

REPORT OF NJPN QUARTERLY MEETING 11 FEBRUARY 2006

As usual the meeting was held in the garden room at CAFOD in Romero Close. After a short liturgy arranged by our chairperson Ann Peacy, the meeting began with apologies, a check of the minutes of the November meeting and the executive report.

This gave us an update of the progress towards getting charitable status for the NJPN, and the extension of membership. It also included a report on the discussion with Marie McNeil, of CAFOD, on the criteria used for funding the Network.

As always, the reports from the Diocesan Commissions were a source of inspiration, encouragement, ideas and hope. One very good piece of news was from Brian Davies who reported on the new Commission in Birmingham. The 'unofficial' hard work of the J and P workers, means a Commission can be born with a great deal of experience and expertise already in place. There is hope that Deacons of the Diocese will be encouraged by the Archbishop to be more involved in the promotion of justice.

Porstmouth reported growing links with the Apostleship of the sea, describing the kind of hardships suffered by seamen and the support they need, in which they are encouraging parishes to be involved. This link is also growing in Plymouth. Hexham and Newcastle reported on the Conference 2006, for which the booking forms are now available.

Pat Gaffney of Pax Christi, who had to leave at mid-day to support a multi-faith group, gave her report on the Conference 2007. Two speakers have been engaged so far, John Deer SJ and a Lutheran Palestinian from Bethlehem. She is hoping to have Bernadette Farrell helping in the liturgy and possibly demonstrating how liturgy and music can be a component of peace work.

The Speaker for the day, Guyonne James, was from Tourism Concern. She painted a very clear, and lurid, picture of the exploitative nature of tourism especially in developing countries where labour is cheap, and where the poor will do any job for next to nothing because nothing is often the alternative. Tourism can even destroy a local economy, and most of the profits go to the main tour operators rather than to the local population. So while the environment suffers seriously from the tourism industry it is not just the environment that is at stake. Tourism needs a 'Fair Trade' mark, and the campaigning that Tourism Concern now does aims at this. Meanwhile responsible tourism depends on the tourists in the first place to be informed and willing even to make sacrifices. Guyonne left campaign materials and information for us to take away (and use!).

The agency and working party reports included CAFOD's on the new 2006 Campaign - 'Unearth Justice' which focuses on 'extractives'. This and reports on Environment, Ethical Investment, peace education, all added to the growing sense of partnership with other organisations and agencies. The Jesuit Refugee Service reported some more hopeful developments for families refused permission to stay in the UK, and who were in danger of losing their children into care. It is always uplifting to meet the representatives of so many people at work in the promotion of peace and justice in our society and in the world. Anyone who thinks they will come travelling light certainly does not go home that way, - the wealth of excellent resources available makes sure of that!