

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](mailto:anneoc980@hotmail.com)



## EDITORIAL: JUBILEE 2025 PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Pope Francis declared 2025 to be a year of Jubilee using the theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope', urging us to look for signs of hope in the world around us and to work for peace and justice. The linked themes of 'hope' and 'pilgrimage' provide a firm foundation for us in these turbulent times. Hope that we can trust in the God who loves everything he has created and pilgrimage as we journey through life with all its ups and downs, ever mindful of the hope our faith brings.

A few years ago, I came across a book that made a deep and lasting impression on me: *Hope's Work: Facing the future in an age of Crises* by David Gee (published in 2021 by Darton, Longman and Todd). In the book David shares stories of people resisting oppression not through violence, but through living an alternative way – the Palestinians who lose their homes to Israeli violence still practising hospitality in the ruins, the refugees facing the tragedy of the world with open eyes and hearts. He encourages those of us engaged in the struggle to change the world for the better to carry on; and to realise that we don't have to carry the burden of hope alone.

After reading *Hope's Work* I signed up for David's blogs and we corresponded a few times. With David's blessing, I reprinted his words on several occasions in the monthly NW NJPN e-bulletin. He was one of those rare people who touch you deeply, even after a fleeting acquaintance.

In his final blog he shared his experience of terminal cancer with grace and dignity. He was only 52, yet there was no self-pity, only a quiet acceptance, drawing the positive out of a negative situation. David had an exceptional gift with words. These final musings, with a focus on love, celebrated the innate goodness in people, bringing comfort and hope:

"I spend a lot of time lying on my back daydreaming, writing a bit when I can in the mornings. Beneath me is the physical assurance of a bed, which I don't take for granted. Beneath me too is the solidarity of love from all those who have flocked to cook me food that sadly I can't always eat, offer lifts to the hospital, waft up their prayers or the balm of a poem, offer a few minutes' company and urge me on adventures I can't yet join. Their waves of care lift me from my bed, take me crowd-surfing under a night sky where every star constellates the companionship of care. How beautiful we are when love is drawn out of us like this – how natural we become. What testimony against the commonplace that 'people are made violent and always will be'. Love is there, underneath, has been all along, waiting for our invitation. This is hope." <https://hopeswork.org/2024/05/07/gift/>

I have shared these words with others and all have been deeply moved. This is David's legacy to the world, bringing hope and love in the midst of all that so often seems hope-less. **Anne O'Connor** June 8, 2025

Here's an extract from **Hope (3/8): A place of promise** Oct 22, 2019: "'Hope is something you make every day'. This is Basma, and the first thing she tells me about hope. When a militia came to burn down her home in Libya, she and her daughters ran for their lives under a barrage of bullets. Now Basma lives in Liverpool as a refugee, caring alone for her children, working odd jobs, studying human rights. I ask her the difference between real hope and false, and she says, 'You have to face the tragedy of the world.'

"In my conversations with people well-grounded in their hope, I've been finding that they share a fervent feeling for the vitality in the world around them.

"Celia's been an activist since her schooldays in Italy. She says she's always felt hopeful, despite the baked-in injustices that she's been railing against for years, because 'life is beautiful'. About ten years ago a massive earthquake levelled her house, burying her in bricks; she was presumed dead. In the darkness under the rubble hope was all she had left, she tells me. I ask why hope stayed with her. Because above her in the light of day, she answers, she knew that 'life is beautiful'.

"As a nurse in palliative care, Joe has cared for many people who are dying. Accompanying his patients towards their death has drawn him closer to 'what makes life worth living and death worth dying and the present worth being in'. Every moment of our aliveness carries worth, Joe says, even when – especially when – death waits around the corner.

"Joe and Celia know that the world is a tragic place, but also that it's not merely tragic. Hannah, a community worker, puts it perfectly: even 'in a broken world, things aren't fully broken'. If hope had a slogan, this might well be it. And since the world is far from 'fully broken', it's still a place of promise." <https://hopeswork.org/2019/10/22/promise/>

On his blog David says, “the word ‘hope’ comes from the Old English ‘hopian’, meaning to trust, or to hold faith. It may come from the word ‘hoffen’, meaning to hop or to leap. It may be that to hope is to make a leap of faith.” To read all the blogs, go to: <https://hopeswork.org/>

David was a passionate campaigner for climate justice. He understood the power of pilgrimage too. In the blog ‘**Hope and the ecological crisis (4): Water music**’ he reflected, “Our walk, on the ancient pattern of a pilgrimage, bears towards the COP26 climate summit. But as a pilgrimage, the true destination is not a place on a map but a change within us, a hoped-for turn of the heart.” Here’s the blog in full, sadly still relevant today:

#### **BLOG: HOPE AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: WATER MUSIC**

*My life flows on in endless song  
Above earth’s lamentation,  
I hear the sweet, tho’ far-off hymn  
That hails a new creation;  
Thro’ all the tumult and the strife  
I hear the music ringing;  
It finds an echo in my soul—  
How can I keep from singing? – Robert Lowry, 1869*

Finally, water – the long black plastic pipe first gurgles, expectant, then jumps to life with an unruly gush. We cheer, those of us who hold its sudden weight, and begin running it back and forth while Nick takes the end and tries to control the torrent. He drenches this dusty aloe, that lanky sapling, then fills the shallow channels dug into the dirt, which like fractal veins carry this salvation right across the grove.

This shouldn’t be happening. The arterial river runs right next to us, or should. In spring, when the snowmelt tumbles off the sierra, the river swells half a mile wide, but it ran dry months ago and the autumn rains are late again. The Andalusian sun still bakes the ground daily. Even the evergreen, ever-patient olives, now close to harvest, are wrinkled for want of water.

For weeks, the water pit has gaped empty, and now the giant steel cistern is down to the dregs too. Until the river comes back, every cup counts. When we’re done with the puddle’s-worth we use for the washing up, we pour it under whichever plant seems to need it most. We wee strategically, under a different tree each time. There’s no shower; you climb the hill to a neighbour’s inch-deep irrigation channel no wider than your hips, and splash away.

It’s been expensive to run this pipe a mile or so down-valley to a diesel pump, and in just two hours it’ll be shut off, but until then it’s playtime. Wherever the water strikes the ground, grey dust turns to black mud in an instant, like a spell. Rubbing it between finger and thumb, it’s possible to believe once again that this is soil, the ground of all life. By noon the next day, the same ground is back to bone-dry, but Nick checks the olives and they’re plumping up...

A month on and these daydreams of Andalusia swim back to me as we wade through floodwater outside Falkirk. It sluices sideways off the farms and over the towpath, sloshing over our sodden boots. Bridges tip their streams onto the path in a brash clatter. The canal simmers with the downfall, silver in the half-light. All is drunk with the deluge. The grasses, laden with it, sprawl across our way. It rolls in languid, heavy drops over the umbers and ochres of old oaks and beeches. It hangs from new haws in hundreds of glass beads, each one holding the world still, preserving it perfectly upside-down.

Few of us know this land well, but as we make our way west, the company of its life has been introducing itself. From the curlew’s clarion purl on the estuary to the private symbiosis of lichens along the canal, we’ve all been getting acquainted.

But the infrastructure of violence has been with us, too. We’ve skirted the aristocrat’s estate, passed the place warships are made, picked out pellets from the plastic factory washed up on the strand. Last night, we climbed to the crest of a bluff and looked down on the massive oil refinery at Grangemouth, wondering at the alien noises that burst sporadically from its tangle of pipes and towers. I thought of the Babylonian patriarch Nebuchadnezzar, who with biblical hubris looked down from his palace: ‘Is this not Babylon the Great, which I myself have built by the might of my power... for the glory of my majesty?’

It hit home that this unintelligible machinery pumps power to our shopping malls, motorways, and mail-order warehouses, and to the oil wars that keep the whole torpid phantasmagoria artificially alive. And I recognise myself in it, too, it has shaped my whole life. The entire complex glistens up from the mudflats, lit a sickly orange by flaring gas-stacks and security lights, and I feel I’m looking in a mirror.

Our walk bears towards the COP26 climate summit on the ancient pattern of a pilgrimage. But as with all pilgrimage, the true destination is not a place on a map but a change within us, a turn of the heart. The point is not in getting there but in returning home afterwards: more alive, more present – more available, as the Taizé abbot Frère Roger once put it.

Our walk is just a walk, but it's one with intention. If Babylon's machinery is pushing Kiribati under the sea today, we want to hold this knowledge tight and keep asking what that means for us and our society. We don't want to forget, either, the children waiting for us in the wet to show us the posters they made to encourage us to care for all life. Or the community choir who stand around them, coats dripping: 'Thro' all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing; / It finds an echo in my soul— how can we keep from singing?' We let their song soak in with the rain.

And although Nebuchadnezzar's story confronts the vanity and corruption of our own society's ways, I want to remember that it's also a fable of forgiveness and hope. For all his hubris, the biblical story spares the king from death. He was sent instead into exile to live in the wild among the animals. His freedom would be restored, but not until he was 'drenched in the dew of heaven' – until the arid patriarch learned for the first time his place on earth.

Today we crossed the watershed. All day, the rain's been crackling off our hoods. Now and then we let it land in our hair and listen to the susurrating canal guiding us on to Glasgow. Along the way, these notes of falling water have been an enchantment all of their own, bathing us in their music. And as we move through the land, so it has been moving through us, tilting us towards its peace. In a word, it woos. In leading us away, astray, it even seduces – though by no power pushier than the perennially open invitation of our ecological place.

I realise I've been slowly falling towards a feeling of home. We all talk of this or something like this, plumbing for the words, but it speaks most clearly when we fall quiet. We are awed, but that's not the point. Awe comes pretty cheap, as anyone knows who has marvelled from the mountaintop at nature as a distant spectacle. This is different, intimate, a kind of learning. We feel moved, certainly, but we're also being moved, turned around. In coming to know, little by little, the company of this land, our feeling for its worth moves from abstract principle to visceral knowledge. We learn to love it.

We may even be learning the converse: that 'in your loving is your knowing', as the theologian Liz Templeton once insisted. It's a bold a beautiful possibility that certain kinds of knowing – the kinds that keep life well – only come to us once 'loving' matures to be more than a way of feeling, but also a way of thinking. I look up into the rain, watching it fall from high heaven, letting it splash in my face. I'm skin to skin with it now, drenched.

Stepping back, I hear a sceptical voice, too, which wants to interrupt. It's suspicious of the idea that the way out of our ecological emergency is to spend more time wondering at the natural world, any more than it's to fix it with better tech. Doesn't our crisis shake down to a radically relational cleft: a social and political culture that treats much of the life around us as expendable, without worth of its own?

This does indeed seem to be the underlying violence of our predicament, the place where the real hurt comes from. To face it, the imperative has to be justice – social and ecological justice at the level of the biosphere. We don't need to spend time with the trees to know that the likes of Grangemouth are making the whole world sick, sending entire peoples, cultures, species to oblivion. Or do we?

Very belatedly, I've been taking a closer interest in how elders and activists of indigenous peoples have been talking about the crisis. Without wanting to romanticise their lives, they're clearly better placed to speak than I. They've been living closer to the earth, and to the harm of our latter-day Babylon's domineering violence. And what they have to say is not the aloof, we-can-fix-it narrative that often prevails in climate debate.

Each time I hear indigenous elders speak, in their diversity, about the ecological crisis, a common, twofold refrain comes to the fore. First, the way to survival lies in honouring ecological and social justice, which nature knows as balance. If we think it's about reducing carbon but not righting relationships then we're no further on.

Second, the honouring itself is not found in hollow principles like 'respect for the planet', but in cultivating mutual, close relationships with its living places. You can't save the soil if you don't know what it is, and you won't know what it is if it hasn't spent time under your fingernails – and those of your ancestors. The repeating plea is not only that we recognise a crisis of ecology as one of injustice, but also that we devote time to the ecology itself as the place we ourselves live. Let's not make the mistake that love without justice is real, but let's not imagine, either, that justice is possible without love – without being in love with the life now held at risk. For the way to love and justice is through attention.

So, sink those hands in the loam. Let the rain reach you. Know the long story of the place you call home. Learn, says Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, to read the language of the natural world. Search for the grammar of its animacy, writes Robin Wall Kimmerer, and find there its laws and government, the democracy of species.

After all, this is an inspirited world, where even water is alive – especially water, says Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq. All beings belong. You, me, the stranger, the refugee fleeing war and hate and other dried-up places, even the stranded soul of a vain and violent king – we all have a place here with the curlew and the lichen.

Such is the saving knowledge of people who have not lost themselves.

And it's not because people of indigenous cultures are a special kind of human being, but because they still come together to remember their place in the scheme of life – to remember what matters, for it is what they love. As for the rest of us, aren't we all Nebuchadnezzar now? If we are to hope for the same second chance offered him, then we too need to find ways to remember who we are and our ecological place, and so come to know for the first time what it means to be involved in the great society of the earth.

Reaching Glasgow's edge, we stop off at Lambhill Stables, built to rest the weary horses that once worked the waterway. Like their coats then, ours now are soaked right through, though we get to sit, sip hot chocolate, and warm up while we drip.

Out the back, we're led up to a shallow ridge that looks over Possil Marsh, which curves away from us between a line of pylons and the A879. Nearly 150 species of birds have been spotted here, sharing their wetland home with a boggling profusion of beetles and butterflies. Among the marsh's 'ecosystem services' – or 'gifts', as Robin Wall Kimmerer prefers that we imagine them – is to hold safe its share of three billion tons of Britain's peatland carbon.

Like all homes now, this one's future is uncertain. With its wee loch, the marsh is already one of only three natural bodies of water left in the Glasgow area. It has to survive the toxic run-off from roads and farms, the loss of keystone species, the absence of traditional land-work that would keep it in health, and the encroachment of ever-pushy 'development opportunities.' It's surrounded by life out of balance.

As is Lambhill itself, a former mining community where unemployment runs at 32 percent, child poverty at 40 percent. The life expectancy of a boy born here is just 70 years; in South Kensington, it's 82. Evidently, this economically cheated neighbourhood has been written off as one more 'sacrifice zone' in our socio-ecological landscape.

But it's not a hopeless place. For a few years now, the stables have been a community hub, worked by and for the people who live here. We're shown the volunteer café serving good homemade food on a budget, cooked up from the big communal veg patch next door. The stables host a long list of clubs and classes, as well as a low-cost bike repair shop for the local community.

The volunteers are fond of Possil Marsh – it's their manor. During summer, the aquatic and fenland plants burst into colour, among them the pale yellow of the scarce tufted loosestrife. Right now, under the autumn squall, the muted browns and greens remind me of pike skin. A Google review says the marsh makes for a good date. It's certainly a place to fall in love.

Water is everywhere now – beneath our feet in the peat, and still hanging heavy in the clouds in every direction. Not far ahead: Glasgow city, its streets already colonised by corporate marketing in anticipation of COP: big business brandishing its 'green' credentials in stock images of trees and valleys. Soon and with thousands of others, we'll precipitate into the same streets as human rivers of grief and anger and hope.

Far behind now: the community in Andalusia. I can still picture the caked ground, the heat of the wind, the ancient olives – and the open-hearted people, whose hope is just to find a place to live well without adding to all the harm. My stay there was too short. 'You should see it in spring, it explodes everywhere green,' Nick said with a sudden smile as I was leaving. 'I'd love to be here for that,' I said, 'but I need to get back.'

I am still with them, though, waiting in all expectancy for the mountain river to flow again: that 'sweet, tho' far-off hymn / that hails a new creation'.

**David Gee** December 9, 2021 <https://hopeswork.org/2021/12/09/water-music/>

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FIND OUR HUMANITY? – A TRIBUTE TO DAVID GEE

Child Rights International Network (CRIN) March 6, 2025

Our beloved colleague David Gee passed away at the end of 2024. We wanted to take time to share about David's life, his work and his humanity. David believed in the power and the purpose of hope. As we work and hope in the days ahead, we will continue to carry him with us.

David was a warm and generous person who shared the meaning of his life – in both living and in dying – with many. With David's same spirit of giving, we wish to share with our community more about who he was, what he dedicated his life to, what we learned from him and what impact he has left on us. As the world continues to present its many challenges, we feel it is important to be reminded of what it means to be a genuine human being – one who is curious, thinks of others, reflects upon the path our world is on, and who calls on all of us to think and act with foresight, integrity and kindness.

David was such a human.

David worked with CRIN since 2017. He wore many hats, including as a peace activist, but his primary role at CRIN was as an expert on ending the military enlistment of children in the UK armed forces, campaigning for a rise in the minimum military enlistment age from 16 to 18. You can learn more about this work, including the impact it has had, here: <https://home.crin.org/military-recruitment>

He worked on this issue for nearly 15 years, both at Child Soldiers International and later at CRIN. He conducted extensive research, wrote briefings and reports, developed campaign strategies, met with MPs, spoke with journalists, listened to those with lived experience, and collaborated with staff working on this issue.

David felt strongly that the UK's military recruitment of children is a grave injustice and a violation of children's rights. His last report<sup>1</sup>, published weeks before his passing in December, documented over a decade of abuse at the UK's main army training college for under-18s, including testimonies from former recruits.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://home.crin.org/readlistenwatch/stories/children-in-uniform-a-decade-of-abuse-at-army-foundation-college>

<sup>2</sup> <https://home.crin.org/issues/military-enlistment/testimonies>

There can be no doubt that if one day the UK raises its age of military enlistment to 18, it will be in no small part because of David Gee.

But David's contribution to CRIN went beyond what he did, it was also how he did it. David was beautifully reflective, and an incredible listener. When you met with him, he was genuinely curious about what you thought and felt about something. He would encourage you with simple words, infused with care and insight. He had high standards, but he also knew how to gently bring out the best in people. He would make you smile and laugh through any challenges.

The world right now – at least for us – feels less humane. As tensions rise and divisions become starker, our world calls for more David Gees, not fewer. We feel that the qualities he had are qualities that can be present in all of us.

Despite our deep admiration for David, he would not want to be put on a pedestal. He was human, like everyone else. That is what we think he would want us to reflect upon. What does it mean to find our humanity? To show up for each other - in moments of crisis and uncertainty? What does it mean to be alive to the world, facing its tragedies and accepting our limits, but doing the work all the same? In spite of - or in defiance of - our restrictions?

This is what his living – and passing – has made us consider at CRIN. Because who David was, at the core, was so wonderfully human.

We are sending our love, appreciation and care to David's partner, family and friends. And we would encourage every reader to visit David's blog<sup>3</sup> to get a deeper sense of the person David was. We will miss him tremendously and carry him with us, always.

<sup>3</sup> <https://hopeswork.org/blog/>

It feels only right to end with David's own words: "A hopeful place here, would be alive to the world, inspired by its promise and willing to face its tragedy. It would have a feeling for what matters most and a real commitment to it. It would accept the limits of its power, knowing that its work still counts. And it would be a centre of solidarity: both inwardly, in cultivating the integrity of genuine community; and outwardly, in reaching for alliances with others."

<https://home.crin.org/readlistenwatch/stories/what-does-it-mean-to-find-our-humanity>

**WALTER BRUEGGEMANN March 11, 1933 - June 5, 2025**

*Like the ancient prophets,  
we are dispatched back to the good work entrusted to us.  
It is the work of peace-making.  
It is the work of truth-telling.  
It is the work of justice-doing.  
It is good work, but it requires our resolve to stay it,  
even in the face of the forces to the contrary  
that are sure to prevail for a season.*

~ Walter Brueggemann

Renowned theologian Walter Brueggemann has died, but his prophetic voice lives on. In one of his powerful talks, he reminded us: Jesus acted out the alternative to empire. May we carry that dangerous, hopeful imagination forward.  
<https://sojo.net/articles/walter-brueggemann-jesus-acted-out-alternative-empire>

## **WALTER BRUEGGEMANN: JESUS ACTED OUT THE ALTERNATIVE TO EMPIRE**

**Source: Sojourners** June 22, 2018

Sojourners Editor's note: *The following is the transcript of a speech delivered via video by Walter Brueggemann on June 15 to attendees of Sojourners' 2018 #SummitforChange. His thoughts prompted a standing ovation from the crowd gathered. We're honored to share them with our readers now:*

I want to think with you about prophetic imagination in the ancient world of the Bible, and prophetic imagination in the contemporary world. But I want to begin by thanking Jim and the Sojourners community for the powerful witness that they sustain. It is a witness that is so important to the rest of us, because it empowers us to try to get our energy and courage mobilized for prophetic ministry as well.

I have come to the conclusion that the prophets can only be understood if you understand that their context is an ideological totalism, that intends to contain all thinkable, imaginable, doable social possibilities. That totalism always wants to monopolize imagination, and it wants to monopolize technology, so that there are no serious alternatives that seem on offer.

In the ancient world of the Bible, that totalism is represented and embodied by the monarchy of Solomon in the Jerusalem temple. The king was surrounded by priests in the temple and by scribes who did the fine print to legitimate everything. And that totalism was completely intolerant of any alternative thinking.

We are able in the Old Testament to identify many of the features of Solomon's totalism. First of all, it was an economy of extraction that regularly transferred wealth from subsistence farmers to the elite in Jerusalem, who lived off the surplus and the device and the strategy for that extraction was an exploitative tax system.

So, you remember that at the death of Solomon, under his son Rehoboam, there was a tax revolt, and they killed the tax officer who had regressive tax policies. That totalism also represented a strong military. Solomon was an arms dealer: Partly Solomon's military was for show, and partly it was for intimidation. The totalism also had to exercise enormous economic opulence to impress people with wealth, so that Solomon's temple is essentially an exhibit of Solomon's much much gold. The temple, and the priest who operated the temple, fashioned a series of purity laws to determine who the purer people and the impurer people were, to determine who had access and who was excluded from the goodies.

I have come to think that the three-chambered temple of King Solomon is a lot like a commercial airline. There was the outer court for women and gentiles. There was the inner court for guys in suits. And there was the holy of holies, where only the high priest could go. And that flows a lot like the tourist cabin and the first-class cabin and cockpit, where only the high priest can go. So everything is delineated by rank, and therefore by opportunities that come with it.

And this whole enterprise of extraction and exhibit and grandiose commoditization was all blessed by a very anaemic God, whose only function was to bless the regime. So that under Solomon, you get chosen king, a chosen city, and a chosen land, to the exclusion of all those who were not chosen.

And what you can see in the biblical record is that this totalism was completely impatient with and intolerant of any alternative thinking. It was prepared to crush any alternative thinking, which was represented by the prophets. So what you get is the expulsion of the prophets, or the killing of the prophets, because they challenge the totalism that was legitimated by this anaemic God.



So, in the way the history of the Old Testament works: For 400 years you get a recital of the kings of the family of Solomon, and these are the point persons for the extraction system.

But when you read along in First and Second Kings, what you see periodically are eruptions of poetry. These are the prophets who come from nowhere, and they regularly unsettle the kings, and they come to occupy space in the historical recital. If you look at those prophets, you can see first of all that they are without a pedigree. They don't have any credentials that legitimates what they want to say. Second, they come from nowhere. They are people who do not accept the truth of the totalism, and the way they articulate their coming from elsewhere is that they either say, "Thus says the Lord," or they say "The word of the Lord came to me," and "the Lord" becomes a kind of a signal that this is a word that will not fit or accommodate the totalism.

The prophets, moreover, were deeply grounded in the old covenantal traditions and the wisdom traditions. So that they knew that there were structures and limits that were inherent to the way of creation that could not be marked with impunity. They have a very vigorous notion of the governance of God. But along with that sense of tradition, they have an acute sense of social reality.

They know how to follow the money. And they know that if you follow the money, what you can see is that the extraction system produces many grievances and cries of oppression and exploitation. And they have a peculiar affinity to the cries of injustice that they believe are the motor of creating futures. So when you add all that up — no credentials, coming from elsewhere, knowing the tradition, doing social analysis — it is not surprising that the characteristic idiom of the prophets is that they speak in poetic rhetoric. They speak in language that on the one hand is porous and elusive and slippery, and on the other hand that can be dangerous and offensive and scandalous to people who live inside the regime.

So what you have in the Old Testament, when you read the royal history, is the managers of extraction who tend to operate with unambiguous memo. And disrupting that are these poetic voices that are dangerous and subversive and oppressive, because they are voices that come from outside the totalism and that refuse to accept the totalization as normative.

If you take the phrase "prophetic imagination," the imagination part of that is that the prophets are able to imagine the world other than the way that is in front of them. The word prophetic alludes to the reality of God. And what the prophets believe deeply is that God is a lively character, and a real agent who acts in the world, who causes endings and who causes new beginnings. And that's worth thinking about, because that is not ordinary thinking among us — that God is a lively agent and a real character.

If you consider most conservative evangelicals, they do not believe that God is a lively character and a real agent, because they've got God all packaged up into sustained systematic explanations. And if you consider most theological progressives, they don't believe that God is a real character and a lively agent, either, because they really believe that God has no hands but our hands.

So prophetic imagination is grounded in the conviction that God is doing something lively in the world. That it may be slow, but it is very sure, and that a new world is coming into being that will discredit and dismiss the old totalism.

If you look at what the prophetic tasks are, you can identify that there are three prophetic tasks.

The first prophetic task is to *be clear on the force and illegitimacy of the totalism*. And what we have to recognize is that almost all of us, conservative and liberals — almost all of us, clergy and laity — are to some extent inured in the totalism. We take it as normative. And to take that as normative is a great narcotic that makes us passive and apathetic. Becoming clear and unambiguous about the force of the totalism is a teaching point that we really have to work at.

The second task of prophetic imagination that I could identify is that we have to *pronounce the truth about the force of the totalism that contradicts the purpose of God*. That's called prophetic judgment. And my sense is that in the institutional church we are very quiet about prophetic judgment, because we and most of our parishioners are too deeply committed to totalism, and you really are not able to talk that way.

But if we understand the totalism honestly and clearly, then we have to talk about that contradiction. And we are able to say that a predatory system of economic extraction contradicts the purpose of God, that the extraction system in which we live, lives by cheap labor. And as we all know, that the history of cheap labor in the United States is grounded in the institution of slavery. So many of our economic arrangements are simply trade-offs to continue the practices of slavery.

And particularly, we might pay attention to the book by a Christian Baptist, *The Half of It Has Never Been Told*, which makes the compelling argument that the wealth of the United States basically is grounded in slavery. So if you think about the things that go around cheap labor and slavery, what you come up with is regressive taxation, high interest rates, stacked mortgage rates, and debt — so you can imagine the way we are helping college students get into insufferable debt, which assures that they will be willing workers in the extraction system for all of their working life. Plus, the fact that we have to recognize that this system is committed to the deregulation of banks and all sorts of deregulation, that lets creation be exploited. Deregulation really means the unleashing of predatory forces against the vulnerable.

We have to make room for other religious traditions, and respect the viability of their claims, and find allies where we can about the main prophetic tasks of justice and holiness.

And we have to recognize that the totalism in which we live is a system of incredible militarization, so that on the one hand what we are seeing is the militarization of the police, and on the other hand we are seeing the militarization of sports.

It turns out that the NFL is really the great military liturgy. And now at NFL football games, the announcer says, “Please stand, and place your hand on your heart.” It’s kind of coerced patriotism. And we are able to see, if you just look at anything on television, that the totalism is committed to consumerism. It believes that more stuff will somehow make us safe, and will somehow make us happy. So, this combination of acquisitiveness, militarization, and consumerism adds up to a doctrine of exceptionalism, which then gets translated into “Make America Great Again.” And it is all blessed by an anaemic God who has no function except to bless white nationalism.

If you just take the case of Colin Kaepernick<sup>1</sup>, you can see that this system is ready to ruthlessly silence anyone who speaks or acts to the contrary. So what prophetic judgment amounts to is making the case that acquisitiveness leads to violence, that militarization leads to bankruptcy, that consumerism leads to the evaporation of citizenship, that ecological exploitation leads to chaotic weather, that silencing leads to brutality, and that exceptionalism leads to white tribalism. It is a package that needs to be exposed at the teaching level of the religious community.

So the first task is to identify the totalism. The second task is to identify the contradictions that put us on the route to death, because one can see that we now live in a society that is engaged in its self-destruction.

And the third task of prophetic imagination is to *articulate the alternative world that God has promised, and that God is birthing before our very eyes*. If we have eyes to see it.

It is not often enough noticed that for all of the harsh judgment of Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah, there runs through their rhetoric extraordinary promises about beating swords into plowshares and not learning war anymore — all of which, I think, have come to contemporary fruition into Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have A Dream.” It is a dream that imagines a world that is completely alternative to the one in which we now live.

So I thought I’d take a stab at identifying with you four dimensions of that future, that prophetic imagination ought to be imagining.

These are all obvious to you, but there is some merit in lining them out. The first of these is a new ecological perspective in which the earth and all of the creatures of the earth are treated like covenant partners who are entitled to dignity and viability. Every acre, every squirrel, every radish, every whale, every cornstalk is entitled to viability and respect. And of course, I commend you as the Bible for this prophetic task, Wendell Berry. In his most recent book, Wendell Berry has the phrase that “we have a duty to be old-fashioned.” So, as you know, Wendell Berry does not mind being old-fashioned, and he will have none of the extractive consumerism that we tend to think of as normal. So for Wendell Berry, two ethical reference points are restraint on the one hand and frugality on the other hand. That new environmentalism is an alternative to the kind of world of plastic accumulation that is killing our oceans and our ocean creatures.

The second facet of prophetic promise that I could identify is a new ecumenism. Listen to this carefully: a new ecumenism that makes room for other chosen peoples, other than Western white Christians.

That does not mean that we Christians give up our claims about Jesus, and we are in the process of recovering Jesus. But it means to recognize that our claims about Jesus are not universal statements, but they are confessional statements about how we intend to live our life. And that means that we have to make room for other religious traditions, and respect the viability of their claims, and find allies where we can about the main prophetic tasks of justice and holiness.



The third facet of prophetic imagination, as you know, is a new economy that is organized around a love of neighbor and that is committed to the viability of widows, orphans, and immigrants. Widows, orphans, and immigrants are people who in the ancient world did not have advocates who were empowered by the totalism in a patriarchal society. So it becomes a test case for the economy, and it is a redistributive economy of respect and viability for vulnerable persons, and there is no way to cover over or to hide or disguise that we are talking about policies of redistribution. And obviously the 1 percent or the 3 percent or the 10 or whatever the top is intends to keep extracting from the vulnerable until we have only the 1 percent and big collection of subsistence peasants who have no economic viability. So what we have to do in the church is to educate the church that we are not really in the charity business, we are in the justice business.

And fourth, also obviously, the prophetic imagination means a new multiculturalism that opposes in all the vigorous ways we can think of white nationalism and all that's now of making white America "Great Again." The Bible, because of its permeation with chosenness, lends itself too easily for that reading of tribal chosenness. But there are all kinds of trigger hints in the Old Testament and in the New Testament to the contrary — that chosenness has to remain open, that God is in the business of choosing many other peoples.

The best text I know in the Old Testament is this anticipatory text: At the end of Isaiah 19, where the prophet said, "Behold the days are coming when God promises are all fulfilled. Behold the days are coming, when I will bless Assyria, my people Egypt to my chosen, and Israel, my inheritance" — which is a recognition that there are many blessed chosen peoples.

And in the New Testament surely the lead text is Peter's incredible vision in Acts 10, where God tells him to eat impure food to violate the old purity codes of Leviticus, and out of that comes this incredible dawning on Peter and Paul and all of the apostles that the good news of God's transformative love in the world is not a monopoly of any race or tribe or nation or tongue.

So, the practice of prophetic imagination, as you know, requires energy, courage, and freedom, and the sense of being otherwise. And I have no doubt that we are now arriving at a moment when there is no more middle ground. That we either sign on uncritically to the totalism, or we take on this task of dangerous oddness that exposes the contradictions and performs the alternatives.

Finally, I want to make a comment — and then I'll be finished — to make a comment about the institutional church. The institutional church is a very weak instrument for the prophetic imagination. But it is the best instrument we got. It is the best instrument we got because when people come to church they expect us to talk funny. They expect us to talk about God. And I believe we are now at a point when the church has got to recover its nerve and its energy and its courage and its freedom. To be about our proper business, the church cannot engage in prophetic imagination as long as it lives in the cocoon of the totalism. And that, of course, is where many clergy and the laity want the church to stay. Because you get rewards for that, and you get money, and you get payoffs, and you get success. But our mandate and our vocation is otherwise.

I think the church now must be more vigorously engaged in scripture after having been lazy for a very long time. And the church must do a much better job of social analysis than we have done, because very many church people think that social analysis feels like communism. And clearly the prophets were doing social analysis before anybody ever heard of Karl Marx.

The good news, that you can see all around now, is that the spirit is moving among us. It is the spirit of Jesus. And Jesus is that great voice of otherwise, who saw the contradictions of the gospel to the Roman Empire and who acted out an alternative.

Good Friday, which keeps being re-performed, was the last desperate reach of the totalism of the Roman Empire. They did their best. And I have come to think that we shouldn't use the word "crucifixion," we should use the word "execution." Jesus was executed as an enemy of the totalism. And Easter is that strange wondrous gift of newness that rushes beyond the totalism. It is no wonder that Mark ends his gospel by saying that they were afraid. It is very fearful to discover that the totalism is not normal. But it is the truth of the matter.

I am so glad that you gathered in D.C., to constitute this, brave, free, energetic community of prophetic imagination. I am glad that I am able, as much as possible, to stand alongside you in your vocation.

<https://sojo.net/articles/walter-brueggemann-jesus-acted-out-alternative-empire>

<sup>1</sup> Colin Kaepernick, the former NFL quarterback first 'took the knee' during the US national anthem at the start of a game in 2016 in protest against racial injustice and police brutality. Some praised his action but he was vilified by many. His action cost him his career — Ed.

## GAZA: IS THE TIDE TURNING IN ISRAEL?

Ian Linden June 2, 2025

No-one who has looked at the images of extermination of six million Jews in the Holocaust Memorial of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem will underestimate the impact of the appalling 7 October 2023 Hamas attack and hostage-taking on Israelis and Jews worldwide. No-one watching the daily TV coverage of the civilian dead and dying amongst the rubble of Gaza, and listening to radio reports of attacks on Palestinian communities on the West Bank, will underestimate the impact on our own public opinion and elsewhere.

The ability of Israel's Jewish State to define the purpose of this violence – and the wider conflict with Palestinian nationalism - has reached its limits. It has created the current spiritual crisis in Judaism. Partly in response to public opinion, the tone and tide of Western governments' reactions is changing. Why now?

For a long time Western democracies voiced concern rather than condemnation of Israel's conduct. Hamas, the sorcerer's apprentice that had received funding from Israel to split the PLO (Palestine Liberation Movement), had perpetrated a face-to-face version of 9/11. The ravages of ISIS and Al-Qaeda, Europe's millennia of antisemitism, all weighed heavily on the scales of foreign policy. The weapons kept coming from the USA.

After months of bombing and blockade, Israel continued to promote a story that this was a war for survival – rather than a war for the survival for Benjamin Netanyahu and his government, propped up by religious extremists determined to ethnically cleanse the land of Palestinians. Haaretz, Israel's oldest and most influential newspaper, was writing on 18 April that there was “no longer a war, but an unrestrained assault on civilians”.

The key to continuing unrestrained the invasion and destruction of Gaza while containing the volume of protest both inside and outside Israel, was to ‘kettle’ reporting and comment on public outrage in a wider story of antisemitism: to present as a further expression of antisemitism protest at the massive civilian casualties, blockade of Gaza, deprivation of all but the most rudimentary health care, near starvation and resultant malnutrition of a generation of Palestinians. But like most falsehoods it contained an element of truth. Islamic solidarity worldwide with the Palestinians can slip easily into antisemitism, and in the heated language of Left-wing protests sometimes Jews are conflated with the Israeli government. Some hate crimes have been prosecuted in Britain.

As protestors increasingly emerged from Jewish communities around the world and inside Israel – albeit at first a small minority - dismissal of protest at the conduct of the war as merely antisemitism became implausible, even if frequently repeated by Israeli government sources. Moreover, IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) bombing and shelling put the lives of hostages in danger. On 13 May a number of British Rabbis called for an end to the blockade. “What is happening in Gaza is completely against core democratic values and what I would call Jewish values that we are all made equal in the sight of God”, in the words of their spokesperson Rabbi Janet Laura Klausner. Trump's Riviera of the Middle East, AI-generated social media video brought out some 350 US Jewish leaders in denunciation.

Dissent with the conduct of the war has been growing in Israel. Last week, 40 NGOs issued an urgent appeal to stop the war. A Catholic news service, Independent Catholic News, carried this significant story about civil society resistance to the war in Israel. I have not found it reported elsewhere in the UK.

The organisations included - to give some sense of their range - Rabbis for Human Rights which has increasingly been supporting Palestinians on the West Bank against settler attacks, a co-operative village founded by Jews and Arabs, Neve Shalom Wahat Al Salaam, the Jaffa based Physicians for Human Rights Israel, and the veteran Israeli soldiers' organisation, Breaking the Silence with over 1,400 willing to break cover. “All residents of the [Gaza] Strip are at risk of famine”, the appeal read, “while the healthcare system is collapsing due to severe shortages of medicine, medical equipment, and fuel. Israel is deliberately inflicting conditions that make life impossible in Gaza, with the declared goal of carrying out ethnic cleansing.... Israel's commission of war crimes, which could also amount to crimes against humanity, must not be met with continued silence and inaction by the international community”.

Read the ICN story here: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52440>

In the past Israeli Government sources have spoken with candour. The Israeli director, Dror Moreh's documentary The Gatekeepers, 2012, contains strikingly candid interviews with six former heads of Shin Bet, Israel's internal security agency. Avraham Shalom (1981-1986) warned of the dangers of occupation. “We are making the lives of millions of people unbearable ... the future is bleak ... we've become cruel ... cruel to ourselves, but especially the occupied”. Former Prime Minister 2006-2009, Ehud Olmert, recently asked whether war crimes were occurring, spoke of “actions which can't be interpreted in any other way”. The Refuser Solidarity Network is growing in numbers amongst IDF reservists and conscripts.

So when did the tide begin to turn? The date 24 April 2025 stands out, Holocaust Memorial Day, the annual State occasion at Yad Vashem, the grieving heart of Israel holding the victims' names. According to the 25 April Guardian, waiting for Benjamin Netanyahu and his Ministers at the entrance to Yad Vashem were a handful of people in their 80s holding a banner with "If we lose our compassion for the Other, we have lost our humanity" in English and Hebrew. They were Holocaust survivors. The 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz falling in January was widely featured in the UK. This not so.

Veronika Cohen, one of the three survivors holding the banner, was born in the Budapest ghetto. "People here see Palestinians as the Other and that's why they have created a barrier," she said. "They have managed not to feel their pain and I find that incomprehensible. To me, when I read the stories of their suffering in Gaza, it blends completely into how I feel about the Holocaust." This, the past's call to the present for compassion resonating in the soul of Israel at this memorial to the victims of genocide, at this symbolic place of tragic memory, and on this day, sends a unique and unequivocal message. In a square in Jerusalem thousands had gathered holding pictures of Palestinian children killed during the Gaza war whilst some 50 lined a road in Tel Aviv dressed in black holding empty pots symbolising the hunger of the Gazan civilians.

No-one should imagine Veronika Cohen as typical of Holocaust survivors, nor the Refuser Solidarity Network of the military, nor the many now protesting representative of the majority of the population. This poignant protest will not end the killing but it challenges any claim Netanyahu and the Israeli State makes to represent Jewish values. It is not impossible he may one day find himself and his repeated calls for more war on trial in the Hague.

World opinion about Israel is changing. Future generations may see April 24th 2025 in Israel, under-reported at the time, as a turning point. But, please God, its protests may signal the beginning of the end to the intolerable suffering in Gaza. <https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/gaza-is-the-tide-turning-in-israel>

• **Professor Ian Linden** is Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Strawberry Hill, London. A past director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, he was awarded a CMG for his work for human rights in 2000. He has also been an adviser on Europe and Justice and Peace issues to the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Ian chairs a new charity for After-school schooling in Beirut for Syrian refugees and Lebanese kids in danger of dropping out partnering with CARITAS Lebanon and work on board of Las Casas Institute in Oxford with Richard Finn OP. His latest book was *Global Catholicism* published by Hurst in 2009.

#### **PAX CHRISTI AGM: "THE WORLD IS LOOKING FOR PROPHETS OF PEACE"**

**Ellen Teague** June 8, 2025

"The old rules of war have gone, and this is something to which we should give full attention." Oliver McTernan, the Co-Founder and Director of Forward Thinking, was guest speaker on Saturday at the Annual General Meeting of Pax Christi England and Wales in London. The experienced mediator in conflict situations called for Pax Christi and other peace groups to highlight the moral and ethical issues in modern warfare. "We are not impotent," he said, "we have the power to challenge."

The theme of his talk was 'Prophets for Peace in a Changing World'. The Chair of Pax Christi England and Wales, from Pax Christi Merseyside, Kathryn Lydon, told around 60 in-person participants and 20 online, that "the world is looking for prophets of peace."

Dioceses represented included Birmingham, Hallam, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Southwark and Westminster. Groups represented included the Archbishop Romero Trust, Columbans and the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales.

Devoting much of his talk to the Gaza conflict, McTernan deplored Israel's use of powerful Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems to identify targets in Gaza. "This has had a devastating impact on the population of Gaza, which are subject to machine selection whether they live or die," he said. He suggested that advances in technology have made a new arms race and war more likely, commenting, "what we are witnessing in Gaza has global consequences."

Under International Law, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza are occupied territory. McTernan pointed out that, "as an occupying force, the Israeli government has a legal responsibility to care for people in these territories." He highlighted the fear of getting on the wrong side of the US government, which has supported Israel, and asked: "Do we put our values or our interests first?" Also, there is the fear of being accused of being antisemitic. He suggested the term has been weaponised, saying, "if you question Israel's actions you will be targeted as antisemitic, but Israel should not be treated differently to any other country." He lamented that some politicians have feared for their careers if they are targeted and this prevents them from speaking out. However, in his view, "anyone who cares for Israel and Israelis should be blunt."

McTernan felt Pax Christi International, which has UN accreditation, could be a group to influence the opening of new dialogue. "Inclusiveness is the key," he suggested, "and we must engage with everyone." The only 'solution' would be to create a political process which includes everyone - even those who believe in violence - as happened in Northern Ireland. An area for dialogue would be changes in the United Nations, particularly looking at the composition and power of the Security Council.

At the AGM, Pax Christi staff reported on Peace Sunday, the magazine 'Justpeace' and other outreach. Education work over the past year included 19 days in schools in 11 dioceses and running stalls at three gatherings of teachers and educators. Events over coming months include the National Justice and Peace Network annual conference in July with the theme, 'Towards a Just Peace: Challenging the Inevitability of Violence.'

There was a call for messages of solidarity to be sent from the gathering to Pax Christi International, Gaza's Catholic parish and the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, whose hospital in Gaza was attacked for the third time, on 5 June. And calls to advertise and support the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Participants also expressed a desire for more Pax Christi members, whose donations boost key incomes from the annual Peace Sunday in January and legacy money. "Why don't all Catholic parishes have a Pax Christi Group?" asked several participants. Referring to the Pentecost weekend, Fr Joe Ryan, a Westminster priest newly elected onto the Pax Christi England and Wales Executive, called for, "more wind in our sails and fire in our bellies."

The meeting concluded with the sharing of cake, celebrating Pax Christi's 80th anniversary, after being founded in France in 1945 at the end of World War II. National Chaplain Sr Katrina Alton led a prayer for the Jubilee Year 2025, which suggested we, 'follow in the footsteps of the nonviolent Jesus.' The concluding liturgy remembered renowned peacemakers connected with Pax Christi, particularly Bruce Kent, whose third anniversary was the following day and whom Oliver McTernan credited with getting him involved with Pax Christi five decades ago. There were also prayers for the Church to be "a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52559>

#### LINK

Pax Christi UK: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/>

### MANCHESTER CHAPLAINCY STUDENTS FOLD 1,000 CRANES FOR PEACE TO MARK HIROSHIMA ANNIVERSARY

June 6, 2025

To mark the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, students from the Jesuit-run Universities of Manchester Catholic Chaplaincy have folded one thousand origami cranes in a powerful gesture of peace and solidarity.



The tradition, known as *senbazuru*, is rooted in Japanese culture and symbolises the hope that peace might triumph over violence. It is inspired by the story of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who, after surviving the Hiroshima bombing, began folding cranes in the belief that creating 1,000 would help her recover from radiation-induced leukemia. Today, *senbazuru* has become a global act of remembrance and resistance to war.

Installed in time for Pentecost, the cranes now hang in the Holy Name Church in Manchester as a striking visual prayer for peace. Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit, whose fruits, Paul reminds us, are "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

*The paper cranes hanging in the Holy Name Church (left)*

The students hope their offering will be a prayerful call to action, that hearts may be softened, and conflicts resolved. In particular, they are holding in prayer those suffering in Ukraine and Gaza, and all victims of violence around the world.

The crane project is just one expression of the life and spirit of the Catholic Chaplaincy serving Manchester's university students. Run by the Jesuits, the chaplaincy is a place of welcome, faith, and friendship for students from all over the world, supporting them as they navigate the challenges of university life.

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/news/manchester-chaplaincy-students-fold-1-000-cranes-for-peace-to-mark-hiroshimas-80th-anniversary>

## HEARTS IN SEARCH OF GOD: JUBILEE WALK

The Pilgrimage of Hope is a national walking pilgrimage for England & Wales with four main Ways converging at the Cathedral of St Barnabas, Nottingham, on Saturday 13th September 2025, the eve of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.



Registration for day pilgrims to join the 2025 National Walking Pilgrimage of Hope is now open! Find out how you can be part of it.

<https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/the-pilgrimage-of-hope-is-open-for-day-pilgrims-to-register>

The four main Ways start at the Catholic cathedrals in Cardiff, Leeds, Norwich and Southwark, London, and will bless our nations with a Sign of the Cross and with the Gospels. The routes are named after the Evangelists and use established hiking routes and are off road as much as possible. A small group of 4-6 'perpetual pilgrims' will walk the full distance of each Way, and up to 20 day pilgrims will be able to join for day stages. Stretches which are suitable for wheelchairs and buggies have been identified. There will be opportunities for non-walkers to provide en route support, hospitality and prayer.

There are possible feeder routes to the four main Ways from all the other Catholic cathedrals of England & Wales for keen long-distance walkers, so people from every diocese can organise their own pilgrimages. Information about how to support the Pilgrimage with prayer and hospitality and how to register to walk stages as day pilgrims can be found here: <https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/national-jubilee-pilgrimage-of-hope>

## A YEAR OF THE ALL KINDS OF CATHOLIC PODCAST

**Theresa Alessandro** June 8th, 2025

Regular listeners will know that the All Kinds of Catholic podcast has just reached its first birthday.

Weekly guests speak from amazingly diverse perspectives. In Episode 52 Maria shared that, "The Catholic community was a very big part of not only my childhood, but even now, that sense of belonging and having extended, not by blood, but extended families by faith."

Pope Leo, in his recent address to Catholic media professionals, advised that, 'Communication is not only the transmission of information, but it is also the creation of a culture, of human and digital environments that become spaces for dialogue and discussion.'

Reflecting on Pope Leo's words, podcast host Theresa Alessandro said, "The weekly conversations with different guests express something of who we are as Catholics at this point in the history of the Church and the world. I am glad to help ensure the voices of ordinary Catholic people are present in the digital space."

Recent guests have shared honestly their experiences - and struggles - as LGBT+ members of the church. Another guest spoke from his home in Canada about the 'turning point' for him, of daily Eucharistic Adoration. Upcoming episodes will feature a woman with hospital chaplaincy experience, a group of parishioners, and Catholic people who have lived on different continents.

Theresa will be developing the opportunities for discussion among the podcast's listeners and guests in the year ahead. She also convenes the Catholic Podcasters Network.

Find the All Kinds of Catholic podcast on all the usual platforms and here <https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/>

If you are podcasting in this space too, please register for the next meeting of the Catholic Podcasters Network here [https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/4JLUt60ISOS0zgp6s7n\\_3Q#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/4JLUt60ISOS0zgp6s7n_3Q#/registration)

The All Kinds of Catholic podcast is created and hosted by Theresa Alessandro. In each episode, Theresa is in conversation with a different Catholic guest exploring how they live their faith in the world today. Guests will often be people who are not in the public eye. Taken together, their stories illustrate the image Pope Francis uses in *Evangelii Gaudium*, of a 'chaotic...genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage' experienced by Catholic people 'stepping into this floodtide' of life.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52553>

## LINKS

**Website:** <https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com>

**Social Media Fb and Twitter/X** @KindsofCatholic



## **COVENTRY: ST PATRICK'S CHURCH HOSTS LGBTQ+ VIGIL WELCOME MASS**

**Source: Birmingham Archdiocese** June 6, 2025

In an expression of welcome and unity, St Patrick's Church in Coventry recently held an LGBTQ+ Vigil Welcome Mass, inviting all - especially members of the LGBTQ+ community and their families - to come together in worship. Organized by the Coventry Deanery LGBTQ+ group and Parish Priest Fr George Bennett, this gathering embodied the spirit of Christ's message of compassionate love and acceptance.

The LGBTQ+ Group emerged from the Synodal process, where the Catholic Church encouraged listening to the voices of the marginalized. In Coventry, eight participants - some LGBTQ+ individuals, others parents - shared deeply personal experiences of faith and exclusion. Their openness and courage led to the establishment of a diocesan working group, formed at the request of Archbishop Bernard Longley. Comprising priests, a sister, and lay youth workers, this group laid the foundation for what has now become a thriving local community that meets monthly, always welcoming new members.

Fr Bennett described the Mass as a joyful occasion, with 30 to 40 additional attendees joining the usual congregation. "We want everyone to feel welcome in our parish and in the church in general. That is Christ's message to all of us," he said.

Archbishop Bernard said: "It is so important that everyone should feel welcome in the family of the Church within our Archdiocese. Each one of us is a pilgrim of hope along the pathway towards holiness of life, trying our best to fulfil the invitation of Our Lord to "be holy as your heavenly Father is holy". I pray that this initiative will enable us to offer appropriate accompaniment and encouragement, so that the Church's teaching on holiness of life may draw all Catholics closer to Christ."

Bishop Timothy Menezes, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham said: "In my conversations with some members of the group, they find attending Mass in a parish difficult against the backdrop of what they sometimes see to be a Church that does not accept them. This means that they find a Mass at which they know that they are accepted, which is a first step to hopefully full integration in our parish communities."

Following the Mass, attendees gathered to share refreshments and conversation, fostering connections that extend beyond the walls of the church. <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52541>

## **POPE LEO: THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENS BORDERS**

June 8, 2025

On Sunday, Pope Leo XIV criticized the "exclusionary mindset" in "political nationalisms." He asked God to "open borders, break down walls, dispel hatred"

During his homily at Mass for the Solemnity of Pentecost, which also marked the Mass for the Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities, on Sunday morning in St Peter's Square, Pope Leo XIV recalled how the Holy Spirit accomplished 'something extraordinary' in the lives of the Apostles, and suggests that today, the Holy Spirit likewise descends upon us, ready to shatter our inner chains, fears, and hardened hearts, to make us new.

"Today, too, what took place in the Upper Room takes place anew in our midst. Like a mighty wind that overtakes us, like a crash that startles us, like a fire that illuminates us, the gift of the Holy Spirit descends upon us."

While "following Jesus' death, they had retreated behind closed doors, in fear and sadness," now, Pope Leo observed, "they receive a new way of seeing things, an interior understanding that helps them to interpret the events that occurred and to experience intimately the presence of the Risen Lord." In this context, the Pope marvelled that the Holy Spirit "overcomes their fear, shatters their inner chains, heals their wounds, anoints them with strength and grants them the courage to go out to all and to proclaim God's mighty works."

Pope Leo XIV recalled that at Pentecost, the doors of the Upper Room were opened because the Spirit opens borders, as he quoted the late Pope Benedict XVI's words in a 2005 Pentecost homily: "The Holy Spirit bestows understanding. The Spirit overcomes the 'breach' that began in Babel, the confusion of mind and heart that sets us one against the other. The Spirit opens borders..."

"Calling this an eloquent image of Pentecost, Pope Leo XIV went on to reflect on this idea, noting the Spirit "opens border" first of all in our hearts, and "is the Gift that opens our lives to love." His presence, breaks down our hardness of heart, our narrowness of mind, our selfishness, the fears that enchain us and the narcissism that makes us think only of ourselves."



The Holy Spirit, he went on to suggest, comes "to challenge us."

Moreover, the Spirit, Pope Leo stressed, allows us to find a new way of approaching and experiencing life, observing, "He puts us in touch with our inmost self, beneath all the masks we wear. He leads us to an encounter with the Lord by teaching us to experience the joy that is His gift."

"He convinces us, that only by abiding in love," the Pope suggested, "will we receive the strength to remain faithful to His word and to let it transform us."

He also observed that the Spirit also opens borders in our relationship with others.

Recalling Jesus' explanation that the gift of the Spirit "is the love between Him and the Father that comes to dwell within us," the Pope said this enables us to "open our hearts to our brothers and sisters, overcoming our rigidity, moving beyond our fear of those who are different, and mastering the passions that stir within."

Moreover, he said, the Spirit "transforms those deeper, hidden dangers that disturb our relationships, like suspicion, prejudice or the desire to manipulate others," adding, "I think too, with great pain, of those cases where relationships are marked by an unhealthy desire for domination, an attitude that often leads to violence, as is shown, tragically, by numerous recent cases of femicide."

The Pope explained that the Holy Spirit brings the fruits within us to maturity in order to cultivate good and healthy relationships, and in doing so, broadens the borders of our relationships and opens us to the joy of fraternity.

"This," he stressed, "is also a critical yardstick for the Church," reminding that we are only "truly the Church of the Risen Lord and disciples of Pentecost," "if there are no borders or divisions among us; if we are able to dialogue and accept one another in the Church, and to reconcile our diversities; and if, as Church, we become a welcoming and hospitable place for all."

The Holy Father also recognized that the Holy Spirit also opens borders between peoples, underscoring that "God's 'breath' unites our hearts," "makes us view others as our brothers and sisters," and "breaks down barriers and tears down the walls of indifference and hatred."

With this in mind, Pope Leo XIV reaffirmed, "Pentecost renews the Church, renews the world!"

"May the strong wind of the Spirit," Pope Leo concluded before imploring the Blessed Mother in prayer, "come upon us and within us, open the borders of our hearts, grant us the grace of encounter with God, enlarge the horizons of our love and sustain our efforts to build a world in which peace reigns."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52558>

**Read the full homily text:** [www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20250608-omelia-pentecoste.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20250608-omelia-pentecoste.html)?

**Watch the Mass on Vatican Media Youtube channel:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd4QR6IkBHE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd4QR6IkBHE)

#### **CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY NEWS**

The Church Action on Poverty Sunday that took place in March was the most successful we've had for many years. Churches across the UK used the 'Dreams and Realities' paintings to spark reflection and discussion about tackling poverty, and raised over £7,000 that will support work to reclaim dignity, agency and power.

This year, we are moving Church Action on Poverty Sunday so it takes place on 19 October, at the end of Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales. It's a great opportunity to get even more churches involved, and build on the commitment already shown by so many churches. Could you help to maximise its impact? Find out more here: <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/volunteer/>

**NEW OFFICE:** Shared Space Initiative, Ground floor, Oakland House, Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0PQ

**STOP PRESS** – News just received that Ann Gill died on June 7 after a long illness. We will post tributes in the next issue – please send any memories for inclusion to [anneoc980@hotmail.com](mailto:anneoc980@hotmail.com) Ann was a former J&P Worker for Shrewsbury Diocese and long-standing Pax Christi member.

## DIARY

### JUNE

**12 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting** 2.00pm at St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH. All welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 or email [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com)

**14 Day of Reflection for CAFOD Volunteers, Supporters And Friends.** 10 am -3.30 pm at St Alban's RC Church, Liscard, Wallasey Join us to reflect on the theme of hope in the Jubilee Year and how we can make a difference to our global family and more locally. Meet other volunteers, supporters and others as we share experiences, hear from some local parish groups and are inspired to be Pilgrims of Hope. More info register: [kkeen@cafod.org.uk](mailto:kkeen@cafod.org.uk)

**15 and 16 Chester Green Weekend** – events, summer Sustainability Fair and June Eco Exposition  
<https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/climate-emergency/stories/chester-green-weekend-2025-a-celebration-of-sustainability>

**16-22 Refugee Week** <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

**19 Liverpool Anglican Cathedral 12th annual Micah Lecture**, our flagship social justice event, spotlighting leading voices in Christian social action. This year, we welcome Jenny Sinclair, Founder and Director of Together for the Common Good, as our keynote speaker. Q&A after the lecture and time to connect with like-minded individuals from churches, charities, faith communities, and the social justice sector. Free event – all welcome. Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/from-charity-to-solidarity-12th-annual-micah-lecture-tickets-1336405006349?aff=oddtcreator>

**20 World Refugee Day** <https://www.unhcr.org/get-involved/take-action/world-refugee-day>  
<https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/events/2025-micah-lecture/>

**20 GREENSTOCK** 11am – 4 pm Woodbank Park, Turncroft Lane, Offerton, Stockport SK1 4JR celebrating Stockport's communities and environment, organised by Stockport's Green Network (open to all residents and community groups who are interested in climate and nature action). The Green Network is supported by Stockport Council's Climate Action Now programme. Free venue parking All activities, food and drink will be provided for free. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/greenstock-2025-tickets-1317543892249>

**30 Telford, The Beckly Lecture 2025: Whiteness is the Sea, not the Shark:** a postcolonial critique of British Methodism with Anthony Reddie. 6.45pm, Beckbury Suite, Telford International Centre. The lecture will be held as part of the Methodist Conference, but is open to everyone. Free event – attend on site or watch a livestream online. A recording will be available on this web page afterwards as well as previous Beckly Lectures to download: <https://jpit.uk/beckly-lecture> It is free to attend. Professor Anthony G. Reddie is Professor of Black Theology at the University of Oxford, and the Director of the Centre for Black Theology at Regent's Park College, Oxford. He is also an Extraordinary Professor of Theological Ethics with the University of South Africa, and a Methodist local preacher. His latest book, on which this lecture will draw, is Living Black Theology: Decolonizing Knowledge (OUP, June 2025), which promises to offer “a bold reassessment of how we can rethink the past that will challenge our contemporary ways of living... and help us reimagine and remake the future, one that is more equitable and just for all peoples.”

### JULY

**9 'Act Now, Change Forever' mass lobby of Parliament.** <https://cafod.org.uk/news/events/mass-lobby-of-parliament> Register your interest now and we'll keep you updated as plans develop. Register here to meet your MP: <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/act-now-change-forever> For those who wish, there will also be a mass picnic at lunchtime and we're inviting our supporters to stay on to join us for 5.30pm Mass at Westminster Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop John Arnold of Salford Diocese.

**10 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting** 2.00pm at St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH. All welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 or email [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com)

**25-27 The National Justice and Peace Network 47th Annual Conference Moving from 'Just Politics to Just Peace'** at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details and booking info on page 17 below

**26 July 26 – August 2 Thinking Faith - Time out for working Catholics. Theme: St Paul.** Boarbank Hall, Allithwaite, Grange Over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7NH All welcome. Contact: Sr Margaret Atkins [margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk](mailto:margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk) or 015395-32288

### AUGUST

**2 Disarm Now: Peace Witness Vigil.** 10.30am at South Gate Faslane. Disarm now is a Christian ecumenical gathering in united opposition to nuclear weapons and commemorating the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Read the thoughts of JPIT's Steve Huckelsby's on Faslane here: <https://jpit.uk/50-years-of-continuous-at-sea-deterrence-what-is-there-to-celebrate>

**18 – 22 St Augustine's Confessions** An introduction to St Augustine's classic spiritual autobiography. Boarbank Hall, Allithwaite, Grange Over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7NH. Contact: Sr Margaret Atkins [margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk](mailto:margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk) or 015395-32288 All welcome

**Moving from 'Just Politics to Just Peace'**  
**The National Justice and Peace Network 47th Annual Conference**  
25 - 27 July 2025 at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

We live in a world where many believe in the inevitability of violence as a means of resolving conflict.  
However, as people of faith, we believe that we have been given an alternative model.  
We are to put down our swords, and live out the gospel message of justice, peace and love.  
Violence is not inevitable, there is another way.

During this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis urges us 'to become pilgrims of hope,  
to silence the sound of arms and overcome divisions.'

Working in partnership with Pax Christi and the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group the conference will explore how  
we can build a just peace globally, nationally and in our own life.

Keynote speakers include Dr. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury  
and Joanna Frew from Rethinking Security.

We have a great line-up of interesting Workshops, Stalls, and other events going on across the weekend.

For more information, and to book your place,  
please use this link <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/> to the NJPN website where you will find two  
ways to book: - either through Microsoft Forms, or by downloading a Word version of the Booking Form, filling it in  
and returning it to [admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk](mailto:admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk)

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News [www.indcatholicnews.com](http://www.indcatholicnews.com) an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.
- **See current NJPN news here:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/news/>
- **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](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk) or contact [ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org](mailto: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://jpsbshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/mouthpeace-summer-2025.pdf>

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