



Summer 2026

Justice & Peace

News from the National Justice & Peace Network

Human dignity does not depend on a person's abilities, wealth, or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love.

Pope Leo XIV
(*Magnifica Humanitas* - paragraph 50)



PLEASE NOTE

SHINING A LIGHT ON WHAT'S NEXT FOR J & P
Has been postponed for the time being.

Instead...
Join us online at the
NJPN AGM
Wednesday 23rd
September
7.30pm

We welcome expressions of interest in joining our Executive Committee.
Please contact
admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk
For more information

NEXT ISSUE DATE—
MID SEPTEMBER
Articles required by 4th Sept.

Flourishing Together: Building Compassionate Communities.

'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full'

Jn.10:10

In the chaos of our busy lives, we fail to recognise that we are constantly chasing time, trying to find time to catch up, time to fit in one extra task or another before time runs out, time to meet the next deadline.

Having the opportunity to step away, to use time in a different way is indeed a luxury. Being fortunate enough to be part of the Caritas Social Action Network Conference in Rome provided a wonderful opportunity to step back, taking time to reflect, share, rediscover our roots in the Gospel message of justice, peace, and love. All this in a tranquil environment allowing time for discernment and deep listening, to each other and to the Spirit working within and around our gathering.

In his introduction to the conference, Dr Austen Ivereigh reflected on the profound changes shaping our society, speaking of "*anonymous power*" and institutional uncertainty. Across society, many individuals and groups feel excluded and isolated, often scapegoated and blamed for economic and social fragmentation rooted in inadequate and unjust structures and systems. Faith communities are not immune to these pressures. Family dynamics have changed significantly, and building cohesive, vibrant parish communities—where everyone feels valued and accepted, and where our shared humanity is recognised—remains a challenge for the Church. How, then, can our parish communities become signs of resistance to rising populism? Dr. Ivereigh highlighted the continuity of social teaching contained in Vatican documents from Pope Paul to the

current time, while Professor Helen Alford OP reflected on keywords from Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical

'Magnificent Humanity' emphasising injustice, dignity, common good and love.

During the week, we visited the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and took part in a round table meeting at Caritas Internationalis. Attending the Papal Audience with Pope Leo was unforgettable, reminding us that we belong to the wider worldwide Church community.

Much of the formal dialogue and reflection centred on four thematic workstreams: Dignity of Work, Young People, Flourishing Communities, and Organisational Challenges.

Across the groups, common themes emerged: the need for belonging, acceptance, inclusion, outreach, collaboration in a challenging world, communities of resistance, and a deeper commitment to valuing every individual and group.

The conference was deeply enriching and joyful, offering much to absorb and reflect on. For me, the working groups were especially effective because they used the Synodal Process, or Conversations in the Spirit, which involves:

- Responding actively to our changing world by reading the signs of the times
 - Creating prayerful, honest, and safe conversations shaped by gracious listening and courageous speaking
 - Seeking the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - Allowing the stories we hear to move us towards action
- School for Synodality, "Four Steps" This process is a powerful way to foster inclusive conversation, ensuring that each participant feels

heard and respected. When used well, it creates a strong sense of empowerment. The preparatory document for the Synod stated:

"It is clear that the purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission" Synod 2021-24 Preparatory Document

For Conversations in the Spirit to be meaningful and community-building, participants need a clear overview of the process and its intended outcomes, guided by an experienced facilitator. Everyone should commit to the process and agree to its ground rules. Although this may initially feel somewhat formal, shared

commitment can help build trust, strengthen relationships, and foster a more cohesive parish community. Care should also be taken to respect the personal information shared, with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

We would do well to consider the powerful vision of our Church articulated by Pope Leo in *Dilexi te*

'A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today'

Dilexi te 120.



Anne Peacey

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Shining a Light on Food Sustainability (NJPN Networking Day - 25th April 2026)

Marian Thompson from Holy Spirit Marple parish writes:

In April, NJPN organised a meeting in Sheffield to think about food sustainability. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet in person and learn from invited experts and from each other.

The morning speakers were from the local area but their ideas had universal application. The first presentation was from Professor Peter Jackson



emmeritus (retired) of the Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield. He advised that a holistic view of food sustainability must take into account environmental, economic and social aspects of producing, distributing and consuming food in a way that does not harm the planet in the long term. We can say that we are in a world food crisis when we are living beyond what our planet can sustainably provide. According to the EAT-Lancet Commission 2025 report, 700 million people are malnourished globally with hunger and malnutrition being mostly found in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. By contrast, being overweight is a

major problem in the Global North. Professor Jackson went to discuss the problems inherent in individual diets and in world food systems. He then described the Sheffield H3 project which seeks to transform UK food systems from 'the ground up' working in a variety of areas: from lab to field, farm to landscape, school to community. You can see more on <https://h3.ac.uk/>

The next speakers were doctors Maggie and Ian Paterson, a GP and hospital consultant, respectively, who work in Sheffield. In recent years they have come to realise the value of a plant-based diet in three overlapping areas: health, animal welfare and climate change. The health issues are obvious to them from their daily experience. They are particularly concerned about the growing levels of obesity amongst people of all ages, which lead to an increase in premature deaths from cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Dr Ian mentioned especially that colorectal cancer was becoming the leading cause of death in young adults (20–49 years). It is increasingly recognised that an animal-based diet heavy in red and processed meat, eggs, poultry and dairy products, can lead to health problems. Yet production of meat and poultry for human consumption is

rising worldwide, dramatically in some places such as China and Brazil. Maggie and Ian urged us to consider a plant-based diet for our own good and the good of the planet, and there was general discussion about what this involved and how it can be achieved.

The final speaker in the morning was Gabi Socol who grew up on a farm in Romania where she learnt early about the value of food. There was no waste as food not immediately eaten was preserved for later or traded with other farms, such as trading corn for fruit. Since coming to England, Gabi has studied for a degree and certificates that help her better understand sustainability systems, healthy eating and wellbeing. Gabi now works at Hope4Sheffield, a community project she helped found. This offers workshops, activities and cooking demos that focus on sustainable cooking, healthy eating and general life skills.



After enjoying conversations over our picnic lunches, the shorter more general afternoon session included Paul Kelly talking about The Northern Diocesan Environment Group, Anne Wilkinson about NJPN's Quaker Partnership, and Chris Myers about Justice and Peace at a Diocesan Level. The content of these interesting sessions can be found at

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/meetings>.

It was a very informative day with plenty of ideas to put into practice.

We are looking forward to our next opportunity for meeting in person, at the Annual Conference in July.

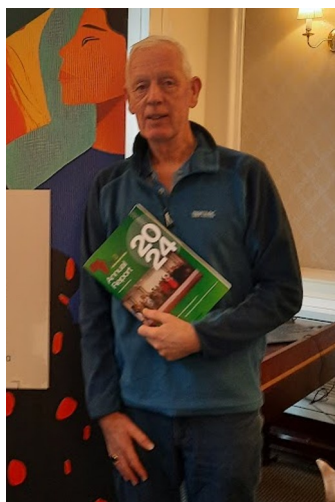
For information. Gabi Socol has been involved in putting together a book called *OUR FOOD WORKS* (stories, tips and recipes from a decade of driving change).

Food Works Sheffield still have copies of this book available. If you are interested in buying a copy please email:

info@thefoodworks.org

Speaking Personally...Brian O'Toole

My commitment to justice and peace comes from a combination of upbringing, education, faith, and a deep belief that no one should be left behind—but more than that, it calls me to place the person who is furthest behind at the very centre of how I think and act, recognising the dignity not only of those I have met, but also of those I have not yet encountered. It was especially shaped by over 30 years of work with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, where I came to understand that poverty, disadvantage, and discrimination are so often experienced through no fault of one's own, and where we sought both to relieve immediate suffering and to advocate for lasting change, always learning from the quiet strength and resilience of those we served recognising their lived experience as true expertise. As a schoolteacher, I saw how each classroom reflects society, a true microcosm where many children face real disadvantages that affect their opportunities, reinforcing my sense of fairness and inclusion,



while also teaching me to look for and learn from good example—in colleagues, in communities, and especially in young people themselves, whose insight, courage, and instinct for justice give real grounds for hope.

My involvement with the VdeP, Sunshine Fund further showed me the profound impact of simple acts of care, as children given modest weeklong seaside holidays experienced joy and transformation that stayed with them into adulthood, reminding me that dignity is often restored even in the smallest of moments.

Today, while we face serious concerns such as growing inequality, intolerance, and a lack of welcome for those seeking refuge, along-

side the need to remain committed to global efforts like those of the United Nations, there are also strong signs of hope in communities, in solidarity, and particularly in the energy and leadership of younger generations, which points to the importance of an intergenerational response where wisdom and experience

walk hand in hand with new thinking and fresh resolve.

What sustains me is a belief that hope exists in every conversation and every person, that even the smallest light can guide us through darkness, and that real change often comes from unexpected places; and so my hopes for the 21st century rest on a vision where peace comes first, where those most in need—especially women and girls—are protected, where inequality is actively addressed, where

environmental justice recognises the disproportionate burden on the poorest, and where access to education, fair systems, ethical technology, and renewed social cohesion are built around the needs of those furthest behind, ensuring that justice and peace are not merely responses to crisis but proactive forces shaping a more inclusive, humane, and hopeful world for all.

Brian O' Toole

(Working at the Presentation Interprovincial Justice Desk for Ireland and England).

Ben Bano RIP

Ben Bano passed away on the 16th June, following a very sudden decline after treatment for Lymphoma.



Ben, when he suspected that death might be near, asked me to make sure that people knew about his long-standing concern to work for justice. He attributed this to his participation

in a Dominican "Peace Preaching" course at Blackfriars in Oxford. In recent years. He has been a lay associate of the Passionist, alongside Martin Newell and others.

He was very concerned with the treatment of migrants in NW France, and thus set up 'Seeking Sanctuary' along with Phil Kerton. He also contributed to national work in the Church upon ministry to those suffering from dementia, and was a long-serving

member of the Labour Party - elected to the Dover District Council and as Mayor of Deal Town Council, of which he has remained a member. (Flags in the town were adorned with black ribbons following his passing.) Additionally, he has written about the life and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His work on dementia led him to associate with CSAN and to also enrol Seeking Sanctuary in that organisation. Ben's work with CSAN involved working alongside the church, as well as within it.

Phil Kerton

'Each human life is precious - and as many parts of the world fall into chaos we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the needs and rights of vulnerable human beings from war torn countries who need sanctuary are valued and respected. Our partners in Calais much appreciate the concern evident from our side of the Channel.'

Ben Bano, 'Seeking Sanctuary'

Become a Member:

Membership is open to local groups, families and individuals. Individual Subscription only £25 a year (but you are welcome to give more!) Low Income £15. Download a membership form from the website or contact the Membership Co-ordinator, Ann Kelly...membership@justice-and-peace.org.uk

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

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

This newsletter is produced three times a year by the Network

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

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