

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

Before you read the articles in this month's bulletin that focus on the horrific death of George Floyd and its aftermath, take 3 minutes to watch this clip which shines a glimmer of hope in the darkness. <https://youtu.be/ei7gAtM0pOA>

EDITORIAL: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

NCR Editorial Staff 29/5/2020

"What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

There is no accounting for the death of George Floyd. A person, a reflection of God's very image, senselessly killed, murdered. A 46-year-old father of two daughters, stopped in Minneapolis over a report of someone nearby having tried to use a counterfeit \$20 bill at a local store. Brutally held to the ground by a police officer's knee for about eight minutes, while others watched. His last words a repeated gasp, a begging for help: "I can't breathe. I can't breathe."

"What have you done? Your sister's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

There is no accounting for the death of Breonna Taylor. A person, a reflection of God's very image, senselessly killed, murdered. A 26-year-old emergency medical technician in Louisville, Kentucky, sleeping in her apartment one March night when police enter without warning in a botched narcotics raid. After her boyfriend shoots an officer in the leg, Taylor is killed in the crossfire. Her last words are unknown.

"What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

There is no accounting for the death of Ahmaud Arbery. A person, a reflection of God's very image, senselessly killed, murdered. A 25-year-old former high school football star, chased down by two men during a run in his Georgia neighbourhood in February. His last sounds an unintelligible shout as he struggles to prevent his assailants from shooting him, before being killed at point-blank range.

"What have you done? What have you done? What have you done?"

There is no accounting for these deaths, or the unknown multitude of other African Americans whose deaths by police were unfiled or otherwise unrecorded by history.

God's question to Cain repeats and repeats. All this has happened before, and all this will happen again. Who will wedge something in the gear of the machine to stop it going round and round?

A president so detached from any sense of decency that he threatens on Twitter that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

Who will put the wedge in the machine?
What have you done? What will you do?

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/editorial-what-have-you-done-no-accounting-deaths-floyd-taylor-and-arbery?clickSource=email>

AM I NEXT?

Richard Rohr writes 7/6/2020:

During this time of social unrest, I invite you to sit with the powerful and uncomfortable emotions, such as anger or grief, that you may be carrying. Welcome them in the presence of God. As I often say, if we do not transform our pain, we will most assuredly transmit it. Tragically, we are witnessing the results of centuries of unresolved racial violence in our collective body today. As a white man in the United States, I humbly begin this week's meditations on "Contemplation and Racism" by sharing the words of a woman of colour in our own CAC community. **Leslye Colvin** is one of our Living School students and a member of our Daily Meditations team. In our time of ongoing disorder, Leslye asks, "Am I Next"?

*Lord, have mercy.
George Floyd of Minnesota.
Your nation failed you.
Rest in God's peace.
Kyrie eleison.*

*Christ, have mercy.
Breonna Taylor of Kentucky.
Your nation failed you.
Rest in God's peace.
Christe eleison.*

*Lord, have mercy.
Ahmaud Arbery of Georgia.
Your nation failed you.
Rest in God's peace.
Kyrie eleison.*

*Christ, have mercy.
Tony McDade of Florida.
Your nation failed you.
Rest in God's peace.
Christe eleison.*

Four people whom I never knew have been murdered. It is merely the tip of an iceberg. The details of each heinous act are so horrifically unjust that there is no sense to be made of them. Each of the four was victimized. Each of them was Black, but their race was not the cause of death. Each was murdered because of the systemic structures that endow white people with an unimaginable authority and privilege based on the perpetuation of lies. The onus is not on the victims but on the perpetrators and their oppressive and unjust systems.

There is also a realization that it could have been me. I could be laying cold and lifeless in the morgue because of a distorted perception of me rooted in lies. Maybe it will be me the next time—not because of who I am, but because of how you see me in relation to how you see yourself. What lies about me do you believe? What lies about yourself do you believe?

POPE FRANCIS CALLS EL PASO BISHOP MARK SEITZ, OFFERING SUPPORT FOR GEORGE FLOYD MEMORIAL

Lauren Villagran *El Paso Times* 3/6/2020: Bishop Mark J. Seitz's act of kneeling in prayer for eight minutes and 46 seconds to remember George Floyd earned an appreciative call from Pope Francis on Wednesday. The bishop and priests from the Diocese of El Paso prayed for Floyd, a black man who died after a Minneapolis police officer knelt for more than eight minutes on his neck during an arrest, on Monday night. Floyd repeatedly cried out saying he couldn't breathe.

The bishop told the priests that "it was nice to know that the Holy Father specifically said that we are united in prayer as we all work to increase peace and justice in the world, which is our Christian mandate." Pope Francis called for national reconciliation and peace, saying he has "witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest" in the U.S., according to the Associated Press. "My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life," he said. <https://eu.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2020/06/03/pope-francis-offers-support-el-paso-bishop-mark-seitz-george-floyd-memorial/3138253001/>

EL PASO'S BISHOP MARK SEITZ: BLACK LIVES MATTER

Bishop Mark J. Seitz 4/6/2020: I think that sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that Christianity is a dead letter religion. That it's about things that happened a long time ago or about words on a page. But every day at Mass, when I kneel before Jesus in the Eucharist, I'm reminded that he is alive and present. That Christianity is an event happening right now. The drama of salvation is something playing out every day. And we all have a role to play. I taught liturgy in seminary. In good liturgy, our faith is brought to life. I think what we've seen play out over the last couple days is maybe a little bit like liturgy.

The other day I saw a video of a young white woman at a protest near the White House who put her body in front of a young kneeling black teenager as police officers in riot gear approached. As Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." It's a scene of solidarity and self-giving that has played out across the country so many times in the last week. In El Paso, Texas, there were two young police officers who knelt down with protesters during a demonstration here and it helped defuse some tension. There is something profoundly eucharistic about these moments and I'm so inspired by our young people. They are teaching us something.

When religion becomes stagnant, we can forget that the Word always comes to us crucified and powerless. As James Cone put it, in America, the Word comes tortured, black and lynched. Today, we meet Jesus in those tear-gassed, tasered, strangled and snuffed out. That's the reason why the church teaches a preferential option for the poor. And why the church stands up for life wherever and whenever it is devalued and threatened. To say, as all who eat from the table of the Eucharist should be able to say, that black lives matter is just another way of repeating something we in the United States seem to so often forget, that God has a special love for the forgotten and oppressed.

Many are understandably upset by the destruction and looting. It's true, none of us should crave the thrill of violence or revenge. That's wrong. We also need to recognize that we are seeing the effects of centuries of sin and violence and rights denied playing themselves out. And frankly, civil rights are not enough. That's the minimum and clearly, we're not there yet. We also need to be building a society with housing, and education and health care and just wages for all as well as the right to migrate. And then we can begin to heal.

My brother bishop in Chicago, Cardinal Blase Cupich, suggested we should be less quick to judge the proportionality of "their" response and start talking about the proportionality of "ours." [see below] We also need to remember what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, that "a riot is the language of the unheard." I think leaders in the church today, and leaders everywhere really, should perhaps say a little less right now. Instead, we should stand with and give the microphone and listen to those who have been unheard for too long. To those who have suffered our shameful history of discrimination and racial profiling and police brutality. To those who are putting their bodies on the line in protest and in defence of others.

Let's look at the grace in all of this. Look at the witness of those who are bravely taking up their parts in the drama of salvation unfolding in front of us. If we look past the static, they're pointing the way to redemptive transformation. They are showing us what the reign of God looks like and what our country can look like when we all have a place at the table. Let's encourage them. And pray with them. And thank them. With grace, they are joining the living ranks of a long faith tradition of labourers for greater justice, like Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, Joan of Arc, Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Earl Chaney, Oscar Romero, Thea Bowman and so many others. Thank God. Thank God.

• **Mark J. Seitz is the bishop of El Paso, a diocese in West Texas on the U.S.-Mexico border.**

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/el-pasos-bishop-mark-seitz-black-lives-matter>

STATEMENT OF CARDINAL BLASE J. CUPICH, ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO

31/5/2020: The past nights I have watched in great personal pain as the pent-up anger of our people caught fire across our country. I saw the city where I was born, the cities where I have lived, the city I pastor now, catch embers from the city where I was educated and burn. Was I horrified at the violence? Yes. But was I surprised? No.

As the saying goes, if you're not outraged, you're not paying attention. What did we expect when we learned that in Minneapolis, a city often hailed as a model of inclusivity, the price of a black life is a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill? When we added another name to the list of those murdered for being black or for caring about the marginalized?

I will not pretend to speak with any authority about the challenges people of colour experience in our society. I do not share the fear they put on when they and their children leave their homes every day. I do not know what it means to be "other." But I know there is a way to fix it. And the fix begins when we stop talking about the proportionality of "their" response and start talking about the proportionality of "ours." Surely a nation that could put a man in space, his safety assured by the brilliance of black women, can create a fair legal system, equitable education and employment opportunities and ready access to health care. Laws do not solve problems, but they create a system where racism in all its forms is punished and playing fields are levelled.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been called a great equalizer. It has been even more a great revealer of societal cancers as deadly as the virus. As others have pointed out, health insecurity kills, and poverty is poison. We can and must make a society that views the soaring of a child's potential with more joy than the soaring of a rocket.

I stand ready to join religious, civic, labour and business leaders in coming together to launch a new effort to bring about recovery and reconciliation in our city. We do not need a study of the causes and effects. Those answers can be found on the shelves of government offices and academic institutions across our burning nation. No, we need to take up the hard work of healing the deep wound that has afflicted our people since the first slave ships docked on this continent. And we need to start today.

<https://www.chicagocatholic.com/chicagoland/-/article/2020/05/31/statement-of-cardinal-blase-j-cupich-archbishop-of-chicago-on-the-murder-of-george-floyd-and-its-aftermath>

US BISHOPS 'BROKENHEARTED' AT KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

31/5/2020: ***Seven US Catholic bishops have issued a statement in the wake of the death of George Floyd and the protests which have broken out in Minneapolis and in other cities in the United States. Thousands of people - including several church groups also took part in a peaceful march in London from Trafalgar Square to the US Embassy, to protest against the killing.***

'We are broken-hearted, sickened, and outraged to watch another video of an African American man being killed before our very eyes. What's more astounding is that this is happening within mere weeks of several other such occurrences.

This is the latest wake-up call that needs to be answered by each of us in a spirit of determined conversion. Racism is not a thing of the past or simply a throwaway political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It is a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice.

While it is expected that we will plead for peaceful non-violent protests, and we certainly do, we also stand in passionate support of communities that are understandably outraged. Too many communities around this country feel their voices are not being heard, their complaints about racist treatment are unheeded, and we are not doing enough to point out that this deadly treatment is antithetical to the Gospel of Life.

As we said eighteen months ago in our most recent pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts*, for people of colour some interactions with police can be fraught with fear and even danger. People of good conscience must never turn a blind eye when citizens are being deprived of their human dignity and even their lives. Indifference is not an option. "As bishops, we unequivocally state that racism is a life issue."

We join Archbishop Bernard A Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis in praying for the repose of the soul of Mr George Floyd and all others who have lost their lives in a similar manner. We plead for an end to the violence in the wake of this tragedy and for the victims of the rioting. We pray for comfort for grieving families and friends. We pray for peace across the United States, particularly in Minnesota, while the legal process moves forward. We also anticipate a full investigation that results in rightful accountability and actual justice.

We join our brother bishops to challenge everyone to come together, particularly with those who are from different cultural backgrounds. In this encounter, let us all seek greater understanding amongst God's people. So many people who historically have been disenfranchised continue to experience sadness and pain, yet they endeavour to persevere and remain people of great faith. We encourage our pastors to encounter and more authentically accompany them, listen to their stories, and learn from them, finding substantive ways to enact systemic change. Such encounters will start to bring about the needed transformation of our understanding of true life, charity, and justice in the United States. Hopefully, then there will be many voices speaking out and seeking healing against the evil of racism in our land.

As we anticipate the Solemnity of Pentecost this weekend, we call upon all Catholics to pray and work toward a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray for a supernatural desire to rid ourselves of the harm that bias and prejudice cause. We call upon Catholics to pray to the Holy Spirit for the Spirit of Truth to touch the hearts of all in the United States and to come down upon our criminal justice and law enforcement systems. Finally, let each and every Catholic, regardless of their ethnicity, beg God to heal our deeply broken view of each other, as well as our deeply broken society.'

Read the full list of signatories here: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39700>

UK BISHOPS CHALLENGE THE EVIL OF RACISM AND THE BRUTAL KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

3/6/2020: We stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the USA as they challenge the evil of racism and the brutal killing of George Floyd. As the US Bishops made clear: "we cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice." Systemic racism is embedded in our own society. The disproportionate harm suffered by BAME people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted profound inequalities, marginalisation and injustice here in the UK. The peaceful Black Lives Matter protests taking place in our towns and cities this week reflect the understandable anger that so many people feel about this. As Catholics we recognise that racism is an evil which must be opposed; we all have a responsibility for actively promoting racial justice. Whenever we ignore racism or dismiss BAME people's experience of it, we are complicit in violations of human dignity. We pray for God's help to overcome racism in all its forms and that we might protect everyone who suffers its consequences. We are all made in God's image.

Bishop Declan Lang, Lead Bishop for International Affairs; Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Racial Justice

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/bishops-solidarity-with-sisters-and-brothers-in-usa-over-evil-of-racism-and-killing-of-george-floyd/>

EPISCOPAL BISHOP ON PRESIDENT TRUMP: 'I AM OUTRAGED'

Michelle Boorstein and Sarah Pulliam Bailey *The Washington Post* 2/6/2020

The Right Rev. Mariann Budde, the Episcopal bishop of Washington, was seething. President Trump had just visited St. John's Episcopal Church, which sits across from the White House. It was a day after a fire was set in the basement of the historic building amid protests over the death of George Floyd in the custody of Minneapolis police. Before heading to the church, where presidents have worshiped since the days of James Madison, Trump gave a speech at the White House emphasizing the importance of law and order. Federal officers then used force to clear a large crowd of peaceful demonstrators from the street between the White House and the church, apparently so Trump could make the visit. "I am outraged," Budde said in a telephone interview a short time later, pausing between words to emphasize her anger as her voice slightly trembled. She said she had not been given any notice that Trump would be visiting the church and did not approve of the manner in which the area was secured for his appearance. "I am the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and was not given even a courtesy call." She added, "The President just used a Bible and one of the churches of my diocese as a backdrop for a message antithetical to the teachings of Jesus and everything that our church stands for. To do so, he sanctioned the use of tear gas by police officers in riot gear to clear the church yard.

The President did not pray when he came to St. John's; nor did he acknowledge the agony and sacred worth of people of colour in our nation who rightfully demand an end to 400 years of systemic racism and white supremacy in our country. We in the Diocese of Washington follow Jesus in His Way of Love. We aspire to be people of peace and advocates of justice. In no way do we support the President's incendiary response to a wounded, grieving nation. In faithfulness to our Saviour who lived a life of non-violence and sacrificial love, we align ourselves with those seeking justice for the death of George Floyd and countless others through the sacred act of peaceful protest."

In a written statement, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, head of the Episcopal denomination, accused Trump of using "a church building and the Holy Bible for partisan political purposes." "This was done in a time of deep hurt and pain in our country, and his action did nothing to help us or to heal us," Curry wrote. "The prophet Micah taught that the Lord requires us to 'do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God,'" he continued, calling on Trump and others in power to be moral. "For the sake of George Floyd, for all who have wrongly suffered, and for the sake of us all, we need leaders to help us to be 'one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.'"

https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/bishop-budde-trump-church/2020/06/01/20ca70f8-a466-11ea-b619-3f9133bbb482_story.html

EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT Rev. Gina Gerbasi: "Friends, I am ok, but I am, frankly shaken. I was at St. John's, Lafayette Square most of the afternoon, with fellow clergy and laypeople - and clergy from some other denominations too. We were passing out water and snacks, and helping the patio area at St. John's to be a place of respite and peace. All was well - with a few little tense moments - until about 6:15. By then, I had connected with the Black Lives Matter medic team. Around 6:15 or 6:30, the police started really pushing protestors off of H Street (the street between the church and Lafayette Park, and ultimately, the White House.) They started using tear gas and folks were running at us for eyewashes or water or wet paper towels. Suddenly, around 6:30, there was more tear gas, more concussion grenades, and I think I saw someone hit by a rubber bullet - he was grasping his stomach and there was a mark on his shirt. The police in their riot gear were literally walking onto the St. John's, Lafayette Square patio with metal shields, pushing people off the patio and driving them back. People were running at us as the police advanced toward us from the other side of the patio.

By the time I got back to my car, around 7, I was getting texts from people saying that Trump was outside St. John's, Lafayette Square. I literally COULD NOT believe it. WE WERE DRIVEN OFF OF THE PATIO AT ST. JOHN'S - a place of peace and respite and medical care throughout the day - SO THAT MAN COULD HAVE A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH!!! PEOPLE WERE HURT SO THAT HE COULD POSE IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH WITH A BIBLE! HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO STEP OVER THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES WE LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE WE WERE BEING TEAR GASSED!!!!

I am deeply shaken, not so much by the taste of tear gas and the bit of a cough I still have, but by the fact that that show of force was for a PHOTO OPPORTUNITY. The patio of St. John's, Lafayette Square had been HOLY GROUND today. A place of respite and laughter and water and granola bars and fruit snacks. But that man turned it into a BATTLE GROUND first, and a cheap political stunt second. I am DEEPLY OFFENDED on behalf of every protestor, every Christian, the people of St. John's, every decent person there, and the BLM medics who stayed with just a single box of supplies and a backpack, even when I got too scared and had to leave. I am ok. But I am now a force to be reckoned with."

POST SCRIPT- Someone on Twitter turned my post into a hashtag: We ARE #aforcetobereckonedwith

ARCHBISHOP GREGORY CONDEMNS PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO ST JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

3/6/2020: **Washington Archbishop Wilton D Gregory issued the following statement regarding the planned visit today from the president at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine:**

I find it baffling and reprehensible that any Catholic facility would allow itself to be so egregiously misused and manipulated in a fashion that violates our religious principles, which call us to defend the rights of all people even those with whom we might disagree. Saint Pope John Paul II was an ardent defender of the rights and dignity of human beings. His legacy bears vivid witness to that truth. He certainly would not condone the use of tear gas and other deterrents to silence, scatter or intimidate them for a photo opportunity in front of a place of worship and peace.

On Sunday, May 31, Archbishop Gregory released this statement on the Memorial Day death of George Floyd:

In astonishment, we are seeing the reactions of people across the United States as they express feelings of frustration, hurt, and anger in their cry for justice for George Floyd, whom we painfully watched being suffocated in front of our eyes on video in Minneapolis, Minnesota this past week.

Many of us remember similar incidents in our history that accompanied the Civil Rights Movement, where we repeatedly saw Black Americans viciously brutalized by police on television and in newspaper photos. Those historic moments helped to rouse our national conscience to the African American experience in the United States and now, in 2020, we tragically still see repeated incidents of police brutality against African Americans. We find ourselves in this national moment again with the awakening of our conscience by heartbreaking photos and video that clearly confirm that racism still endures in our country. On TV and in social media, we are observing an overflow of pain felt acutely in the African American community and shared by too many other communities.

Moments like this cause people of good will, who believe in the value, respect and dignity of every human life, to wonder if and how we can move on from here. The horror of George Floyd's death, like all acts of racism, hurts all of us in the Body of Christ since we are each made in the image and likeness of God, and deserve the dignity that comes with that existence. This incident reveals the virus of racism among us once again even as we continue to cope with the pandemic.

Bishop John Stowe from the Diocese of Kentucky and President of Pax Christi tweeted:

'As Trump visits the John Paul II National Shrine today, I hope someone proclaims today's Gospel (Mark 12:13-17) where Herodians and Pharisees are called out for their hypocrisy.

Archdiocese of Washington <https://adw.org/>
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39719>

PAX CHRISTI METRO NEW YORK: ERUPTION OF A NATION ON FIRE

STATEMENT 5/6/2020

"Beloved: Wait for and hasten the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to God's promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.... Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability." (2 Peter 3:12-13; 17)

This scripture passage comes from the first reading of the Mass for Tuesday of the Ninth Week of Ordinary Time, this year June 2nd, 2020. How prophetic! It certainly seems that the United States of America is on fire right now, figuratively and literally. It is on fire from racism and the unwarranted murders of innocent lives like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmad Arbery. It is on fire from anger and frustration over centuries of bigotry and discrimination. It is on fire from economic injustice, environmental injustice, and all systemic injustices. It is on fire from fear and hatred, ignorance and division. It is on fire from selfishness and greed. It is on fire from arrogance and indifference. It is on fire from looting and arson. It is on fire from loss of lives and loss of livelihoods. It is on fire from a refusal to accept responsibility. It is on fire from an unwillingness to do the hard and time-consuming work of doing justice and building peace.

But out of the ashes can come new heavens and a new earth. We see these sprouting all across the country. We see them in peaceful protests. We see them in people reaching out across ages and generations, across sexes and sexual orientations, across races and religions, across economic classes and political persuasions. We see them in people standing together to block attacks and protect property. We see them in police taking a knee and joining marches. We see them in neighbours gathering to clean up broken glass and to repair damaged and destroyed businesses. We hear them in voices crying out for understanding and compassion.

We as Pax Christi Metro New York condemn the violence and insist that its provocateurs acknowledge their incendiary behaviour and make reparations for their crimes. We know that violence only begets more violence. The particular violence we are witnessing strives to divide and defame those who have legitimate grievances against a history of injustices. It is opportunistic and counterproductive. We need to defuse racism, not fuel it. We need to end false justification for vengeance and the perpetuation of suspicion and turmoil. We call for a period of truth-sharing, which can only happen with open hearts and minds and with sincere listening to one another. We need the guilty to repent of their sins against humanity. Ultimately, we need justice that defies prejudice and reconciliation that lasts. Let us unite to put out the fires and to create new heavens and a new earth. And let us start NOW!

Pax Christi Metro New York www.nypaxchristi.org/ <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39742>

See also: Pax Christi USA Statement on the death of George Floyd <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39682>

A CRITICAL MASS OF AMERICANS COMES TO TERMS WITH THE TRUTH

Is there finally consciousness that law enforcement officers too often serve white privilege, not justice?

Diane Roberts 1/6/2020: In spring of 2018, Sacramento, California police saw 23-year-old Stephon Clark standing in his grandmother's back garden with what they believed was a gun. They opened fire. After they killed him, they discovered he was actually holding a mobile phone. Earlier this year, a former cop called Gregory McMichael grabbed his shotgun and jumped in his pick-up truck with his son Travis to chase down Ahmaud Arbery, a young black man out jogging in Brunswick, Georgia. Arbery, shot three times, bled to death. In each instance there were local demonstrations, demands for greater police accountability, and official pledges of improvement. Most Americans tutted, shrugged, then went about their business. Black lives matter, sure, but those guys must have been doing something wrong: otherwise, why would they get themselves killed? In Clark's case, the Sacramento district attorney declined to bring charges. In Arbery's, three men have been arrested and charged with murder. The difference? In Arbery's case there was a video.

Now something has changed. Pretty much every living soul has watched the video of a Minneapolis cop with his knee on George Floyd's neck, grinding his face into the pavement as Floyd pleads, cries, and dies. He's not the first black man to die on camera: we've all seen it many times before. There was Floyd's fellow Minnesotan Philando Castile, shot by police in front of his girlfriend and her four-year-old child and Eric Garner, put in a chokehold by an NYPD officer who ignored Garner gasping, "I can't breathe." But this time it feels different, as if a wire worn thin over too many years finally broke: as if a critical mass of Americans finally realised that too many of our police equate dark skin with criminality and violence. Many of us are just now coming to the truth that law enforcement officers too often serve white privilege and white property, not justice.

Perhaps three and a half years of Donald Trump's race-baiting presidency is raising the national consciousness. The white men now charged with the murder of Arbery claimed he looked like somebody who might have robbed a local construction site. That's code: he was a black guy in a mostly white space. An intruder.

The white woman who tried to weaponise the police against a black bird-watcher who told her to leash her out-of-control dog in Central Park. She shouted into her phone: "an African-American man is threatening my life!" Behind her lay 400 years of American history in which a white woman would always be seen as the victim and a black man the aggressor. Christian Cooper (no relation to his accuser Amy Cooper), the black birder, filmed the whole thing. He's alive; she got fired from her Wall Street job — a rare instance of justice. Nonetheless, in America you can be killed for driving while black, jogging while black, shopping while black, even sleeping while black. In March, Breonna Taylor, a medical technician in Louisville, Kentucky, was killed in her own bed by police using a battering ram to break into her home. In normal times, back before we started hoarding hand-sanitiser and loo roll, if some atrocity — a school shooting, a terrorist bombing, a terrible storm — occurred, Americans could be certain their government would, at minimum, try to calm things down.

George W Bush, rarely celebrated for his eloquence, won bi-partisan praise for his speech after al-Qaeda attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre. When a white supremacist murdered nine black parishioners in a Charleston church, President Barack Obama sang "*Amazing Grace*" and spoke of forgiveness and love. A few days ago, Trump managed to express sympathy for Floyd's family, but then tweeted he'd be prepared to send in the army to quell American citizens, called protestors "thugs," and promised "when the looting starts, the shooting starts." Trump likes to boast that he single-handedly brought black unemployment numbers to the lowest rate ever, but most African-Americans seem unmoved. Trump built his political career signalling to white "America Firsters" that their culture was in danger from people of colour, whether Mexican "rapists" or black "thugs." Trump's property company was once sued by the federal government for refusing to rent to African Americans.

When neo-Nazis rampaged in Virginia, he remarked that there were fine people on both sides, and when white nationalist militias invaded the capitol building in Michigan, armed with assault rifles to demand the state be opened back up, pandemic be damned, he tweeted at Michigan's (female, Democratic) governor that she should "make a deal" with these "very good people."

Trump has not called any of those protesting police racism "fine" or "very good" people. He knows his voters are terrified at the sight of young, angry marchers, black, white, Latino, Asian, gay, straight, male, and female shouting at cops in every corner of the land, and they want them silenced. Trump merely threatens, telling protestors massed outside the White House on Saturday, they'd better back off or be met by "the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons."

Barring a few extremists, nobody welcomes violence. But some might argue peaceful protest hasn't brought meaningful change. In 1967, Martin Luther King called riots "the language of the unheard." If only Trump would shut up and listen. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/world/a-critical-mass-of-americans-comes-to-terms-with-the-truth-george-floyd-donald-trump>

Read also: OPINION: TRUMP'S AMERICAN DYSTOPIA HAS REACHED A NEW AND OMINOUS CLIFF by former CNN producer and world affairs columnist Frida Ghitis 1/6/2020: <https://apple.news/AKI7SUA0bQUquXKMBobHliw>
WHEN WILL THE MONSTROUS BECOME UNACCEPTABLE? by Sojourners' editor Jim Wallis

<https://sojo.net/articles/when-will-monstrous-become-unacceptable>

THE ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT by Fr. Bryan N. Massingale, theology professor at Fordham University in New York and author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/assumptions-white-privilege-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>

NEARLY 30 YEARS AFTER THE RODNEY KING BEATING NOTHING MUCH HAS CHANGED by Scottish journalist Gavin Esler <https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/opinion/nearly-30-years-after-the-rodney-king-beating-nothing-much-has-changed/31/05/>

VIEWPOINT: US MUST CONFRONT ITS ORIGINAL SIN TO MOVE FORWARD

Barrett Holmes Pitner 3/6/2020: Following the death of George Floyd while under arrest, protests have consumed America and onlookers have wondered how one of the most powerful countries in the world could descend into such chaos.

Despite being defined by race, American society does not spend much time analysing the history of our racial divisions, and America prefers to believe in the inevitable progression towards racial equality. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 fed into this narrative of progress, but Donald Trump's presidential victory in 2016 was seen as a step backwards, coming after a campaign with a slogan that championed America's divisive past as a form of progress.

Floyd's death now appears to be the tipping point for an exhausted, racially divided nation still in the throes of the coronavirus pandemic and the economic cost that followed. Floyd's cries of "I can't breathe" echoed the cries of Eric Garner, who was choked by police on a New York City sidewalk in 2014. Floyd's words reminded Americans of the oppressive past we work to forget regardless of whether it is six years ago, 60 years ago, the 1860s, or 1619 when some of the first slaves arrived in America.

To a large extent, America's neglect of the past and belief in progress has left many Americans unaware of the severity and scope of our racial tensions, and as a result many Americans lack the words to articulate our current turmoil. Recently, I have used the word ethnocide meaning "the destruction of culture while keeping the people" to describe America's past and present racial tensions, and this language also helps articulate the uniqueness of America's race problem.

In 1941, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew and distinguished lawyer, immigrated to the United States as he fled the Nazis. While in America he implored the American government to stop the Nazis from killing his people, and as his words fell on deaf ears, he realized he needed to create a new word to describe the unique horror befalling his people. In 1944, Lemkin coined the words genocide and ethnocide. Lemkin intended for the words to be interchangeable but over time they diverged. Genocide became the destruction of a people and their culture, and this word radically changed the world for the better. Ethnocide became the destruction of culture while keeping the people, and has been ignored for decades. Recently, ethnocide has been used to describe the plight of indigenous people against colonization, but regarding America, ethnocide also pertains to the transatlantic slave trade and the founding of the nation.

From the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, European colonisers destroyed the culture of African people, but kept their bodies in order to create the chattel slavery system that became the economic and social foundation of the United States. Colonisers prevented Africans from speaking their languages and practising their religions. Tribal and familial bonds were broken, and African people could no longer identify as Igbo, Yoruba, and Malian. Instead de-cultured names such as nigger, negro, coloured, and black were stamped upon African people.

Additionally, Europeans identified themselves as white, and in the United States the one-drop rule was created to sustain that division. One drop of black or African blood meant that a person could not be white. In America, whiteness became a zero-sum identity that was maintained by systemic racial division. Interracial marriage was still illegal in much of America until the *Loving vs Virginia* decision in 1967.

From colonisation to the formation of the United States, America has created countless laws and policies to sustain the racial division between blacks and whites forged by ethnocide. These American norms, extending to housing, education, employment, healthcare, law enforcement and environmental protections including clean drinking water, have disproportionately harmed African Americans and other communities of colour in order to sustain racial division and white dominance.

George Floyd's murder represents a continuation of the systemic criminalisation and oppression of black life in America that has always been the American norm dating back to Jim Crow, segregation (which means apartheid), and slavery.

When the Confederacy, the collection of American slave-holding states in the South, seceded from the United States, they launched the Civil War to defend the immoral institution of slavery. After losing the Civil War, these states were readmitted back into the United States. To this day, many Americans, and especially America hate groups, still celebrate Confederate soldiers and politicians as heroes, and there are monuments and memorials dedicated to them across America. Despite the American South losing the Civil War in 1865, American president Andrew Johnson pardoned Confederate soldiers, and soon thereafter Confederate politicians won elected office in the newly-reunited America. The influence of former slave owners and Confederates contributed to erasing the rights that African Americans won in the 1860s including citizenship and the right to vote.

The political campaign to remove African American rights was called the Redeemers movement, and it was led by former slave-owners and Confederates, who wanted to redeem the South by returning it to the norms of chattel slavery. The Redeemers and "Make America Great Again" derive from America's oppressive, ethnocidal school of thought. The Redeemers were also assisted by American terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan that were made up of former Confederate soldiers. The KKK, and many other white supremacist groups, terrorised and lynched black Americans, and they also prevented them from voting to help ensure that Redeemer candidates won elected office. The terrorists became the government.

By the start of the 20th Century the Redeemers had succeeded in undoing the racial equality progress of the post-Civil War Reconstruction era, and now Jim Crow segregation became the norm of the American South. The Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy vs Ferguson* made "separate but equal" the new law of the land, and America again became a legal apartheid state. According to the Equal Justice Initiative's 2017 report *Lynching in America*, over 4,400 lynchings of African Americans occurred from 1877-1950. That is more than a lynching a week for 74 years.

During Jim Crow, America could not legally deny black people their humanity, but they could deny them the services that are afforded to human beings. Black people were denied education, housing, employment, and were expected to "know their place" as a perpetually subjugated people. Large prisons were erected on former plantations, and black people were arrested for minor crimes and given long prison sentences doing manual labour on the same land their ancestors were forced to work as enslaved people. As a result of Jim Crow, millions of African Americans fled the neo-slavery and terror of the South during the Great Migration, and racial tensions spread across America as other American cities did not welcome these domestic refugees. This is the same journey as the Underground Railroad, where prior to the Civil War enslaved African Americans escaped the South and sought refuge in Canada and the Northern parts of America. The civil rights movement of the 1960s effectively ended Jim Crow, and African Americans began reclaiming the rights, specifically voting rights and freedom of movement, they had previously won in the 1860s, but it is a long road to dismantle systemic and legalised racism and segregation.

Obama's election in 2008 was a monumental event in American society, but it did not magically erase the systemic racism woven into America's social fabric and the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin, 17, helped launch the Black Lives Matter movement to national attention. Trayvon was shot and killed by George Zimmerman as he walked home in his own neighbourhood because Zimmerman thought he looked suspicious. Martin was unarmed. Zimmerman pled self-defence and a jury found him not guilty of second-degree murder and manslaughter. Trayvon was one of countless African Americans killed by America's ethnocidal society that sanctions terror from both the government and civilians. The unjust killing of black people by the police and racist vigilantes remained the norm during Obama's presidency, but now the black community could record and document these crimes on video, and had a president who would defend them. Obama famously said: "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon."

The emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and other protests under Obama occurred because black Americans were confident that the White House would listen to their cries of "I can't breathe" and make American society finally equitable and just. Under Trump those cries have fallen on deaf ears and tensions have escalated.

America has much work to do to fix our racial tensions because our divisions and inequality are forged in our ethnocidal roots. We need to reform the policing of a nation nearly the size of a continent with over 300 million people, but we also need to make our education, healthcare, and housing systems, and every facet of our democracy more equitable. Additionally, truth and reconciliation commissions, a national apology, reparations, holding evildoers accountable, and other processes nations have used to heal after a genocide, the linguistic sibling of ethnocide, will help America change course and forge equality and justice. Also, America has rarely criminalised white supremacist hate and terror and instead has spent centuries normalising white terrorist groups, celebrating them as heroes, and letting them decide if their actions are evil or not. This is why the Confederacy is still celebrated today. Europe did not allow fascists and Nazis to determine if their actions were good or not, but America has always given this luxury to racist slave-owners and their generational apologists and offspring. This must change.

Rwanda, Germany, and South Africa have reckoned with their troubled past to make a better future, but America has long preferred to ignore the past, and proclaim the inevitability of progress. America today must define and confront the Original Sin of slavery, ethnocide, and the cultural destruction it has inflicted upon all Americans, past and present. Otherwise we will fail to make a better future, and will continue our regression.

• **Barrett Holmes Pitner is a writer, journalist and filmmaker focusing on race, culture and politics**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52912238>

NOW, SAY THEIR NAMES AT THE POLLS

John Pavlovitz 7/6/2020:

This week as I stood here in Raleigh inside a glorious mass of humanity moving through the streets with fists and signs and voices raised, I found my mind wandering. Even as I basked there in the radiant glow of disparate people assembling to celebrate black life and demand its defence, even as I joyfully gorged on the Tweets and photos streaming in from similar gatherings through the country, even as my tear-blurred eyes widened at the scale of the outpouring—I realized it could easily be for nothing, that it could all be a futile exercise. I looked around at the staggering beauty and had a sobering thought. It was the same thought I had witnessing the displays of solidarity in Philly and DC and New York City, and in small towns in Oregon and South Florida and Tennessee: ***I hope these people are registered to vote.***

Protests are powerful things. They are a necessary visual reminder that we are not alone. They help provide a sense of scale in dark days; to right size the threats that seem so towering. They burn away the myth that we are the only ones twisted inside and driven to sleeplessness and brought to our knees. They give us a chance to stand with a tribe of affinity as a tangible response to the things that collectively burden us. Protests are awe-inspiring and goosebump-inducing and breathtakingly cathartic moments—but protests don't vote. They can't craft legislation and they won't protect people in danger a month from now or a year from now or a decade from now. They won't jettison corrupt leaders from their well-fortified perches of power. They can't reach into the labyrinthine hallways and cloistered rooms where those charged with protecting us decide our fates. They can't tip the scales of our political process back toward decency.

Protests are indeed powerful things, but they can't hold a candle to votes. Protests can encourage imperiled people for a day. Votes can save them for a lifetime. These protests and marches and demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience can't be a landing pad, they have to be a launching pad. If the events of this week don't catalyze us into changing the political landscape, it will have been an exercise in self-medication; a temporary high that for a moment allows us some short escapism - but does nothing to alter the terrifying reality we find ourselves in and that others will find themselves in.

This week we spoke out against senseless violence and predatory politicians and toxic systems and ignorant bigotry and corrupt officers. We affirmed the value of black lives in a mighty and diverse chorus that has been steadily growing. We cheered and applauded and exhorted one another, and we cultivated hope together there on the same asphalt where young black men died. It was medicinal for weary souls starved for a little good news. And here in the afterglow of such clear and unmistakable goodness, the real work begins.

We need to register to vote. We need to register others to vote. We need to canvas neighbourhoods. We need to financially support political candidates committed to equality, diversity, and justice and to reforming law enforcement. We need to build social media groups and community organizations and interfaith partnerships, to be as focused over many months as we were for a few days. This is how we make Black Lives Matter. This is how we renovate the systems. This is how we protect our children. This is how we eject racist politicians. It's the same way we marginalize the bigots, protect Muslims, embrace refugees, welcome immigrants. It's how we collapse the gun lobby and dismantle the fake news of Fox News. It's how we protect students and teachers from terror, how we stand with bullied gay teenagers, how we care for poor families and sick children and elderly couples. This is how we help America be its best self. This is the way we legislate in ways that perpetuate the protests. These days have been born by the premature and violent deaths of people of colour, human beings who deserve to be here but are not. They need us to do more than remember and praise and applaud them. They need us to do more than turn their images into icons we wear on our chests, and their names into brief hashtag decorations. They need us to enter the spaces they cannot, and to be as passionate and persistent and courageous as we've tried to be this week. They need us to show up and cast votes on behalf of them. We cannot let these students down by letting this moment remain simply a moment.

We The People of every colour and religious tradition, every political affiliation and gender identity, every nation of origin and sexual orientation—we need to protest now and we need to not stop. We need to protest all the way to November, all the way to the polls; to speak there with one massive, unified, unwavering voice. We need to say their names there: the names of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and Tamir Rice and Eric Garner and Philando Castile and Trayvon Martin. We need to declare the value of a black life there. We need to demand justice there. We need to make our thunderous presence felt there. If we do that we'll look back on these days, not as merely a powerful but fleeting moment of defiance and celebration, but as the beginning of an enduring season of true revolution.

<https://johnpavlovitz.com/2020/06/07/now-say-their-names-at-the-polls/>

• **John Pavlovitz** is a writer, pastor, and activist from North Carolina

CAMPAIGN CALLS ON UK TO END SALE OF EQUIPMENT TO US POLICE

Source: CAAT 3/6/2020: Campaigners have called on the UK government to end the sale of repressive equipment to police forces across the US and investigate if any of it has been used against protesters. Over recent days there have been appalling scenes of police violence and repression following protests against the killing of George Floyd.

The US is one of the world's largest buyers of UK arms, with almost £6 billion worth of arms licensed since 2010. This includes all weapons categories. The end user is not published, so no distinction is made between the military and police, but it is likely that some will be police forces. Since 2010 the UK has licensed £18 million worth of ammunition. Categories that are particularly likely to be for police use include smoke/pyrotechnic ammunition, smoke canisters, crowd control ammunition, CS hand grenades, tear gas/irritant ammunition, tear gas/riot control agents etc. The sales of tear gas and 'crowd control ammunition' was done via the opaque and secretive Open Licence system. This means that the value of exports is not published and nor is the end user. These licences allow for an unlimited volume of equipment to be exported over a fixed-term period (usually five years). In total, three licences were approved for this equipment. The UK has licensed £800 million worth of small arms to the US since 2010, a proportion of which is likely to be for police forces. This includes assault rifles, sniper rifles and other guns. Since 2010 the UK has licensed £2 million worth of Security and para-military police goods, this includes anti-riot shields and other equipment that could be for police use. According to the consolidated criteria for arms exports "The government will not grant a licence if there is a clear risk that the items might be used for internal repression."

Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade said: "The brutal and racist police violence we have seen over recent days has been absolutely appalling, and so has the reckless and totally irresponsible escalation from the President and his colleagues. These arms sales should never have been allowed and the government must ensure that they do not happen again. This kind of equipment is always repressive, and it can be deadly. There must be an urgent investigation into what weapons have gone over and if any of them have been used against protesters. Silence in the face of such injustice is compliance. We are always being told about the great relationship and influence that Boris Johnson has with the White House. If that is the case, then he must use it to condemn the violence in the strongest terms and call for widespread and structural change. Police violence and racism is not new, and nor is it exclusive to the US. Many of these issues will be familiar to people in the UK and beyond. It is time for police forces and politicians from across the world to consider their own roles and the systematic inequality that they are responsible for."

www.caat.org.uk/

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39724>

GEORGE FLOYD IS OUR BROTHER, OUR FATHER, OUR COUSIN, OUR FRIEND

Neil Charlton 1/6/2020: Last Sunday my church celebrated Pentecost. Over 50 different nationalities are represented within our fellowship in Streatham, South London. It was great to see an online montage of many of our members dressed in their national attire. It's a beautiful reminder of the multicultural birth of the church. The Pentecost festival saw Jerusalem packed with "devout pilgrims from all over the world" and many foreign-language speakers (Acts 2:9-11, MSG). The narrative clearly suggests that God specifically intended for the good news of Jesus Christ to be for all nations, all people and all cultures.

Fast forward to London today. We too share the joys (and pains) of living in one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world. There are over 300 different languages spoken at home in London.[1] I was born and raised in North London to Jamaican parents and now live in South London. For most people London and the UK as is a wonderful place to live. But for some, it's not all good news.

Employment rates are the lowest for ethnic minorities across the country.[2] Education attainment for ethnic minorities is the lowest in primary and secondary schools.[3] Ethnic minorities are under-represented at senior levels across the public sector.[4] There is greater dis-proportionality in the number of Black people in prisons in the UK than in the U.S.[5] Black people are more than four times more likely to die of Covid-19 than the white British population.[6] BAME people are fined disproportionately than the rest of the population under Coronavirus laws (whilst others who break the rules are excused).[7]

Time doesn't permit me to convey all the verbal and non-verbal slights and indignities that I and other ethnic minorities have experienced while living in the UK (including within churches!). Nor have I even begun to touch on the enduring psychological and economical legacy of slavery that Britain participated in and received the financial benefits of for over 500 years. It may sound uncomfortable to hear, but these historical injustices have a direct bearing on contemporary ethnic inequalities. God is not pleased with those who continue to accept the injustice of others (Isaiah 10:1-3). God is deeply concerned for the spiritual and social well-being of suffering ethnicities (Acts 6:1-7). Are you?

On July 6, 2016, in Minnesota, Philando Castile, a 32-year-old African American man, was stopped while driving with his partner and four-year-old daughter. While seeking to fully comply with the police from within the car he was fatally shot five times by an officer. His partner and four-year-old daughter witnessed the whole thing. The officer was charged but was later acquitted. Kehinde Andrews wrote: "To understand the depth of feeling in Britain to slayings in America is to grasp the connections of blackness, which cannot be contained by national borders. When we see Philando Castile bleeding out we are not looking at a distant stranger. We are seeing our brother, our father, our cousin, our friend. His killing happened to black communities in Britain as much as it did to those in Minnesota."

THIS is the reason why the death of George Floyd has upset and angered so many people around the world. Because this is far from just an American problem. Sarah Reed, Mark Duggan, Sheku Bayoh, Christopher Alder, Leon Patterson, Cynthia Jarrett, Sean Rigg. These are just a few of many black people who have died in police custody in the UK in recent decades. Perhaps you haven't even heard of half these names because the injustice was not caught on camera. Contrary to what some may believe, racism in all its guises is alive and kicking here in the UK.

Be honest: if you were to observe any form of racial inequality happening to someone would you see them as a possible "brother", "father", "cousin", "friend"? Or would they be more a "distant stranger"? Would you speak up and help them, or would you stand by and just watch like the complicit officer standing next to George Floyd? God calls us to be his body (1 Corinthians 12:27), to be His hands, His feet, and His mouth. Which means seeking and serving the spiritual and social well-being of all people, but especially those who are consistently suffering the most. If God is deeply concerned for the well-being of suffering ethnicities shouldn't we be too? When needed, we must speak up on their behalf.

Thinking of yourself as 'not racist' is not enough. "One either allows racial inequities to persevere....or confronts racial inequities...there is no in-between safe space of 'not racist.'"[8] White middle-class Britons are in a privileged position to help ethnic minorities in the UK since the "burden of racism and racial inequality does not lie on the shoulders of people of colour." [9] It lays on the shoulders of those who observe it but do nothing about it. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it." We must actively and openly challenge racial inequities whenever and wherever we find them. This is allowing the good news of God to affect others through us. We should pray and study the justice in God's word. But we also need to be people of action. And to end, I want to direct you to an excellent resource which summarises my thoughts far better than I ever could: **Why we must be actively anti-racist** <https://www.brightzine.co/news/2020/5/30/why-we-must-be-actively-anti-racist>

• **Neil Charlton is the Youth Worker at Streatham Baptist Church**

<https://gracetruth.blog/2020/06/01/george-floyd-is-our-brother-our-father-our-cousin-our-friend-by-neil-charlton/>

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_London

[2] <https://www.obv.org.uk/number-10-statement-race-disparity-unit>

[3] <https://www.obv.org.uk/number-10-statement-race-disparity-unit>

[4] <https://www.obv.org.uk/number-10-statement-race-disparity-unit>

[5] *The Lammy Review*, 2017

[6] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/27/call-for-coronavirus-uk-race-equality-strategy>

[7] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/26/bame-people-fined-more-than-white-population-under-coronavirus-laws>

[8] Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*

PAX CHRISTI AGM HEARS CALL FOR 'A REVOLUTIONARY AGENDA'

Ellen Teague 7/6/2020: Pax Christi's peace education outreach in schools, work with the Vatican on nonviolence initiatives, lobbying for UK expenditure on Trident nuclear weapons to be redeployed, and highlighting apartheid policies in Israel/Palestine were among the areas of work highlighted at the AGM of Pax Christi England and Wales yesterday. More than 60 Pax Christi members attended by zoom from at least 10 dioceses in England and Wales, and from Pax Christi Scotland, the Catholic Workers, Drone Wars UK and the National Justice and Peace Network.

Retiring chair Holly Ball called for a "revolutionary agenda for the post pandemic world". Pax Christi would be further engaging with the climate crisis, sustainable energy and mass extinction, as they relate to peace, along the lines suggested in *Laudato Si'*. "This is not an era of change but a change of era" she said and concluded with "Let the revolution begin". Pax Christi's National President, Archbishop Malcolm McMahon of Liverpool, thanked Holly for her four years of service as chair and led a zoom clap. "She has put her heart and soul into Pax Christi, offering inspiring leadership and great sensitivity to the organisation" he said.

She is succeeded as chair by Ann Farr, who has a special interest in advocacy for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel after working for three months in the West Bank as an Ecumenical Accompanier on a World Council of Churches Programme. She has served on the Board of Pax Christi International for six years and is a member of its International Working Group on Palestine and Israel.

Pax Christi's Director in England and Wales, Theresa Alessandro, expressed appreciation for Archbishop Malcolm "who has issued two statements over the past year in support of our work". There was one last November endorsing Pope Francis' opposition to nuclear weapons, and another last month supporting a new interfaith group report looking into divesting from financial institutions which support the production of nuclear weapons. The gathering of many members at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall for a Liturgy of Repentance on Ash Wednesday was the last before restrictions on assembling came into force. Pax Christi's small staff has run popular zoom liturgies during lockdown which have always attracted more than 50 people and have been very much appreciated.

Income is a concern with donations to the Pax Christi Peace Sunday collection falling in January 2019. It is hoped that the organisation's membership of around 1,000 people can be boosted by at least 75 in the 75th anniversary year of the movement. Legacies are up and there was gratitude to people who remember Pax Christi in their wills. Pax Christi England and Wales reaches more than 3,000 people on twitter and a new Instagram account already has more than 100 followers.

Aisling Griffin, Schools and Youth Officer, spoke of her outreach work over the past year, although it has been severely disrupted since March. She visited 21 schools across eight dioceses and delivered 80 sessions, on topics including '*Faith and Justice*', '*Work of Pax Christi*', '*Religion and Conflict*' and '*Conflict and Refugees*'. There have been inset sessions for teachers, a Million Minutes' workshop and Clifton Diocese summer camps in 2019. Two parishes asked for Confirmation sessions. A Peace Education Day was held at a school in Birmingham and she has worked with SPARK Social Justice in Leeds Diocese.

Video messages to the AGM were sent in by international partners, including Pax Christi in Germany, Japan and Russia. Pax Christi USA appreciated being part of "this worldwide movement for peace which can change the world through peace and reconciliation". Pax Christi Australia named Pat Gaffney, Ann Farr and Bruce Kent as inspirational people in the movement from England. Valerie Flessati's overview of Pax Christi's history over 75 years, also underlined the international nature of the movement. The next five-yearly international gathering of Pax Christi International is scheduled for Hiroshima, Japan, in May 2021, after being postponed this year.

During the concluding liturgy, spontaneous prayers were said by participants for people in refugee camps across Europe suffering starvation and neglect, people with mental health problems during lockdown, George Floyd and all people suffering racial discrimination. There was a prayer, "that we are better agents in passing on the fire and inspiration behind the Pax Christi movement", acknowledging that we are better peacemakers "because we are part of the Pax Christi community". Reflecting on the first zoom AGM, which included efficient polling on resolutions on-line, many felt it has gone very well. One couple from Leeds said they would not travel to London for an AGM and very much appreciated involvement by zoom. <https://paxchristi.org.uk/> <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39758>

KAIROS CONFERENCE 2020

We have taken the difficult but important decision to change our 2020 conference and AGM from a face-to-face event to an on-line one. We are delighted to announce that despite having to make these changes, we have an exciting line-up for our online event, which will take place on the same day, Saturday 19 September, from 10am - 12 noon. **Joining us from our two key partners: Sabeel Jerusalem and Kairos Palestine, will be Omar Haramy and Rev Dr Munther Isaac. We will be exploring the themes of the conference with these speakers, including sessions on 'You cannot serve God and the occupation' and 'Antisemitism, Israel and Palestine'**. There will be interactive Q+A sessions, and live worship led by Amos Trust founder Garth Hewitt. Rounding up our on-line conference will be the chance to take part in a joint, online action. We are currently working on the technology we will use for this fantastic event, but that doesn't need to stop you from booking your 'virtual' place. We will be using a platform that will be easy to use and one that most of us are likely to be familiar with already. Please register your interest in this event here: <http://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/sabeel-kairos-conference-2020/> Please contact advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk if you have any questions.

COVID PENTECOST

I

For fifty days they watched that door, unsure, uneasily cocooned,
protected by its bulk and bolts yet startled by each passing sound,
lest soldiers come and haul them out into the unforgiving daylight of the street
and thence into the even less-forgiving darkness of a priestly or imperial cell.

For fifty days their bodies stayed unstirred, it seems, by
empty grave-space, visions, visitations;
wounds seen, voice heard, hearts that burned along the road;
bread blessed, broken, shared; final recognition that "It is the Lord!"
And so they watched that door in fear for fifty days,
powerless until the Dove descending clatter round them
singeing brows, inflaming hearts and spilling onto Pentecostal streets
their lives transformed and lips uncorked to pour New Wine.

II

For eighty days and more, we've sat behind our Covid-closed doors,
fearful not of brutal soldiers' spears
but of the tiniest viral barb borne, maybe,
on our loved-ones' love-filled breath;

Fearful of those normal daily human things:
caress, hug, handshake and the rest,
lest broken lungs deny us life-sustaining breath
and ventilated coma meld into the kiss of death.

We know too well the wounded Christ
and understand the first disciples' fears –
but wonder: What shape can a resurrected life have here,
when will our Pentecostal moment of unlocking come
and where's the Paraclete this year?

III

The healing Spirit hovers still, for sure,
in quietened skies, in cleaner air,
in manic schedules voided
and in lives made strangely still –

Still enough to hear the rhythms of each others' hearts
and to dream 'new normal' where, maybe, we'll grasp at last
the dignity and value of the humble folk who keep us safe –
porters, cleaners, carers and the rest;
Still enough to heed
the invitation to us all to start afresh
and learn to tread more lightly
on God's earth.

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FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST RECOVERY

5/5/2020: **350.org** has written an open letter calling for a global coronavirus response that leads us towards a fairer and more sustainable society. **See the letter below, and add your name here:** <https://350.org/just-recovery/>

COVID-19 pandemic demands swift and unprecedented action from national governments and the international community. Choices being made right now will shape our society for years, if not decades to come. As decision-makers take steps to ensure immediate relief and long-term recovery, it is imperative that they consider the interrelated crises of wealth inequality, racism, and ecological decline – notably the climate crisis, which were in place long before COVID-19, and now risk being intensified. This is a time to be decisive in saving lives, and bold in charting a path to a genuinely healthier and more equitable future through a Just Recovery. We, the undersigned organisations, call for a global response to COVID-19 to contribute to a just recovery. Responses at every level must uphold these five principles:

1. Put people's health first, no exceptions. Resource health services everywhere; ensure access for all. **2. Provide economic relief directly to the people.** Focus on people and workers – particularly those marginalised in existing systems – our short-term needs and long-term conditions. **3. Help workers and communities, not corporate executives.**

Assistance directed at specific industries must be channelled to communities and workers, not shareholders or corporate executives, and never to corporations that don't commit to tackling the climate crisis. **4. Create resilience for future crises.** We must create millions of decent jobs that will help power a just recovery and transition for workers and communities to the zero-carbon future we need. **5. Build solidarity and community across borders – don't empower authoritarians.** Transfer technology and finance to lower-income countries and communities to allow them to respond using these principles and share solutions across borders and communities. Do not use the crisis as an excuse to trample on human rights, civil liberties, and democracy. <https://joyinenough.org/2020/05/05/five-principles-for-a-just-recovery/>

DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY

Sr Margaret Atkins: When historians look back in a hundred years time, they won't say that COVID changed the world. But they will say that the world changed. Quite apart from pandemics, we were already on the cusp of a paradigm shift, comparable to the time of the Reformation or the Enlightenment. Historians will look back and see the information revolution, wars in the Middle East from 9/11 onwards, the economic crises in 2008 and beyond, the forest fires and the floods, the end of the one-off cheap oil bonanza, the mass migration and the refugees. They will note the ever-increasing pressure on the natural world and the increasing gap between rich and poor. And they will (if there are still historians around to do such things) identify the moment in which it all changed - politics, economics, society, and our response to the planetary crisis. The question is: what will that moment look like? Will it be a moment of collective wisdom, leading to careful, compassionate, creative, peaceful and far-sighted changes, or will it be an epoch of madness, leading to ever greater polarisation, to catastrophe and to unprecedented suffering?

If 2020 is remembered for anything, perhaps it will be as the year when the human race was forced to take a collective breath, and, in the stillness, began to pay attention to what it was doing to itself. Or so we can hope.

The old paradigm, rooted in the Enlightenment and the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions, had come to be dominated by centralisation and by polarisation. The two were connected. Its energy provision, manufacture and information depended on large-scale production and distribution, and political power followed. This led to the accumulation of wealth and influence by small groups, and by organised masses in response to this. It was the age of Right or Left, of multi-nationals and state provision. It had become so much scientific as scientistic: the fiction of Rational Economic Man dominated policy, and what mattered was only what could be measured. Both big business and the state saw themselves as agents only, and treated ordinary people and small communities primarily as passive. The old paradigm had achieved great material advances, and transformed our societies. This had always been achieved at some cost, and now the costs, and the risks, were becoming very great. The costs and the risks were massively multiplied in the twentieth century by the age of cheap oil, which was squandered to create a luxurious lifestyle for the minority, and produce the unsustainable and unadaptable infrastructure to support this (see James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency*).

The relics of that age still weigh upon us, and still shape our policies. But things are moving, in the provinces and on the margins, and from below, often through networks that cross traditional boundaries. What I call the '*Undergrowth Movement*' has been springing up, little noticed until recently (see e.g. Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest*). COVID has brought it into the public eye, but its shoots have been growing for thirty years and more. Undergrowth is organic, flexible, spontaneous, evolutionary, creative, democratic, networked, rooted in the local but embracing the global. It is self-consciously ethical, with ecological health, wisdom, justice and compassion as its watch-words. It makes relationships central. It is exactly, one might argue, the eco-system we need to sustain us through this time of multiple global crises.

We are not short of effective new ideas for how to do things: they are spilling out all over the internet (TED talks are a mine for them). In many cases, we do not even need to invent projects and practices from scratch: somewhere in the world, an innovative group is already doing what we need on a small scale. What is it then that we need?

We need the right goals, and we need general agreement about them. For that, we need a shared vision of what it is to be human.

We need flourishing communities, and the human virtues that sustain these. For that, we need strong, healthy families and neighbourhoods.

We need a healthy environment, without which we cannot live at all. Specifically, we need to learn to provide our own food, shelter and energy needs while protecting the climate and fostering biodiversity.

We need wise, humble, and imaginative leadership, which enables, connects and supports rather than commanding and controlling; a leadership of service rather than ambition. We need to recognise the gifts and contributions of every person and of every small group in our society. We need to connect states, big business, small enterprises, volunteers, families, schools, charities and not-for-profit organisations in a spirit of collaboration and complementarity rather than competition.

We need to commit ourselves to act decisively, courageously, imaginatively and with self-sacrifice in order to tackle the multiple crises that face us.

We need honesty, truthfulness and trust as the basis for all of the above.

In other words, we need politics and economics to be grounded in ethics, and an ethics that bears remarkable resemblances to the Christian tradition, and particularly to that of Catholic Social Thought. Specifically, we need faith and hope as well as charity, for there is no strong reason to think that our collective efforts will be successful, unless they are handed over to and guided by Providence.

Where, then, is the good news from the COVID-19 crisis?

COVID has made us ask what really matters in our lives, and what we are prepared to sacrifice to achieve that. We have come face-to-face with our vulnerability and our mortality, and in our suffering, we have learnt more about the meaning of love.

COVID has sent us back to our families and to our local communities. Parents and children have had time to play and to study together. We have rediscovered our neighbours. We have re-learned the power of volunteering.

COVID has given us cleaner air, cleaner water and a quieter world. It has allowed us to slow down and notice the plants, birds, insects and animals on our doorstep. It has given us the chance to measure the effects of 'business as usual', and taught us both the benefits and the damage of human intervention in the ecology. It has forced us to ask what all our travel is for, and how far we really need it. It has given us the experience of learning and working from home.

COVID has given us examples of wise, decisive, selfless and energetic leadership. It has also revealed many mistakes and limitations from which we can learn much, mistakes by over-confident leaders who cared too little for the truth, and the limitations of top-heavy centralised organisations. It has also taught us who the key-worker really are, and how little we might value them in ordinary times (see Rutger Bregman, *Utopia for Realists*, ch. 7, 'Why it doesn't pay to be a banker'). It has seen groups from all sectors of society collaborating to an unprecedented degree.

COVID has shown us how decisively we can act, how many courageous and hard-working people there are in our society, how much we are prepared to sacrifice to face a serious threat. It has shown us thousands of examples of flexible and imaginative reinvention, from fashion designers making scrubs and school-children making visors to sports stadia becoming hospitals and waitresses picking fruit.

COVID has reminded us where bluff, bluster, false news and misplaced optimism will lead, and of the fundamental importance of facing scientific facts, and of honesty and openness about complexity and about hard choices.

COVID has allowed us to pray, as individuals and communities, publicly, openly, without embarrassment. We have been forced to learn humility, to learn the limitations of our capacity to fix our own messes with nothing but our own resources.

Above all COVID has offered us a time to rethink (and 'repent', of course, means 'rethink'). After this, we will have in some way to reinvent our economy, and the daily life in which it is embedded. We can do so carelessly, sliding back into 'business as usual', and letting the usual entrenched interests invisibly control our collective decisions. Or we can do so intentionally, reverencing our humanity in its vulnerability and its majesty, embracing the hard choices we need to make about our goals and purposes, and welcoming the opportunity we have had to reflect and to repent, to face facts and to learn new things, to experiences different ways of living. The choice is ours, and that is both a gift and a responsibility.

'I call to heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and clinging to his voice' (Deuteronomy 30.19-20).

● **Sr Margaret Atkins is an Augustinian canoness from the community at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria.**

CHARITY OR JUSTICE? WE NEED BOTH

Pat Gaffney: Outside St Thomas' hospital in south London an artwork has been created of artificial flowers with the message I ♥ NHS. This captures the sentiments of so many who have been clapping on their doorsteps every Thursday, placing rainbows in their windows, acknowledging in personal messages their admiration and support for those who work in hospitals and care homes. An important human response. We have also seen a flourishing of fundraising activities for the NHS from individuals anxious to affirm the work and help meet short-falls in funding. Here lies the rub. The funding of the NHS is a matter of justice not charity. It is a 'national' project, a sort of contract between the state and the people of the country who have contributed to it through their taxes. Lack of proper investment over many years has led to the crisis we face now: scarcity of PPE, the over-extension of staff, the invisibility of the elderly in care homes and so on. So, good, ordinary people work to make up the short-fall. This reflects one aspect of catholic social action – the two feet of Christian service – one calls for social change, removing the causes of problems, the other offers direct service, helping to survive problems and crises. We need both.

I often look at issues through the lens of my work for peace. I cannot but help challenge the scandalous amounts of money spent in defence, arms, warfare which take money from projects such as the NHS and other great work such as care of the isolated elderly, undertaken so well by the Irish Chaplaincy. Last month marked Global Days of Action on Military Spending and invited people to think of where the global military spend of US\$1.8 trillion a year (in the UK US\$50 billion) might be better used. For me the answer is healthcare not warfare.

Such questions and choices are also a matter of faith. Years ago a SND sister whom I worked with would say, "A budget is the acid test of where our heart is"... or put another way, where our values lie. Informed by the Gospels and the teaching of the church we ask difficult questions and take positive actions to redress the balance when the reality and our values are out of kilter. In his homily a few Sundays ago Pope Francis said: "May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us: the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family! Let us learn from the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. It received mercy and lived with mercy: *"All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need"* (Acts 2:44-45). This is not some ideology: it is Christianity." <https://www.irishchaplancy.org.uk/charity-or-justice-we-need-both/>

● **Pat Gaffney is a volunteer with the Irish Chaplaincy**

BOOK REVIEW: *Illness, Disability and Caring*

Jill Segger 4/6/2020: Bernadette Meaden's book, *Illness, Disability and Caring* is the third in a study series *How the Bible Can Help Us Understand*, inspired by the Revised New Jerusalem Bible which was published in July 2019.

The book is short, but the chapter headings indicate its remarkable spiritual and moral range: *Radically inclusive love; Made in the image of God; Strength, weakness and the authority of suffering; Suffering; The gift and challenge of caring; Refraining from judgement: logs and splinters*. Points for discussion and further action are offered within each section, as are a wide variety of cultural resources across film, art, poetry, dance, drama, music, biography, fiction and documentaries. The spiritual threads which hold together the book's argument are strong but unobtrusive. Prayers are offered in each section and these are characterised by empathy and loving-kindness, whilst the illustrative scriptural passages are not only well chosen but are woven into something more than a supporting scaffold.

For those of us who are neither biblical scholars nor scriptural literalists, the challenging nature of the 'two-edged sword' may sometimes be difficult. The writer's honesty about her own struggle with some passages puts warm and living flesh on the bones of the book's structure. Her account of journeying with patient attentiveness through the account of Mary and Martha, and what she learned from it during her mother's last illness, is particularly moving. Here is a spirituality which is never didactic nor 'preachy'.

Writing for a programme of study and discussion is not one of a writer's easier tasks. The framework may not be one's own and the necessity of serving both group discussion and individual reflection is not always conducive to the flow of ideas. Meaden has met the challenge with warmth and rigour. Good writing almost always comes out of experience and the author's undramatic description of herself as living with a lifelong disability is worth quoting in full: "*I was born with a rare form of complex congenital heart disease, so have experienced some limitations and challenges in my life which I hope helps me to understand some of the issues explored in this book, but of course, every person is unique and every illness and disability affects people differently. Most areas of disability or illness are as unfamiliar to me as they are to anyone else who hasn't experienced them. So I make no claim to expertise on the issues explored in this book, or, indeed, on theology. What follows is very much a personal view, and simply offered as a starting point for thinking and discussion. The hope is that through such discussion, the knowledge and experiences available will be multiplied. Everybody will have something unique to contribute, and thus the discussions will certainly contain far more insight than the book.*" Knowing both the authority and the limitations of lived experience is the essence of 'authenticity' - a word more often used than reflected upon.

Illness and disability could affect anyone at any time - a possibility which many of us who are generally in good health may choose not to dwell upon. But it is this very unpredictability which should focus our thinking. The COVID-19 crisis has made everyone more vulnerable and some of the injustices and failures of support baked into our social security system and austerity-damaged public services are now having an impact on many for whom they were once distant and unthinkable.

Bernadette Meaden is well known as a writer on the social dimension of disability and long term sickness. It is unsurprising therefore, that she is so effective in exploring the framework of injustice with which those living with physical or mental difficulties have to contend and which too often excludes them from as full a participation as possible in the opportunities, relationships and experiences which make our lives worthwhile and fulfilling.

How government and individuals perceive the unique dignity of every person is the point on which society pivots. Is our centre of gravity to be the Divine economy of generosity or the narrow begrudgery of envy and suspicion? Shall we 'other' and therefore infantilise disabled people? Meaden's vivid realisation of the personality of the man born blind, whose healing is narrated in Chapter 9 of the Gospel of John, reminds us that the Iron Age had its own version of 'does he take sugar?' and that the sterile righteousness of those who prefer tidy orthodoxies over the messiness of love has a long history. Shall we hold in common - both practically and spiritually - the dignity of sick and disabled people and of their carers, as did the early Church, or shall we turn aside to easy excuses and the willed myopia of a protective self-interest?

Meaden cites the scriptural challenge from which no person of good faith may turn away: "*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, needing clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.*" Then the righteous will say to him in reply, "*Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, needing clothes and we clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to you?*" And the King will answer, "*Amen I say to you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me.*"

Whether we are studying individually or collectively, *Illness, Disability and Caring* offers us the gift of that challenge. Published by Darton, Longman and Todd. Available in eBook format (released 29 May, £4) or as a paperback (released 27 August, £7.99) <https://www.waterstones.com/book/illness-disability-and-caring/bernadette-meaden/9780232534566>

© **Jill Segger** is Associate Director of Ekklesia with particular involvement in editorial issues. She is a freelance writer who contributes to the *Church Times*, *Catholic Herald*, *Tribune*, *Reform* and *The Friend*, among other publications. She is the author of *Words out of Silence* published by Ekklesia in May 2019. Jill is an active Quaker. You can follow her on Twitter at: www.twitter.co/quakerpen <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39735>

BOOK REVIEW *Climate Crisis: the Challenge to the Church*

Anne O'Connor 25/5/2020:

First of all a confession: I'm a huge fan of David Rhodes' books. A former journalist who seeks the truth by not being afraid to question what he sees David has a rare gift for taking a well-known story and turning it on its head.

Like all David's books, *Climate Crisis: the Challenge to the Church* is an easy read. However don't be fooled into thinking the content is lightweight. Whilst the style may be accessible the questions it throws up demand a radical re-examination of the Gospel. We are challenged to move away from the comfort and safety of what David calls our 'tribe' (the Church) with its strong focus on personal salvation and into the riskier, controversial area of questioning unjust structures and then, more controversial still, doing something to change them. To quote James 2:15-16,

'If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, "I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty," without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that?' (New Jerusalem Bible).

Despite the title this book is much more than a passionate plea to take climate change seriously for the sake of our children and grandchildren; it is a radical re-vision of the Christian tradition which, David argues, over the centuries from St Paul, through St Augustine, the Crusades, the Reformation and right up to the present day has subverted and buried the true meaning of Jesus' life and teachings, replacing it with an emphasis on sin and personal salvation which has eclipsed the key message to love our neighbour. And loving our neighbour means breaking down barriers of class, wealth, social status, ethnicity, gender, our 'tribes', and treating everyone as equal.

In place of the image of a sometimes vengeful and judgemental God operating in a powerful all-male environment, we are presented with a nurturing and loving God as exemplified in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Here there are no questions, no recriminations, just a tender embrace from father to son. Rembrandt captured this movingly in his masterpiece *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1669), described by renowned art historian Kenneth Clark as possibly "the greatest picture ever painted". Look closely and you will see that one of the father's hands embracing his son is large and masculine, the other smaller, gentle, feminine. The artist, who like the journalist sees and questions, understands that God is both father and mother.

After Jesus died his followers were left with two choices: carry on his mission to liberate the poor and downtrodden or build on the existing model of organised structures of worship. They had seen Jesus put to death. His way was a dangerous path to tread. Doubtless they were afraid. He had warned them that if they were to carry on his work they must pick up their cross and follow where he had gone (Matthew 16:24). Gradually they slipped into the old ways, forming what became the Church with a hierarchy whose model is still with us today. The women who were important to Jesus' vision were sidelined and an all-male leadership formed. Women in the Church, especially in the Catholic Church, remain sidelined to this day.

But was this the model Jesus wanted, with its rules and regulations? After all, when he was alive he cared little for rules and regulations, save for the command to love (Matthew 22:39). Although he spent time teaching and in quiet prayer he also loved to socialise and especially enjoyed the company of those whom the church leaders shunned: tax collectors, prostitutes, outcasts, the poor. As David says, "By sharing his food with low-status people, Jesus is not simply expressing his love and the love of God for the poor, he is demolishing the barriers that segregate different groups." (ch.3, p.32) But Jesus also had a love for the rich, witness the story of the wealthy young man (Mark 10:21). In other words, his 'church' was open to all.

If Jesus were among us today who would he associate with? Have his lessons been buried under a mound of dogma and tradition?

This book challenges us to find a way back to the real Jesus and to become true disciples. Only then will the Church(es) find the courage to speak with one voice for the sake of people and planet. Only then will it rediscover its true mission and ditch the dogma and divisions that blind us to the truth. Let's pray that happens before it is too late.

***Climate Crisis: the Challenge to the Church* by David Rhodes was published by Kevin Mayhew in April 2020.**

A PLEA: Please buy from Turbulent Books, Eden Books, SPCK or Kevin Mayhew rather than supporting Amazon.

See other books by David at www.turbulentbooks.co.uk

Eden Books <https://www.eden.co.uk/shop/climate-change-5182823.html>

SPCK <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/catalogsearch/result/?q=David+Rhodes>

Kevin Mayhew <https://www.kevinmayhew.com/products/climate-change-the-challenge-to-the-church-1501666>

• **David Rhodes is a former journalist and parish priest. He writes and lectures on social justice and spirituality. Find him** [@RhodesWriter](https://twitter.com/RhodesWriter) and www.turbulentbooks.co.uk

PEACE, NONVIOLENCE AND #COVID19

Wonderful set of essays on different aspects of peace, nonviolence and #COVID19 written by Marie Adele Dennis and others in Pax Christi International Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

<https://paxchristi.net/2020/05/28/responding-to-structural-violence-exposed-by-covid19/>

PAMPHLET: *Caring for the Planet in a Time of Crisis*

To celebrate the Fifth Anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Sr Margaret Atkin's CTS pamphlet, *Catholics and Our Common Home* has been reprinted in a revised version, with the new subtitle, *Caring for The Planet in a Time of Crisis*. As a taster, here is the Preface from the revised version. The pamphlet will be available from <https://www.ctsbooks.org/>.

" I write this in a world that has fallen still. The aeroplanes are grounded, the boats are in dock, the factories have jerked to a halt. Business as usual has been halted, by a microscopic virus. This time, if we allow it to, can offer us the space to think more deeply about what business as usual has been doing to the world, our common home.

We have learnt how much we want to protect vulnerable people from sickness and death. How much do we want to protect our vulnerable planet, on which the lives and health of all of us and every living thing depends?

We have learnt that we are prepared to sacrifice our travel, our comforts to reduce the spread of a pandemic. What are we prepared to sacrifice to reduce forest fires, floods, drought and the destruction of other species?

We have learnt that we can act with boldness, energy, speed and conviction, that we can change our habits drastically and effectively, that we can work together as a global family, east and west, rich and poor, to respond a short-term and temporary emergency. Are we prepared to do this to respond to a long-term and permanent one?

We have discovered the resilience of our local communities, the generosity, compassion and courage of millions of ordinary people, the inventiveness and creativity of the same. How can we harness these to face the biggest collective challenge of all?

We have been given space and time to ponder and pray. We have glimpsed clean air and clean seas. We have listened to birdsong where once there was only traffic. Can we grasp the hope that this offers?

The Christian Church can make a unique contribution to the healing of our planet, in at least three ways. Firstly, if most Christians, let alone most religious people, were to live fully the ecological implications of their faith, their numbers are significant enough to reach a tipping point for positive change; we can be the anticipation of the kingdom of heaven, the 'leaven in the dough' (Matthew 13.33). Secondly, the Church can offer an existing structural model of an organisation that connects global with local moral leadership, understood precisely as service, along with a mass of members explicitly committed to trying to live well as communities. The Church also has a history of successfully effecting dramatic changes of behaviour; it is not far-fetched to read the history of the Church as a history of successive reforms. There is much here from which wider society might learn.

Above all, we have our faith. We do not need to invent a new way of living. Our saints have been living 'ecology', out of love of God, for the last two millennia. Let us take them as our models as we commit ourselves to acting, yes, with urgency, but also with calm and patient trust, as God is calling us to do.

The Feast of Pentecost 2020 marks the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' letter on care for our common home. Let us celebrate it by embracing its radical challenge together. "

• Sr Margaret Atkins is an Augustinian canoness from the community at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria.

CATHOLIC CHARITY ECHOES WORK SAFETY CONCERNS

Ellen Teague *The Tablet* 29/5/2020: A Catholic organisation that supports working people has said that it is too soon to safely send people back to work. Kevin Flanagan, Director of St Antony's Centre for Church and Industry in Manchester, told *The Tablet*: "Health and safety measures are not sufficient at the moment to give people confidence in returning to work after lockdown." He cited in particular the health and safety of teachers if schools reopen in early June, and wondered where there was adequate testing for the virus, risk assessment, or guidance for teachers on infection control or using personal protection equipment. "Safe working practices are of great concern to us," he said, noting trade union advice to keep schools closed until "it is demonstrably safe" for them to reopen. He warned that in some of its pronouncements, "the Government does not seem to be rooted in realities on the ground".

St Antony's is an accredited training provider with centres in Accrington, Manchester, Oldham, Liverpool, Preston and Runcorn, that offers support to people in work, out of work or looking for work. Mr Flanagan said that people face significant changes to their working lives, which could include redundancy, reduced hours, or being asked to work from home. "Reduction in furlough payments is leading to anxiety. There is a storm brewing, with us likely to see deep recession and huge redundancies. I'm sure the world of work will change radically," he warned.

Mental health issues are already surfacing, he said, and noted that St Antony's is helping people with high anxiety levels among people having to reapply for work, being pushed into more home-working, or concerned about health and safety in the workplace.

Mr Flanagan also worried that the Church lacks a mechanism to hear the stories of people in local communities, and lamented that the Bishops' Conference no longer has a World of Work Committee within its structure.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/12982/catholic-charity-echoes-work-safety-concerns->

UK FOOD BANKS REPORT HUGE SURGE IN NEED

Source: Trussell Trust 3/6/2020: The Trussell Trust this week reports a soaring 89% increase in need for emergency food parcels during April 2020 compared to the same month last year, including a 107% rise in parcels given to children. The number of families with children receiving parcels has almost doubled compared to the same period last year. Food banks in the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) report a 175% increase in need for the same period.

A coalition of charities, including Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), The Children's Society, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), StepChange and Turn2us, is calling for funding for local authorities in England to ensure grants are quickly distributed to help people stay afloat as part of a temporary Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme. Without support they warn thousands could be swept into destitution.

As the impact of coronavirus continues to unfold, food banks in the Trussell Trust's network are reporting their busiest month ever, with an 89% increase in emergency food parcels given to people across the UK in April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The figures include a 107% increase in parcels going to children compared to last year. The number of families with children receiving parcels has almost doubled compared to the same period last year. Independent food banks are seeing similar increases, with IFAN reporting a 175% increase in need for emergency food parcels given out in the UK during April 2020 compared to the same month last year.

Measures brought in by the government, including the Coronavirus Jobs Retention scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and changes aimed specifically at people on low incomes, have helped some people stay afloat. But these new figures warn far more people are needing food banks' help than this time last year, with little sign of slowing. With these schemes set to wind down over the coming months and other measures proving to be insufficient, the charities say further action is urgently needed to ensure no one is left behind during this crisis. The coalition says a first step should be to make sure local authorities in England have enough funding to provide emergency cash grants so money can be put directly into people's pockets quickly. An increase in funding to local authorities in England would help bring the government response on this type of support closer to that of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is one part of a temporary Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme proposed by the coalition to ensure everyone has enough money in their pockets for essentials during this crisis. The scheme would include:

- Increasing benefits that go to families to help with the costs of raising children
- Extending the suspension of benefit deductions to include advance payments - the loans offered to cover the five-week wait for a first Universal Credit payment
- Lifting the benefit cap to ensure this support scheme benefits everyone

Chief executive of the Trussell Trust Emma Revie said: "We have been seeing rises in food bank need for the past five years but this 89% increase - with the number of families coming to food banks doubling - is completely unprecedented and not right. People need to be able to put food on their table. The government must put urgent support in place to ensure people already struggling to keep their heads above water can stay afloat. We have outlined what we need our government to do - it's in our power to protect one another, we've seen it during this health crisis, and we need it to continue during this economic one."

Coordinator of the Independent Food Aid Network Sabine Goodwin said: "Our food bank figures paint a grim picture of what is unfolding across the UK and the numbers of people having to resort to emergency food parcels to survive. But the solution to the escalating food insecurity crisis has never been the provision of charitable food aid. Everyone needs to be able to afford to buy food and the bare essentials. Our joint call details how this can start to be achieved and we urge the Government to act swiftly and decisively to reverse this devastating trend."

Child Poverty Action Group's chief executive Alison Garnham added: "Today's figures are grim. No parent wants to depend on charity to feed their own child but it is clear that food banks are becoming the only option for a growing number of families whose finances have all but collapsed because of Covid-19. Struggle is turning to real hardship. The Government has quickly put in place unprecedented and very welcome schemes to support family finances in the wake of Covid-19, but too many households are falling through the gaps. An uplift in children's benefits should be the priority now to shield children from poverty and its lifelong effects."

Chief executive at The Children's Society Mark Russell commented: "It's a tragedy that double the number of families are having to rely on food banks to feed their children, and a situation which could be prevented with more action to stop children from going hungry. The Children's Society wants to see significant extra investment in local welfare assistance so councils can provide much needed emergency support. We recently found more than half of councils (63%) were forced to reduce spending on these schemes between 2015 and 2019 yet more people than ever need the help they can provide. No child should face destitution as a result of this pandemic. The Government must step up and protect vulnerable children and families."

Policy and partnerships manager at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation JRF Iain Porter said: "It's just not right that the number of families turning to food banks continues to climb so steeply. We all want to help each other weather this storm, but these figures show the government support provided so far is still not providing a lifeline to families in crisis who are not able to afford the essentials. As a rapid first step, increasing funding to councils for emergency cash grants would provide a lifeline to those most at risk of hardship. Alongside this, we need emergency investment in the social security system, such as targeted benefits to families with children, to prevent more families from reaching crisis point as we continue to weather the storm. www.trusselltrust.org <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39723>

NEW LIFE ON THE BREADLINE BLOG POST HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19

Guest blog post from Rebecca Stockman who works with YMCA St Paul's Group in delivering Merton Winter Night Shelter.

Rebecca writes: In Merton, a multi-faith, grassroots winter night shelter, MWNS, has been running and growing since 2011. Just last Autumn it seemed like a daunting leap to make a badly needed extension to the provision – extending it by 7 weeks, extra venues and another 100 or so volunteers. At that time, we couldn't have imagined having recruited and prepared people and venues to increase our provision by 50% only to have to pivot over two days from a smooth running and well-established rotating scheme into a sole venue as a static provision with drastically reduced volunteer teams. But that is what we did together to ensure that our guests and volunteers were still safe in the world of Covid-19; the commitment, flexibility and tenacity of the community groups and individuals involved frankly blew us away.

We sat together with the guests and other volunteers, with a good deal of clumsy sign language, to explain the changes in place and the limits to free movement. To somewhat blank faces, with none of us then fully understanding what was to happen, we were trying to get across the gravity of the situation. Many were unaware of the virus at all – hard to imagine now. We explained that the shelter scheme was no longer moving but remaining in the church hall we were all sat in, that we needed to keep distance from each other, wash hands with high frequency and report coughs immediately. The challenges of needing to self-isolate in that environment were discussed though few real solutions emerged. Over the next few days text group messaging was relentless, offers of help came from every angle and the changes needed were very quickly put in place. But behind that was a shadow of fear. Volunteers didn't know if they could help or they wanted to but conflicted with families seeking to protect them. Our guests became fearful of each other and anxiety was running high. Guidance from government was evolving at pace and it was a challenge at times to keep up and keep everyone informed.

Then, just as food supplies as well as healthy and willing volunteers were becoming harder and harder to find, we heard the news that all the night shelters in London were due to 'decant' into hotels arranged through government agencies. The relief was palpable, however the next 5 days before our guests were successfully transferred into hotels rooms were intense. While most of our guests were positive about the move one or two experienced triggers around the containment involved and struggled with the change enormously – one left to go back to the tent he had been living in for the past 4 years, such was the strength of feeling for him. Once the majority of MWNS guests were settled in their rooms, the future for all those being accommodated in this way became the greater concern.

Over the past two months now there have been layers of activity in response to the situation. There have been reports of central government ending funding for the scheme, and concerns from local government about how they can respond. Pressure from homelessness agencies such as Homeless Link as well as faith and community groups has focused on the opportunity provided by the situation to ensure that those now housed, albeit temporarily, in hotels does not result in a mass exodus back onto the streets but into accommodation for the long term. Programmes such as Housing First have been discussed in many forums as a potential solution to this. The MHCLG has responded by recently announcing the intention to create 6,000 new homes in the UK to 'end homelessness for good'.

Dame Louise Casey has created a task force to take a longer-term view on what is needed to change the situation, looking at the support needed to make changes sustainable. With all these efforts there is a sense of collaboration being key, and an appreciation of what has been achieved so far by grassroots groups. Undoubtedly there is a crack in the system here, allowing a glimmer of hope for tangible and much needed change in the future. Clarity over the landscape ongoing is lacking, however I have seen through community organising as well as professional networks the passion for change that exists. While time passing allows for the questions to be answered and kinks ironed out, it doesn't alleviate the fear the individuals currently isolating in hotels are no doubt feeling and what will happen to them when 'normal' resumes – whatever is meant by that these days. <https://breadlinersearch.coventry.ac.uk/2020/06/03/homelessness-and-covid-19/>

'CALLED TO SAY YES'

We are called to say yes.
That the kingdom might break through
To renew and to transform
Our dark and groping world.

We stutter and we stammer
To the lone God who calls
And pleads a New Jerusalem
In the bloodied Sinai Straights.

We are called to say yes
That honeysuckle may twine
And twist its smelling leaves
Over the graves of nuclear arms.

We are called to say yes
That children might play

On the soil of Vietnam where
the tanks
Belched blood and death.

We are called to say yes
That black may sing with white
And pledge peace and healing
For the hatred of the past.

We are called to say yes
So that nations might gather
And dance one great movement
For the joy of humankind.

We are called to say yes
So that rich and poor embrace
And become equal in their poverty
Through the silent tears that fall.

We are called to say yes
That the whisper of our God
Might be heard through our sirens
And the screams of our bombs.

We are called to say yes
To a God who still holds fast
To the vision of the Kingdom
For a trembling world of pain.

We are called to say yes
To this God who reaches out
And asks us to share
His crazy dream of love.

Edwina Gateley

From *'There Was No Path So I
Trode One'* (1996, 2013)

DIARY DATES

JUNE

14 Tax Justice Sunday - online service prepared by **Church Action for Tax Justice** available on youtube. Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzKV4yFvmfl>

15-21 Refugee Week. **Counterpoints Arts** produces Refugee Week <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/>
Come together in a virtual festival across borders and distance to celebrate our interconnectedness and imagine a different world. **Resources and ideas:** <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/do-a-simple-act-for-refugee-week-2020/>

26 United Nations Day for Victims of Torture
<http://www.irct.org/our-work/day-against-torture-on-26-june.aspx>
<https://www.un.org/en/events/torturevictimsday/resources.html>
www.acatuk.org.uk

JULY

9 Sea Sunday www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk/about-sea-sunday

More information: johnngreen@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk 07505 653 801

18 POST PANDEMIC CHURCH: PARALYSED OR ENERGISED? RECOVERED OR RE-IMAGINED?

Mini-Conference via Zoom Following the postponement of this year's NJPN Annual Justice and Peace Conference at Swanwick to July 23-25 2021, the planning team are in the process of developing a Mini-Conference via Zoom. This will be 2 sessions on Saturday 18 July 10.30 to 12 and 2 to 3.30.

Preparing for a new world order. How do we, as Church, move to an alternative model of being. In the light of the Gospel message and Pope Francis Catholic Social Teaching documents (*Laudato Si'*, *Evangelii Gaudium*) How do we begin to build and 'Care for Our Common Home'. This will lead us into preparing for '**2021 – Action for Life on Earth**', the new name for our postponed '*2020 Vision: Action for Life on Earth*'.

Timetable and speakers will be sent out to you once confirmed. Booking in advance allows us to sort out the technology of having breakout groups with facilitators in the session. **Book via Eventbrite** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/post-pandemic-church-paralysed-or-energised-recovered-or-re-imagined-tickets-108604414728>

We look forward to seeing you on zoom as we can't see you in person.

23-28 World Youth Day

AUGUST

6&9 Anniversaries of the first use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki www.paxchristi.org.uk/ccnd.gn.apc.org

9 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

23 International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition <http://www.hrea.org/>

30 International Day of the Disappeared and Stop the Traffik <http://www.stopthetraffik.org/>
<http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Finding-missing-family/International-Day-of-the-Disappeared>

LIVERPOOL J&P ASSEMBLY 28, 29 JUNE AND 1, 4 JULY

'SEE, I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW': OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

This year in place of the Liverpool Archdiocese's usual annual assembly, we will be hosting four events on Zoom:

Sunday 28 June (7.30 – 8pm) **Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald MAfr** will offer a spiritual reflection, to open the week of events

Monday 29 June (7.30 – 8.30pm) **Fr Diarmuid O'Murchu MSC** will discuss 'framing the conversation': local and national issues followed by breakout groups

Wednesday 1 July (7.30 – 8.30pm) **Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD** will discuss international issues followed by breakout groups

Saturday 4 July (10am – 12pm) a sharing of responses to the earlier talks, followed by Q&A to a panel made up of the speakers and politicians

The entirety of the week's events will take place free of charge, on Zoom, for which places must be registered for, for free. It is possible to attend as many or as few events as you like. The talks, and panel discussion will also be available on Facebook, and YouTube.

NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe*, and some of these are uploaded onto our website.

● Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin *Independent Catholic News* www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

● Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN including a **new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN