

Pax Christi member Anne Dodd offers her reflection on the Celebration of International Women's Day ZOOM gathering

International Women's Day, generally, has had a higher profile this year and it was a very positive experience to be part of Pax Christi's Zoom celebration of women's contribution to nonviolent peace - making and peace building. To break through the myth that violence is the only way requires a wide range of strategies and an equally wide range of gifts and both of these were made manifest in the mosaic of contributions during the Zoom event.

To bring about change requires both dogged, persistent engagement with those who hold the levers of power and, equally, the grass roots tilling of the soil, the day-to-day actions within families, local communities and individual hearts and minds. True change, real change, real transformation depends on both these two different kinds of peace building. This truth was reflected in the two contrasting speakers, Mary Yelenick and Sister Katrina Alton. Such all-important qualities as deep listening, empathetic building of close relationships and building mutual trust were explored and affirmed as vital in peace building.

Three 4-word phrases stood out for me. The first was said in awe and amazement by Yola, telling her story of the struggle in Peru. She was suddenly aware of being heard, listened to and honoured, aware of the real meaning of solidarity. "We are not alone !" The second phrase was "Do not be afraid!" used more than 300 times in the New Testament. A phrase that gives others courage in public witness and was epitomised in the striking painting by Michael Cook that Sister Katrina used, contrasting so vividly the cowering fear of the Apostles with the joyful witness of the three women. The dramatic painting was also a reminder of the huge potential of art, music and the creative arts in the toolbox of peace making. The third and final 4-word phrase was "Listen, Learn , Share, Act !", a mantra for all peace builders and peace makers.

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