

REFLECTIONS ON QUARTERLY MEETING OF NJPN NOVEMBER 24TH

As always there was a warm welcome to Romero Close. The meeting was held in the Garden Room with resources heaped on tables and the doors firmly closed against the cold winter's day outside. (Some of those attending had travelled through snow in the early hours of the morning on their way to London.)

After the opening prayer, the Executive's report included an update on charitable status and included discussion of the purpose of the network and of our accountability. We talked about venues for future quarterly meetings and we were reminded that, even though the whole network can't be present at every meeting, Commissions could be encouraged to attend meetings in their local area.

The diocesan reports were as inspiring as ever...they're a rich vein of ideas for development. It was especially encouraging to hear that the network is growing, with Cardiff diocese setting up an official group and a paid worker about to be appointed in Portsmouth diocese.

Hexham and Newcastle gave an update on Conference 2006, Pax Christi shared early ideas for Conference 2007, and there was a reminder that volunteers are needed to begin planning for Conference 2008. Thought of Conference brought welcome reminders of summer to a cold winter's day.

Marie McNeil from CAFOD told us about the preparation for the 40th anniversary of 'Populorum Progressio'. After her presentation she asked for our response under the headings of 1: Campaign model 2: Catechetical model 3: Whole parish model 4: School model. This task, very daunting to those of us who are not familiar with the document, led to very interesting discussion and a growing sense of excitement. There was a request for people to get involved.

All the agency reports increase the sense of partnership between our movement and the professionals. In fact, we're all part of the same movement, with NJPN representing and trying to hold together the more informal parts.

The very rich and rewarding formal business of the gathering can be captured in the written reports but what can't be captured is the sense of community and fellowship that pervades the meeting in the formal bits and in the conversations around the tables and during lunch time. If you've never been, or if you've not been for a while, it's well worth coming when 'NJPN Quarterly' trundles into a venue near you.

Finally, armed with fresh resources, we dispersed back to our dioceses.