Opinion
Guest Voices



Charlene Howard, executive director of Pax Christi USA, leads community members during a prayer vigil outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement headquarters in Washington Dec. 12, 2025. (OSV News/Leslie E. Kossoff)



by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with Charlene Howard, the executive director of Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement, about Pax Christi's ongoing work for justice, disarmament and peace.

"One light can dispel the darkness," Howard said. "That's what we're trying to do — be a light in the darkness. There's a lot of hard things happening in this country, but there's a lot of light, too. Don't be fooled into thinking that we are not gaining ground for the good and for peace, because we are."

Howard is a lifelong Catholic, a catechist and a longtime teacher in the Archdiocese of Washington Catholic schools. She holds a master's degree in catechesis and religious education from Catholic University of America and is a graduate and former faculty member of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies Imani Catechetical Program at Xavier University of Louisiana.

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We discuss organizing Pax Christi groups and actions, getting connected with other like-minded peace and justice church activists, taking on a variety of issues, and how we can practice and teach the nonviolence of Jesus.

Howard encourages us to get involved and stay involved, and take to heart Pope Leo XIV's Jan. 1, 2026, World Day of Peace message, "Peace Be With You All: Towards an 'Unarmed and Disarming' Peace."



Charlene Howard, then-chairwoman of the Pax Christi USA national council, Josie Garnem, a national council member, and Lauren Bailey, the organization's national field organizer, pose during a demonstration in Washington June 18, 2022. (CNS/Courtesy of Pax Christi USA)

"The peace of the risen Jesus is unarmed, because his was an unarmed struggle in the midst of concrete historical, political and social circumstances," Leo said. "Christians must together bear prophetic witness to this novelty."

"Read it," Howard said, "and let's speak truth to power."

Listen to the full podcast here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.