

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin July 2025

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

REMEMBERING ANN GILL WITH LOVE

Joan Sharples writes: When asked about her justice-and-peace work, Ann, a keen gardener, would say that she sowed seeds. She lived her life in the light of the words of Pope Paul VI 'Peace is the fruit of anxious daily care to see that everyone lives in justice as God intends' (Populorum Progressio). This was particularly evident in her involvement with the Justice & Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Ann had a good understanding of the many justice-and-peace issues and a deep awareness of how they connected and how they related to 'the Big Story' of the God's love for the earth, its creature and all humanity.

She was proud of having been to Greenham Common and treasured memories of the visit she made to Peru in the late eighties and these experiences informed her life and work. In response to a CAFOD campaign, she walked barefoot to Mass to highlight the dangers of landmines.



Ann (left) and Joan
Shrewsbury J&P Commission Open
Meeting

photo courtesy Bernard Payne

For ten years between 1990 and 2000 she was employed as Justice-and-Peace Fieldworker in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Her great contribution to work in the diocese was to forge links with those involved in adult catechesis and religious education ensuring that Catholic Social Teaching was an integral part of its work. With computer skills in advance of most of her contemporaries, she produced databases and put the commission's accounts on impressive spreadsheets and produced a regular short mailing, Quick News, a vital resource in those pre-internet days.

She collected a wide range of children's books and resources which she toured around schools in the diocese including the handbook on development education to which she had contributed.

Her last project as fieldworker was one she undertook at the request of Bishop Brian Noble when, on behalf of the diocese, she coordinated the resources tent for the Churches Together in Cheshire Millennium event, 'Catch the Dream'.

Her work for justice and peace reached beyond the diocese: she was treasurer for Pax Christi and the National Justice & Peace Network.

Ann was kind, encouraging and generous. When a friend was offered the opportunity to visit Peru, but was without the finance to make the journey she immediately offered the money on the condition it was 'paid forward'. When the J&P Commission drew up a list of goals for its work, it was Ann who insisted that the last of these was that 'we enjoy the journey'. With Ann around it was impossible to do otherwise.

May the seeds Ann planted continue to flourish.

- Joan Sharples was J&P Co-ordinator until the Commission was disbanded in 2013.

Anne O'Connor writes: I first met Ann about 40 years ago at a peace exhibition in Manchester Cathedral, not long after we moved to the area from Nottingham. We got chatting and found out we both lived in Timperley. That was the start of a long friendship. In the mid-1980s we both joined the Shrewsbury Justice and Peace Commission – Ann was one of the first salaried workers alongside Mike Simpson; I produced the newsletter 'The Daily Pressure' (later to become 'MouthPeace' when Liverpool J&P Commission asked to join us in sending out regular bulletins).

Mike had an extensive knowledge and interest in Latin America as part of the Las Casas Network. As a member of Pax Christi, Ann brought her commitment to peace to the role. Their differing skills and approaches complemented each other and gave an added breadth to the work. When Ann stood down as worker she continued to serve the Commission as Treasurer.

Ann and I were also members of the Commission's Core Group, together with the Fieldworker, Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and a couple of co-opted members including Fr Ned Wall. The group met monthly in Joan's home or mine and handled the day-to-day running of the Commission, made policy decisions and planned events. Throughout the 80s, 90s and up until 2013 when the new Bishop Mark Davies disbanded the Commission, Shrewsbury Diocese was at the forefront nationally. There were regular study days, days of prayer and reflection, an annual Advent reflection and get-together as well as the renowned biennial Conference at Crewe between 1989 and 2005 which was attended by several hundred people from across the diocese and other parts of England and Wales, attracting expert speakers on a wide range of subjects.

Whenever the Core Group met at Joan's, Ann would drive us and we enjoyed many a chat along the way, sharing family news and putting the world to rights. Ann used to pick me up, we'd drop my daughter Catherine at school and always get back in time to collect her on the way home. One day, we had some time to spare and Ann said she had a treat in store. Instead of using the 'A' roads, she took a detour into Knutsford onto Legh Road which has a breath-taking set of Italianate villas, constructed by a local designer, Richard Harding-Watt, who was renowned for his unique (and eccentric) designs around the town. For a moment we seemed to have been transported to the Tuscan hills. I've visited that road many times since, marvelling at its beauty and grateful to Ann for showing it to me, one of her many kindnesses over the years.

A requirement of the secondary school curriculum at that time was to gain a couple of weeks' work experience which the student had to fix up themselves. Ann knew that our daughter Annie was looking to find a placement so suggested she could help with filing and other admin tasks at her home. When work was done, they enjoyed a chat and developed a firm friendship. I'm sure Ann was a great influence and helped shape Annie's desire to serve the poor and marginalised in later life.

John Mulholland, St Vincent's Altrincham CAFOD/Justice and Peace Group, writes: Anyone meeting Ann for the first time would only have to spend a short time with her to discover that, apart from her beloved husband John and their family, what mattered most to her in life was her burning commitment to work for justice and peace, locally and globally. It sprang from her deep, Catholic Christian faith and was part, as you might say, of her DNA.

I had the privilege of knowing her for over thirty years and for much of that time we were both members of the then very effective Shrewsbury Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission which did so much good both in the diocese and further afield. Ann's contributions to its discussions were always particularly insightful and positive.

Ann became a J&P Field Worker for the diocese, and I know, from our lively conversations when travelling together to meetings, how much she valued and enjoyed that work. She would recount to me, with great enthusiasm, teaching sessions which she had conducted, in both primary and secondary schools, and her delight at seeing pupils recognise, often for the first time, the connection between their faith and the plight of the poor. I am sure that she was a very effective teacher and that pupils long remembered her sessions with them.

She was far from being solemn and straight faced. Ann had a warm, outgoing personality, an infectious laugh and a mischievous sense of humour; both were never far away and could lighten discussions at any meeting.

I have especially strong memories of our both being members of the small Millennium Committee, established in 1997 by our late and greatly loved Bishop Brian Noble. He was responding to Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, "Tertio Millennio Adveniente" in which the Pope called on the faithful to mark the coming millennium as a great Jubilee, with emphasis on helping the world's poorest countries by, for example, cancelling their great burden of debt to the rich.

The committee met in Laburnum Cottage, the bishop's residence at Barnston, Wirral, to which Ann and I alternately drove each other and it was he who chaired our meetings (and brought in the tea and biscuits at our interval!). I know that Ann greatly enjoyed and valued that experience and contributed much to what it achieved – raising awareness amongst the people of the diocese of the importance of justice and peace for us all. New J&P groups resulted in parishes and some became CAFOD 'Fair Trade Parishes'.

Ann was a much valued friend and time in her company was for me always uplifting and special.
May she rest in peace.

Bernard Payne, Secretary to the former J&P Commission, recalls that Ann enthusiastically submitted to the face painting activity at the Chester World Development Day proceedings at Chester Town Hall in July 1993!

Pat Gaffney, General Secretary Pax Christi 1990-2019, writes: Ann Gill was a tremendous support to me when I started to work with Pax Christi in 1990. She was then the Pax Christi Treasurer and fulfilled that role with professionalism and humour (given that we were living a hand-to-mouth existence!).

Before the days of on-line book-keeping everything was done in a ledger. I would make monthly trips to her home where she would reconcile the books, sort me out for the month ahead, feed me and offer, with her husband John, warm hospitality.

Ann also had a very sharp mind for issues of the day and offered thoughtful insights into the discussions of the day – from Northern Ireland to nuclear weapons and then, impending war in the Gulf. A no-nonsense person who was able to show great humanity too - even through difficult days of poor health.

Ellen Teague of the Columbans writes: Ann was a stalwart supporter of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and I have been a collaborator with her for about four decades. I knew her through Shrewsbury Diocese Justice and Peace, the National Justice and Peace Network and Pax Christi, as well as through Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology work. She was on the Columban database for the Vocation for Justice magazine. Ann was so generous with her time and inspirational to all her friends locally and nationally.

A CELEBRATION OF ANN GILL

Anne O'Connor July 4, 2025

Fr Pat Munroe concelebrated Ann's funeral at St Hugh and St John's, Timperley assisted by Fr Bernard McDermott, long-time supporter of J&P, representing the Columbans, and Fr Ned Wall.

The service, so lovingly put together by Ann's family, reflected her commitment to Justice and Peace with the hymns 'Christ be our Light', 'Colours of Day', 'This is my body, broken for you' and 'Love is his word, love is his way', plus a rousing Peruvian Gloria. The readings were taken from 1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:1-8, 13, and 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 with a responsorial psalm titled 'The embrace of Justice and Peace' (Psalm 84: 8). The gospel reading was the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). The gospel acclamation "Happy are those who live in the Lord! Now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them" encapsulated Ann's life.

Fr Ned shared how he first met Ann when, as a young priest in the late '80s and, as he said, "wet behind the ears", he was invited to join the diocesan J&P Commission. He recalled the first meeting he attended – how he was inspired by the women in the group; "amazing women whose enthusiasm and vigour for life was life changing and effecting for all around them". He said that meeting changed his life – strong words indeed, and so affirming for those of us from the former Commission to hear. (Ned has wholeheartedly embraced justice and peace ever since. We were blessed to have him lead us in our final liturgy when the Commission was disbanded in 2013).

Everyone laughed when Ned added that whenever he went on a journey with Ann he was never sure whether he would end up back at home or getting arrested!

The significance of Ann's funeral taking place on 4 July was not lost to those present given the turmoil caused by the Trump Administration. Doubtless Ann would have had plenty to say about the current state of the USA. Ned declared it to be 'Ann's Independence Day!'

He ended his homily by quoting from Ann's words which were printed in the funeral booklet.

Extract from Ann's Journal March 29, 1985

"The Christianity preached by the Churches truly seems to be the 'opium of the people'; they offer comfort, solace, acceptance but above all respectability. Christ did indeed come to give us true peace and real love. But he makes it absolutely clear that to follow him will mean persecution, poverty, rejection and humiliation. Surely one of the marks of a Christian should be a 'foolishness' in the eyes of the world. When someone says to me 'Don't you feel a fool on these peace vigils? I know I am on the right track. I believe with all my heart that only love can save the world.'"

Ann's journal entry concludes: "There is no way I will ever be a 'persuader' through words. So, I must act and try to live my life as an example. This will be hard, if not impossible, but Christ requires me to try and I must do as God bids."

Ann's life and commitment to peace and justice, over a long life well lived, has been a lasting example to us all. Her words challenge us, inspired Christ's example of unconditional love, to reach out to others near and far and to never fear looking foolish in the eyes of the world.

US DEACON: FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTION ON PATRIOTISM

Deacon William T Ditewig, PhD, from the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, writes in his blog: Deacons Today: Servants in a Servant Church: "Non Sibi Sed Patriae": A Reflection on Patriotism. 4 July 2025

German Protestant pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, arrested, imprisoned, and eventually murdered in 1945 by the Nazis, wrote eloquently about many things, including what he called "the cost of discipleship." One of his most widely quoted insights concerns his distinction between "cheap" and "costly" grace. According to Bonhoeffer, cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ. Regardless of one's religious beliefs, I think all can appreciate the notion that our beliefs about anything carry with them a responsibility to act accordingly, that our beliefs are more than simple "cheap" words, devoid of concrete impact.

It strikes me that one might make a similar distinction between "cheap" patriotism and "costly" patriotism. Cheap patriotism is the jingoistic bluster of the bully, toxic forms of masculinity, and appeals to violence as a first resort rather than the last. This is not true patriotism. It is demagoguery. Costly patriotism looks beyond all of that. The cost of true patriotism is found in acting despite one's own fear of injury or death, of realizing that there are people and principles more important than oneself, people and principles worth dying for.

Cheap patriotism is about waving the flag without honor. Cheap patriotism holds loyalty to a leader as a prime virtue. Cheap patriotism wears the uniform as a sign of personal status. Costly patriotism is about the people of the country, not an individual. Costly patriotism never lets the flag we honor "touch the ground" of personal greed, political posturing, or be used as a tool of violent revolt. As I watched in horror the events of January 6, 2021, two images still haunt me. First was the use of the flag as a weapon, as a tool of violence in every sense of those words. Second was watching others replace the flag of our country with a personal "flag" of the man who had lost the presidential election: he was being elevated, literally, above our own national ensign. Such cheap patriotism should have no place in our country, a country founded on principles of service over self.

This brings us back to the Fourth of July. If we let those who proclaim "cheap" patriotism have their way, we lose as a country and as individuals. If we don't remember and celebrate "costly" patriotism, the bullies win. On the other hand, if we do remember and celebrate true and costly patriotism, we proclaim in word and deed that we are more than our worst instincts, more than empty posturing, and that we will redouble our efforts, individually and collectively, to create the more perfect union our Constitution calls us to. For me, personally, this is what it means to wear the uniform of my country's Navy again. It connects me with the generations of family and friends who have shared that same commitment to service over self.

On this Fourth of July, may we take time to reflect on costly patriotism: "non sibi sed patriae". And after reflection, action.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52752>

Read in full here: <https://billditewig.blog/>

CATHOLIC BISHOPS SPEAK OUT AGAINST TRUMP'S "BIG, BEAUTIFUL BILL"

Source: Occupy Democrats July 4, 2025

The Catholic Church enrages MAGA world by coming out forcefully against the "big, beautiful bill" as twenty bishops sign an interfaith letter stating that its "passage would be a moral failure for American society as a whole."

There is nothing less Christ-like than cutting healthcare and food stamps or the poor....

"First, it provides tens of billions of dollars to the government to undertake a mass deportation campaign which will separate US families, harm US-citizen and immigrant children, and sow chaos in local communities," the letter reads. "It will spur immigration raids across the nation, harming hard-working immigrant families essential to our economy and causing widespread unrest like we recently witnessed in Los Angeles."

The legislation would funnel over \$150 billion towards Trump's border policies and immigration crackdowns, with the ICE detention budget alone ballooning from \$3.4 billion to \$45 billion until the end of 2029. Professor Donald Moynihan of the University of Michigan has pointed out that this figure is more than the combined funding for all 50 federal prisons.

In addition to being a gross waste of taxpayer money, this funding will create a self-perpetrating deportation industrial machine similar to our private prison system and military complex. Just like pouring money into military contractors incentivizes new wars, pouring money into this fledgling deportation industry will incentivize more crackdowns and family separations. The more you feed the monster, the bigger and hungrier it gets.

"This funding also will be used to target faith communities, as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has removed places of worship from its sensitive locations list, allowing ICE agents to enter them for enforcement purposes," the letter continues. "We have already witnessed a reduction in attendance at many of our religious services in our denominations, as the threat of enforcement has deterred many families from practicing their faith."

The signatories include numerous prominent bishops such as Cardinal Robert McElroy, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Bishop John Dolan, Archbishop Paul Etienne, Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski, and Bishop Jaime Soto. In addition to the Catholic leaders, the letter was signed by the leaders of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas as well as respected faith leaders of the Episcopalian, Jewish, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Muslim communities.

"Moreover, the bill provides funding for a border wall along the US-Mexico border which we believe will drive migrants into the most remote regions of the border and lead to an increase in migrant deaths," the letter goes on. "It also would hurt the local environment along the border and force desperate asylum-seekers seeking safety to increasingly rely on human smugglers." "As you should know, our faith organizations have long favored the creation of legal avenues for migration and a legalization program for immigrants who have lived in the US for years and contributed their hard work to our economy," the signatories wrote. "We believe the adoption of these policies, instead of the implementation of a mass deportation campaign, would not only benefit immigrant workers and their families, but be in the best interest of our nation."

"Second, the legislation makes severe cuts in health-care coverage and food assistance to millions of both low-income citizens and legal residents, including asylum-seekers and refugees, driving them deeper into poverty," the letter adds. "According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the bill transfers wealth from those in the bottom 10 percent of income to those in the top 10 percent of income in our nation, increasing the already large gap between the rich and the poor."

The bill will slash nearly \$1 trillion in funding from Medicaid, a move that will directly result in the death and suffering of countless Americans. People will go blind, see their life expectancies cut in half, and end up bankrupt and homeless. Nursing homes and hospitals will shut down. It also guts funding for crucial food programs like SNAP by roughly \$186 billion by 2034. Americans are literally going to starve to death so that billionaires can afford a few new yachts.

"From our various faith perspectives, the moral test of a nation is how it treats those most in need of support. In our view, this legislation will harm the poor and vulnerable in our nation, to the detriment of the common good. Its passage would be a moral failure for American society as a whole," it concludes.

In a separate statement, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that the bill "takes from the poor to give to the wealthy. It provides tax breaks for some while undermining the social safety net for others through major cuts to nutrition assistance and Medicaid," he continued. "It fails to protect families and children by promoting an enforcement-only approach to immigration and eroding access to legal protections. It harms God's creation and future generations through cuts to clean energy incentives and environmental programs. I underscore what my brother bishops said in their recent letter to find a better way forward and urge Senators to think and act with courage and creativity to protect human dignity for all, to uphold the common good, and to change provisions that undermine these fundamental values," he added.

TRUMP & IRAN: HISTORY AS SELECTIVE MEMORY

Ian Linden June 19, 2025

There would not now be a war between Israel and Iran without President Trump. It has been evident for two decades that there were only two ways of stopping Iran going nuclear: either diplomacy or war. On 14 July 2015 the USA, France, China, Russia, Germany, and the EU/UK agreed a Joint Plan of Action, (JPCOA), a nuclear deal to limit and monitor Iran's stockpile and enrichment of uranium in exchange for significant sanctions relief. It had taken years of hard diplomacy to achieve this goal. In March 2018, the IAEA (international Atomic Energy Agency) stated it could verify that Iran had been implementing its JPCOA commitments notably to keep uranium enrichment below 3.67%. Diplomacy had prevailed.

On 8 May 2018, Trump announced the USA's withdrawal from the agreement. Negotiators had carefully ring-fenced the nuclear deal from problems of Iran's missile development, and its support for Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas and the Syrian regime, but Trump re-introduced these issues as an excuse for sabotaging JPCOA. Heavy pressure from Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, seems to have been influential. A week before, Netanyahu had delivered an inflammatory speech in the White House citing documents allegedly found in a Tehran warehouse, but pertaining to the period before 2003, purporting to show Iran was lying about its claim that its nuclear intentions were peaceful. It took Sir Simon Gass, former British ambassador to Iran and chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) 2019-2023, speaking on the BBC Today programme of 14 June, to point out Trump's role in creating the conditions for war.

Until the USA reneged on the JCPOA agreement in 2018, strengthening the hard-liners, demoralizing the Iranian public, and humiliating President Hourani, Iran's preparations for making a nuclear weapon had been in abeyance. From the perspective of ordinary Iranians, you do not necessarily think possession of a nuclear deterrent is perversely irrational. Some, of course, are opposed to it. A number of States with a military presence near or around Iran's borders have nuclear weapons: Russia, USA, UK, Pakistan and Israel. Iran/Persia has in the past suffered greatly from foreign interventions and invasion. JCPOA took a lot of selling to Shi'a hardliners. To allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) thorough monitoring access to Iran's nuclear facilities was a big ask. Despite the regime, in my experience, Iranian national pride is widely shared inside the country. You do not have to be a fanatical Revolutionary Guard commander to believe in national sovereignty and maintaining national security. These are basic principles in and derived from of the UN Charter.

Not surprisingly, with American sanctions restored and in response to the assassination on 20 November 2020 of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, the 'Father' of Iran's nuclear programme, the Iranian Parliament in reaction passed legislation enabling installation of new centrifuges for uranium enrichment to 20%. After the Israeli attack on the Natanz nuclear facility in 2021, the hardline President Ebrahim Raisi (2021-2024) declared Iran would increase uranium enrichment to 60%. To justify its present war, Israel claims Iran is now able to assemble several atomic bombs and 'weaponise' them. That has been questioned by sources in the CIA. Remember Saddam's 'weapons of mass destruction'? Iran pulled out of talks with the USA in Muscat on 15 June in Oman.

Not surprisingly, Trump does not refer back to his historically damaging 2015 decision. Indeed, with his customary inconsistency, he has described the current Israeli attacks on Iran as "excellent" and called for Iran's "unconditional surrender". Trumpian peace-making has three steps reminiscent of the school playground: decide who is winning, back them, deride the loser.

Meanwhile Netanyahu is moving on from talk of Iran's existential threat to Israel to regime change in Iran. However despicable the human rights record of Iran's rulers, the velayat-al-faqih (guardianship of the – Shi'a – jurist) in which the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, supported by the Revolutionary Guards is a de facto dictator despite parliamentary trappings, interventions sponsoring regime change in Iraq and Libya are a dire warning to pursuing the same goal in Iran.

The current Iran war raises fundamental questions about Trump's role in the new world disorder: the use of naked power, impunity, disinformation, and distortion of the past. In Stalin's famously cynical words: *"It is always difficult to predict the past."* In Orwell's words: *"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."* A control largely managed through social media, what computer scientist Kate Starbird calls "participatory disinformation" (Sage Journals 2023). We now recognise this rewriting of history as a tool of populist authoritarianism. In Trump this manifests itself in his belief in an imaginary past and insistence on history as an exercise in narrating America's greatness. Are we watching cognitive decline? Calculated political manipulation of history? Mere wishful thinking? Probably all of these.

While driving with young children on the back seat I once asked 'did you see the stoat crossing the road', a wonderful, fast elongate wiggling form, tail flowing out behind. Back came the answer 'yes, and it had a rabbit in its mouth'. It didn't. (3-4 year-old children have yet to distinguish in their minds between what is true and what they would like to be true). And this is reminiscent of Trump's assertion that the US 2020 elections were rigged, demonstrably untrue, and that the crowds at his first inauguration were bigger than those at Obama's, pictures clearly showing they weren't. The Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful country in the world also holds a children's storybook versions of US history and is set on American children learning it.

In a world of information dominated by the news-cycle everything is "Now, Now". On his Truth Social platform, sometimes touching on "what might come next", Trump inhabits this world and frequently sets its agenda. Asking how we arrived at any situation, and perhaps how we might change it, often seems an afterthought, even on radio, TV and print media. For he who controls the present controls the past - even in democracies. We need a developed historical consciousness to deal effectively with the present. We also need creative imagination, integrity and a concern for the truth to create a safe and better future. Trump lacks all these attributes. He is a clear and present danger both nationally and internationally. At this critical moment in history, have we begun to take on board the magnitude of this misfortune?

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/trump-iran-history-as-selective-memory>

• **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.

DON'T MENTION THE CHILDREN

Heather Kiernan writes June 7, 2025:

Yesterday, I got news from a dear friend in Gaza that his cousin Safaa Saad Kahil and infant son Mosaab were killed when their house was targeted while she was breastfeeding. Her husband and two daughters survived.

More than a decade ago, Michael Rosen wrote this poem after reading that the Israeli government had banned a radio advert that would have listed the names of the Palestinian children killed in Gaza. In the poem Rosen uses irony to expose the racist propaganda efforts of Western corporate media to minimise or provide cover for Israel's crimes against Palestinian people, whether that's the murder of thousands of children in the Gaza genocide, the ongoing apartheid system, the violent anti-Palestinian pogroms in the West Bank, or the whole project of ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories.

DON'T MENTION THE CHILDREN

Don't mention the children.
Don't name the dead children.
The people must not know the names
of the dead children.
The names of the children must be hidden.
The children must be nameless.
The children must leave this world...
having no names.
No one must know the names of
the dead children.
No one must say the names of the
dead children.
No one must even think that the children have names.

People must understand that it would be dangerous
to know the names of the children.
The people must be protected from
knowing the names of the children.
The names of the children could spread
like wildfire.
The people would not be safe if they knew
the names of the children.
Don't name the dead children.
Don't remember the dead children.
Don't think of the dead children.
Don't say: 'dead children'.
Michael Rosen

CHILD RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK (CRIN)

David Gee passed away at the end of 2024 (see the June edition of the NW NJPN E Bulletin for tributes and reflections <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-north-west/nw-njpn-e-bulletin-june-2025/>). David worked with Child Rights International Network (CRIN) from 2017.

JIM WYKE Children's Rights and National Security Campaign Coordinator CRIN worked closely with David about the issue of raising the age of military enlistment in the UK armed forces from 16 to 18. Jim gives an overview of David's work here and pays tribute to his contribution to this crucial campaign. Do follow the links to find out more.

David's Work: Imagine teaching a child to kill. Imagine giving them a rifle and sending them out of a trench. Once you have that image in your head, sometimes it can be very hard to let it go.

Those familiar with campaigning will understand that the story of change is woven by many for whom the campaign comes unexpectedly into their lives. For some, an injustice can seize you and addressing it can unexpectedly become a core part of who you are. I think the injustice of teaching a child to kill seized David. Once you start to understand the consequences of such an action, it is hard not to become determined to stop it.

David was involved in the campaign to end the military recruitment of under-18s, both in the UK and around the world, from 2007 until his death in 2024. To hear what David thought about his contribution to the international campaign to end the military recruitment of children, I would recommend a blog post he wrote entitled '*We Don't Always Lose*'. ^[1]

It is hard to summarise David's contribution to the Enlistment Campaign ^[2] at CRIN. David was a thinker, so together with CRIN he published numerous reports on issues ranging from the link between deprivation and under-18 year old military recruitment, ^[3] under-18 year old military recruitment and suicide ^[4] and the sexual and physical abuse that under-18s experience in the Army. ^[5] David was curious, so he helped guide our research and understand what we might need to know. David was a peacemaker, speaking to UK politicians, members of the UN CRC, former under-18 recruits, their families, those still in the Armed Forces and trying in all of this to bring people together. David was patient; he worked for 17 years on one issue and never lost hope.

David brought to CRIN a holistic patient humanism. His contribution was to be found as much in his way of seeing the world as it was his material output. If I were to highlight a particular contribution, it would be a letter he wrote for under-18s in the Army.

David ran a website giving impartial advice to soldiers or would-be recruits called *BeforeYouSignUp*,^[6] he considered it to be one of his greatest achievements. On *BeforeYouSignUp*, there is a template letter which under-18s in the Army who wish to exercise their right to leave military service could use. David told me it has been downloaded thousands of times. In July 2024, the Army rewrote the rules governing children's ability to leave the Army, which banned the use of this or any other template letter and required that all future letters in which child military recruits express their wish to leave Army service must be handwritten. CRIN is appealing this change to the rules and is working with policymakers to try to correct this degradation of children's rights in the Armed Forces. I hope this gives you an idea of how effective David's work could be and how threatening the military found his work.

The progress to end the military enlistment of children in the UK is a slow one, but David was patient. He saw it as an endeavour with its roots in decades. It was a privilege to work with him. Shortly before he died, he messaged me to say, 'I feel that our work is in good hands now too (yours, I mean)'. I hope we can continue to honour his work and his way of seeing the world. David wrote, '*We Don't Always Lose*'.^[7] Thanks to David's work, we will win.

Jim Patrick Wyke, Children's Rights and National Security Campaign Coordinator CRIN

^[1] <https://hopeswork.org/2024/04/29/child-soldiers/>

^[2] <https://home.crin.org/military-recruitment>

^[3] <https://home.crin.org/evidence/research/british-army-recruitment-and-deprivation-report>

^[4] <https://home.crin.org/readlistenwatch/stories/pressure-cooker-child-recruitment-suicide-british-armed-forces>

^[5] <https://home.crin.org/readlistenwatch/stories/children-in-uniform-a-decade-of-abuse-at-army-foundation-college>

^[6] <https://beforeyousignup.info/>

^[7] <https://hopeswork.org/2024/04/29/child-soldiers/>

TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS WON'T PROVIDE SECURITY

Steve Hucklesby, The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) 27 June, 2025

This week the UK government has announced its intention to undertake a new nuclear mission. Keir Starmer indicated that the purchase of 12 US F-35A aircraft will provide the capacity for the UK to threaten states with US-made B61 tactical nuclear bombs. The Ministry of Defence implies that UK pilots would be trained to enable these aircraft to provide a second leg to the UK nuclear weapons programme, threatening adversaries with smaller more usable and 'credible' nuclear weapons in addition to the UK's current large-scale strategic nuclear weapons system.

The introduction of a new range of tactical nuclear weapons would be a mammoth shift in UK nuclear strategy, unparalleled in the past 25 years. Contrary to claims by some, the recent Strategic Defence Review (SDR) does not offer justification for this dramatic development.^[1] The review only recommended "commencing discussions with the United States and NATO on the potential benefits and feasibility of enhanced UK participation in NATO's nuclear mission". The review has not considered the pitfalls of various options or even outlined what 'enhanced UK participation' might look like.

Lord Robertson, the chair of the independent review team, was asked by the Defence Committee about the possibility of the UK hosting US air-launched nuclear weapons or developing its own. In reply, he stated, "We considered it. The fact that it's not there indicates that we weren't terribly enthusiastic about it. When I was Defence Secretary the last time round, I got rid of the free-fall bombs."

Let's be clear: there is no identifiable public support for the UK's involvement in tactical, more 'useable' nuclear weapons; no Parliamentary scrutiny of this proposal to date; and no case set out by the Government outlining the pros and cons of such a major shift in UK defence policy. Why are tactical nuclear weapons being considered? To do this question justice we need to delve into the controversial policy of nuclear deterrence, the theory of which is that the threat or potential of one party using force will convince another party to refrain from initiating some other course of action.

The SDR acknowledges that Russia's aggressive adventurism is driving the UK's strategic thinking. Nuclear planners in Whitehall are concerned that the UK's current nuclear weapons lack credibility as a deterrent across a range of scenarios. They worry that the UK is unable to influence the escalation ladder that climbs from conventional conflict to all-out global nuclear war, if the UK only possesses large warheads several times the size of the Hiroshima bomb. There is no evidence that President Putin, despite his brutal and ruthless tendencies, would consider using a nuclear weapon on European states. Yet the fact that he could is apparently enough for some nuclear planners to recommend spending billions of pounds on new warheads and delivery systems. This shift would reverse undertakings that the UK has made at Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conferences, thereby weakening the NPT; a treaty which remains vitally important for non-proliferation.

To engage with the deterrence argument properly it's necessary to consider the presumed role that tactical nuclear weapons might play in two potential scenarios involving Russian aggression.

The first concerns suppression of conventional conflict. Imagine Russia was to invade a neighbouring state, say Lithuania or Estonia, for which they could mobilise troops in numbers that would overwhelm a NATO conventional response. Given Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this future possibility cannot be entirely dismissed, and it is prudent to give it serious consideration. The hypothesis is that if the UK had tactical nuclear weapons this might dissuade President Putin or another future Russian leader from crossing the border with troops. Russia might assess that the United States lacked the resolve to use its tactical nuclear weapons based in Europe. In this case, Russia would then be deterred by the faint possibility of the UK breaking the global nuclear taboo and using nuclear weapons for the first time since the Second World War in a counterforce attack against Russian military assets. This possibility, vanishingly remote as it is, is thought to have more credibility if the UK were to possess tactical nuclear weapons as an alternative to its hugely destructive strategic nuclear weapons.

However, the supposed deterrent effect of the UK's nuclear weapons in this scenario does not hold water. Russia's counter-strategy would see it engaging in hybrid warfare, destabilising regions close to the Russian border through support of provocateurs, alleging 'extremism' on the part of local and national political figures to provide cover for a low-level military intervention with the option to expand later. There are plenty of options open to Russia to initiate a military intervention that at no point would involve a step significant enough to conceivably warrant resort to tactical nuclear weapons. This renders UK nuclear weapons a useless deterrent against a conventional attack by Russia.

The second scenario is one that is maybe more familiar in habitual nuclear deterrence thinking. It concerns deterrence of a Russian nuclear attack, and Ukraine is a pertinent case study. Over the past three years, Russia has increased its nuclear rhetoric. There are concerns that were Russia to lose this conventional conflict and be pushed out of the four regions of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia, it could make good on recent nuclear threats. It could, let's say, bomb military bases in Ukraine or NATO states with its tactical nuclear weapons. Western nuclear strategists suggest that if the UK had tactical nuclear weapons of a similar nature, then Russia would be deterred from a first use of nuclear weapons. The main difficulty here is the assumed plausibility of Russian 'first use'. While the rhetoric coming from Moscow is certainly alarming at times, Russia has nothing whatsoever to gain from first use in this or any similar scenario, and everything to lose with respect to its relationship with China and India and its standing and trading position in the international community. It is precisely this diplomatic and economic cost to Russia that the UK government could look to strengthen by reinforcing nuclear restraint.

It is only when we delve into the smoke and mirrors of nuclear deterrence thinking that we can assess the merit of a proposed allocation of vast sums of public money to develop and maintain a whole new category of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, while nuclear scenario planning takes place in Whitehall, it is discouraged in political debate in the Parliament across the road. In response to any MP's question on deterrence strategy, the responsible government minister is likely to decline to comment with respect to any particular adversary.^[2] This imposes a serious constraint on the democratic process. Democratic debate is sacrificed in the name of the extremely vague and unsafe notion of protecting 'deterrence credibility'

The consultation on the SDR invited input from organisations, including churches and faith groups, but discouraged comment on the current policies around the UK's strategic nuclear weapons.^[3] The review panel will have missed the opportunity to hear a range of critical views on both the missteps of UK government policy by reducing transparency of its nuclear stockpile, and the affordability of an expanded UK nuclear role and opportunity costs. It also meant that it did not hear proposals about opportunities for the UK government to engage more constructively with non-nuclear weapons states, the UK role in shoring up the global non-proliferation architecture, and the role of UK faith groups and others in a global movement around the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The SDR expresses concern that public trust in nuclear deterrence is not what it might be. Consequently, one of the SDR's 62 recommendations is for a "public communications campaign that conveys the fundamental importance and necessity of the deterrent". A PR campaign should not be the priority. Rather, a more honest and open debate about the dangers and costs of our nuclear deterrent would be much more befitting of a democracy.

<https://ipit.uk/tactical-nuclear-weapons-wont-provide-security>

^[1] UK Defence Journal – Britain considering fleet of nuclear strike aircraft. The Times – Britain considering fleet of nuclear strike aircraft.

^[2] Luke Pollard in response to Sir Desmond Swayne "I decline that polite invitation to detail our nuclear strategy. That ambiguity is absolutely certain ..." 2 June 2025 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-02/debates/14BA9D9E-231D-46CC-97AD-87467397E3DA/UKNuclearDeterrent>.

John Healey in response to Ben Obese-Jecty 2 June 2025 “I will not comment in public on those discussions ...”
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-06-02/debates/AA250D32-663A-462C-98F4-64DD8DF389A7/StrategicDefenceReview>.

MPs receive news of nuclear weapons on UK soil from the US Department of Defence while the UK Government continues to deny scrutiny. Luke Pollard in response to Shockat Adam: – “It remains longstanding UK and NATO policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at any given location.” <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-01-21/25424/>

^[3] This did not dissuade the Baptist Union, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church from offering comment on the Government’s ‘triple lock’ on Trident in our joint evidence submission to the SDR, despite the consultation guidance.

- **Steve Hucklesby’s background** is in international relief and development, having worked for 10 years on programmes in conflict and post-conflict settings in Africa and Asia. He is committed to exploring Christian responses to conflict and injustice, covering areas such as non-proliferation, ethical investment and climate change.
- **The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)** – a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

See also: 2 August 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.

Article by Steve Hucklesby here: <https://jpit.uk/50-years-of-continuous-at-sea-deterrence-what-is-there-to-celebrate>

SCHOOLING FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Ian Linden 1/7/2025

When Orla Guerin, the distinguished BBC foreign correspondent, broadcasts from a distant land, and Pat McFadden MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is interviewed here in Britain, you know things are bad. But at least you can begin to understand them. And Pat McFadden has that gift for making you think everything is all right: you should go to bed and it will be better in the morning. Everything is under control. But it isn’t.

“Fragile”, “volatile”, “threatening”: three increasingly common words to describe the new world disorder. Floods, fires and heat waves from climate change. MAGA mania, persistent violent religious extremism, the decline globally in democracy and the rise in authoritarian states, all add to the anxiety.

The Financial Times (26 June) reports that the Oslo Peace Research Institute counts 61 “state-based conflicts” around the world: the greatest number since 1946. In the words of a former CIA Director, Leon Panetta, we should take heed of “how dangerous a world we live in now”. According to our own current National Security Strategy we must “actively prepare for the possibility of the UK coming under direct threat, potentially in a wartime scenario”. Add preparation for the consequences, nationally and globally, of climate warming.

Responding to these threats has resulted in removing funding for poverty alleviation in the “developing” world, as well as cutting budgets needed for acute domestic social needs. Intensive care for an economy debilitated by the 2008 financial crisis, Brexit and Covid at the expense of the poor.

What now needs asking is how to live in the UK’s starkly unequal, morally and materially diminished society, which is deeply mistrustful of government. The wider question of how to live in this fragile, volatile and threatening world is – ethically – no less important. And what of justice for future generations? How should parents prepare their children and grandchildren for further troubled times? What kind of upbringing and education fits today’s deteriorating circumstances?

Responding to this question, and not accepting narrow schooling for the jobs market as an adequate answer, should be the strategic priority for our education system — whilst not excluding the development of jobs-related skills. Personal, Social, Health, Relationships and Sex Education, or PSHRSE, is a beginning. But it is fragmented within the curriculum, not sufficiently developed and sometimes treated as an add-on, although since 2020 the teaching of Relationships, Health and Sex Education has been a statutory obligation. And the Government’s own presentation of PSHRSE sends mixed messages. Parts are non-statutory, not required by law, yet the curriculum is said to be “important”, “necessary” and “should be taught” even if only for one hour a week.

PSHRSE is vital but rarely in the news except when there’s controversy about sex education.

The PSHE Association, the provider of advice on teaching the curriculum, is a membership charity “supporting children’s physical and mental health, relationships, careers and economic wellbeing”. It is funded by the Government and, as the Association’s own mission statement indicates, retains the emphasis on entering the economy and on jobs. But it is not enough for troubled times.

Parts of PSHE do touch on hotly contested areas in the world outside school, hence guidance and regulation by the Department of Education. Statutory teaching standards “prohibit the promotion of partisan political views”. Schools – like the BBC – “should take steps to ensure the balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues when they are brought to the attention of pupils”. Students may get to look at contemporary politics in these sessions, how systems of governance are put together and work, the different political parties. Whilst different cultures and religions are sometimes introduced by visits to places of worship, many of the urgent contemporary problems we and they face have to be discussed elsewhere. Up to the age of 16, debating societies alone provide an outlet for argument and opposing views.

In some traditional subjects opportunities do arise for exploration of contemporary issues. GCSE Geography should provide a scientific account of the causes of global warming. Given the role of disinformation in contemporary society, critical analysis of evidence and documents in History lessons offers training potentially protecting children from social media influence. In discussion of novels, poetry and drama, English Literature provides scope for understanding different social and personal values. At A level there is a gear change when ethics and philosophy, also examination subjects, positively require and encourage debate.

This is all well and good. But missing from the curriculum is a sharp focus capable of countering the dominant, driving narrative of might is right, creating a mindscape redolent of divided societies, conflict and the need for militarisation. Conformity to norms based on humane and compassionate values and virtues, whether in national life or international relationships, are fast waning. They are in danger of being lost to future generations unless taught in our classroom. This is not a plea for compulsory religious education in a secular society, though the Abrahamic faiths, and of course others, still make a substantial contribution to retention of norms.

The default position – which religious faiths can also fall into – is understanding the world as a binary opposition between “them” and “us”, laying the foundations for conflict and violence. An attractive mindset, because so simple, replaces an isolating individualism with an emotionally satisfying sense of belonging and empowerment. The pithy proposition which opens the 1945 Constitution of UNESCO argues “that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”.

Putting together a meaningful account of the world, about life, that recognizes the complexity of relationships within society and internationally, both within politics and geo-politics, is demanding. Children and young people need help to develop the necessary insights and to begin to think about such matters. Just consider how difficult democratic governments find integrating the conflicting demands of different human rights within law and acceptable shared national policy.

In my own experience of working to prevent violent religious extremism, what’s needed is prolonged cultivation of both emotional and cognitive empathy, the ability to put yourself in someone’s shoes, understand their feelings and perspective on the world. This is not only a diplomat’s and negotiator’s skill: it is perhaps the most important attribute for future generations. And the one we must directly address.

What does this mean for teaching in our classrooms? Firstly, the need for a more holistic approach, bringing some coherence to PSHE and the contribution of History, Geography, and English Literature, painting a big, normative picture, emancipating PSHE teaching from the demands of the job market. The Finnish Government’s approach to education is an attractive attempt to do so. Secondly, whenever feasible, increase creative multi-media approaches to presenting the topic. What better way to broach the nature of disinformation than *The Wizard of Oz*? Thirdly, raising the status of this more holistic PSHE by making it a compulsory GCSE subject.

Our education system should be pre-occupied with results, but if the primary one is not a compassionate society that can, with the support of parents, move beyond spurious and dangerous binaries, it will fail our children and grandchildren. <https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/schooling-for-troubled-times>

• **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.

A TINDERBOX OF DISCONNECTION AND DIVISION THREATENS OUR DEMOCRACY

We must find out what unites us to avoid divisions such as those that led to the racist attacks after the Southport knife attack from deepening further

Sajid Javid | Jon Cruddas 25 June, 2025:

When riots rocked 27 towns and cities across the country last year, after the horrific Southport knife attack, the prime minister admitted they did not happen in a vacuum. Sir Keir Starmer said they “revealed a deeply unhealthy society”, with “the cracks in our foundation laid bare, weakened by division and decline”. He was right — but we have heard very little about it since.

Those cracks now threaten to deepen further. In the last few weeks we have seen more racially motivated riots in Northern Ireland and the stark findings of Baroness Casey’s audit into the state’s failure to tackle grooming gangs. Each of these are awful in their own right — the attacks on mosques by racist mobs, the burning of houses on the basis of ethnicity and the thousands of girls abused for years while too many turned a blind eye. But these are not isolated events and to treat them as momentary crises is to miss the point. Beneath the surface lies a deeper shift: weakening trust, deepening polarisation, growing concerns about the scale and impact of immigration and a decline in our social connections.

Reflecting on the brutal class divides of the Victorian era, Benjamin Disraeli famously wrote of “two nations ... between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy”. Two centuries on, we face a challenge that is at least as intense but also far more fragmented. The bonds that hold society together — civic participation, social connection and a shared sense of belonging — are under growing pressure. At the same time, the drivers of disconnection are intensifying: economic hardship, institutional mistrust and the siloisation and misinformation generated by social media. These forces are converging into something more dangerous than any individual issue: a tinderbox of disconnection and division. It is no exaggeration to say that unless we find ways to defuse it, the basis of our democracy is at risk. Examples from history and around the world show us that building a peaceful, diverse democracy is a journey, not just a destination.

For years — in brief breathing spaces between elections, Brexit battles and financial crunches — our leaders have sometimes reflected that we need a greater sense of belonging; a unifying sense of community at a local level and camaraderie at the national level. But these reflections rarely make the jump from the pages of a speech into a concerted national project. Even when we have a compelling roadmap, like that set out by another Casey report into integration, meaningful follow-up is often lost in the churn of Westminster.

That timidity is partly because there is no single lever to pull that fixes these things in the short term, and because there is no one authority who feels they can lead the national discussion. We do not have a national era-shaping presidential figure such as Lee Kuan Yew or Charles de Gaulle and we probably would not listen to them if we did. But we know a laissez-faire approach to community and national cohesion can no longer suffice, and is in fact now very much part of the problem. If we do not want to see the creeping balkanisation and extremism in our politics that is taking root in other countries, we need a radically different approach — one where disconnection and division are not treated as secondary issues, addressed only in times of crisis, but become central to our politics.

Realising this ambition will take boldness of thinking, bravery and a willingness to step outside of our comfort zones. It will also require as much cross-party consensus as possible. This, by its nature, is a whole-of-society challenge. Identifying the issues and values that can unite us is not something that government alone can dictate, not least when people’s trust in politics and government remains so low.

That is why we have agreed to co-chair the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion, which we believe will be a critical first step in this journey. We bring different political viewpoints and backgrounds but are united in our belief that this issue is one of the defining challenges of our time. While both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition support our work, it is an independent, cross-society effort to listen, understand and act.

Our commissioners reflect the full breadth of modern British life, from business and faith to civil society, academia, the media and more. In the months ahead, we will begin a UK-wide process of engagement, reaching into communities that are too often left out of national conversations. Asking: what unites us? What divides us? And what would bring us closer together?

This project will not be a magic bullet, of course. But we hope we can help capture a shared vision of how we want to live together and form a policy agenda to take us towards it. We also hope we can prompt a national conversation about the kind of country we want to build. Because if, as citizens, we decide we want to build a country based on kinder, closer and more connected communities, politics will have no choice but to follow.

Sir Sajid Javid is a former senior cabinet minister. Jon Cruddas was a policy co-ordinator for the Labour Party and MP for Dagenham & Rainham (2001-2024)

<https://www.livingwelltogether.org.uk/a-tinderbox-of-disconnection-and-division-threatens-our-democracy/>

The Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion is hosted by The Together Initiative, Registered charity in England & Wales No. 1193060. Contact us: contact@livingwelltogether.org.uk

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ON FRONT LINE AGAINST CHILD POVERTY

June 9, 2025 **Marie Southall, Director of Partnerships and Public Affairs, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Catholic Education Service writes:**

It's clear to anyone in the education sector that for quite a while schools have been picking up the pieces from the retreat of local public services.

School leaders tell us they're increasingly taking the place of statutory support, and this isn't only for children but also now for families too. School staff members are having to handle issues related to physical and mental health, immigration, housing, transport and more, and what they are seeing is children living in poverty.

Over 90% of our schools have reported encountering families which are struggling with the cost of living, and 70% have noted worsening conditions. We know this because at the end of last year our 2,155 Catholic schools, colleges and academies in England and Wales were asked about the extent of the child poverty that they were witnessing, and the results of this survey have been eye-opening. The cost-of-living crisis has meant instances of children arriving at school without having had any breakfast, and sometimes in insufficiently dry clothes due to high energy costs.

When faced with this situation what matters is action and our schools and parishes are going above and beyond to support families. Help with school uniform and its costs is something that 94% of Catholic schools responding to our survey offer.

Similarly, breakfast clubs are another one of the most common forms of assistance that our sector's schools provide, which have been up and running long before the Department for Education announced its intention for a national scheme. However, many parents of pupils at Catholic schools aren't eligible for Free School Meals due to their immigration status or by being in low-paid casual and temporary employment. Reforming the eligibility status for Free School Meals can solve this along with streamlining the application process, and awareness-raising initiatives.

Being part of a wider family of local parishes and charities also helps. Catholic Care, in the Diocese of Leeds, provides residential homes for children unable to live with their own families, a family style of living based on a stable and supportive environment. This is in addition to a team of educational psychologists who work in schools and with families as part of the diocese's school and family social work service.

Caritas Salford, the social action charity of Salford Diocese, supported over 2,700 children and young people last year through its social work, counselling and therapy initiatives.

Recognising the more than 200,000 school pupils affected by parental incarceration, Catholic charity the Prison Advice Care Trust (Pact) runs services for visiting families in more than 60 prisons across the country. Other charities such as the St Vincent De Paul Society provide safe and caring holidays all over England for children in need of a break from family problems such as unemployment, illness, bereavement or relationship breakdown.

Long-term solutions must address the root causes of poverty, which may sound like an impossible task but in some cases can be achieved by a simple change in policy. The Department for Work and Pensions' own data states that 1.6 million children live in households which are affected by the two-child benefit cap for Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit. The majority of these homes have one or more householders in work. The cap exacerbates financial strain and disproportionately affects Catholic communities, where larger families are common.

The Catholic Bishops have called for the abolition of the two-child policy since its introduction in 2017, highlighting the moral imperative of valuing all children equally. In challenging times, and amid falling birth rates, the cap can prompt families to make difficult decisions about having new pregnancies rather than rightly valuing every new life as a blessing. In the words of the late Pope Francis: 'Every family is a common good and family policies represent not a cost but an investment to guarantee the futures of our societies.'

While our schools do what they can to mitigate child poverty, there are other, knock-on effects. A strong connection between poverty and mental health issues was reported in our survey by 88% of schools, with financial instability exacerbating stress, anxiety, and depression among pupils and their families. This is in the context of a fifth of all pupils in state-funded Catholic schools meeting the highest national deprivation criteria, compared to a 12% England average, according to the Government's Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

Supporting the whole person is a key part of any Catholic school's ethos, and pastoral care is provided including in the form of chaplaincy services, which have seen a significant increase in demand in recent years. So much so that a new School Chaplaincy and Youth Ministry apprenticeship course has been established by the Archdiocese of Southwark with St Mary's University, and a career development pathway for school chaplains has been developed by the Diocese of Nottingham to increase recruitment and retention.

Our students are also activists on behalf of others. Some at Cardinal Newman Catholic School, in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, helped secure a school-based mental health counselling pilot project in the Brighton and Hove Council area, following a decade of related mental health campaigning with the local NHS. The Government's policy commitment to roll out this initiative on a national scale is to be commended.

Overall, there are several policies in the Labour Party Manifesto at last year's election which promise to help reduce child poverty, and it referred to working with faith communities specifically on this issue.

We hope that the Government will draw from the experiences of Catholic schools and charities to address the root causes of poverty and develop policies and strategies that will enable all children and families to flourish.

Read Child Poverty in England and Wales: www.catholiceducation.org.uk/resources/child-poverty-report
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52566>

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY NEWS

Niall Cooper who is stepping down as Chief Exec of Church Action on Poverty (CAP) after 28 years. He looks back at his time in post, and some remarkable highlights in an interview on page 8 of CAP's current newsletter SPARK (link below).

NIALL COOPER: A FAREWELL EDITORIAL

Farewell! I would like to see Christians take seriously the command of God that we all pursue justice for the poor and oppressed. As I've been getting ready to leave Church Action on Poverty, I've been reflecting on the incredible journey that it's been since 1997... the many powerful and impactful campaigns and programmes we've run over the years, and many of the inspiring individuals I've met along the way.

It has truly been an honour to work alongside some amazing Church Action on Poverty members, staff and trustees, people and partner organisations, the length and breadth of the UK. It has been – and will continue to be – a privilege to be part of a wider anti-poverty movement that refuses to give up, in spite of all the challenges thrown at people struggling on the frontline of poverty.

The context may have changed, but the challenges are just as great now as in 1997: the cuts to Britain's social security system announced in the Government's spring statement are deeply harmful to some of the country's poorest people.

It is vital that people who are at the sharp end have the opportunity to speak out – as Mary, Sydnie and Stef have done in relation to the cuts to disability benefits that will affect them personally (see page 6 - link below). The growth of Your Local Pantry continues to offer dignity, choice and hope to people struggling to make ends meet in more than 120 communities across the UK. See page 7 for how you can become a Friend of Your Local Pantry (link below).

Ultimately, the big task for the churches is still to commit to the long-term goal of building a powerful movement in which people feel they have agency, dignity and power. Your support and your donations are vital to enable Church Action on Poverty to continue to put faith into action.

I wish Church Action on Poverty well in the next stage of the journey.

Read the latest news with the articles highlighted by Niall and other reports here:

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SPARK-newsletter-May-2025.pdf>

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY APPOINTS LIAM PURCELL AS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

June 30, 2025: The ecumenical charity Church Action on Poverty has appointed a new Chief Executive. Liam Purcell steps into the role from 1 July, and says he wants Church Action on Poverty to speak truth to power, and be a catalyst for change in communities.

Liam Purcell said today: "I'm excited to start working alongside the many churches and other partners who share Church Action on Poverty's vision. I want us to continue being a catalyst for change in communities, and speaking truth to power. I'm proud to be part of an organisation that is always rooted in the lived experience of people who live with poverty. I've seen first-hand the amazing difference that churches can make in their communities, and if any churches are looking to embark on work to tackle the injustice of poverty, we'd love to work together."

Helen Goodman, chair of Church Action on Poverty's Council of Management, said: "We had a high number of first-class applicants for this role and following a rigorous process the Council of Management appointed Liam. He has total commitment to the organisation and its values. At the same time, we believe his experience and management skills will serve the organisation well, following a period of phenomenal growth and in a time when action to tackle poverty is really important."

Liam Purcell has overseen Church Action on Poverty's communications since 2007, and played a lead role in initiatives including Let's End Poverty, End Hunger UK, and Challenge Poverty Week. Prior to that, he was National Coordinator for the Student Christian Movement. He replaces Niall Cooper, who was Chief Executive of Church Action on Poverty from 1997 until he stepped down this summer. Church Action on Poverty works with churches and partners across the UK, and supports 120 communities to run Local Pantries supporting over 60,000 people.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52715>

• Church Action on Poverty is a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. Since 1982 we have worked in partnership with churches, and with people in poverty themselves, to tackle the root causes of poverty. We put gospel values of justice and compassion into practice. We know that the real experts on poverty are the people who live with it. Our work is driven by their insights and experiences. We help them to make their voices heard. We speak truth to power, campaigning nationally and locally for policies that will loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives.

www.church-poverty.org.uk

A MESSAGE FROM NEW CHIEF EXEC LIAM PURCELL

We have a new Chief Exec – and we'll continue to be a catalyst for change!

You may be used to receiving emails from me about Church Action on Poverty. As of 1 July, I am stepping up to be Chief Exec of the charity. I want to thank you for giving, acting and praying with us - and share some of my hopes as we look to the future.

I'm excited to carry forward Church Action on Poverty's amazing vision, and work closely alongside the many churches and other partners who share our values of dignity, agency and power. I'm proud to be part of an organisation that is always rooted in the lived experience of people who live with poverty.

I'll focus on how we can be a catalyst for change in communities and a resource for churches who want to tackle poverty. We'll also continue speaking truth to power and challenging injustice. And I want us to pioneer new ideas and approaches that can transform people's lives, as we have done with programmes like participatory budgeting, Schools of Participation, and Your Local Pantry.

I spent a lot of last year listening deeply to our supporters and partners. I'm inspired by your commitment and vision, and I look forward to finding out what we can do together.

I know that the support we receive from churches is essential to sustain our work, and I've also seen first-hand the amazing difference that churches can make in their communities. If any churches are looking to tackle the injustice of poverty, we'd love to work together.

I invite you to make a commitment to give, act and pray with us now - by signing up your church to take part in Church Action on Poverty Sunday on 19 October!

Find out more and sign up for Church Action on Poverty Sunday: https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=ceo&utm_content=2025+07+01+enews+announcement+of+new+CEO+-+Core

Best wishes, **Liam Purcell, Chief Executive Officer**

CHANGE OF DATE

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/>

PLEASE NOTE: WE HAVE MOVED!

THE NEW CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY OFFICE IS AT:

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

THE CLIMATE AND NATURE BILL

Liz Archibald, Communications Officer for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council, has passed on the following report and action ideas.

Liz writes: *Chris Myers, the environmental lead on the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council and a member of the diocesan environment group, gives the background to the Climate and Nature Bill being brought before Parliament on July 11 and explains how we can support it by signing an open letter to the Prime Minister. As we celebrate the anniversary of the publication of Laudato Si', this would be an ideal way to turn concern about the climate crisis into action:*

Chris Myers, Environmental Lead, Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council writes:

The Climate and Nature Bill (CAN) will return to Parliament on July 11 but is likely to fail without Government support. The latest campaign organised by Zero Hour is aimed at persuading Keir Starmer to support the Bill.

If you would like to see bold, science-led action on the environmental crisis, the cross-party Climate and Nature Bill is exactly the legislation we need.

Written by leading scientists and supported by 190 MPs, 54 Peers, 380 local councils, 905 organisations, and 72,652 UK citizens, the CAN Bill would ensure that the UK Government:

1. Reduces its greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK's international commitments under the Paris Agreement 2015;
2. Halts and reverses the destruction of the natural world, in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework 2022;
3. Establishes a temporary climate and nature citizens' assembly to recommend measures for inclusion in an all-of-government strategy.

The CAN Bill is a historic piece of legislation that will make the UK into a true world leader on tackling the climate and nature crises.

Will you join 72,652 people calling for the Government to deliver REAL change for climate and nature? Tell the Prime Minister that REAL change means a greener, cleaner, happier, and more prosperous Britain for all.

Please follow the link below to sign an open letter to the Prime Minister (there is one letter for each parliamentary constituency) – and it's a brilliant letter!

Climate and Nature Bill Campaign: <https://action.zerohour.uk/>

More information about the Climate and Nature Bill and the campaign by Zero Hour is available at:

<https://www.zerohour.uk/climate-and-nature-bill/>

Video - why we need the Climate and Nature Bill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YImDg1gKCV4>

UPCOMING LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT: ACTING TOGETHER FOR PEOPLE, CLIMATE AND NATURE

Ellen Teague June 29, 2025

More than a hundred organisations and upwards of 4,000 people so far will be at a mass lobby of parliament on Wednesday 9 July, calling for leadership from the UK government to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. CAFOD, Jesuit Missions, Columbans, FCJ Sisters are among the Catholic groups involved, and the organisations are part of The Climate Coalition.

All are encouraging supporters to tell Members of Parliament (MPs) they care about people, climate and nature, and urge them to act. MPs will be meeting constituents at two mass lobby venues in the Westminster area.

They will be asked about delivering vital funding to communities hit hardest by climate change, tackling the global debt crisis, securing a greener and fairer future for UK citizens, and restoring Nature.

The lobby will tell our MPs: this is a moment for leadership that protects what matters most - our health, our nature, our communities, our climate, and our future. The family-friendly event includes a prayer vigil outside Parliament.

A coach from Wolverhampton is amongst the initiatives organised by Church groups. Bishop John Arnold, lead bishop for the environment for England and Wales, will be there for the day and then celebrating the 5.30pm Mass in Westminster Cathedral. And Bishop Peter Brignall of Wrexham Diocese is one of the latest signatories on the 'Cancel Debt, Choose Hope' petition. 2025 is a Jubilee year, which is when the Bible calls for debt cancellation to restore justice and human dignity.

In a collaborative programme between the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team - led by James Trewby - and the London FCJ Centre for Spirituality and Ecojustice, five schools in Birmingham Archdiocese and one in Liverpool Archdiocese are sending sixth form delegates to the 9th July lobby. They are Bishop Ullathorne and Cardinal Newman in Coventry, Archbishop Illsley and St Thomas Aquinas in Birmingham, St Peters in Solihull and Bellerive in Liverpool. They will visit Westminster's Queen Elizabeth Hall, where there will be stalls from organisations in the Climate Coalition and a chance to meet other participants from around the UK. And they will take part in CAFOD-led activities at Westminster Cathedral Hall.

The lobby programme offers powerful talks, opportunities to meet inspiring communities and campaigners, and a unique chance to be part of something historic.

At this time when so much energy is being put into war, it is a time to heal relationships.

We must not permit wars to divert political attention and financial resources away from climate action and environmental protection. In many countries, clean energy projects and conservation efforts are delayed or defunded as governments shift priorities toward military spending and crisis management.

National Justice and Peace Network Conference: 'Just Politics to Just Peace'

The world is looking for Prophets of Peace. Coming up, the National Justice and Peace Network Conference at the end of July, is focusing on nonviolence and efforts to heal Planet Earth are among the workshops.

The Conference runs from 25 - 27 July 2025 at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Details here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

Season of Creation 2025: 'Peace with Creation'

Then, the Season of Creation 2025 will take place from 1st September to 4th October. The theme for this year is 'Peace with Creation,' which emphasizes the need for humanity to restore its relationship with the environment. Various activities, including themed services and prayer sessions, will be organized during this period to encourage participation and reflection on creation care. This is a good time to start preparing.

There are so many opportunities to show love for our neighbours and for God's creation.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/52707>

LINKS

Register for lobby at: <https://cafod.org.uk/news/campaigning-news/join-us-for-the-mass-lobby-of-parliament>

Travel subsidies are available. Email: campaigns@cafod.org.uk.

Hashtag: #ActNowChangeForever

CAFOD Petition on Debt: <https://action.cafod.org.uk/page/161357/petition/1>

✠ A NEW MASS FOR OUR COMMON HOME 🌿

✠ On July 3, 2025, the Vatican made a historic announcement: the introduction of a new Mass "For the Care of Creation" (Missa pro custodia creationis) into the Roman Missal. This marks the first time the Church formally includes a liturgical prayer focused on creation as part of its public worship.

🌿 But this moment is about more than a new set of prayers.

💚 It represents a bold spiritual milestone — a clear sign that caring for our common home is not merely an environmental issue, but a deeply moral and faith-centered calling.

<https://laudatosimovement.org/news/a-new-mass-for-our-common-home/>

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DIARY

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

25 CAFOD Day of Reflection Laudato Si' Centre at Wardley Hall, Salford Diocese 9.30 – 3.00. To celebrate the Jubilee Year, come and spend time in the peaceful outdoor setting of Wardley Hall, to pause and reflect on the meaning of this special year, and how it calls us to reset, renew our faith and commit to building a fairer world where all people may flourish. The day will be led by Emily Cahill from the Laudato Si' Centre, Simon Holleron CAFOD Salford and Kathryn Keenan CAFOD Shrewsbury, using CAFOD's Jubilee Reflection Guide. Bring your own lunch and be dressed for the weather and being outdoors. **Tickets are free but will be limited to 20 (At least 13 places are already filled.) so if you are interested; don't delay – book today using this link:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cafod-and-laudato-si-centre-jubilee-reflection-tickets-1320068593699?aff=oddtcreator>

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. 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. Plus Workshops, Stalls, and other events going on across the weekend. Details: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

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 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 or 015395-32288 All welcome.

● 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.

● 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 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://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/mouthpeace-summer-2025.pdf>

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