espriella were perhaps those who ‘shouted the loudest’). To the extent that we knew anything was known about this political unknown’s sympathies prior to the campaign, it was broadly as a centrist with some progressive leanings, and as a declared atheist. The Whatsapp text above alludes to his conversion to a form of ultra-conservative Christianity, and this duly secured him the support of like-minded compatriots.

One treads a fine line here; plenty of people accused De la Espriella of utilitarianism. Yet, while only God can know what truly lies in the heart of any one of his creatures, it is hard for us to imagine that the Lord might have put a vision resting on violent vocabulary, imagery and promises at the heart of a nation’s political direction.

The Whatsapp message also alludes to former-President Petro’s past as a guerrilla fighter (he did indeed belong to a now-demobilised group, from which process – ironically – the 1991 Constitution ultimately stemmed; and many have suggested, rather more unfairly, the same thing of Cepeda, who held communist leanings in his earlier years), something which in reality the conservatives in Colombia – Christian or

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MPF members visit Sunderland

The Methodist Peace Fellowship held its AGM in Roker Methodist Church, Sunderland on Saturday 6th June. Ten members attended with several more logging in online.

Richard Bickle, who is also a FOR trustee, was re-elected as chairperson. A vote of thanks was given to Ronnie Aitchison for his years as secretary. The new secretary is Rev. George Heinz.

The new co-ordinator, Liddy Buswell was introduced and she reported on her activities since being appointed.

MPF is involved in the online Friday prayers for peace in Ukraine, Russia, and elsewhere. It is also represented on the Chaplains Group Meetings of Faith and Order, which is still debating the matter of new materials towards informing the church of preparedness for war. John Cooper commented that he had been involved with a discussion regarding the number of unemployed young people in which the response was "Conscription is never the answer".

A papier-mâché heart was prepared for use on the stall at the Methodist Conference.

Our AGM's keynote speaker was **Rev John Purdy**.



His theme was ***The land of Saints and Scholars, Civil War and Semtex - what we might learn from Ireland today.*** This was a very powerful presentation



using John's personal experience growing up in Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles and how this impacted him with the death of neighbours and school friends. He went on to describe his later experiences as a Methodist Minister in The Republic and encounters with protestant peoples who had lived in the area for generations and the antagonism they were now experiencing as the Republic grew and they were suddenly seen as the enemy within.

Jonathan Sewell led the comments with a call for the churches to be involved within communities with the aim of tackling division and bringing healing to the community.

Denis drew attention to the demonising of difference and how that is affection all our communities today.

Malcolm Hickox suggested that it was incumbent on the church to create peace through the Christian values integrity and seeing all people as part of humanity.

FOR member walks for peace

Gerald Drewett, a Quaker who turned 90 on May 19th, has set out to walk 4,000 steps a day for 90 days, something he hopes to repeat every year until he is 100.

He says this odyssey will need God's co-operation.

In doing so, he is raising money for the Give Peace a Chance Trust and the Peace Museum in Bradford, which he was instrumental in founding in 1998.

Don't ask him what will he do on his 100th birthday, because he has no idea.

You can find more information on the Give Peace A Chance Trust website: <https://gpactrust.uk/>

Colombian Elections *continued from page 9*
otherwise – have *never* accepted.

The fusion of adherence to Christianity with (far) right-wing ideas of social order is hardly restricted to Colombia. It is the guiding force of President Trump's administration in the USA, and it is increasingly in evidence across Great Britain too. We Christian pacifists have much work to do if the love story that is Christianity is not to be crucified and buried in a maximum-security tomb by the far-right. Responding to the recent devastating earthquake in Colombia will be an immense early task for the new government, but the Colombian election campaign should remind the Fellowship of Reconciliation that its vocation to be the leaven for a loving and liberating faith is as crucial as ever.

*Peter Cousins is former director of
FOR Peace Presence Colombia.*

Methodist Peace Fellowship welcomes President's statement

The Methodist Peace Fellowship welcomed the Address by Rev Mark Slaney, President of Methodist Conference's (27 June 2026), and what MPF member Denis Beaumont called the 'divine mirror' held up. The challenge and focus on a nonviolent image of God is important to hear and matches an increasing interest in peace among the Methodist People.

Denis, who with his wife Diana have been a key presence at many Methodist Conferences, listened to the president's address. He said "I was struck by his focus on nonviolence and solidarity. I liked how he weaved together that our understanding of God's vision for us and all humanity reflects back – like a divine mirror - on how we love ourselves and others. He challenged us to consider if we worship a violent and divine

God or a God of nonviolence and solidarity. In a time of increasing war and conflict I believe our worship of a God of nonviolence and solidarity is never easy, but the fruit of peace is worth pursuing. Methodism is in Good Hands".

Liddy Buswell, Network Co-Ordinator of the Methodist Peace Fellowship welcomed the broader conference focus on peace. All churches were encouraged to mark Peace Sunday on 20th September 2026 (*see notice on back page*).

Rev Mark Slaney's full presidential address is here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/structure-and-governance/the-methodist-conference/conference-2026/presidency/the-presidents-address-to-the-conference/>.

MPF website: <https://www.mpf.org.uk/>.

Remembering Hamish Walker

The Fellowship was saddened to learn of the death on 11th April of Reverend Hamish Walker, who was General Secretary of British FOR for eight years (1976-1984) when there was one organisation for the whole of the UK.

Hamish was born in Edinburgh in 1928. After graduation he was licensed by the Church of Scotland, serving in Scotland and India. He married Jill in 1957 (they were to have 3 children).

In 1979 during a week organised by the Iona Community and FOR, Hamish met up with Jim Forest who was his counterpart at International FOR and Jean Hutchinson, later of Greenham Common Women. They devised a plan for a cycle pilgrimage from Iona to Canterbury, taking in large towns and cities and military bases.

The 1981 pilgrimage lasted 7 weeks including one on Iona, and ended at Pentecost with a service in Canterbury Cathedral. Around 30 cyclists took part. Along the way, it took in Greenham Common and Molesworth where US nuclear missiles were to be based. Meetings were held in church halls and meeting houses where they also slept. People were invited to sign a personal disarmament statement. Hamish said that when General Secretary "nothing gave me more pride and pleasure than the pilgrimage".

"Hamish was a dedicated worker and inspiration to us all. The Iona-to-Canterbury pilgrimage



Hamish with Lord Donald Soper in Downing Street

benefited from his valuable leadership, care, and ideas. He helped to keep us going on the pilgrimage of 1,100 miles in 6 weeks, and we were helped by his strength. His work for the pilgrimage gave it a marvellous character. His loss is very very sad. Let us say prayers for his family and friends." - *Jean Hutchinson*

"I just remember Hamish as a calm and gentle man, a man of integrity". - *Bridie Wallis*

"Yes, I have memories of Hamish on the bike ride – and somewhere photos of the group coming into Darlington, where I was living at the time. A lovely quiet spoken man."

- *David Mumford*

Hamish endorsed non violent civil disobedience in some circumstances, stating that "many people are now called to bear their witness directly to those who make important decisions on our behalf, even if this involves breaking the law".

After FOR, in 1987 Hamish transferred to the United Reformed Church.

Diary Dates

Every Friday: 7.30 - 8 pm

Prayers for Peace in Ukraine and other conflicts

on Zoom, to register now:

www.for.org.uk/ukraine (until the war ends)

Third Saturday of each month: 12 noon

Vigil at main gate, RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

to protest the return of US nuclear bombs.

<https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/monthly-vigils/>

August 27 - 30 Greenbelt Festival

- artistry x activism x belief + theme is Let It All Go

Meet our director, John, and Hannah Brock Womack at the Whispers of Peace workshop on Sunday

and find our FOR stall all weekend at

Boughton House, Kettering.

www.greenbelt.org.uk

September 6: 4 - 5 pm

Garforth Methodist Church, Leeds

Circuit Service, guest preacher: John Cooper

September 16: 7.30 pm online

What does Pope Francis's *Magnifica Humanitas* mean for War, Peace and Artificial Intelligence?

- see page 3 for details and to register -

September 19: 12 noon - 4 pm

National Silent Walking Vigil for Peace

Central London. All are welcome.

Register at <https://quakervigilforpeace.org/>

September 20: Peace Sunday

www.for.org.uk/peacesunday - see page 3

October 7: 7 pm

FOR Annual Council & AGM

Keynote: 'Exploring Fellowship and Community' with Lakeshmi Piette ([Rose Castle Community](#))

who explored residential and dispersed religious communities around the world. Register

via www.for.org.uk/events

October 12 - 19: Week of Prayer for World Peace

www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk

October 24: Love Thy Neighbour

following Jesus in an Age of 'Us vs Them'

9 am - 6.30 pm at St Dionis church,

Parsons Green, London SW6 4UH

Tickets & details: <https://tinyurl.com/4a2xwcx3>

December 6 : Advent Service: 4 - 6 pm

- livestreamed from The Mint Methodist Church, Exeter. Join online or in person - details soon.



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- [] to receive information about becoming a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation
- [] information about the International Peacemakers' Fund
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