

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

29 May 2024: THE PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CRIES OUT AND ASKS ...

Is there a prayer we can utter that can possibly express the depth of pain and despair we feel as we witness the unbearable suffering of our sisters and brothers in Rafah? We tremble in the face of such horror and disregard for the sanctity of life. Is our voice loud enough to shake the heavens or better yet is our voice determined enough to shake those on earth? When will justice be served so that peace can be realised? We lift our eyes for we can no longer look at what is in front of us. And plead to the God of love, mercy, and forgiveness. Strengthen our resolve to never avert our eyes, to remain steadfast in our witness. Shield us from what is surely a righteous anger and instead plant seeds of hope in our hearts. Make us your agents to turn swords into ploughshares.

We plead with all faith leaders to forcefully condemn the IDF attacks in Rafah which have caused so much suffering and demand that Israel respect international and humanitarian law and abide by the recent ICJ rulings. We demand a permanent and immediate ceasefire to allow the start of diplomatic negotiations. These massacres must stop immediately, and critical humanitarian aid must not only be allowed to cross into Gaza without delay but its safe delivery secured by the occupation forces.

*"My grief is beyond healing, my heart is sick within me ...
For the wound of my beloved people is my heart wounded,
I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.
Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician here?
Why then has the health of my beloved people not been restored?
O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears,
that I might weep day and night for the slain of my beloved people."* Jeremiah 8:1 8, 9:1

Sign the ALLMEP's letter calling on G7 leaders to prioritise civil society peacebuilding at the G7 Summit:

<https://www.allmep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/May-27th-G7-2024-Letter-w-member-International-signatures-.pdf>

Dear G7 Heads of Government, on behalf of over 160 Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding organizations that make up the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), and others who stand in solidarity with this community, we write to you today to urge you to include language in the upcoming G7 Leaders' communique highlighting the importance of civil society peacebuilding work as an integral part of any viable process to end the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

With levels of violence, trauma and destruction that we have never before seen, we are calling on you to address the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in a more comprehensive way than we have seen attempted previously.

As long-time advocates of peace, we see the recent horrific, yet avoidable, escalation of violent conflict as a clear indication of the international community's failure to adequately support civil society peacebuilding initiatives. Thanks to successive academic studies, we know that such programs – which build meaningful relationships between Israelis and Palestinians and are predicated on a shared commitment to peace, security and equality for both peoples – disrupt and reverse attitudes and beliefs that fuel conflict.

For peace to last it must be built from the ground-up. Yet, every previous round of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy has lacked a "bottom-up" strategy. To ensure the success of any diplomatic initiative, top-down negotiations among leaders must be matched this time by a peacebuilding process at the societal level between Israelis and Palestinians, even more critical now considering the trauma and polarization from the unprecedented violence of past months.

As such, we – Israeli and Palestinian civil society peacebuilders, and our partners around the world – are recommending that the Apulia Summit break new ground on multilateral support and a new centrality for civil society peacebuilding – a consensus priority not dependent on the more complex issues currently being debated and creating division and delay. Specifically, we recommend that G7 leaders include language in the Leaders' Communique that commits G7 states and other welcome partners to collaborate on civil society peacebuilding as part of a coordinated and multilateral approach to conflict resolution. Specifically, we recommend the insertion of the language below, which aligns the G7 with the latest messaging within the Quartet, UN, and several G7 member states: "We affirm our commitment to working together multilaterally – and with other international partners – to closely coordinate and institutionalize our support for civil society peacebuilding efforts. Ensuring that such efforts are part of a larger strategy to build the foundations necessary for a negotiated and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace"

There can be no sustainable peace without the critical mass of individuals and groups in Israel and Palestine who can support and sustain a diplomatic agreement. We welcome your reply and commitment to supporting peace and Israeli-Palestinian partnership.

Text of the letter: https://www.allmep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/May-27th-G7-2024-Letter-w_-member-International-signatures-.pdf **Sign the letter here:** <https://advocacy.allmep.org/a/join-allmep-calling-g7-leaders-prioritize-civil-society-peacebuilding-g7-summit>

UN COURT RULING FOR ISRAEL TO STOP RAFAH OFFENSIVE 'MUST BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY'

Source: Christian Aid 26 May 2024: The international development agency Christian Aid says all states should get behind the UN's International Court of Justice's (ICJ) decision that Israel must halt its military offensive in Rafah in southern Gaza. The ruling follows South Africa's petition to the ICJ for emergency measures, to order Israel to halt all operations that threaten the survival of the Palestinian people.

IOPT Programme Manager at Christian Aid, Julie Mehigan, said: "In its ruling the ICJ has demonstrated at last that the international rules-based order can work for the protection of Palestinian civilians. The order to halt military actions in Rafah needs to be implemented immediately. Crossings need to be opened so that aid can be delivered to starving people at scale. All states must get behind the ruling and take whatever measures are necessary to ensure it is upheld. After almost eight months of terror our partners along with all Palestinian civilians and the hostages in Gaza deserve nothing less."

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor asked the court's judges earlier this week to approve the arrest warrants of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Tonight, Husam Zomlot, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the UK, has written on X (formerly Twitter): "Israel commits a massacre in #Rafah this evening, dropping several 2,000 pound bombs on civilian tents and #UN compounds, murdering dozens of civilians seeking shelter. This was Israel's response to the @CIJ_ICJ ruling Friday that it must halt its offensive on Rafah."

Mustafa Barghouti, Palestinian doctor and politician writes: "Horrible scenes of a new massacre in Rafah: The Israeli army committed a horrific massacre in North West Rafah which is supposed to be a safe area bombarding and burning tents of displaced Palestinians killing more than 30 civilians many of whom were burned to death and injuring many others." <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49852>

BALFOUR PROJECT CONFERENCE TO CALL FOR UK RECOGNITION OF PALESTINE

27 May 2024: UK recognition of Palestine is one of a number of actions for the UK Government to be discussed at the Balfour Project conference '**Peace with Justice - how to get there**' from 2pm UK time, on Thursday 6 June 2024 at Bush House KCL and online: <https://balfourproject.org/2024conference/>

The conference organisers state: "The people of Gaza have been subjected to a level of death, injury and destruction surpassing all previous cycles of violence, and now face man-made famine. The West Bank is locked down, its economy at a standstill, while settler violence goes unpunished. The people of Israel suffer from the lasting horror of the 7 October Hamas attack, their fear for the hostages still captive, and the wider regional threat. Despite a growing international consensus pressing for an end to the conflict, the dreadful prospect of further escalation in Gaza is real.

"On 6 June, in partnership with the History Dept of King's College London, the Balfour Project is bringing together a range of speakers with ideas on the pathways out of this dreadful calamity towards Peace with Justice for both peoples. Palestinians will provide eye-witness accounts, insight and fresh thinking; other speakers will cover the regional and international context. There will be a Q & A with MPs focused on what actions the British Government should take to advance equality under the law."

Speakers: Andrew Whitley, Balfour Project Chair; Professor Adam Sutcliffe, Professor of European History, King's College London; Mohamed Ghalayini, Gazan scientist; Nour Odeh, Palestinian political analyst; Daniel Levy, political scientist; Sir Vincent Fean - Trustee of Balfour Project Lord Purvis of Tweed (LibDem); Dr Phyllis Starkey, Vice Chair of Balfour Project.

General admission including reception after the conference: £15. Students/Jobseekers: £8. Friends of the Balfour Project: £8. Online access: FREE: <https://balfourproject.org/2024conference/>

Write to your MP to push for British recognition of Palestine: <https://balfourproject.org/email-your-mp-to-push-for-british-recognition-of-palestine-now/>

LIKE IRELAND AND MORE THAN 140 OTHER COUNTRIES, IT IS TIME THE UK RECOGNISED THE STATE OF PALESTINE

Sir Vincent Fean writes in The Independent online newspaper 27 May 2024:

For more than a century, Britain has shown scant respect for Palestinian rights, says our former envoy in Jerusalem, Sir Vincent Fean – we must now play our part in creating a framework for peace.

Palestinian self-determination is the key to a just peace in the Middle East. The United Kingdom deprived Palestinians of that right, through its misconduct of the Palestine Mandate, before we cut and ran in 1948. It is 57 years since the Israeli occupation of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. It is only right that we should now recognise the state of Palestine on those lands.

Spain, Ireland and Norway are the latest to have done just that, last week announcing that, from tomorrow, they will join the long list of countries that formally recognise a Palestinian state. They have set the example that the United Kingdom should have provided for the so-called two-state solution – and which we must encourage others to follow.

First, some clarity is needed on what we should envisage as the Palestinian state: namely, pre-June 1967 borders, with full territorial sovereignty, the free movement of people and goods, and control of administrative matters (a registry of births, and so on).

Security is fundamental to statehood. In January, Foreign Secretary David Cameron said that the last 30 years had been a story of failure for Israel because it had not delivered that basic security requirement to its citizens. And the reason for that failure is that Netanyahu and his peers have systematically deprived Palestinians of their rights – including their own right to security – by entrenched military occupation, blockades, the building of illegal settlements and much more besides.

The realisation that my safety is best assured by the safety of my neighbour, through mutual security with international guarantees, is what will stop this chronic cycle of violence. Repression is not only evil – it doesn't work.

The arguments presented against state recognition for Palestine now are spurious. To confirm its status alongside Israel is not a "reward for terror", as Netanyahu claimed last week, adding that a sovereign Palestine would be a "terror state" that would "try to repeatedly carry out the massacre of 7 October".

Yet some 140 governments, out of the 193 UN member states, now recognise the state of Palestine – and our Government recognises states, not their governments, an important distinction. There will be no recognition for Hamas, for Fatah, or for any other faction. If Hamas seeks to wipe Israel off the map, it only stands to lose when states reaffirm their recognition of Israel along pre-June 1967 lines. British recognition of Israel has been a fact for over 70 years and is completely unaffected by recognition of Palestine.

Nor is British recognition of Palestine "premature". It is decades overdue. MPs voted overwhelmingly for recognition ten years ago. Since 2011, our Government's policy has been to recognise the state of Palestine "at a time of our own choosing, when it will best advance the cause of peace". That time is now.

It is wrong to subordinate recognition to potential peace negotiations. The current Israeli administration asserts that it has the right to all of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Netanyahu's coalition agreement explicitly states that only Jews are entitled to self-determination on that land – a racially defined claim. While he remains in office, there will be no negotiations. The prospects thereafter are, at best, uncertain.

It is for the UN Security Council, working with regional partners, to create the framework in which peace with justice can come about. In 1948, Britain sought to wash its hands and transfer its historic responsibility to the United Nations. The UK retains a duty to do better. The inauspicious days as the Mandate Power are long gone, but Britain still has influence to exert, for good or ill.

The United Kingdom is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, alongside France, now the leading foreign policy player in the European Union. The UK should work closely with France, the US, EU, Israel's Arab neighbours and those Commonwealth partners now also contemplating recognition, particularly Australia and New Zealand.

Recognition can bring with it two rare commodities – hope and respect. Hope that there will be a genuine and sustained international effort, with the United Kingdom at last playing its full part, to address inequalities, discrimination and shared insecurity by exclusively peaceful means on the basis of international law and UN Security Council resolutions. Hope that Israelis can live in safety, recognised by all their Arab neighbours, and that the Palestinians can realise their right to self-determination.

As for respect – the United Kingdom has shown scant respect for Palestinian rights for a century and more. Recognition of Palestine alongside Israel would begin to show parity of esteem for two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli.

It is not the whole answer. But it's the right start.

• **Sir Vincent Fean is a former UK Consul-General, Jerusalem, and a trustee of the Balfour Project charity.**

Read the article here: <https://balfourproject.org/like-ireland-and-more-than-140-other-countries-it-is-time-the-uk-recognised-the-state-of-palestine/>

• **UPDATE:** Scotland's first minister and SNP leader John Swinney has written to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Labour leader Keir Starmer to demand that they recognise a Palestinian state. Speaking on a campaign visit to an exhibition of poems written by children in Gaza (see article below), Swinney claimed his party had been Westminster's moral compass on the conflict in Gaza. He also said it is important the UK "take steps to bring about an immediate ceasefire". He added, "this catastrophe has got to be brought to an end. We have to stop selling arms to Israel."

Spain, Ireland and Norway have formally recognised a Palestinian state, in what they say is an attempt to refocus attention on efforts to find a political solution to the war in the Gaza.

BEAUTIFUL RESISTANCE: THEATRE FROM GAZA NOW – WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2024

An evening of powerful storytelling and moving theatre performances from Gaza, showcasing the beauty and resilience of the human spirit with an illustrated talk by Nick Bilbrough, the founder of the educational charity Hands Up Project sharing the stories behind two short plays. Through its network of volunteers HUP connects children around the world with young people in Palestine. By means of online interaction, drama and storytelling activities, it enables the use of creativity and self-expression to promote mutual understanding, personal growth, and the development of English language skills.

The first play: **It will be over soon** is performed by children in a newly formed drama club in Jabalia camp, northern Gaza. The second play: **I can 2024** is a remake of a winning play from the 2018 remote theatre competition, performed from their tents in Rafah.

Anne O'Connor writes: I watched Nick's moving presentation. The children clearly enjoyed putting together their short plays which they performed in English. This was partly to improve their language skills but also, as we learnt in the Q and A, to give a degree of distance from the situation they are in – by using a language other than their own they can develop a new persona that takes them out of the horrors of war.

Basim, one of the winners of the drama competition of 2018, reprised his play 'I Can' for 2024, performing with the same two friends, standing together among the rubble.

During the play he says: "we suffer but we are born again amidst the suffering. I can achieve anything." The image (right) shows him with the words "I am a human" written across his arms. In the final frame of the film we see Nick and then other adults and children holding up their hands, palms facing, with the words "we can" written clearly.



The film then pans out to give smaller and smaller images of all the hands in one great montage, accompanied by rousing music. This scene had echoes of the closing credits of Richard Curtis' hit movie Love Actually which gives a similar focus on the power of love and solidarity.

Basim says: "Yes, I can. I am a human. I always knew you were with us, holding our dreams, listening, sharing our pain, wanting to help. It's not 'I am' anymore. It's 'We can.'"

Nick's talk accompanies a touring exhibition **Moon Tell Me Truth**, with art and poems from the children of Gaza, at the Scottish Poetry Library from Thurs 28 May-Thurs 20 June 2024 free and open to all Mon-Thurs 10am-3pm. The event is supported by the Scottish Palestinian Forum and Peace & Justice (Scotland) as part of a series of events across Edinburgh curated by Heather Kiernan and Iliyana Nedkova to support the Hands Up Project.

Moon Tell Me Truth exhibition and events across Edinburgh: <https://linktr.ee/moontellmetruth>

Hands Up Project: <https://www.handsupproject.org/>

Scottish Palestinian Forum: <http://scottishpalestinianforum.org.uk/>

Peace & Justice (Scotland): <https://peaceandjustice.org.uk/>

UPDATE: May 20, Heather Kiernan writes: Children in a besieged enclave write poems inspired by two paintings. They enter them for a competition and the competition poems are made into a book, complete with the two paintings and illustrations by the poets for their poems. At least two of the children whose poems are in the book were killed while the others have been displaced. Meanwhile the poems, and the pictures, were made into an exhibition that is travelling to Edinburgh this week. At rallies and events supporting Palestine, and at openings of the exhibition, the poems are read out.

Fatema Saidam, killed last October aged nine, with her whole family, lies as dead as Homer and Sappho, and her words are working in the world just like theirs:

Legs are for walking slowly

And also run

Hands are for shaking with friends

Not for shooting gun

May 21, Heather writes: Yesterday I posted the poem of young Fatema who, along with her family was killed last October by an Israeli airstrike. Today's poem is by 14-year-old Obada who also wrote his poem for the Hands Up poetry competition. He was killed last October in an Israeli airstrike. I was struck by the illustration that accompanies the poem. The words seem to emanate from a heart, almost medical in design. This is Obada's poem:

I always dream of a life

Clear as the serenity of the sky.

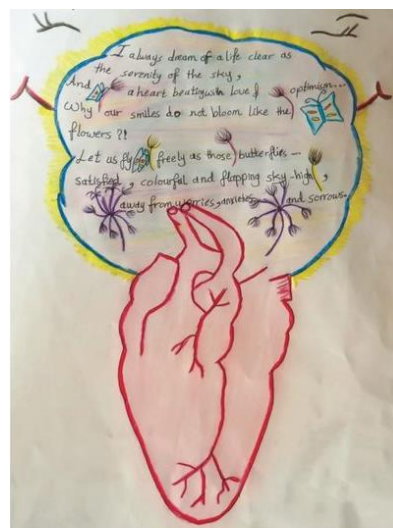
And a heart beating with love and optimism.

Why our smiles don't bloom like the flowers?

Let us fly as freely as those butterflies ...

Satisfied, colourful and flapping sky-high,

Away from worries, anxieties and sorrow.



Obada Mohammad Abu Oda | 14 years old | Palestine

May 23, Heather writes: Today's poem is by Roa'a Al-Masri, aged 13.

My darling's face is sad.

The moon's face in our homeland is sad.

Sad you are my city

... you the spring of tears and a long sad history

... you are the painting of pain and expressions of pain.

Your eyes have the green colour of olives and the blue colour of sea

... while the night falls over the face of life.

Darling: wipe out that sadness and weave the dress of impossible from the tears.

June 2023, Alice Oswald writes: 'Wipe out that sadness and weave the dress of impossible from the tears.'

"Those lines by a 13-year-old have stayed in my head since I read them and now I will always think of poetry as the dress of impossibility. How wonderful to make clothes out of tears and alter the world by wearing it. Even more wonderful to know that this poem, like the others in this book, was written by a student under fifteen, for whom English was a second language.

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD: Moon tell me truth (with a foreword by Alice Oswald, Professor of Poetry, Oxford University) (EPub) £4.95. All the poems in this collection were entries for the 2023 Hands Up Project international poetry competition, written and illustrated by children aged 9 to 15 from Palestine, Argentina, India and Spain.

<https://www.handsupproject.org/shop/moon-tell-me-truth>

FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

Caroline Ward writes: Friends of the Holy Land was established in 2009 and is an ecumenical, non-political charity. We work to support the lives and witness of Christians living in the Holy Land through prayer and practical projects, recognising that their presence in the land where Jesus once walked is an important witness to all Christians.

We fund a mixture of sustainable and immediate relief work and our beneficiaries come from all Christian communities in the Holy Land. A network of lay and clerical professionals, rooted within the Christian community in the Holy Land verify our projects and beneficiaries. They quickly identify cases where our support has the potential to make the Christian community stronger and more resilient.

Our mission is to secure a resilient and enduring Christian community in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan.

We achieve support for our mission in the UK in four main ways:

- Raising awareness: of the challenges faced by Christians in the Holy
- Prayer: we encourage prayer on their behalf
- Fund Raising: we generate funds to provide practical help
- Pilgrimage: we encourage visits to the Holy Land to meet local Christians

Our work focuses on five key areas:

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Housing improvement
- Emergency Support

The war in Gaza has devastated the community. There were approx. 1000 Christians in Gaza at the start of October. Some have been lucky enough to leave but most are sheltering at the Holy Family Church (Latin parish) or St Porphyrios (Greek Orthodox). Many have no homes to return to.

The effects have been much wider reaching than just Gaza. The West Bank has been locked down. Borders have closed. Tourism has stopped. Estimates suggest over 200,000 people lost their jobs in the West Bank, about 24% of employment (International Labour Organization). But most of all there is fear. Fear of escalating violence, fear of being shot or attacked, fear of demonstrations and indiscriminate arrest and fear of an uncertain future.

The most important thing Friends of the Holy Land are doing during this time is being in contact with our team and continuing to fund our projects as well as looking to new projects. We cannot change the situation, but we can make it a bit more bearable by giving our support - practically, prayerfully and emotionally. We speak to our team and Committee in the Holy Land several times a week. We let them know that they are being remembered in prayer by Christians all over the world, as well as the financial support being offered.

The people of the West Bank are proud of their heritage and where they live; they don't like making their tragic circumstances public. They do not want sympathy from us, they do want practical help. Friends of the Holy Land has sent £120,000 of aid directly to the Christian communities in Gaza. We have increased emergency support in the West Bank. We are exploring more projects to support employment and healing of the most vulnerable, including psychosocial interventions for trauma support, scholarships for vocational training, water projects to replace rusty tanks and enable access to clean water and employment and empowerment opportunities for women and young people.

We want to help the Christian community to rebuild a sustainable future to remain in the Holy Land.

New Chairman to guide us through the challenging times ahead. Sadly, Jim Quinn has retired as both a Trustee and our Chairman in April. Jim had been a Trustee since 2013 and we are most grateful for his many years of guidance and dedicated service, helping Friends of the Holy Land grow to where it is today. We are very pleased to announce that the Rt Rev William Kenney has agreed to take over the role as our chairman, with immediate effect. An Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, +William is well known for his work internationally, especially the Middle East, being involved for many years with the Holy See's Holy Land Coordination.

For more information about Friends of the Holy Land, please visit our web site: www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

PREPARING FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

Catholic organisations have been quick to produce resources designed to be useful to parishes, groups and individuals preparing for the general election on 4 July. Without being party political, the resources are intended to prompt engagement with the election process, highlighting issues of importance to the churches.

THE COLUMBAN JUSTICE, PEACE AND ECOLOGY TEAM offers election guidelines in its latest newsletter such as “materials for discernment, engaging with candidates and manifestos, and, ultimately, playing our part in encouraging candidates to be disturbed by injustice and ready to respond lovingly for the common good”, says team coordinator James Trewby. Themes tie in with CAFOD and SVP, with an additional call for candidates to support the Climate and Nature Bill, which would require the UK to achieve climate and nature targets, and peacemaking initiatives: <https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/14136/columban-vocation-for-justice-newsletter-preparing-for-the-election/>

Hard copies can be ordered here for distribution in parishes and bringing to meetings:

<https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/14110/request-extra-copies-of-vocation-for-justice-election-edition/>

CAFOD AND THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY have produced A Year of Encounter, a resource to help the Catholic community engage with their candidates in the election. See: <https://cafod.org.uk/campaign/uk-general-election-2024-a-guide-for-catholic-voters> and also here: <https://svp.org.uk/encounter>

CARITAS SOCIAL ACTION NETWORK (CSAN) has published Do Justice: A Vision for Spiritual and Civic Renewal in England and Wales: <https://dojustice.co.uk/csan-statement-on-general-election-2024/> This document might be a good place to begin your preparations for a Catholic response to the General Election, as a reminder of the Gospel-inspired principles which inform our reflections. See other Do Justice resources here: <https://dojustice.co.uk/>

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES has assembled a range of teaching resources on seven key issues: criminal justice, domestic poverty, family life and taxation, education, environment, international, human rights and peacebuilding, life issues and migration as a guide on how to vote for the common good: www.cbcew.org.uk/election24/ The bishops urge Catholics to engage with the election process and to vote.

THE CATHOLIC UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN, which has members of its team in Parliament, will be producing its election literature soon. Updates here: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/2024/05/the-election-campaign-begins/>

THE CENTRE FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICE, based at Durham University, has produced a range of resources for parishes and first-time voters: <https://ccstp.org.uk/>

OTHER RESOURCES

CITIZENS UK. Many Catholic parishes and individuals are involved with Citizens UK. Their manifesto outlines eight areas where community leaders are calling for change: www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/citizens-manifesto/

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND resources: www.churcheselection.org.uk/

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND is launching a campaign known as [#PrayYourPart](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/general-election-2024-invitation-pray-nation) - to promote prayer and participation in the life of our nation and communities, both as voters and as citizens. A series of daily thematic reflections written by bishops, drawn from the Bible and exploring major themes will cover the final three weeks up to polling day. See: www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/general-election-2024-invitation-pray-nation

THE JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM (JPIT) a partnership between ecumenical groups including the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, say, “We believe that Christians have an important role to play in elections: to love, to pray, and to vote.”: <https://jpit.uk/general-election-praying-and-preaching>

GREEN CHRISTIAN AND OPERATION NOAH have also produced a general election pack for churches: <https://greenchristian.org.uk/general-election-pack-for-churches/> again urging churches to support the campaign for the Climate and Nature Bill and to bring it to the attention of candidates.

And don't forget this year's NJPN conference JUST POLITICS <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

NJPN 46th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

July 19 – 21 at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick

The theme for the weekend is **'Just Politics'** and the aim is to explore the need for truth and integrity in public life.

- As people of faith, how are we called to work towards honest dialogue and respectful listening in political and social engagement and seek good governance in all seats of power; local, national, and global?
- What is our gut response when we hear, via our news channels, that the forthcoming election will be full of 'dirty tricks and muckraking'?
- How should we respond to such a depressing and alarming prediction?
- Is this the level of public discourse that we must accept?

Sir John Battle will chair the conference, bringing his vast knowledge and experience of Catholic Social Teaching in action both in the political sphere and community engagement.

During the weekend we will hear from Keynote speakers, take part in workshops, find resources and information in the 'Just Fair' and listen to the voices of young adults as they share their hopes and concerns for the future of our world.

Right Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford, will explore some of the dynamics of public discourse, the implications for individuals and society, some possible solutions and opportunities for Christians and the Church to play a positive role.

Molly Scott Cato, Former Green MEP and currently Finance and Economy Spokesperson for the Green Party will speak about how untruth is undermining democracy.

Steve Whiting, former manager of the Quaker Turning the Tide Programme, will start to pull together what we have learned from speakers and workshops and help us identify common themes.

Colette Joyce of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission will facilitate the session with young people speaking about their concerns, what action they can take and what they look for from others.

The final part of the conference will be facilitated by **Fr Chris Hughes and Sara Bryson** who will share and describe how they have used community organising in campaigns in Tyne and Wear Citizens. They will focus on how participants accept the challenges raised during the weekend and how we move forward in our action for peace and social justice.

For more details of the Conference and booking form to download see: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

REFUGEE WEEK 17-23 JUNE 2024

"How can Christians welcome refugees? Stories from Beirut and Bristol" Monday 17 June, 6-7.15pm

Embrace the Middle East invites you to a FREE WEBINAR

The Middle East has been shaped by conflict and the resulting displacement of large numbers of people. Many of Embrace's partners are involved in welcoming and supporting refugees – often in far more challenging social and economic conditions than in the UK.

The issue of how we treat refugees has been in the UK media a lot recently. At Embrace, we think we can all play a part in building a kinder, safer and fairer world for refugees – whether we live in the Middle East or the Midlands.

We'll be joined by Catherine Mourtada from Embrace's partner Tahaddi in Lebanon and Dan Green, co-founder and director of Bristol-based charity, Bridges for Communities. We'll be asking Dan and Catherine about the joys and challenges they face in their work, and the role their faith plays. We'll also learn about some of the bigger-picture issues facing people who have been forced to flee their homes. There'll be an opportunity for you to put your own questions to the speakers.

To join the webinar go to: <https://embraceme.org/events/webinar-how-can-christians-welcome-refugees?>

TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD: THE UPPER ROOM

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Acts 2 v1

Jenny Sinclair writes: A General Election is a time to consider seriously the condition of our country. One way to start might be to focus on policy, but this can miss what's really going on: the policy agenda is often driven by a political class disconnected from the country. Another way is to approach the question from the old political categories of left and right, but these can be misleading. And both approaches omit the transcendent. A better way for Christians is an approach anchored in God's reality. We might imagine doing this somewhere like an "upper room".

An upper room brings to mind a rarely used space at the top of a house, or even a practice of solitary prayer. But in first-century Holy Land the upper room was a place of communion. It was a place of fellowship and reunion, of encounter with scripture, of conversation and deliberation, a place to gather around a meal at the end of a long day. It's said that even the poorest families kept such a room furnished so that guests could be welcomed.

It was this kind of upper room where Christ met with his disciples. It was in such a room that he washed their feet and ate the final Passover meal. It was here our Lord introduced the communal practice of the Eucharist and here that the apostles received the Holy Spirit. It was in the upper room that they discussed their engagement with the world, and from here they left and here they returned. Perhaps our distinctive approach to consider the state of our country might be best done somewhere like an upper room.

Some of us are fortunate to have such a place of fellowship. But for many, spiritual life is a solitary activity. Like going to the gym, in the dominant individualistic sea in which we swim, even the idea of prayer is privatised. But the early church was communal: at the heart of the home, it was grounded in the neighbourhood and infused with the Spirit of God.

Our discernment around what is going on in our country needs to be anchored in a similar way. The framework of Catholic Social Teaching can help: sometimes referred to as the theology of the Holy Spirit in practice, it infuses our deliberations with both the transcendent and the rootedness of real life. Attuned to God's view, it trains us to join him in the neighbourhood, look for the flourishing of human beings, communities and relationships, and to call out any system which overcentralises power and undermines human agency.

Seeing our country through this portal reveals an operating system geared to benefit finance capital, generating human distress, failing to serve the interests of families and communities. A forty-year neoliberal misadventure, perpetuated by parties of both the left and the right, has driven a low wage, high welfare economy. This model has enriched a few while 5.2 million people are on out of work benefits and 14 million are classified as living in poverty. This ideological mismanagement has broken large parts of our country. And so we see the reason for the disconnect, and why people are so angry and alienated. A new government promising "stability" while not delivering fundamental reform is not serious about change, even if they use that language. The fundamentals will stay the same. There will be a continuity of collusion between government and big corporations to insulate financial interests from democracy. This is unacceptable from a Christian point of view.

A new government may well attempt mitigation by further centralising the welfare state, but the system inevitably will continue to generate pathologies that far exceed capacity. The churches will no doubt be invited to partner with social action and service-providing help. But the risks to the church are real: saviour complex, becoming a handmaid to the state, burnout and mission drift. Perhaps the greatest risk is that the church will inadvertently end up propping up an unjust system, alienating the very people it aims to help.

Instead of delivering services in a benefactor-recipient dynamic, Christians are called to build local relationships of reciprocity. The churches themselves are marginalised and in need of friendship: they must learn to receive as well as give. Together we can build a common good to resist the principalities and powers of the day. At a time when global instability is likely to get worse, emerging forms of local association are going to become more and more important. To ward off the darkness of this new time, we will need many upper rooms. We'll need places of communion, and to become communities of place.

Texts, slides and recordings from a recent talk on these themes by Jenny Sinclair - Session One: The Challenge We Face: Reading the Signs of the Times, and Session Two: Hearing the Call: Discerning Our Unique Vocation to Build the Common Good: <https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/from-jenny-sinclair/living-the-common-good>

Download resources, in-depth articles and podcasts: <https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/>

Subscribe (free): <https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/what-you-can-do/subscribe-to-our-newsletter>

FAIRTRADE NEWS

From 8 June to 16 June, Fairtrade supporters nationwide are coming together to urge shoppers to swap to Fairtrade, so more farmers can earn enough to take on the climate crisis. **Our Protecting Forests with Farmers petition** is calling on UK politicians to support farmers like Jaime, who are swapping to sustainable farming methods to protect forests.

"We have implemented agro-forestry systems which bring shade and mitigate some of the effects of climate change, as well as reforesting certain areas, avoiding the degradation of the soil and minimize our carbon footprint" says Jaime Alberto García Flórez, who grows cocoa and Fairtrade coffee on his farm in Colombia.

Jaime is a coffee farmer from the Red Ecolsierra coffee Fairtrade co-operative in Colombia, he experiences some of the worst effects of climate change on his farm. The changes Jaime and his fellow farmers have made have led to positive results. Biodiversity has improved, soil has become healthier and more trees are now protected. By supporting Jaime and others like him, we can pave the way for a fairer and more sustainable future for agriculture.

By signing our petition to the UK government, you can urge Ministers who are right now preparing new laws on deforestation to make those laws fair, and to invest in the skills and knowledge of farmers like Jaime. You will be joining more than 10,000 people who have already signed to shape policies that could protect our environment.

The Climate Crisis isn't fair! Climate change disproportionately affects the same farmers in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific who also disadvantaged by our rigged global trade system. That's why we need Government action on Climate Justice and Trade Justice, and why we launched our Protect Forests with Farmers petition. But fortunately, we don't have to wait for Government action to stand with farmers taking on the climate crisis.

Swapping to Fairtrade products means farmers like Jaime can earn a fairer income, meaning they are able to do more to tackle climate change and its effects on their community. With your help, we can get many more people signing our petition and swapping to Fairtrade. And that could make Great Big Green Week 2024 the biggest and greenest yet!

SIGN THE PETITION: <https://action.fairtrade.org.uk/page/145890/petition/1?>

BIG GREEN WEEK JUNE 8 – 16



The Great Big Green Week is the UK's biggest ever celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. Every year, people come together to unleash a wave of support for action to protect the planet. Tens of thousands of people in every corner of the country celebrate the heartfelt, brave, everyday actions being taken to stand up for nature and fight climate change.

For 2024, we'll be celebrating swaps – from clothes or book swaps, to skill swaps in allotments or upcycling workshops, to knowledge swaps on discussion panels or wildlife reserves. Events are hosted by teachers, bus drivers, sport clubs, artists, community groups, places of worship, libraries, builders – anyone who cares about climate change.

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/about/>

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/find-an-event/?>

BIG GREEN EVENTS IN THE NORTH WEST

Friday 7 June THE SUSTAINABILITY FESTIVAL 2024 Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, Lyceum PI, Manchester

Are you passionate about nature, social and climate justice – then come along to the 3rd annual festival on action for sustainability. This brings together people who are passionate about socio-ecological justice and climate action. Family friendly Food / refreshment available. Free event. Ticketed event. Disabled toilet. Toilets on site. Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/the-sustainability-festival-2024/>

Saturday 8 June POP-UP PATCHERS Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BG

Have simple clothes repairs done for free or, even better, be shown how to do them yourself. Free event. Toilets on site. Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/pop-up-patchers/>

Saturday 8 June ACCRINGTON ECOFEST 2024 in Accrington Town Centre Broadway, Accrington.

For the 3rd year in a row, the Prospects Foundation will be hosting 'Accrington EcoFest' Everyone from the borough of Hyndburn & beyond is invited to come take part in an eco-celebration! Family friendly. Free event. Outdoor event. Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/accrington-ecofest-2024/>

Saturday 8 and Saturday 15 June HOME GROWN National Trust - Acorn Bank, Temple Sowerby, Penrith

The Garden Team at Acorn Bank will be sharing ideas for easy ways to grow fruit and veg in small spaces, in mini 10 minute talks between 10.30am and 4pm. Learn how to grow salad on your windowsill, a pot-ful of spuds, strawberry pallets, how to keep supermarket herbs going. Family friendly Food / refreshment available. Free event. Outdoor event. Baby changing facilities. Disabled toilet. Toilets on site.

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/home-grown/>

Sunday 9 June SIX INCHES OF SOIL FILM SHOWING Kirkgate Arts, Kirkgate, Cockermouth.

Our current food system is both a miracle and a disaster. Cockermouth CAN is presenting Six Inches of Soil, an independent British feature film, which follows the inspiring story of British farmers standing up against the industrial food system and transforming the way they produce food. Family friendly Food / refreshment available Ticketed event. Toilets on site. Disabled Access.

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/six-inches-of-soil-film-showing/>

Monday 10 June ARNSIDE'S BIG GREEN PLANT SWAP Arnside Educational Institute, Church Hill, Arnside, Carnforth.

Anyone can come to the event and swap plants, indoor or outdoor, seedlings or cut flowers, for free. The event takes place in our Educational Institute, at the same time as the Community Cafe. Everyone is welcome from Arnside or from elsewhere. Family friendly. Free event. Outdoor event. Disabled toilet. Toilets on site Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/arnsides-big-green-plant-swap/>

Tuesday 11 June VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY AT LYTH HILL NATURE RESERVE Lythbank, Shrewsbury SY3 0BT

Join our rangers at Lyth Hill Nature Reserve for a day of practical activities to help maintain the site. Depending on what needs doing, activities can include planting, shrub clearance, path and gate maintenance and wild flower management. Meet at the car park off Lyth Hill Road, SY3 0BT at 10 am. No facilities on site- please bring your own refreshments. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/volunteer-work-party-at-lyth-hill-nature-reserve/>

Wednesday 12 June GREEN WAYS Bramhall War Memorial, Bramhall Lane South, Bramhall, Stockport

A circular three and a half mile walk along old paths and new byways linking green spaces in Bramhall. Wear sturdy footwear. Family friendly. Free event. Outdoor event. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/green-ways/>

Wednesday 12 June TREES & RIVERS Bentham Town Hall & Tourist Information, Station Road, Bentham, Lancaster, 7-9 pm

The River Wenning Group will be holding a talk about a tree planting event carried out in January 2024. Come and hear about a project in our community. Jemma Wilson from Lune Rivers Trust and Jonathan Stubbs, from Bentham, will tell us about recent tree planting by Ellergill Beck. Free event. Toilets on site. Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/trees-rivers/>

Wednesday 12 June LET'S TALK ENVIRONMENT Christ Church, Sullart Street , Cockermouth , CA13 0DX

Cockermouth Rotary Club host an annual conference and this year our theme is 'Let's Talk Environment'. The theme will be around 'Let's swap ideas, information, good practice, seeds and passion for our environment'. Family friendly Food / refreshment available. Free event. Disabled toilet. Hearing aid loop. Toilets on site. Wheelchair accessible. Disabled Access. Ticketed event. Book here <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/lets-talk-environment/>

Saturday 15 June WOODS WALK for adults and children. Carrwood Road, Bramhall, Stockport

A walk around Carr Wood, observing and listening to what's in the woods with local nature expert. Wear sturdy footwear Family friendly. Free event. Outdoor event. Disabled Access.

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/woods-walk/>

Saturday 15 June CARR WOOD TASK DAY

Family friendly Free event Outdoor event Disabled Access

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/events/carr-wood-task-day/Carrwood Road, Bramhall, Stockport>

CHESTER GREEN WEEKEND 15-16 JUNE

Chester Green Weekend is a new event to Chester which will be part of the national Great Big Green Week. It has come from a collaboration of Chester Great and Small Ambassadors¹ who are responsible for various sustainable activities, including AT Fest, Green Expo, Sustainable Cheshire Fair (Eco Communities) and the Oh design Foundation. ¹ https://chestergreatandsmall.co.uk/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Join in with fun activities taking place around the city and in Grosvenor Park, focused on raising the awareness of what we can all do to tackle the climate and nature emergency. This free event features activities, workshops, walks, stalls, food and entertainment. **Link to events here:** <https://wlgf.co.uk/locations/chester-green-weekend-24/>

Book tickets to keep up to date with all the weekend's activities:

https://www.tickettailor.com/events/ecocommunities/1207946?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Active Travel Festival Sunday 16 June

It's nearly here! Take a look at the ATfest website for all the exciting details ...<https://atfest.uk/>

- Partner stalls in Town Hall Square
- Glamorous Gals and Dapper Chaps cycle ride around Chester
- Stunt Bike display in Exchange Square
- Children's Fun in the Kitchen area and a talk by Prof Peter Cox in the Garrett Theatre at Storyhouse, plus a film the following weekend
- Kiddies Zone near the old market entrance
- Fun demonstrations on the stage in the Market by the Bike Factory
- Dance workshops in Exchange Square
- Bike decorating as well....

Special screenings of 'Wilding'

Based on Isabella Tree's best-selling book by the same title, Wilding tells the story of a young couple that bets on nature for the future of their failing, four-hundred-year-old estate at Knepp. The young couple battles entrenched tradition, and dares to place the fate of their farm in the hands of nature. Ripping down the fences, they set the land back to the wild and entrust its recovery to a motley mix of animals both tame and wild. It is the beginning of a grand experiment that will become one of the most significant rewilding experiments in Europe.

Watch the trailer at <https://www.wildingmovie.com/>

There is now a new documentary WILDING with two special screenings taking place at Chester Picturehouse on Thursday 13 June, 8pm and Storyhouse Chester on Saturday 15 June, 3.30pm where there will be a recorded Q&A with author Isabella Tree. You can find out more about both events at <https://www.wildingmovie.com/screenings>

Chester & District FoE seeking volunteers to help launch repair cafe

Forum members may well be aware of this initiative. Repair Cafés are pop-up events held on regular dates where the local community can get their broken household items repaired by volunteers for free or for a small donation. Friends of the Earth want to form a core team to help set up and organise the Repair Café, and they need to know what support they can get from other volunteers and 'fixers'. Initial 'kick off' meeting dates are proposed for July, after the General Election. Check out the link below for more information, and to register your interest. <https://chesterfoe.co.uk/chester-repair-cafe/>

Festival of Ideas 4-7 July

The Festival of Ideas is a programme of free, inclusive and accessible public events on a wide range of themes in and around Chester, co-created by the University of Chester and external stakeholders and city partners. These events may include; speakers, discussion panels, theatre, pop-up exhibitions, interactive events, music, readings, guided walks and many more! The Festival is founded on the University of Chester's mission to create community and serve society through the transformative power of education, research and our Citizen Student Strategy. <https://www.chester.ac.uk/citizen-student-strategy>

The Festival will provide a platform for residents to engage in ideas and discussions about our city's history and its future. The events programme will seek to inspire residents to think about civic participation and it will encourage collaboration between private enterprise, public services, education providers and the community, voluntary and faith sectors in Chester, so that we can work together to ensure a healthier, greener and fairer future for all of Chester's people. <https://festivalofideas.chester.ac.uk/>

CLIMATE JUSTICE EVENT LIVERPOOL

Climate Justice Gathering Saturday 29 June 2024 St Bride's Church, Percy Str L9 7LT 9.30am to 4.30pm

Join us in Liverpool for a day of networking, talks and workshops and welcoming space for individuals and groups to engage with the Climate Crisis and enjoy opportunities to network

- Hear and interact with Local Campaigns around Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis
- Discover how we engage with the General Elections and the Climate Crisis
- Explore the importance of International Solidarity and Solidarity with Migrants
- Workshops on building our networks and tools to work together better and engage with the wider civil society: faith groups, trade unions, community groups
- A Climate Café to reflect on our feelings around the Climate Crisis and recognise the importance of preserving our Mental Health
- Explore the issues of Air and Water Pollution
- Plan the next steps for our Liverpool City Region Climate Justice Coalition

Full programme to be confirmed but you can register now:

<https://actionnetwork.org/events/climate-justice-gathering-liverpool-city-region>

ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTION NETWORK CONFERENCE

4 July 2024 Liverpool

This partnership event between Housing Justice, Together Liverpool and the Archdiocese of Liverpool will bring together policy makers, workers and volunteers involved in social action, to interlink themes, make partnerships, and advocate for change. The keynote speakers will focus on Homes, Housing and Land, with workshops.

SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOP LEADERS INCLUDE:

Beki Winter, Housing Justice: The housing crisis and role of faith communities

Rev'd Shannon Ledbetter, Co-Founder of Housing People Building Communities: From derelict churches to affordable housing in the Archdiocese of Liverpool

Kevin Hyland, Co-Founder of Santa Marta Group: How we can tackle the devastating impact of human trafficking on victims and our local communities.

WORKSHOP THEMES WILL INCLUDE:

Asylum, Refugees and trafficking: What is the current situation – practically and politically?

Housing Crisis: Where faith meets housing – what is the contribution of the faith?

More details and booking here: <https://archdioceseofliverpool.churchsuite.com/events/1yerqfks>

CAFOD NEWS LANCASTER DIOCESE

CATHOLIC PARISH SUMMIT: CAFOD will be present at Catholic Parish Summit on June 12-14, 2024. Do let us know if you'll be going and come and say hello - look out for us in our CAFOD T-shirts. <https://catholicparishsummit.com/>

SPECIAL EVENT ABOUT GIFTS IN WILLS: On Thursday 6 June we will be holding a special event in the beautiful seaside location of St Joseph's Prayer Centre, Formby to learn more about how CAFOD uses the generous donations from people who have left a gift in their Will. Please can you encourage parishioners to come along. To find out more go to: <https://cafod.org.uk/give/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/legacy-events>

Upcoming and recorded online events

<https://cafod.org.uk/volunteer/online-talks>

Our Voices of Change Podcast (latest episode with Clare Dixon)

<https://cafod.org.uk/voices-of-change>

Latest news <https://cafod.org.uk/news>

And don't forget our Year of Prayer webpage

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/year-of-prayer>

Please share the prayer for the Year of Encounter (see opposite)

Patrick Gardner Community Participation Coordinator – Lancaster Diocese pgardner@cafod.org.uk 07920 565 454

A Prayer for the Year of Encounter

*Mary, model of encounter,
you heard God's call.*

*Teach us to listen deeply
in our polarised world.*

*Mary, woman of courage,
you sang joyfully of God's justice.
Inspire us to challenge inequality
and call for fullness of life for all.*

*Mary, seeker of sanctuary,
you fled violence and persecution
Be with us as we seek peace
and respect for human dignity.*

*Mary, mother of community,
you joined the disciples at Pentecost.
Pray that the Spirit will empower us
as we act together for the common good.
Amen.*

THE BIG RIDE FOR PALESTINE: RIDE AGAINST GENOCIDE AND OCCUPATION IN 2024

Calling all cyclists and supporters from Merseyside, Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales, for this year's Big Ride for Palestine.

The Big Ride for Palestine started 9 years ago in response to the devastating loss of children's lives already happening in Gaza in 2015. Riding is a great way to show your solidarity for Palestinians and raise funds for Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) for children's projects and more recently, for Palestine Riders and for the Gaza Sunbirds paracycling team.

2024 has been very different from previous years with the horrifying genocide in Gaza and the unending harassment of Palestinians in the West Bank. Sadly, we have also witnessed the brutal destruction of playgrounds like the one The Big Ride funded in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza.

Jane Marshall writes: This year The Big Ride is going Regional. I'm contacting you as a member of the organising group for our Region. The ride will be in Liverpool on Saturday 20 July and we are busy getting the route sorted and planning a really good day for cyclists and supporters.

At present it's looking to be about 26 miles through city parks, a cycle way, some quiet roads and some busy roads where we can make an impact. There are opportunities to do a shorter ride by hopping on a Merseyrail train partway. There'll be a rally at the beginning from 10am at the Pier Head and a fund-raising social event with food from about 5 in Liverpool 8 - we're working on this now.

We're very much hoping that there'll be riders from across the region, and also volunteers for marshalling on the ride, providing support vehicles, mechanical and first aid, help with rider registration, support at the break stops, support with the evening event, food, offers of accommodation for those from afar, and generally to help raise awareness of the ride and get riders.

Email janesbigride@gmail.com to let us know how you want to be involved, with a tel. no. and email address and we'll put you on our supporters list. Any queries, do please ask. We look forward to meeting lots of riders and supporters from all over the Region.

Jane Marshall, The Big Ride Regional Planning Group

Booking for this ride is now open: <https://www.thebigride4palestine.com/big-ride-2024>

REGIONAL BIG RIDES THIS SUMMER

Saturday 20 July

North of Ireland (lead city: Belfast)
Yorkshire & North East (lead city: Sheffield)
Merseyside & North Wales (lead city: Liverpool)

Saturday 3 August

Lancashire & North West (lead city: Manchester)
Midlands (lead city: Birmingham)
South Wales & South West (lead city: Bristol)

Saturday 10 August

London & South East
with rides converging from North (Kings Cross), South (Croydon) and West (Paddington) London



LANCASTER DIOCESE FAITH AND JUSTICE COMMISSION

Save the date! Saturday, 12 October 2024

Lancaster Diocese Faith and Justice Commission will be holding an event at the Lancaster Cathedral Social Centre, Balmoral Road Lancaster, LA4 3BT.

Speakers will include: **Bishop Paul Swarbrick, Sir John Battle and Clare Dixon** from CAFOD.

More details to follow but do feel free to contact me if you would like to register your interest to come:
Sue Grubic Faith & Justice Worker Diocese of Lancaster ldfsue@gmail.com or by text on 07791 444 417

DREAMING OF A HARMONIOUS EARTH

17 May 2024: Pastor and Climate Change activist Brian McLaren shares his vision of a restored Earth where humans live equitably with the Earth, other humans, and the more-than-human world:

This is my dream, and perhaps it is your dream, and our dream, together: that in this time of turbulence when worlds are falling apart, all of us with willing hearts can come together ... together with one another, poor and rich, whatever our race or gender, wherever we live, whatever our religion or education. I dream that some of us, maybe even enough of us, will come together not only in a circle of shared humanity, but in a sphere as big as the whole Earth, to rediscover ourselves as Earth's multi-coloured multi-cultured children, members of Team Earth.

I dream that the wisdom of Indigenous people, the wisdom of St. Francis and St. Clare and the Buddha and Jesus, the wisdom of climate scientists and ecologists and spiritual visionaries from all faiths could be welcomed into every heart. Then, we would look across this planet and see not economic resources, but our sacred relations ... brother dolphin and sister humpback whale, swimming in our majestic indigo oceans, with sister gull and brother frigate bird soaring above them beneath the blue sky. We would see all land as holy land, and walk reverently in the presence of sister meadow and brother forest, feeling our kinship with brother bald eagle and sister box turtle, sister song sparrow and brother swallowtail butterfly, all our relations.

In my dream, the reverence we feel when we enter the most beautiful cathedral we would feel equally among mountains in autumn, beside marshes in spring, surrounded by snow-covered prairies in winter, and along meandering streams in summer. In my dream, even in our cities, we would look up in wonder at the sky, and a marriage between science and spirit would allow us to marvel at the sacredness of sunlight, the wonder of wind, the refreshment of rain, the rhythm of seasons. At each meal, we would feel deep connection to the fields and orchards and rivers and farms where our food was grown, and we would feel deep connection to the farmers and farmworkers whose hands tended soil so we could eat this day with gratitude and joy.

In my dream, our life-giving connection to each other and to the living Earth would be fundamental, central, and sacred ... and everything else, from economies to governments to schools to religions ... would be renegotiated to flow from that fundamental connection. In my dream, we would know God not as separate from creation, but as the living light and holy energy we encounter in and through creation: embodied, incarnated, in the current and flow of past, present, and future, known most intimately in the energy of love.

Source: Brian D. McLaren, *Life after Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart* (New York: St. Martin's Essentials, 2024), 248–249.

Read this meditation here: <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/dreaming-of-a-harmonious-earth/>

BOARBANK HALL PROGRAMME FOR 2024

Catholic Social Teaching Residential weekend 28 June-1 July. Theme: Revisiting the Basics. A long weekend to revisit the basic ideas and some key texts of Catholic Social Teaching. Would suit especially anyone involved in work in Justice & Peace, Care for Creation, or with young people. All welcome.

Thinking Faith Summer residential week 27 July-3 August 2024. Theme: What Catholics *Really* Believe
Time out for working Catholics.

Living Laudato Si' Residential week 5-12 October. A week to explore how to live out *Laudato Si'* fully in our personal lives and within the Church. All welcome.

We welcome bookings from parish, school or student groups or any other groups who may benefit from our hospitality. We also work with schools to provide INSET days to suit each school, with the option of overnight stays. All our residential events combine talks and discussions with Mass, Prayer of the Church and opportunity for personal prayer, in a context of friendship and community in our beautiful Cumbrian setting beside Morecambe Bay.

Any group who would like help in arranging a programme or speakers for any kind of retreat or residential event should contact Sr Margaret Atkins on margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or 015395-32288

Boarbank Hall, Allithwaite, Grange Over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7NH www.boarbankhall.org.uk

NEW DOCUMENT: CALLED TO BE PEACEMAKERS

A Catholic approach to arms control and disarmament published by the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The publication affirms that: 'As Christians, we are called by Jesus to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) In the modern world, an integral aspect of this mission involves working to limit the proliferation of weapons and advancing the cause of global disarmament' and that 'these challenges are relevant to the mission of the Catholic Church in England and Wales today'.

Pax Christi UK writes: We welcome the publication and are grateful for its clarity on a number of issues which are key to our work and campaigns. The Bishops are calling, for example, for the UK Government to fulfil its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to promote an end to the UK's role in the global arms trade. They urge the Government to take meaningful steps towards General and Complete Disarmament and, in particular, to support a new UN Special Session on Disarmament. This is something we are currently involved in calling for with Scrap Weapons.

The Bishops ask us, with them, to support the diversion of military spending towards spending on peace and integral human development which will be one of the key calls we will be making in the upcoming General Election.

They promote the principles of 'Mensuram Bonam' in relation to investment in the arms industry which will be a support in all campaigns arguing for divestment by Catholic investors from any companies involved in the arms trade or the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons. In their concluding reflection, the Bishops remind us that Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. We believe, of course, that it is along this path that we can find the fresh hope, energy and tools we need to eventually put an end to war. This truly is the 'radically counter-cultural approach' the Bishops refer to in their conclusion and we invite everyone to join us who wants to explore that approach further and work for its realisation.

You can read the full document on the CBCEW website here:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/05/Called-to-be-Peacemakers.pdf>

Mensuram Bonam: Faith-Based Measures for Catholic Investors

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/plain/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/01/Mensuram-Bonam-ENG.pdf>

A CHALLENGING NEW BOOK

Just Worship is a new book by Stef Benstead, which will explore questions of giving and justice, and challenge Christians to live lives that reflect the God they worship. The book will be published in July 2024 by Darton, Longman and Todd. We know the book will be a fascinating read for anyone interested in how we live out our faith and work for justice. We hope many supporters of Church Action on Poverty will read it.

Stef has agreed with the publisher that she will buy and distribute the first 500 copies, at a cost to her of £3,750. This is a challenge for someone currently supported by disability benefits. If you'd like to read the book, you can help now, by pledging to buy one of those copies: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/justworship> Pledge your support now, and you can receive a copy of the book on publication for £10 (the recommended retail price will be £15). Or make a larger pledge, and you can receive a signed copy - or 'pay it forward', allowing someone on a low income to get a free copy of the book: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/checkout/justworship/start>

The book's synopsis: God loves a cheerful giver. He must, then, hate an uncheerful giver. And he must loathe taxes. Right? Or perhaps not. And what about those on the receiving end of charity; what do they prefer? They might prefer justice to charity. Christians are called to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as God is perfect. The way we live should lead people to praise God, as our good deeds show the world what God is like. So what is God like? How do we live lives that reflect his character? How do we make sure that every part of our lives – not just the religious parts – are lived in worship to God? And in particular – how do we work for justice and live just lives as part of our worship of God? *Just Worship* explores all these questions.

About the author: Stef Benstead is an independent researcher in disability and welfare. Chronic illness means that her capacity for activity is limited, and she is dependent on social security for her main income. She is an evangelical Christian committed to working for justice for people in poverty in the UK. She is a trustee of Church Action on Poverty and a member of Manchester Poverty Truth Commission. She is currently studying for a Master's in Theology, Community Development and Social Change at the Nazarene Theological College. This will be Stef's second published book. Her first was *Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in austerity Britain*.

DIARY

JUNE

1 Pax Christi England and Wales Annual General Meeting, Friends Meeting House, 22, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT. paxchristi.org.uk/agm/ 020 8203 4884

8 Women Making a Difference. An illustrated talk by Susan Flynn of her recent visit to the 10th Anniversary Celebration of Chanasa, a small charity in Malawi, which empowers girls and women through funding their education and enabling them to generate an income. 2pm -4pm in the lower church hall of Hoole URC Hoole Road, Chester CH2 3NT. Refreshments available. All welcome. www.chanasachifundomalawi.org

8 'RIPPLES OF HOPE' a CAFOD gathering 11am – 4 pm at The Dormer Conference Centre, St Peter Apostle Roman Catholic Church, 3B Dormer Place, Leamington Spa CV32 5AA or join us online. Whether you are joining us in person in Leamington Spa or online on Zoom, look forward to a day filled with hope, friendship and the joy of jubilee. On the agenda: Inspirational Catholic speaker David Wells, the latest news from CAFOD Director Christine Allen, sharing ideas, hopes and solidarity with other CAFOD volunteers, joyful prayer and singing. Register here: <https://cafod.org.uk/news/events/ripples-of-hope>

8-16 Big Green Week The UK's biggest annual call for action on climate change and nature. Local events at: <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/>

13 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting 2pm St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

13 Next Frontiers conference 2024: Stewarding wealth for people & planet online 8.30am-5.30pm Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Register here: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/events/next-frontiers-2024>

15-16 Chester Green Weekend <https://wligt.co.uk/locations/chester-green-weekend-24/> (see page 12)

17-23 June - Refugee Week <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

17-24 ICAN Global Week of Action on Nuclear Spending
<https://www.icanw.org/global-week-of-action-on-nuclear-spending>

29 Merseyside Pax Christi Retreat at The Irenaeus Project, Great Georges Rd, Liverpool L22 1RD contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

29 Liverpool Climate Justice Event St Bride's Church, Percy Str L9 7LT 9.30am to 4.30pm. Networking, talks and workshops: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/climate-justice-gathering-liverpool-city-region> (See page 13)

JULY

4 Liverpool Catholic Social Action Network Conference – a partnership event between Housing Justice, Together Liverpool and the Archdiocese of Liverpool to reflect on social action – through the lens of housing, homelessness and land. **Details and booking here:** <https://archdioceseofliverpool.churchsuite.com/events/1yerqfks> (See p. 13)

19–21 JUST POLITICS NJPN 46th Annual conference at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick. Building on the work of the past two years' conferences this conference will seek to explore the need for truth and integrity in the public place. More details and booking form to download: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>
See also: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference-2024/njpn-conference-information/>

26 UN Day in Support for Victims of Torture <https://www.un.org/en/observances/torture-victims-day>

SEASON OF CREATION 1 September - 4 October

Theme: 'HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION.' It urges campaigning for climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities impacted by climate injustice and biodiversity loss. <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

● **READ NJPN E BULLETIN ON GAZA:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-ebulletins/njpn-e-bulletin-on-gaza/>

See other NJPN bulletins here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/category/njpn-ebulletins/>

● **Sign up** for regular news and information from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org 020 7901 4864

● **Read the SUMMER issue of MOUTHPEACE the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses:** <https://jpsshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/mouthpeace-summer-2024.pdf>

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

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