



*Days pass,
the years vanish
and we walk sightless
among miracles.
Lord,
fill our eyes with seeing
and our minds with
knowing.
Let there be moments
in which your presence,
like lightning,
illuminates the darkness
in which we walk*
Jewish Sabbath Prayer

*A Sabbath
for the Earth
and the Poor:
The Challenge of
Pope Francis*



J&P Conference 2017
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The Hayes Conference Centre
Swanwick, Derbyshire
www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

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The Truer Meaning of Sabbath

The word 'Sabbath' and its associated term 'sabbatical' are frequently divorced from their original meaning and intention. In parts of Scotland the Sabbath is still a day on which strict Calvinists visit their church twice and ensure that no physical work is done nor much by way of hilarity experienced as long as Sunday lasts.

In North America, the term sabbatical is commonly used in religious circles to indicate that a church has been given a grant from the Lilly Foundation to allow the pastor to have a break of up to three months, all expenses paid, pursuing either learning or pleasure away from the local congregation.

But essentially Sabbath is not about going to religious worship, curtailing pleasure, or having a few months in the sun courtesy of a drug manufacturer. It is about liberation, plain and simple.

We are invited to observe the Sabbath because God had a Sabbath. In the first of the great creation stories at the beginning of the book of Genesis, God works for six 'days' and then God 'ceases from his labour.' God takes a day off. God is liberated from the great and all-consuming process of creation. God takes time to admire rather than to labour. (Gen 2: 1-4)



When in the book of Exodus the fourth commandment is given - 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy' - it is not primarily concerned with attendance at sacred liturgies. It is an ordinance which decrees that for the good of humanity, there has to be a weekly rest from that to which people are bound - the rigour of work, the burden of responsibilities, physical and mental tiredness, the 24/7 mentality. And God is quite clear that this is not simply for devoted and pious believers. This break is for whole families, and their servants (or slaves) and also for the foreigners - visitors or asylum seekers - within the community. (Ex 20:8-11)

All of them, especially the lower classes and the disenfranchised, need a break from being tied to what grinds them down. However, the world God made is part of an integrated universe. We earthlings were taken from the soil and will return to it, and what is good for those who came from the earth is also good for the earth itself.

So, later in the experience of the ancients, the ecological implications of the Sabbath were realised and respected. The concept of the Sabbath being a day of liberation moves from being a purely human matter to becoming an imperative for the physical earth itself. The divine requirement is that the very soil should be given one year in seven off in order to replenish its nourishment. And every fifty years there is a celebration, called the Jubilee, which ensures that land stolen, borrowed or loaned from its original owners is restored to its proper owners and guardians. (Lev 25 1-7, 8-12)

It is Jesus who both endorses and fulfils all this.

One of the most persistent accusations against him, and a reason for his assassination, was that he made a persistent habit of 'breaking' the Sabbath regulations by healing people on the day of rest. His defence was that people who had been ground down by illness, which would inevitably result in their impoverishment, deserved to be liberated from that burden. And what a better time to do it than on that day which was meant to release people from whatever bound, identified or controlled them.

It is Jesus' insight which 21st century Christians need to appreciate and cherish, namely that the Sabbath is good news for the poor, good news for the marginalised, good news for whoever is shackled to a system which destroys them. And the present parlous state of the planet's ecology indicates that a Sabbath for the earth is equally significant for the survival of rich and poor, celebrated and marginalised alike. These perspectives have to be elevated from the status of being secondary issues to becoming matters of priority and urgency which are as important as the need to offer God attentive worship on Sunday, and for priests and pastors to have a well-earned break.

John Bell, the Iona Community

Action Highlights Spring 2017 - See the Diary on p4 for more details

After the upheavals of 2016 and the uncertainties that face us as we go forward, the work of justice and peace carries on. **Lent** provides an opportunity for reflection, study and solidarity—look out for resources from various organisations via our website and E-Bulletins. **Ash Wednesday** has the annual Act of Witness against nuclear weapons—this year sees the UN start negotiations to abolish all nuclear weapons, let's push our Government to take part. The speaker for **Romero Week** reminds us of the need for compassion to be at the heart of our work. Plus: Women, Military Spending—and the ongoing response to refugees, poverty, homelessness, climate change, violence...

Dignity, truth, agency: The challenge of becoming a poor church for the poor

Niall Cooper, Director of Church Action on Poverty, offers a personal reflection on his 20 years in the post.



Dignity, truth and agency: These are the enduring themes which have cropped up time and time again throughout my twenty years as Director of Church Action on Poverty. As we enter what can feel like the 'dark times' of Brexit, Trump et al, the challenges for the Church, and for individual Christians to witness to these values has never been greater.

Dignity

All people are of intrinsic worth. All people are of equal value in the sight of God; in fact the Bible is even stronger: all people are made in the image and likeness of God.

Yet we are constantly bombarded with messages which deny this. In the public sphere, people are increasingly only valued for their wealth, skills, employability, and overall economic value. Workers are economic units, to whom employers owe no loyalty, and whose dignity is secondary to their economic efficiency. Rather than affirming our interdependency, society is divided into those who are 'hard working' and those who are 'dependent' with former encouraged to revile the latter.

Poverty robs people of their dignity, but not half as much as the way society stigmatises and embeds shame in the hearts of people in poverty themselves, blaming them not just for their plight but for being a 'drain' on the rest of society.

An approach based on affirming the human dignity of all people demands something else. It demands that people are treated with decency and the same level respect whether they are the chief executive, the office cleaner or the homeless person sleeping in the office doorway.

Truth

Who are the real experts? Whose voices can and should we trust? To whom should we look for solutions? These questions are all the more important in our new so-called 'post-truth' world.

The UK suffers from centuries of paternalistic approaches to poverty, in which 'the poor' have been viewed as a social problem to be solved by the 'non poor.' The culture roots of the Poor Law, and Victorian philanthropy run deep. People in poverty are lazy, ignorant and stupid. 'We', the cultured and educated middle class, know best. Only we have the education and intelligence to design the solutions. The battle to solve poverty is waged between politicians, academics, theologians, think tanks and lobbyists. People in poverty are never in the room.

To truly tackle poverty, a revolution is needed. We must rethink our notions of truth, agency and expertise. And that goes for the church as much as any other institution.

Poverty can only be tackled with active engagement of people in poverty themselves. Their knowledge, insights and unique

perspectives are essential not only to understanding the true nature of poverty, but to coming up with solutions that will actually work.

In the motto adopted by the growing number of Poverty Truth Commissions across the UK, 'Nothing About Us Without Us is For Us.'

Agency

Lastly, who has agency to tackle poverty – or indeed to 'change the world for good'? As we enter 2017, its easy to be despondent.

Its easy to fall prey to the narrative that "All power resides with global elites, who are wealthier and more powerful than all but a handful of nation states." Its equally easy to blame Governments, who have the power to tackle poverty but never the inclination, because there are few votes in it. In the fact of populist politics, we are rendered powerless (so the story goes)."

Its also easy to be lured by the siren voices who claim that "The big state has had its day, its now up to faith and charitable action to tackle poverty." Foodbanks show our willingness to step up to the plate. Faith communities can be reinvigorated by filling the gap left by the ebb tide of the welfare state.

Yet for all our enthusiasm and innovation, much of this activity is incredibly fragile, small scale and focussed on alleviating immediate crisis rather than upstream solutions to prevent people slipping into poverty in the first place.

But what again of the role of people who are living with the daily experience of poverty and marginalisation? Have they no agency? Have they no role in changing the world for good for themselves or their neighbours?



A poor church for the poor

What does all this mean for the church? How do we respond to Pope Francis' call to be and become a poor church for the poor? Are we truly committed to treating all people with equal dignity and worth, regardless of class, creed, gender, education or economic circumstance? Are we committed to seeing the world, the church, and our own role in it, through the eyes of those who live at the margins? Do we really believe in the power to bring about change for good, not just by ourselves, but by those whom Jesus called blessed?

Niall Cooper has been director of Church Action on Poverty since February 1997. His two predecessors in the role were John Battle and Paul Goggins.

To find out more about Church Action on Poverty's 'Poor Church' programme visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/poorchurch

To read about the work of the Salford Poverty Truth Commission visit <https://salfordpovertytruth.wordpress.com/about/>



Christians Aware Action Cards

Christians Aware have for many years produced monthly Action Cards to enable individuals and groups to take action on a different issue each month. These were previously postcards,

but are currently online actions on their website christiansaware.co.uk. You can request hard copies from their office: 2 Saxby St, Leicester LE2 0ND, 0116 2540770. Several member organisations of our Network have contributed actions.

Working Together for Justice and Peace

In October 2016 the Exec met with one of our patrons, Rev Ruth Gee, to discuss developing our ecumenical links. She shared how impressed she had been at the amount of justice and peace work at the grassroots that is done ecumenically, and that we needed to celebrate that reality. So here we celebrate the work of East Grinstead Justice & Peace Group.

This ecumenical J&P Group has been going for over 26 years and has members from all churches in the town which gives an all round perspective on matters of social justice and helps us to reach a large number of people. We meet monthly, praying and working together. This is a flavour of our activities during 2016.

In January group members attended an Arundel & Brighton Diocesan study day with the theme "What does it mean to be a Church for the Poor?" Bishop Richard opened the event with a talk on the Year of Mercy followed by John Battle, a former Minister of State, who explored what it means to 'be a church for the poor'. Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice, also examined the current housing crisis. There were opportunities to share useful resources, network with others and learn more about initiatives throughout the diocese, including our response to the current refugee crisis. We also celebrated World Peace Day on Sunday 17 January taking a second collection for the work of Pax Christi, the international peace movement. Members also attended the anti-Trident rally in February in London.

In June Churches Together in East Grinstead supported an ecumenical celebration service about Care for Creation. As a result churches in the town are working towards a study day on Laudate Si' and A Rocha's Eco-Church programme.



The J&P Group at a 'Sleep Out' in July 2016

The 2016 Sleep Out (our 26th) held on 2 July raised £4177.66 and was divided between Crawley Open House, The Easter Team and Worthing Churches Homeless Project - thanks to all those who sponsored us. Packets and tins, sleeping bags, towels, blankets, flasks and hats, gloves and scarves are collected by all churches via the shared shopping scheme.

The Spring and Autumn Charity Feasts at a wide range of local restaurants raised £4000 and £3021.87 respectively which was shared between Crawley Open House, Crawley Prison Fellowship, East Grinstead Street Pastors, East Grinstead Community First Responders and Age UK.

304 shoeboxes filled with goodies for children were sent off to Moldavia and the Ukraine on 25 November from East Grinstead schools and churches as part of Mustard Seed's Love in a Box scheme.

The J&P Group continues to support Syrian refugees, with families being settled throughout West Sussex and some locally, working alongside the Crawley Refugee Welcome Group and West Sussex County Council, with ring-fenced money from the Home Office.

J&P members visited Lewes Prison, collected packet food, tins, clothes and sleeping bags for Crawley Open House, took clothes and bags to Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, wrote letters for Prisoners of

Conscience, helped at the East Grinstead Foodbank, and are members of the town's Fairtrade Group etc.

No shortage of issues to tackle and good causes to support! Onwards and upwards in 2017.

Sue Joy, Co-Chair, East Grinstead Justice & Peace Group

Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace

This is the theme of Pope Francis' World Peace Day message for 2017, recognising that the violence and injustice in the world can only be countered by love and the work for justice and human dignity.

It comes after a ground-breaking conference held in the Vatican in May 2016 on *Nonviolence and Just Peace*. The conference brought together practitioners of nonviolence from situations of struggle around the world. It was important in calling the Church back to the Gospel message of nonviolence, and recognising the need to move from the doctrine of Just War, which, while seeking to prevent wars has too often enabled nations to justify them, to a doctrine of Just Peace—working for the conditions to prevent wars, deal with conflicts nonviolently and create the conditions for reconciliation.

Pat Gaffney of Pax Christi was one of the participants in the conference and she gave a report of it at the NJPN Open Networking Day on 19 November 2016. Her talk is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnqIMqpl2U&feature=youtu.be&a>

The work of the conference is being carried forward by the **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative**. Visit their website <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net> where you can find papers and webinars from the conference, resources for discussion and news of ongoing developments. You can also sign up, as individuals or groups, to an *Appeal to the Catholic Church to recommit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence*.



Love yourself!

'...Care of oneself, which was an important element in ancient Christian spirituality, is a value that needs to be recovered and renewed, for it can remedy a spirituality which conceives of work for justice in excessively ascetical and sacrificial terms. Such a spirituality, focused on short-term activism, has little awareness of the profound needs of human beings and their essential vulnerability; it is in need of an incarnate, holistic perspective. True care of self integrates the emotions into our intellectual, physical and psychological development; it integrates the communal with our ability to savor, enjoy and celebrate the basic pleasures of life in harmony with the earth—and to do so without consumerist voracity. This means discovering and accepting limits and resisting the predatory logic of a capitalism which places the accumulation of capital at the center of life and society.'

Lucía Ramón *Compassion, Caring, Mercy* in CJ Booklet *New Frontiers, the Same Commitment...* available for download at cristianismejusticia.net/en/cj-booklets
Or from *Cristianisme i Justícia*, Roger de Llúria, 13-08010 Barcelona, Spain

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FEBRUARY

Climate Coalition Show the Love Campaign: cafod.org.uk/Campaign/One-Climate-One-World/Share-a-green-heart

- 18 NJPN Open Networking Day:** 'Towards A Listening Church' with Leeds J&P Commission: Leeds: Book via leedsjp.org.uk
- 20** Human Dignity and Religious Freedom: Oxford: lascasasinstitute.org, 01865 250 781
- 25** 10.30 Mass for Vincentian 400th Anniversary: Southwark director@vip-gb.org; 0191 253 6180
- 26** Church Action on Poverty Sunday: church-poverty.org.uk; 0161 872 9294

27-12 March Fairtrade Fortnight: fairtrade.org.uk; 020 7440 7676

MARCH

- 1** Ash Wednesday Witness against nuclear weapons: London and Liverpool: paxchristi.org.uk, 0208 203 4884
- 1** Housing Justice Roadshow: Wrexham housingjustice.org.uk, 020 3544 8094
- 3** Women's World Day of Prayer: wwdp.org.uk
- 4** 'It's Our NHS' National Demonstration: London healthcampaignstogether.com
- 8** International Women's Day: internationalwomensday.com
Postcards from paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884
- 10** CAFOD Lent Fast Day on Zambia: cafod.org.uk
- 10-12** 'The Things That Make for Peace' FoR/ MPF Conference: Manchester: anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk, 07494 272 595 (Tilly)
- 11** 'Listening to Refugees': Rochdale christiansaware.co.uk, 0116 254 0770
- 20-21** Africa-Europe Faith & Justice Network Networking Meeting: Wistaston, Crewe: aefnjuk@yahoo.co.uk
- 18** A Day for Burma: St Andrew's Waterloo, London christiansaware.co.uk, 0116 254 0770
- 18** 'Is Christianity Good News for Animals?': London greenchristian.org.uk/whats-on
- 22** World Water Day: unwater.org/
- 24** CAFOD Northern MP Correspondents Training: Manchester marana@cafod.org.uk, 020 7095 5417
- 24-26** JPIC-Links Annual Conference: High Leigh: 01992 463016
- 25** 'Uncharted Territory: Arms Control and Disarmament in the New Nuclear Age': Student/Young Pugwash Conference: London: newnuclearage.eventbrite.co.uk, 020 7405 6661
- 30** Experiences of an Ecumenical Accompanier: Liverpool paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884

APRIL

- 8** Women's International League for Peace and Freedom AGM:
- 18** Global Day of Action on Military Spending demilitarize.org.uk; paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884

Romero Week 2017

Sr Martha Zechmeister CJ

The Secret of Romero: Passion for God and Compassion for the Poor

- 18 March** Wrexham, St Mary's Cathedral 12.00
- 20 March** Edinburgh, Lauriston Centre 19.30
- 21 March** Glasgow, St Aloysius College, 19.00
- 23 March** Sheffield, St Marie's Cathedral, 19.00
- 24 March** Southwark RC Cathedral, 12.30
- 24 March** Canterbury, St Thomas of Canterbury, 19.30
- 25 March** London, St Martin-in-the-Fields, 11.00
- 25 March** Horsham, St John the Evangelist, 16.00

Contact: romerotrust@gmail.com; romerotrust.org.uk

Other planned events

- 19 March** Liverpool, RC Cathedral, 11.00
s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk, 0151 522 1081
- 25 March** Colne, Lancs, Sacred Heart, 14.00
faithandjustice@ymail.com

28-30 Our Responsibility for the Environment: Aylesford Priory retreat@thefriars.org.uk

28-1 May 'Hidden Treasure—Inner Life and Solidarity'
Taizé International Youth Gathering: Birmingham: taize.fr/birmingham; taizebirmingham@gmail.com

MAY

- 6** Revitalising the Tools of Active Nonviolence: Liverpool
Booking essential: janharper1@yahoo.co.uk
paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884
- 6** Cultural Exchange with China AGM: Birmingham cecchina.co.uk, 020 8202 2555
- 6-13** Pilgrimage along Cleveland Way: christiansaware.co.uk, 0116 254 0770
- 13** **NJPN AGM and Networking Day:** London
- 13** Southwark J&P Spring Assembly: Aylesford Priory office@southwarkjandp.co.uk, 020 7928 9742
- 15** Conscientious Objectors Day: paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884
- 20** Levellers' Day: Burford, Oxon: levellersday.wordpress.com
- 22** Annual Migrant's Mass: East London adeleangel@dioceseofbrentwood.org. 01277 265 257
- 25** 'Celebrating an Inspiring Ecumenical Icon—the Life and Legacy of Oscar Romero': Julian Filochowski
20.00 St Albans Abbey: romerotrust@gmail.com

JUNE

- 3** Pax Christi AGM: London: paxchristi.org.uk, 020 8203 4884
- 5** World Environment Day: unep.org/wed
- 9-11** Green Christian Retreat: Suffolk: greenchristian.org.uk, 0845 459 8460

DONATE TO NJPN: Online at www.cafonline.org, put National Justice and Peace Network in the Find a Charity box; 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 encourages and facilitates communication and networking between Catholic/Christian individuals, groups, and organisations (both lay and religious) who are working for justice, peace and the integrity of creation at grassroots, diocesan, national or international level.

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