



Justice and Peace

WINTER 2025 -26

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The Editor writes:

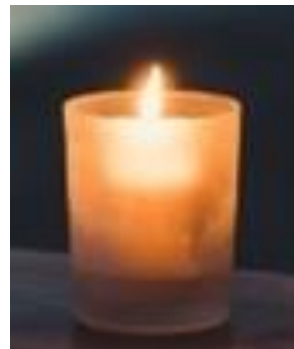
As I was putting this Mouthpeace together, the news of the final agreement from COP 30 in Brazil was being announced. Generally there was disappointment from those agencies that really care about the global warming and the existential future of the planet. It seems that fossil fuels were not included at all and deforestation was only mentioned once. Probably not surprising when the big players (US, China, Russia) hadn't turned up. So there is nothing about COP 30 in this Winter Mouthpeace.

The focus seems this time to be on peace starting with the NJPN/Pax Christi webinar on Dec 1st. There are also several suggestions to help make Advent more of a time of reflection

During this past year, the Jubilee Year of Hope, NJPN have helped us by online meetings to open doors to freedom from human trafficking, refugees and asylum seekers and children

living in poverty. At the Swanwick conference we reflected on 'A Just Peace. Refresh your memory of these on <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/>.

As we approach a new year may the light of Christ shine through you wherever you find yourself.



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The articles in MouthPeace are the views of the individual contributors or organisations concerned and do not necessarily reflect those of the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool and Shrewsbury



CHRIST AMONG THE RUINS DECEMBER 1ST 7.30 pm



A live webinar and conversation of faith, witness, and action

As the people of Gaza face unimaginable suffering amid ongoing bombardment, displacement, and humanitarian crisis — and as Israeli and Jewish communities worldwide grieve, fear, and struggle with the weight of violence and loss — we gather to seek Christ's light among the ruins.

This webinar invites participants to reflect on how the Church understands and responds to this unfolding tragedy: where we find Christ in the midst of devastation, and how we can bear faithful witness to peace, justice, and compassion in a world so deeply divided. More details and link to join Page 11

ADVENT RESOURCES



Anne O'Connor has again produced some excellent helpful Advent resources. She writes: For this year I've produced a booklet (one page of A4 folded) with readings, reflections and prayers for each of the four weeks on the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love plus a choice of 2 leaflets of services on these themes for parish use. Please feel free to use as you wish but do include any acknowledgements for the authors as indicated in the text. You can download these resources from NJPN here:

REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/resources/7447/attachment/reflections-for-advent-hope-peace-joy-love/>

SERVICE FOR ADVENT HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/resources/7447/attachment/service-for-advent-hope-peace-joy-love/>

and an alternative SERVICE FOR ADVENT HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE [2]

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/resources/7447/attachment/service-for-advent-hope-peace-joy-love-2/> which includes some lovely Advent Wreath Prayers by Rev Lisa Degrenia <http://www.revlisad.com>



At a time when many of our refugee brothers and sisters experience indifference, isolation, and rejection, this Advent resource invites us to open our hearts and communities to them.

Each week, as we light the candles of the Advent wreath, we will pray, reflect, and take small actions of solidarity. Together, we prepare for the coming of Christ, who Himself came as a child without a home, welcomed by strangers, and bringing hope to a world longing for peace.

May this Advent season help us prepare not only for Christmas, but also to open our hearts to welcome each person and to recognise the unique value they bring. https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2025_EN_Advent-resource.pdf



As we look forward to the coming of Christ, journey with Embrace this Advent - sign up to receive our free Advent Reflection emails and take part in our online Advent Vigils. Details to sign for the vigils come with the emails <https://embraceme.org/advent-reflections?>

Advent Reflections: This year's reflections are shaped by the theme Building the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace, drawing on the three priorities of the Community of the Cross of Nails and exploring passages from Isaiah.. Each week explores a different passage from Isaiah, on the following themes: Week 1: Healing the wounds of history; Week 2: Learning to live with difference and celebrating diversity; Week 3: Building a culture of justice; Week 4: Building a culture of peace Sign up <https://embraceme.org/advent-reflections>



There are a variety of resources here including material to download for use in schools

<https://www.jesuitinstitute.org/resources?type=Advent+and+Christmastide>



CAFOD's online Advent calendar 2025 of daily prayer and reflection will offer an opportunity to pause, reflect, pray and take action as we prepare for Christmas. Join us as we journey through the season Advent with our global family.

Sign up for daily reflections straight to your inbox <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/advent-calendar>



CAFOD CHRISTMAS FUN RUNS Join us on 27 December 2025. Runners, walkers and spectators alike will come together to shake off the Christmas indulgence and make a difference in the world.

LIVERPOOL Register from 10am for 11 am start - Wavertree Sports Park, Wellington Road, Liverpool, L15 4LE

BOLLINGTON 11 am Middlewood Way (viaduct next to St Gregory's Church), Bollington, Macclesfield, SK10 5JR

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS FUN RUN Wherever you are in the world, you can take part in this joyful fun run by yourself, with friends and family, or your parish.

<https://cafod.org.uk/fundraise/challenge-events/run-for-cafod/christmas-fun-run> Email events@cafod.org.uk

ADVENT A TIME FOR HOPE – AND IMAGINATION

The Lord has done great things for me, and holy is his name”.
(Magnificat)

“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” (Magnificat).

As we approach the end of the Year of Hope, which ends on the Feast of Epiphany 2026, we first enter another season of Hope - Advent. It is a time when we look forward to celebrating once more the gift of God’s only Son as our Redeemer. We get a really good insight into the meaning of Advent and Christmas from the Magnificat, that glorious psalm sung by Mary on receiving the news that she was to become the mother of God.

I will pick out two things from that song which really speak to me. Firstly: **“for the Lord has done great things for me, and holy is his name”**. What a wonderful expression of gratitude and of praise from the “lowly handmaid” chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

Secondly: **“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”**

Just contrast that with the efforts of the commercial world to condition us into the belief that “The perfect Christmas” can only be achieved through consumerism - and how often we fall for it. If you think about it, the advertising industry only exists by creating discontent - we can only be happy if we spend, spend, spend (In reality, if you truly need something, no one needs to advertise it!). But true happiness is based on gratitude, the appreciation of what we have been freely given. It also comes from the contentment of doing what we know is right. The relentless advertising not only distorts our view of what Christmas is about but, worse, it paralyses our imagination about doing things differently. Pope Francis warned us about the throwaway society and yet Christmas is the biggest throwaway event of the whole year.

But it needn’t be like this. The Magnificat gives us the inspiration to reclaim our imagination. Let our starting point be gratitude, giving thanks for our family, our friends, our home; and the fact that in Europe we have enjoyed 80 years of relative peace. Then contrast that with the reality of life for billions of people around the world who suffer from hunger, war and the extremes of climate.

On 1 October, Pope Leo addressed the “Raising Hope” Conference at the Vatican. He did not mince his words: “God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world he created for the benefit of all and for future generations and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters. What will be our answer?”

This is not about doom and gloom, but about a conversion to a better way of living; a liberation; a time to release our imaginations from the cult of “me first” that dominates our society. It is to put others first, as Jesus did. Doing so doesn’t just transform our own lives; it brings a joy that can be infectious. Here are some seasonal ideas to help put this into practice:

Give time: This is perhaps the most precious thing we can give. It can be making more time for our own family, spending time with the lonely or helping with a charity.

Continued Page 4

Make things: Children love making things. What a great way to spend quality time with them whilst they make cards, decorations and presents. It also is a time to discuss with them what Christmas is really about and certainly a lot calmer than sitting in a traffic jam on the way to the retail park! Many of us adults do not need any more “stuff” cluttering our homes, but a thoughtful homemade present, perhaps from the kitchen, or maybe the promise of a day out is so much more personal.

Ask for or buy gifts that help others: CAFOD’s “World Gifts” which help poor communities overseas to help themselves are very popular. Buying “Fairtrade” products ensures that the producers receive a fair return for their labour. Foodbanks and countless charities also need our support.

Make trees of Gratitude and Hope: Among (or instead of) the baubles on our Christmas trees, we could hang labels on which we have written some things we are grateful for, some hopes for the future and what we are going to do to help realise those hopes. We can then invite our guests to make their own contribution to enrich our homes.

I wish you a wonderfully imaginative Advent followed by a Christmas that helps bring “Joy to the World”.

Stephen Garsed Lancaster Environmental Lead



LANCASHIRE CARERS SING CHRISTMAS with Churches Together in Lancashire and Radio Lancashire

DECEMBER 18TH Midday or anytime afterward on BBC Sounds

The resources are all in place for this year’s Lancashire Carers Sing Christmas. You are invited to tune in at Midday on 18th December, or later on that day, or on a day and time that works best for you using BBC Sounds. Your venue needs a good sound system into which you can play your radio, smart device or laptop. (Make sure you have good radio signal or internet).

The midday programme will work well with those who host lunch-clubs: Serving Suggestion:

Gather from 11.30am for mince pies

From midday enjoy singing along using the carol sheets or Powerpoint.

Be encouraged by the stories of Care at Christmas across the community

The stories will be given by both statutory and voluntary community services which this year will include the Chief Fire Officer for Lancashire, Carers Link, Resolve Poverty amongst other community guests.

This year the churches will be represented by the Rt Revd Joe Kennedy, Bishop of Burnley and the new Divisional Leaders of the NW Salvation Army. The music will be led by the Blackburn Band of the Salvation Army and the Blackburn People’s Choir. Do take a look at the 2024 Report to give you a reminder of what a great programme this is each year.

To download the resources please follow this link: <https://www.ctlancashire.org.uk/lancashire-carers-sing-christmas-2025/>

You will find: Small print carol sheet (3 pages)

Large Print carol sheet for printing from A4 to A5 booklet for those with that facility

PowerPoint Carols and running order.

General Flyer for promoting the event.

Local flyer for you to promote your own local event and a registration form to let us know about it.

We have up to 30 places in the Studio Audience. If you would like to be a member of the Studio Audience, please email me at:

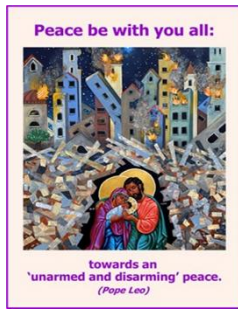
antonmuller@ctlancashire.org.uk

Anton Muller Ecumenical Facilitator Churches Together in Lancashire

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY ‘ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT’

For 2026, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their brothers and sisters of the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches. These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 extends an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18th to the 25th January – the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul. However, some areas observe it at Pentecost or some other time. More details : <https://cte.org.uk/wpcu2026/>



PREPARING FOR PEACE SUNDAY

Pax Christi have produced a special Peace Sunday related edition of our Justpeace Newsletter with helpful suggestions for preparing in advance for Peace Sunday in your parish. See page 3 for the Peace Sunday to do suggestions

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2025-Dec-Jan-2026.pdf>

Also

A Liturgy Booklet with an introduction to the liturgy and readings for Peace Sunday, homily notes and bidding prayers.

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Peace-Sunday-2026-Liturgy-Booklet.pdf>

Prayer cards to order - £3 for a pack of 50 <https://paxchristi.org.uk/product/21990/>

Download image as poster <https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Peace-Sunday-2026-Poster.pdf>

Our new President Bishop John Arnold's Peace Sunday letter to parishes

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Letter-from-Bishop-Arnold.pdf>

Peace Sunday Activities and Prayers for Children <https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Screenshot-2025-11-19-145559-211x300.png>

PEACE SUNDAY JANUARY Sunday January 18th

Pope Leo has continued the exhortation of Pope Francis that the call to live nonviolent 'disarmed' lives is core to Catholic Social Teaching and the key to peace in a world scarred by violent conflict. The theme, noted the press release, "invites humanity to reject the logic of violence and war, and to embrace an authentic peace based on love and justice."

On the evening of his election to the papacy on May 8, 2025, and on several other occasions since then, Pope Leo XIV appealed for peace with a characteristic phrase—"unarmed and disarming"—to characterize the type of peace he hopes for the world.

"This peace must be unarmed, that is, not based on fear, threats or weapons," noted the press release. "And it must be disarming, capable of resolving conflicts, opening hearts and generating mutual trust, empathy and hope."

"It is not enough to call for peace," it said. "We must embody it in a way of life that rejects every form of violence, whether it be visible or systemic."

The Dicastery's press release pointed to the universal call for all humanity to seek peace, no matter our religious affiliation or role in society. "The greeting of the Risen Christ, 'Peace be with you' (Jn 20:19), is an invitation addressed to everyone—believers, non-believers, political leaders and citizens—to build the Kingdom of God and to work together to build a humane and peaceful future," concluded the statement.

"AND LET THERE BE PEACE! WORDS TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD"

A new book of Pope Leo's first speeches hit bookshelves in English, Italian, and Spanish on August 27th 2025. The 160-page volume released by Vatican Publishing House (Libreria Editrice Vaticana) priced at €15, contains the complete collection of Pope Leo's speeches during the first weeks of his pontificate "through which we can better understand the pontiff from his own words".



It also highlights the book's central theme of the need for peace, a call the Pope first made immediately after his election on 8 May, when he greeted crowds in St Peter's Square with the words: "Peace be with you all! Dearest brothers and sisters! This is the first greeting of the risen Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the flock of God. I too would like this greeting to reach your hearts and to your families and all people, wherever they may be, to all nations, to the whole earth. Peace be with you

"This is the peace of the risen Christ, an unarmed peace, a disarming, humble, and persevering peace, which comes from God, from God who loves us all unconditionally."

Continued page 6

It has been noted that the date of Pope Leo XIV's election coincided with the liturgical memorial of the martyrs of Algeria, whose witness of forgiveness and reconciliation are reported to have influenced Pope Leo. Among his other inspirations is Christian de Chergé, Prior of Tibhirine, who wrote of the peace born of sacrifice and trust in God.

The Vatican has described the Pope's priorities for the Catholic Church, as expressed in the book, being "the primacy of God, communion among the faithful, and the pursuit of peace", reports ACI Prensa.

The Pope is said to have described how the Church's authority must always exist alongside self-effacement, so that those in office must, in the Pope's words, "disappear so that Christ may remain", and "make oneself small so that He may be known and glorified".

In the very first pages of the book the pontiff touches on this message of peace, self-effacement and reconciliation, describing that "our first great desire" is "a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which would become leaven for a reconciled world".

Such appeals, Pope Leo emphasises, extend beyond political leaders to each individual heart, with the pontiff insisting that "peace begins with each one of us: with the way we look at others, listen to others, and speak of others".

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH BIG DREAMS!

Sue Gubric writes: What an absolute joy to be invited to a number of schools and colleges throughout Lancaster Diocese during this year's Season of Creation .

This year the theme was 'pilgrims of hope for a troubled world' and I was privileged to run a number of 'Journey to 2030' workshops where young people dared to dream and imagine their very own Eco School based on Pope Francis' encyclical, 'Laudato Si'.

My hope is that when I revisit the schools and colleges next year, I will be able to share with you their ecological progression whereby they have put their amazing ideas into practice in responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Here is a very brief selection of their incredible work:



THE ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION GROUP



The team at The Ecological Conversion Group (The ECG) has welcomed Chee as their new Operations Manager. As a small charity doing a big task in helping the church respond to Pope Francis's encyclical letter 'Laudato Si', Chee's role involves a wide range of tasks which include general running of the charity, communications and the point of contact. To learn more and stay up-to-date with their work you can sign up to their Journey to 2030 newsletter here: <https://journeyto2030.us20.list-manage.com/subscribe?> or alternatively you can contact Chee at chee@theecg.org



SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION

The Columbans are looking for students in Britain and Ireland (aged 13-18 inclusive, parental permission required) to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme:

"BECOMING A REFUGEE IS NEVER A CHOICE, BUT HOW WE RESPOND IS."

(UN Secretary-General António Guterres)

Catholic Social Teaching calls us to 'welcome the stranger'. We invite young people to explore perceptions of people seeking sanctuary, considering practical examples of welcome and solidarity.

COMPETITION LAUNCH:
21ST SEPTEMBER 2025 - WORLD PEACE DAY
DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: 14TH FEBRUARY 2026
WINNERS ANNOUNCED: 9TH MARCH 2026

More details: www.columbancompetition.com



PRINT PRIZES
1ST £300
2ND £150 • 3RD £100

IMAGE PRIZES
1ST £300
2ND £150 • 3RD £100



COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES
BRITAIN

For more details and suggestions to help click here <https://www.columbancompetition.com/>

MINI-PILGRIMAGE TO KIRKSTALL ABBEY



It turned out to be a bit of a soggy affair - not that it deterred our select group! It may have been raining but there was plenty of good conversation along the way and, because of the rain, everything was very green and so I think it heightened our perception of God's creation along the route.

With an introductory prayer in the canal basin, and some words of welcome from the chair of the Leeds J& P

Commission, Sir John Battle, we set off along the canal towpath.

It was noticeable how much fuller the canal was compared with the preparatory walk that Paul Kelly and I did at the start of September. We reached the abbey and said a few more prayers (with our numbers increased by some people who only came to the abbey itself) and still had time to have a hot drink and to refresh ourselves in the abbey cafe.

Joe Burns Leeds Diocese (on behalf of Northern Dioceses Environment Group)



FAITH PARTNERSHIPS IN LANCASHIRE - BRIEFING NOTE

Oct 2025

Preparing for Winter

Many public buildings are again opening their doors to provide warmth and welcome in winter – loneliness and isolation being major features of modern society. As last year, there are several schemes involved in this provision, which can be a little confusing, so here's a simple guide.

i) Warm Welcome Spaces: This began as a seasonal campaign, but is now year-round. Organisations can register, and so appear on the national map; if previously registered, there is no need to re-register (though details can be updated.)

<https://www.warmwelcome.uk/>

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ii) Lancashire County Council have a network of Warm Spaces: these include all county libraries, but any other public buildings, including churches, mosques, temples etc can register – and many have.

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/cost-of-living/warm-spaces/>

iii) Places of Welcome: a long-standing scheme, comprising a network of local community groups, including faith settings, providing places where all people feel safe to connect, belong and contribute. This is managed by the Near Neighbours network. No annual renewal needed. <https://www.placesofwelcome.org.uk/>

Faith or community groups can register with ALL of these schemes, as the criteria are essentially the same. Usefully all of these have maps showing the location of registered locations.

Healthy Neighbourhoods A report by the think-tank Theos echoes the issue of isolation, and highlights the role of faith groups; “The NHS and social care services in England are stretched to breaking point..... Yet, one in five GP appointments are not for medical reasons, but for help with issues like loneliness, housing, or debt.” Further... “faith groups across the country act as “anchors of the community” with the ability to network and convene, provide resources, buildings and volunteers, and offer pastoral and spiritual care.”

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2025/01/27/creating-a-neighbourhood-health-service-the-role-of-churches-and-faith-groups-in-social-prescribing>

With over 700 settings across Lancashire, the faith sector makes a huge contribution to meeting acute need and addressing these wider issues of loneliness and isolation. Whilst such provision is important, to bring about truly healthy and hopeful neighbourhoods requires deeper, more systemic change, addressing the wider determinants of health – poverty, employment, housing, education – and involving a higher degree of networking between sectors than is currently the case.

LANCASHIRE MOVEMENT FOR RECOVERY SUMMIT 20 JANUARY 2026

Venue: St Luke’s church, Bank Top, Blackburn BB2 1TA

To contribute to this vision, a regional summit is being held during the week of prayer for Christian unity, 2026. The aims are to help partners

- understand what faith groups are already offering to support neighbourhood health and wellbeing, particularly through the offer of hospitality
- make use of faith action mapping to identify activity across places, highlighting areas of strength and gaps in provision
- explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership working
- offer guidance and support to faith leaders in working for systemic change.

The day includes an initial keynote from Dr Andy Knox (acting medical director, ICB), workshops on faith action mapping, case studies of partnership working, the potential of social prescribing, the role of faith leaders.

Please register using the Eventbrite link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lancashire-movement-summit-tickets-1659119694669?aff=oddttdtcreator>



Supported by Churches Together in Lancashire, the Gather Movement and the Lancashire Forum of Faiths

Peter Lumsden (pjlumsden58@gmail.com)

Places of Welcome regional coordinator, Gather regional coordinator, rep for Faith Networks on the VCFSE alliance, justice advocate with the NW England Methodist district

In this period of turbulences and unpredictability, where many feel a growing sense of insecurity, disaffection and alienation, the theme of Human Rights Day is to reaffirm the values of human rights and show that they remain a winning proposition for humanity.

Through this campaign, we aim to re-engage people with human rights by showing how they shape our daily lives, often in ways we may not always notice. Too often taken for granted or seen as abstract ideas, human rights are the essentials we rely on everyday.

“We must reconnect with human rights, remembering that they are about people – about their needs, wants and fears, as well as their hopes and aspirations” Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

By bridging the gap between human rights principles and everyday experiences, we aim to spark awareness, inspire confidence and encourage collective action. The campaign emphasizes that human rights are positive, essential and attainable.



Human rights are POSITIVE

They don't only protect, they also bring joy, happiness and safety into daily life. Human rights are lived realities. They are in the food we eat, the air we breathe, the words we speak, the opportunities we pursue or the protections that keep us safe.

Human rights are ESSENTIAL

They are the essentials we all share, the common ground that unites us across differences of race, gender, belief, or background. In a world of uncertainty, human rights remain our everyday constants. When everything feels unstable, your right to safety, to speak freely and to participate in decisions that affect us, become the bedrock of our lives.



Human rights are ATTAINABLE

They begin with us, in the small, everyday choices we make: treating others with respect, speaking up against unfairness, and listening to those whose voices are often ignored. Everyday choices and voices matter more than you may realize; they build a culture of dignity and fairness around us. But human rights also depend on collective action, when communities, movements, and nations come together to demand justice and equality.

See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/campaign/everyday-essentials>

WRITE A LETTER, CHANGE A LIFE



Imagine being locked away, alone, not knowing if anyone cares where you are. Now imagine receiving a letter from someone, telling you they believe in you. That's what real letters can do: bring hope to people in the direst of situations. When letters arrive in huge numbers, they are also an unmistakable reminder to prison authorities and others that the world is watching.

Every year, Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign brings together people from around the world to fight injustice and support people whose human rights are under threat. Over the past few years your actions have made a real difference to people's lives. From Zimbabwe to Guatemala to Kyrgyzstan, activists have been freed and justice has been served.

Join this year's campaign and become part of a community working to make the world a more just and compassionate place.

https://youtu.be/6_x6RaiMwxM

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>



MORE ELECTIONS - NO MORE DEMOCRACY



The Burmese military are planning new elections at the end of 2025. They will clearly be a total sham and mostly rejected internationally and domestically. The Burmese military know this but are calculating that it doesn't matter. They want to repeat what happened with the 2010 elections. Those elections were also rejected, but the international community went on to drop sanctions and support the regime it had previously described as illegitimate.

"The Burmese military likes elections almost as much as it likes coups," said Mark Farmaner, Director of Burma Campaign UK. "For the Burmese military, elections are an opportunity to rebrand, renew, and try to convince the people of Burma and the international community that reforms are finally happening. If the international community goes along with it like they did after the 2010 elections, they risk enabling military rule and human rights violations for decades to come."

The Burmese military is currently fighting for its very survival. In early 2025, the BBC estimated that the military is only in full control of around 20% of the country. Its latest administrative brand name, the State Administrative Council (SAC), has failed to gain the international legitimacy it craves.

The Burmese military needs a gamechanger. A reset. While it initially seemed that the military were being pushed into holding elections by China, the Burmese military are now deploying significant physical and propaganda resources into preparing to hold the election during December 2025 and perhaps into January 2026.

A few days after the 2021 coup, Min Aung Hlaing made a long speech about his post-coup vision. It was basically a version of the Thein Sein era, but with even tighter military control. He spoke of continued international investment, growing the economy. Incredibly, he was trying to persuade people in the country and outside that nothing would really change after the coup. As if it were just some kind of temporary blip.

While the current Burmese military leadership might not have any particular fondness for Thein Sein himself, the period appears to be a blueprint they want to repeat.

Dialogue and compromise with the military, engaging with whatever new post-election system they put in place, will be throwing a lifeline to the military at a time when it has never been weaker and people have genuine hope that they can finally be free.

Many leaders and activists in Burma have expressed the fear that the international community will pressure them to compromise with the military instead of helping them be free from the military.

There is unbearable suffering in Burma, millions of people displaced, more than half the population in poverty, most of the population living in fear. The international community should not try to use this crisis to pressure and manipulate the people of Burma into compromising with the military and coming in under the 2008 Constitution. That is a recipe for decades more conflict, human rights violations and underdevelopment.

Trying to impose a single central government on Burma doesn't bring stability, it does the opposite. It causes conflict and instability. It hasn't worked for the past 70 years and decades of military rule have destroyed trust that it could work.

An alternative to the single central state structure which has contributed to conflict and instability is being built from the bottom up. When the Burmese military are forced out of an area, new devolved administrations expand into the space created. Some are authoritarian themselves, but many others are not. They are engaging in long consultations with local people about what they want and need, and what kind of government they want. Local people are gaining more control of their lives, identity, religion and natural resources. They are providing schools and health services. This is not just happening in ethnic states, but also other parts of the country liberated from Burmese military occupation.

Continued page 11

This is the process the international community should be supporting. Bottom up democracy built mile by mile. What has been achieved with little or no international support so far is remarkable. It offers a viable, if unfamiliar, alternative to ongoing Burmese military dominance, with much better long-term prospects for peace and economic development than that offered by the Burmese military.

More details and briefing paper on the elections to download here <https://burmacampaign.org.uk/>



CSW have been involved in Burma/ Myanmar for many years. Read their latest report

https://www.csw.org.uk/keywords.htm?country=burma_myanmar

CSW have an address book of religious prisoners, their families and individuals who have been targeted because of their religion or belief. These people are located across the world and have asked to receive cards and letters of encouragement.

<https://www.csw.org.uk/connectencourage.htm>



CHRIST AMONG THE RUINS - WEBINAR
MONDAY DECEMBER 1ST 7.30 PM

As the people of Gaza face unimaginable suffering amid ongoing bombardment, displacement, and humanitarian crisis — and as Israeli and Jewish communities worldwide grieve, fear, and struggle with the weight of violence and loss — we gather to seek Christ's light among the ruins.

This webinar invites participants to reflect on how the Church understands and responds to this unfolding tragedy: where we find Christ in the midst of devastation, and how we can bear faithful witness to peace, justice, and compassion in a world so deeply divided.

Together, we will listen to diverse voices — including perspectives from Activists both Christians & Jewish - Peace Advocates, and Church Leaders — to explore how followers of Christ can pray, speak, and act with integrity. We will also consider practical steps for advocacy, including how to engage elected representatives and support those most affected by the conflict.

The speakers will be:

Liz Allcock – a humanitarian protection specialist for 20 years in international development and humanitarian sectors. She has worked with UNRWA in Gaza after the 2015 war and is MAP's (Medical Aid for Palestinians') Head of Humanitarian Protection in Gaza

Robert Cohen – Chair of Trustees for the human rights charity Amos Trust, Earlier this year he completed his PhD. study on young British Jews who are challenging the centrality of Israel and Zionism in Jewish life

Sue McClellan – Church Engagement Lead at Embrace the Middle East and Associate Minister at Coventry Cathedral. She has travelled widely in Israel and Palestine leading study tours.

Ann Farr – Pax Christi UK former Chair and a member of Pax Christi International's Working Group on a Just Peace for Palestine and Israel helping to develop advocacy and campaigning programmes. Frequent visitor to Israel and Palestine.

You can find more details and register to attend the event here: tinyurl.com/bdfh3k2wA live webinar and conversation of faith, witness, and action You are warmly invited to join this conversation, to share your own thoughts and experiences, and to discern together what it means to be people of light in a time of darkness and to take an action for Advent afterwards.



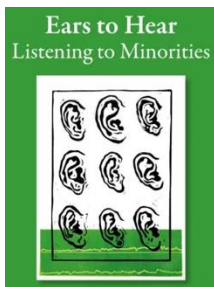
A recording of the session will be made available afterward for those unable to attend live.

More details and link to register <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-meetings/>

The Zoom Link to attend this Webinar will be sent to you closer to the event itself.

The NJPN and Pax Christi Executive.

(National Justice and Peace Network UK & Pax Christi England and Wales)



The Annual Conference of Christians Aware 9-11 January 2026 at Highgate House, Northampton,

Sessions include 'Christian Minorities Living in the Gulf Region' and 'Christian Minorities Living in the Middle East.'

There will be an exhibition of artworks by Adam Boulter Conference music will be led by Geoff Weaver

Speakers and seminar group leaders include:

Barbara Butler of Christians Aware.

Subash Chellaiah: Director of the Centre for Reconciliation, Lincoln.

Rana Khan: Christians Aware Chair and an Anglican priest from Pakistan.

Andy Thompson: Writer who has worked in North Africa and the Middle East. Special focus on interfaith relations

Clare Amos: Biblical scholar and Middle East specialist.

Resham Sandhu: Sikh community leader.

Ellen Teague: Catholic writer/journalist with the Columban Missionary Society.

Kate Hayward: Ecologist and mapping officer with a Wildlife Trust.

Horatio Clare: Author, broadcaster, university lecturer.

For enquiries and bookings contact: Christians Aware, 53B Jarrom Street, Leicester LE2 7DH

Tel: 0116 254 0770 Email: barbara@christiansaware.org.uk

Website: www.christiansaware.co.uk

DIARY

DECEMBER 2025

1 'Christ among the ruins' webinar 7.30 pm NJPN and Pax Christi see pages 2 and 11

5 Peace Prayers for Advent : 7.30pm - on line event with Pax Christi and Fellowship of Reconciliation -

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/pax-christi-fellowship-of-reconciliation-online-advent-reflection/>

10 Human Rights Day - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/campaign/hrd2024> Page 9

11 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting: 2.00pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome, join us for a Christmas celebration. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

18 Lancashire Carers sing Christmas 12 noon live or online see page 4

27 CAFOD Fun Runs – Bollington, Liverpool and Virtual page 2

JANUARY 2025

8 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 2 -4 pm., Liverpool L1 3BT see December 11 above

All welcome Contact Jan Harper 07591 082 195 janharper20211@outlook.com

9-11 Christians Aware Annual Conference – Ears to hear Listening to minorities above for details

18 Peace Sunday Preparing with Pax Christi page 5

18 -25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity theme 'One body, one spirit' Page 4

20 Lancashire Movement for Recovery summit – Venue: St Luke's church, Bank Top, Blackburn BB2 1TA see page 8

FEBRUARY

14 Deadline for entries for Columban Schools Media Competition page 4

12 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 2-4 pm See December 11 above

18 ASH WEDNESDAY Merseyside Pax Christi will hold a Walk of Witness through Liverpool City Centre. Start at St Luke's Bombed out church at the top of Bold St. contact Jan Harper 07591 082 195 janharper20211@outlook.com nearer the time for more details

MARCH

6 World Day of Prayer 'I have come to give you rest' Nigeria <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

7 Announcement of winners of Columban Schools Media Competition page 7

12 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 2-4 pm .. See Dec 11 above

EDITOR : THANKYOU TO THE FOLLOWING HELPFUL WEBSITES:

National Justice and Peace Network <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/>

Independent Catholic News <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/>

NW NJPN Bulletin produced by Anne O'Connor <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/category/njpn-north-west/>

