

## NJPN Comment

# Crisis and opportunity

**Michael Pulham**

Covid-19 is forcing many changes. How is it affecting the work of the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? Information for the churches continues, but some ancillary activity has needed review.

For many years, before attendance at the UN for the conferences on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), members visited embassies in London to find out the positions of their countries, to discuss moral aspects and to discover the names of delegates we could arrange to meet.

However, the current serious health crisis means face-to-face meetings in embassies are giving way to email communications.

There is nothing like meeting people, but relations can still be maintained and developed. With our travel to New York for the Review Conference prevented, we can ask the embassies for their national NPT Statements, plus progress on the new UN Nuclear Ban Treaty.

Morning Interfaith Prayer outside the UN before business begins, will continue. We instituted this practice some years ago and fortunately, it has recently been taken over by New York locals.

Contact with diplomats is desirable, but civil servants must carry out their governments' plans. The hard thing is to affect the thinking of governments! Since time immemorial, those in power have used it to maintain it. World conflicts have resulted. How can world peace ever happen?

Here's an idea that might be worth considering: Nearly all governments act as guardians of chunks of the planet's land mass. Could the smallest patch, the Vatican State, be instrumental? The Papal Diplomatic Corps was involved in the prolonged and extensive work to obtain the nuclear treaty with Iran. It focuses on peace, not territory.

All countries claim to prefer peace. What if the Vatican state devised a syllabus for basic training in fruitful diplomacy, asked governments for their comments, and whether they were behind its peace-building aims? The next stage would be for governments to sign up to sending new recruits to train with those from other countries. It's ideas like this that crop up among members of Christian CND.

People from all denominations join the organisation and connect with other Christian organisations. At the beginning of Lent we joined with Pax Christi at the Ministry of Defence for Ash Wednesday Repentance over a different kind of virus: Britain's Trident nuclear weapons system!

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