

## **NJPN meeting 8<sup>th</sup> February English Martyrs, York**

A small but lively group of representatives from the Network's diocesan and agency representatives met in York on a beautiful early spring day. This was Ann Kelly's first meeting as NJPN administrator. Maureen Matthews came in her capacity as the new website manager.

The group heard updates on the current financial position of NJPN and the need to look for project grants from other sources to help cover the costs of things such as conference, in the light of CAFOD's recent grant review.

Future conference planning was discussed - this year's Swanwick conference is being organised by Liverpool, with the London Dioceses, London Citizens, Housing Justice and Jesuit Refugee Service being responsible for the 2009 one. Offers for 2010 are needed!

It is hoped to have the "Just Fair/Village fete" feature in this year's event which was so enjoyed by conference a few years back.

Input from the Ethical Investment group sparked a lively exchange of views and reflections on ethical investment and the wider, but separate issue of fair-trade. It was noted that there is not a uniform policy for the Dioceses of England & Wales on ethical investment and that getting information about where diocesan funds are invested is often frustratingly difficult.

Fair-trade was seen as an issue in itself and concerns were expressed about the lack of follow up monitoring by the Fair-trade Foundation to organisations and councils who have been given Fairtrade status. A plea was made for churches to keep supporting Traidcraft and BAFTA shops who are struggling to compete with the big supermarkets that now have their "own brand" fair-trade products.

The results of the three year plan for NJPN were presented, with the executive hoping to focus on using the website as a good means of communication and raising the profile of NJPN nationally.

Reports from the diocese and agencies of J&P activities round the country gave a good picture of the amount of commitment to J&P despite difficulties. Climate change issues, Asylum and refugee support and Make UK poverty History were the main concerns highlighted. JRS spoke of an innovative voucher exchange scheme (also happening in dioceses such as Newcastle) whereby people can buy the £35 worth of supermarket vouchers given to asylum seekers. The money can be used by the person to buy the things they really need rather than them having to spend it all in one place.

Professor David Webb of Yorkshire CND gave an interesting talk in the afternoon session on the current situation of the UK's nuclear defence system. The US is expanding its operations in Europe with bases planned in Poland & the Czech Republic, despite local opposition. He spoke of the expansion of the US military Stratcom facility in Omaha, Nebraska, which has the ability to co ordinate air strikes to any part of the world within 60minutes. The proposed replacement of the Trident weapons system was discussed- David pointed out that one Trident nuclear sub. has enough warheads to cause a nuclear winter. The UK has 4 of these submarines.

Concern was expressed at the low numbers attending the meeting. The need for members of the network to be committed to coming to the quarterly gatherings as an important way of supporting each other in J&P issues and to exchange information was stressed.

Bernie Roche