



Justice & Peace

Spring 2024

News from the National Justice & Peace Network

Prayer & Reflection:

Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace, who are Yourself our peace and reconciliation, who so often said, "Peace to you" - please grant us peace.

Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice and brotherly love. Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace. Enlighten our rulers that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May all peoples on the earth become as brothers and sisters. May longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always over us all.

Amen.

-Pope St. John Paul II



Save the Date!

'JUST POLITICS'

19 – 21 July 2024

The Hayes Conference Centre

Swanwick, Derbyshire

www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Save the Date!

OPEN MEETING

24 February 2024

Online

Keep an eye out for details!

Another Circle Turns...

For an interesting article on Eddie Gilmore's time as CEO of the Irish Chaplaincy, please visit our website:

www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

The Passion for Change

The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor...

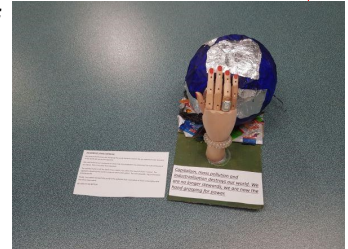
Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si': Care for Our Common Home*, makes it clear that the forces which are wrecking our natural environment are the same ones that are undermining justice and peace and causing untold suffering to the poor, as well as to the beautiful living world that has been given to us.

These forces and social structures, driven by profit-making and consumerism, are generating poverty and inequality regionally, nationally and globally, as well as driving us towards the cliff edge of irreversible climate breakdown.

Pope Francis says clearly that a just solution for the climate crisis involves tackling inequalities of wealth and power and taking the 'option for the poor'. The Passionist Community is also committed to solidarity with the poor, the 'crucified of today', all those who suffer from poverty and powerlessness, including the whole earth community. We are all called to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth, and to effective personal and social action to make a better world.

The Passion for Change is a spiritual and artistic project, supported by the Passionist Community, which answers that call. Its aim is to increase awareness and stimulate action on environmental and social justice, by making artworks and texts that connect the

Passion of Christ with the suffering of all living things in our world. There are two main strands to the project: an educational programme for schools, and the creation of artworks and texts for exhibition.



1. Work in Schools

We delivered a series of workshops in 2 Catholic secondary schools to a total of around 70 schoolchildren, aged between 11 and 17. We talked about *Laudato Si'* and showed extracts from the Pope's YouTube video, *The Letter*. We asked them to choose words relating to events in Christ's Passion, such as 'Betrayal' (by Judas) or 'Solidarity' (from Simon of Cyrene) and think imaginatively about how the suffering in each event related to 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' – the key messages in *Laudato Si'*. Then we asked them to create artworks and write texts which expressed these connections.

The students were marvellous. They quickly grasped what the project was about, and over the six weeks they made a series of brilliant artworks, some of which are illustrated here. They also produced texts to accompany the artworks and exhibited the results to the rest of the school. In the run-up to Easter some of students also presented the artworks and texts to their local—

Continued on next page...

National Justice and Peace Network

@nationaljusticeandpeacenetwork928

@NJandPNetwork

NJandPNetwork

Page 1 continued...

—parishes in powerful 'Stations of the Cross' services. They truly showed 'the passion for change'.

2. Exhibition

The second strand to the project was an exhibition, held at Hexham Abbey during Lent and Eastertide last year. We made a number of 'Stations' which we placed round the walls of the

chancel, with each Station consisting of an artwork, a poem, and quotes from Scripture and from *Laudato Si'*. You can receive a PDF, with more pictures, of the whole exhibition free from info@culturematters.org.uk.



Michael Quille and Lya Vollering

On Laudate Deum

The eagerly anticipated follow-up to Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical *Laudato Si'* was published on the feast on St Francis (4th October). This relatively short read is a nonetheless highly-important one reminding us, and particularly our leaders, that we are at our planet's tipping point in responding to the climate crisis. It summarises both the successes and failures of multinational agreements (particularly COPs) and urges leaders to come together in the interest of all of humanity.

"...we are now unable to halt the enormous damage we have caused. We barely have time to prevent even more tragic damage...it is always too late, since no intervention will be able to halt a process once begun. There is no turning back."

The Holy Father reiterates that we are all connected, and that nobody (and no nation state) can be saved alone. Isolated interventions such as the development of 'innovative' technologies that only address part of the problem (e.g. carbon capture) are insufficient otherwise:

"we risk remaining trapped in the mindset of pasting and papering over cracks, while beneath the surface there is a continuing deterioration to which we continue to contribute."

The document calls us to question the meaning of our time and effort - recognising the feelings of powerlessness we might face as individuals trying to do our best. He encourages us, reminding us that no culture can change without personal change; that the transformation of the world begins with individuals who question the technocratic paradigm and put pressure on our leaders to act in the interest of our global family.

This technocratic paradigm, which he defines as: "a certain way of understanding human

life and activity [that] has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us". Deep down, it consists in thinking "as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such". As a logical consequence, it then becomes easy "to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology".

This way of looking at the world is deepening, especially with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, and in our crisis we are looking towards technology and the powerful as our saviours:

'It is chilling to realize that the capacities expanded by technology "have given those with the knowledge and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used... In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it".'

He poses the following question to our world leaders:

'To the powerful, I can only repeat this question: "What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?"'

And THIS is the question we must ask our leaders. Please share the document with your MP, with changemakers, and other leaders - invite them to really reflect on it.

Continued on next page...

While *Laudate Deum* may look to be pointing towards those in power and the COP negotiations and seemingly talking down the role of individuals and communities, this has to be read in context of the intended audience, our faith, and the Church's wealth of Catholic Social teaching. Pope Francis is applying the need for inner transformation on those with power. Just as we as individuals have power, those in extreme power are also individuals. We cannot solve the problem with the method that got us into this mess. As C.S. Lewis put it:

"It is easy enough to remove the particular kinds of graft or bullying that go on under the present system: but as long as men are twisters or bullies they will find some new way of carrying on the old game under the new system. You cannot make men good by law: and without good men you cannot have a good society. That is why we must go onto think...of morality inside the individual."

John Paul de Quay — The Ecological Conversion Group

Geoff Thompson: Rest in Peace

The first time I encountered Geoff was at an NJPN event linked to the Eucharistic Congress in Liverpool in September 2018, where he was part of the Lancaster Diocese Justice and Peace Commission. He was rushing around offering soup to all who wished to eat. I later learned that the preparing and serving of food, particularly to people who were hungry and vulnerable, was one of Geoff's great passions. He frequently told me how many bargains he had found when out shopping for food for others.

Geoff became part of NJPN when appointed as administrator in February 2019 and brought with him his great commitment and enthusiasm for justice and peace. Because his involvement in justice and peace extended through a range of issues and activities, he had a wide number of contacts which proved valuable to NJPN as an organisation working to develop links and engage with all with a shared vision of a more just and peaceful society, creating new collaborations. When planning open meetings and the Swanwick conference Geoff would often know who to approach as a speaker or workshop facilitator. It would be fair to say that Geoff was a 'doer,' he enjoyed organising events. He would travel to meetings around the country, carrying NJPN resources in his car which he described as his 'skip on wheels.' He worked in collaboration with the Columbans producing the NJPN newsletter and on the planning of our conferences. Being a member of the Lay Community of St. Benedict was an important part of Geoff's life and they became involved in preparing the music and liturgy at the conferences organised by Geoff.

His passion for the Palestinian people was well-known and inspiring, taking part in the planting and harvesting of olives, raising the profile of his friends in Israel/Palestine. I have on my desk, a certificate from the Olive Tree Project, thanking me for an olive tree, which Geoff sponsored as a Christmas present a couple of years ago. His many contributions to our

social media pages helped focus our minds on the plight of innocent people in the holy land.

Geoff's time as NJPN administrator coincided with the Covid pandemic and he embarked on a steep learning curve, ensuring that our open meetings and even the 2020 Conference took place as successful online gatherings.

The NJPN works from a desk at Catholic Bishops' Conference and Canon Christopher Thomas recalls that: "Geoff worked here quietly but with great enthusiasm and was a regular to the lunchtime Mass and lunch gathering in the staff room when he was working in the office. He was passionate about the furthering of justice and peace in our country and worked hard for it himself, not only through his work with NJPN but in his locality in Preston. Geoff's former parish priest, Fr. Peter, writes: "What a dynamic figure he was in J&P, and at St. Wilfrid's".

Through most of his time as part of NJPN Geoff suffered from bouts of ill health, including at least two instances of major surgery. At our last face-to-face meeting towards the end of July he expressed a wish that he could continue working for NJPN in a more limited capacity. Sadly, that was not to be.

Geoff's funeral took place in his home parish in Preston and was a truly wonderful celebration of his life and work. It was clear from those gathered to say farewell to Geoff how many lives he had touched and how his wide circle of friends came from so many organisations and groups, each representing the strands of his life of faith and commitment to justice and peace. Geoff had planned every detail of his funeral and I feel he would have been so happy with the service and reception. We pray that Geoff is now at peace and offer our sympathy and prayers to his family and to all who knew and loved him.

Anne Peacey, NJPN Chair



CALENDAR

January 2024 — May 2024

<p>26—28 Jan <i>Christians Aware Annual Conference: Strangers and Pilgrims: People, Displacement and Migration in God's World</i> <i>Hinsley Hall, Leeds</i> For more info: www.christiansaware.co.uk or 0116 254 0770</p>	<p>27 Jan 10.00am — 1.30pm <i>Arundel & Brighton Annual J&P Assembly</i> St Philip Howard Centre, Crawley For more info: TessaRicketts@abdiocese.org.uk or www.abdiocese.org.uk/diocese/event</p>
<p>28 Jan <i>Racial Justice Sunday</i></p>	<p>31 Jan <i>Feast of St John Bosco</i></p>
<p>8 Feb <i>Day of Prayer for Victims of Trafficking and Those Who Work to Combat it</i></p>	<p>11 Feb <i>Day of Prayer for the Unemployed</i></p>
<p>11 Feb <i>Church Action on Poverty Sunday</i> Theme: 'Dreamers who do' For resource packs: www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday</p>	<p>14 Feb <i>Ash Wednesday</i></p>
<p>20 Feb <i>World Day of Social Justice</i> (UN observance)</p>	<p>21 Feb 7.00pm <i>Christians Aware Webinar: The Coffin Roads: Journeys to the West</i> Ian Bradley Tel. 0116 254 0770</p>
<p>23 Feb <i>Lent Family Fast Day</i> CAFOD For more info and resources: www.cafod.org.uk</p>	<p>24 Feb 11.00am — 3.00pm <i>NJPN Open Meeting (via Zoom)</i> For more info and to book: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk</p>
<p>1 Mar <i>World Day of Prayer</i> Theme: 'I beg you, bear with one another in love.' prepared by the people of Palestine For more details: www.wwdp.org.uk/2024</p>	<p>21 Mar 7.00pm <i>Christians Aware Webinar: Preparing for Holy Week and Easter</i> Rowan Williams Tel. 0116 254 0770</p>
<p>24 Mar <i>Anniversary of the death of St Oscar Romero</i> For more info: www.romerotrout.org.uk</p>	<p>31 Mar <i>Easter Sunday</i></p>
<p>16 — 23 Apr <i>Christians Aware Pilgrimage to Assisi</i> Tel. 0116 254 0770</p>	<p>11 May <i>NJPN AGM and Networking Day</i> Romero House More details to come</p>
<p>12 May <i>World Communications Day</i></p>	<p>17 — 25 May <i>Christians Aware Walking Pilgrimage: Santiago de Compostela</i> Tel. 0116 254 0770</p>
<p>24 — 26 May <i>Christians Aware weekend in Canterbury</i> Staying at the Cathedral Lodge Tel. 0116 254 0770</p>	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>NEXT ISSUE DATE May 2024 Articles required by April 2024</p> </div>

Become a Member:

Membership is open to local groups, families and individuals. Individual Subscription only £25 a year (but you are welcome to give more!) Low Income £15. Download a membership form from the website or contact the administrator.

admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

DONATE TO NJPN: Online via our website. **By cheque** payable to NJPN. **BACS** to NJPN Sort Code:16-31-15 Account No: 10089516, put your name and Donation in the reference field. To make a regular donation by **Standing Order**, contact the Administrator or download the Membership Form on the website.

The National Justice & Peace Network welcomes all who share a vision of a world in which people live in peace and harmony, where our common humanity is respected and all are able to contribute freely to the common good. NJPN seeks to encourage work for justice and peace by promoting communication and shared action between members, supporters and partners.

This newsletter is produced three times a year by the Network

The views expressed are not necessarily those of the National Justice and Peace Network.

Editorial Group: Michael Chambers, Sharon Chambers, Stephen Cooke, Ann Kelly, Anne Peacey.



National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN)
 39 Eccleston Square London SW1V 1BX Tel: 020 7901 4864
 Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk www.justice-and-peace.org.uk
 A UK Registered Charity no. 1114947 A company limited by guarantee: Company no. 5036866
 Registered Office: 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX