

Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk



Issue 37

Autumn 2017

Message from the Chair

Dear friends,

Thanks to the commission members and all who attended our recent assembly. With excellent main speakers, Pat Gaffney and James Trewby, we were given much to reflect on and act on in regard to peace, non violence and education for peace and justice. If you missed it you can find out more in the newsletter and on the commission website.

At the end of the day, never the best time, I tried to flag up our need of some new members for the commission to help continue and develop its work. We have been blessed with many talented and dedicated members in the past and in the present. Please consider what you might bring to the team. We need a spread of people with different experiences and ideas and coming from different parts of the diocese. We meet regularly about every two months. We have a daytime, morning meeting in central Coventry. This seems to suit the present members and gives us time to meet and discuss. You would be most welcome to join us for a meeting to get a flavour of what we do and who we are. The meetings are well attended and rarely boring! There is a simple lunch and we can pay travel expenses. Please get in touch with Janet or myself, Fr Gerry, if you would like to find out more.

With all good wishes for your work for justice and peace.

Fr Gerard Murray (Chair)

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Dates for your diary:

Pax Christi – Peace Sunday 14th January 2018
Homeless Sunday, 28th January 2018

Church Action on Poverty Sunday 11th February 2018

Annual Justice and Peace Lenten Retreat will take place at Selly Park Convent, Selly Park. Birmingham B29 7LL on 17th February 2018

National Justice and Peace Network Annual Conference Friday 20th – Sunday 22nd July 2018

Our next Justice and Peace Assembly will take place on Saturday 13th October 2018

Blessed are the Peace Makers

The annual Justice and Peace Assembly this year was "Pope Francis' call to active nonviolence" at St Peter's School, Solihull. Staff and pupils from the school made us all feel most welcome. Fr Gerry, Chair of Birmingham Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission opened this our 13th Assembly.

Almost sixty delegates, speakers and workshop leaders attended the day, which focused on the Holy Father's Call to nonviolent action.

The keynote speaker, Pat Gaffney from Pax Christie gave an enlightening talk on a "Just Peace" framework as opposed to the pretext of a "Just War". "We are all losers after every war. Any war we fight will only take us back socially and economically to those dark days of survival of the fittest." *Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos*. One question that was asked of us was, "How do we encourage non-violent action?" During the presentation we touched on how we thought Justice and Peace had become an add on, an optional extra, whereas in fact Justice and Peace should be at the core of our Christian life. Pat's presentation has been uploaded to the Justice and Peace website so that you are able to obtain a grasp of this interesting subject.

Our second speaker was James Trewby from the Columbans, looked at Justice and Peace in Education and asked the question "How can we reach young people outside school?". He talked about the excellent job schools do to encourage our young people to participate in fund raising but what do we do to help them to be actively involved with Justice and Peace issues?

Ten discussion groups explored in depth the morning presentations whilst afternoon workshops provided a selection of topics under the overall Justice and Peace umbrella offered by Austin Smith House (Non-Violence Action in the Bible), Justice for Palestine, CAFOD (Live Simply), Caritas AoB (Journey to Tabor), Bees Abroad (Relieving poverty through bee keeping), Catholics Together in Leamington (Switching to Green Energy), Pax Christi (How to spread the nonviolence work into the Parishes), Aid to the Church in Need (Persecuted and Forgotten) and the Eco Church (Caring for God's Church). For some of these workshop presenters it was their first time at the Justice and Peace Assembly. Their feedback on the event was very complementary.

During the Questions to the Panel section, Mgr. Timothy Menezes was encouraged to participate in answering questions posed by delegates.

The Closing Liturgy was prepared by pupils of Trinity School Leamington.

The Final blessing was given by Father Gerry Murray. Delegates were encouraged to give feedback on the day and ideas for topics for next year's Assembly on

Saturday 13th October 2018. We will also be organising a retreat during Lent. Our next Justice and Peace Commission meeting will focus on the feedback from the Assembly.

The content of this year's contributors is on the Commission's website at www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/annual-assemblies.

Article by Janet Vaughan



Pat Gaffney – Pax Christi and the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative
[Link to Powerpoint presentation](#)

http://paxchristi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Justpeace_August-2016.pdf
<http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>

James Trewby – Columbans - J&P Education
[Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#) [Video clip](#)

Justice and Peace Activity around the diocese

The posters of activity around the diocese, displayed at the Assembly, are all available on the website in the [J&P Activity] tab button

link: <http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/jp-activity.html>

Please take the time to look at what others are doing and network with them – all have their contact details.

Pax Christi – Peace Sunday 2018 is on 14 January

Peace Sunday 2018 will be celebrated on 14 January 2018. Check for resources at <http://paxchristi.org.uk>, or contact the office on 020 8203 4884'

Every year Pax Christi promotes the Holy Father's World Peace Day Message on the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. This is in the Liturgical Calendar cycle of prayer. In November, Pax Christi will send resource materials to every parish in the country to help them mark and celebrate the day. The theme will reflect on the relationship between migrants, refugees and peacemaking.



Share the Journey 
#sharejourney

The Refugee Crisis

One of the most profound issues facing humanity today is the refugee crisis, from those fleeing to Bangladesh, to those dying in the Mediterranean, and many more across the world. It is therefore no surprise that Pope Francis is deeply concerned about the plight of migrants, and continues to show international leadership.

He has shown his special concern for people on the move by launching *Share the Journey*, a new campaign in support of refugees and migrants. This campaign brings together more than 200 Catholic organisations, including CAFOD and Caritas Social Action in England and Wales, and sister Caritas agencies in every continent. Together, these agencies will call on all our governments, and on all people, to play their part in welcoming and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to poverty, war, persecution or natural disaster.

The Holy Father launched the campaign on Wednesday 27 September, meeting and embracing migrants during his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square. Pope Francis said: 'Hope is the desire to share the journey of life, as the Caritas campaign that we inaugurate today reminds us. Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to share the journey! Do not be afraid to share hope!'

CAFOD volunteer, Christina Lucey from Bexhill-on-Sea was in St Peter's Square as Pope Francis launched the campaign. She said: 'It was such a privilege to be there. The teaching on the real meaning of the word hope was very moving and thought-provoking. Pope Francis challenged us all to open our arms wide to welcome refugees, and all forced to leave their homes and possessions, who set off in hope in the true sense of the word, hope being all that they have left.'

The Pope's actions aim to highlight the Church's commitment to sharing the journey of people on the move. Now world leaders must be moved to do the same as they negotiate new UN global agreements (or 'compacts') on refugees and migration to be finalised in September 2018.

A little earlier, in August 2017, the Vatican released a 20-point plan. This outlines the issues that need to be included in the global compacts to ensure that the human dignity of refugees and migrants is respected. The document calls for concrete actions, such as

rights for people on the move to work and support their families, and special protection for child refugees.

Graham Gordon, CAFOD Head of Policy said: 'Pope Francis is reminding the world that migrants and refugees are our brothers and sisters, that we all want the same things for our families. We must recognise our common humanity and treat them with dignity.' However, with only just over 12 months until the UN agreements will be made, little progress has been made so far.

These issues have been very important for CAFOD supporters for some time. For example, in 2016, nearly 40,000 CAFOD supporters sent messages of hope to refugees. These messages are being shared with refugees in Europe and all around the world. Looking ahead, in 2018, CAFOD will produce new materials to help Catholic parishes and schools to get involved with the *Share the Journey* campaign, building up to a week of action in June 2018.

For further information about all this, go to

cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/Pope-launches-refugee-campaign

Joe Andrew for CAFOD Birmingham



Our Lady of Mount Carmel., Redditch CAFOD Group Creation-tide Service

On Wednesday September 14th the Redditch CAFOD group held an Ecumenical Prayer Service for Creation-tide. During the service, prayers, readings and reflections from 'Laudato Si' were used, and Father Tony Rohan preached on the dangers of consumerism, after we had listened to part of St Matthew's gospel: 'Do not worry – consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air', read by Reverend John Marsh, a local URC minister.

The participants were then invited to come forward to collect a piece of paper with a single word written on it, something that was part of God's wonderful creation. They were then asked to consider their relationship with the thing that was written – were they abusive, either through neglect or over-indulgence, or did they treat it as one of God's gifts. They were then asked to try to develop that relationship during the remainder of Creation-tide, in order to ensure it was a relationship that was indeed beneficial to the whole of creation. The words used included water, energy, family, clothes and meat.

The evening concluded with Fairtrade refreshments being served in Mount Carmel Parish Centre.

Contact: Jane Lavery lavery.jane@gmail.com



Pax Christi Icon of Peace

St Mary's Church in Harborne hosted the Pax Christi Icon of Peace for a week during May, where it was the focal point for prayers for peace. During the week around 30 people gathered for an evening of silent prayer for peace around the icon, praying the icon prayer and the Pax Christi Daily Prayer and singing Taize chants.

Also the youth group visited the icon and were given Pax Christi prayer cards and peace badges. The young leaders used the Pax Christi resource *The Wall* as a starting point for the session they ran, explaining the difficulties faced by people in the Middle East. The children's liturgy placed their offering of decorated lambs at the foot of the icon during Sunday's family Mass.

The icon was painted by monks in the monastery of St John in the Desert, near Jerusalem. It was painted for Pax Christi International's meeting in Jerusalem in 1999 – which was the movements' first meeting in the Middle East.

The icon is on permanent tour around the UK visiting parishes, schools, prisons. Prior to St Mary's it was in Leeds for 2 months, then at the Taize Birmingham event, and at the end of May it moved to a school in Thamesmead.

It's a great gift and offers another way for Pax Christi to communicate with people and for people to communicate with God about our need for reconciliation and peace.

It is often used in schools for storytelling and Pax Christi has had amazing feedback from its use in prisons where it has been a focus for people to reflect on their own need for reconciliation.

To learn more about what Pax Christi does you can go to the website and there are resources there to support people personally and for parishes:

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/>

'As well as giving the main input to our Justice and Peace Assembly, Pax Christi delivered a seminar on 'Nonviolence Works!' at Newman University, Birmingham on 4 October. You can see a video of the same presentations given in Liverpool at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/2017/10/07/nonviolence-works-videos-and-reports/>.

Article by Helen Gilbert, Pax Christi member



Church of the Poor

Last year **Church Action on Poverty** published a report, ***Church of the Poor***. Inspired by Pope Francis' call for churches to become 'churches of and for the poor', we asked church leaders from a number of denominations to reflect upon what it meant for their church.

More recently we have been having conversations with churches, leaders, activists, and justice and peace workers to find out what they understand by 'Church of the Poor'. We're learning what they are already doing to make it a reality, and how Church Action on Poverty could work with them to do more.

Here are some of the things we have learned: Churches of all kinds are enthusiastic to learn more about what works, and to build networks with others that share an interest in these issues and learn from each other. We need to find ways of supporting what is already happening, rather than demanding more of people.

While ideas like the 'option for the poor' are familiar to many of our supporters, they are less well known amongst other church members. We need to help people to reflect theologically on the idea, as well as helping churches to live it out. We have visited churches that are very much living it out, but found that they don't think of themselves as a 'church of the

poor'. Instead they talk about their faith in a generous God or their church as being a place of welcome.

Others are uncomfortable with using the term 'the poor' – as Keith Hebden at the Urban Theology Union has said, in the UK it is often a term without agency, used to label others.

There is a gap between churches doing great frontline work in disadvantaged communities, and churches in more affluent areas who are interested but don't yet fully understand what it means to be 'church of the poor'.

Ideas are now emerging as to how we can work better with churches around this vision: For example, Church Action on Poverty's broad supporter networks mean that we could have a role in sharing stories and helping churches to connect with each other. We know from our conferences and gatherings that simply sharing stories and ideas can be valuable and inspiring.

Other interesting ideas include organising church visits and exchanges, or helping people set up 'retreats on the streets' or visits to local social action projects. We will be exploring and developing all these ideas in the coming months. If you'd like to take part in the conversation, why not join us.

For more information contact

sarahd@church-poverty.org.uk

Sarah Purcell, Church Action on Poverty

From NJPN newsletter Autumn 2017



[Church Action on Poverty Sunday is
February 11th 2018](#)

A Sabbath for the Earth and the Poor

Around 250 people attended the National Justice & Peace Network's conference at Swanwick from 21-23 July.

The conference started on the Friday evening with a talk from Dr Ruth Valerio, Tearfund's Global Advocacy and Influencing Director on '*Made for Love: Living out the integral ecology of Pope Francis*'. As part of her talk, she discussed how we must change the way we live. She reminded everyone, "We need to take action. We need to live differently. We need to change the way we do things."

After the talk, a Fairtrade wine reception at the Just Fair allowed conference members to browse and buy a variety of items from the many organisations involved in Justice and Peace displaying their latest work.

The second day of conference began with a talk from Fr Peter Hughes, an Irish Columban Priest who has spent most of his life as a missionary in Peru. This was entitled '*Listening to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: the response of the Church in Latin America*'. Fr Peter reminded those present of how linked everyone is to the Amazon and how 20% of the Amazon has already been destroyed. Every time we breathe we share a breath with those living in the Amazon and we rely on the Amazon to be able to breathe.

The testimonies of a panel from *Leeds Poverty Truth Commission* made a deep impression on listeners. The Commission seeks to bring together 'experts by experience' of poverty with public officials and academics working in the field, to enable real listening and understanding in tackling issue of poverty.

The afternoon was filled with 15 different workshops including 'Archbishop Romero- Patron Saint for Justice & Peace', 'Community Sponsorship of Refugees- An introduction' and 'Power to be: Renewable energy tackles poverty and benefits the Earth'. The second part of the afternoon was Festival Time! An opportunity for recreation and enjoyment. Sessions included a Peace meal, Nature walks, Art Sessions and Poetry. Conference members were invited to join the sessions for the whole time or to pop in and out. This was a great way to spend the afternoon.

Before dinner, the conference came together to celebrate Mass, with Fr Martin Poulson as the Celebrant. It was a lively Mass with much to celebrate and Fr Martin gave a homily on the readings of the day, inspiring everyone to do more and not to give up.

In the evening, Rise Theatre performed their latest play 'Romero: Heartbeat of El Salvador', a very

relevant play for Romero's centenary year and as newly adopted Patron of NJPN. The play shares Romero's story and while it only has a cast of 3 people, the variety and detail of the play means it is one to watch. Rise Theatre are going to be touring the play around the UK and details can be found on their website.

Sunday started with a talk by Kathy Galloway, a practical theologian, campaigner, and writer. She focuses her work on peace making and social justice issues, especially relating to poverty, ecology and gender. Her talk was on *'Recovering the Common Joys: 'This could be our revolution; to love what is plentiful as much as what's scarce'*.

Following Kathy Galloway's talk, the Children and Youth groups joined the main conference for a closing liturgy. The Children shared what they had been up to over the weekend, including one of their favourite songs—by the end everyone in the hall was joining in. The Youth shared about their experience of conference by explaining how everyone is interconnected. They shared their own experience as well as the people they had met and learnt about over the weekend. One of the young people said, "Sometimes it is easier to say than do but we all need to get out there and do it."

This year's conference was a great success and everyone is looking forward to next year's National Justice and Peace Network Conference.

Julia Corcoran

from NJPN's newsletter, Autumn 2017

Read more reports of the conference on our website
www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Annual Conference 2018

National Justice and Peace Network in partnership with Housing Justice, Church Action on Poverty, Prison Advice and Care Trust,

'It is in the shelter of each other that the people live':

A conference to explore the meaning of 'home' in the context of being a church of the poor.

Friday 20 – Sunday 22 July 2018

Make a note of the date now and do come if you possible can.

The Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanwick,
Derbyshire

Pope Francis Endorses 'Laudato Si' Pledge Campaign'

Following the second anniversary of the publication of his encyclical *Laudato Si'* – On Care of our Common Home', Pope Francis has endorsed a **'Laudato Si' Pledge** campaign' that aims to mobilize at least one million people to directly engage in turning the encyclical's message into action. Organised and promoted by the **Global Catholic Climate Movement**, the pledge calls on those who sign to answer the call of *Laudato Si'* by

- **praying with and for creation,**
- **living more simply, and**
- **advocating to protect our common home.**



The 'Laudato Si' Pledge campaign' has received support from Church leaders from around the globe including Cardinal Turkson, Cardinal Tagle, Cardinal Ribat, Cardinal Cupich and Cardinal Marx. It has also garnered the support of major environmental leaders. Tomás Insua, Executive Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, said: "We are grateful and inspired by Pope Francis' endorsement of the *Laudato Si'* Pledge. With 1.2 billion Catholics around the world, we

have a critical role to play in tackling climate change and the wider ecological crisis. Pope Francis has already changed the discussion around climate change and this pledge is inviting us to put the Church's teachings into action and answer the urgent call for strong political action and lifestyle change put forth in *Laudato Si'*."

The Pope's endorsement adds to the momentum of recent Catholic climate action: Pope Francis requested that Angela Merkel uplift the Paris climate accord during the G20 summit, several Catholic organizations recently divested from fossil fuels, GCCM joined other Christian groups calling on governments to take strong action before the G7 last month and the Movement's Executive Director joined other scientific, political and faith leaders in publishing a letter in *Nature Magazine* pushing the G20 to recognize the urgency of the climate crisis.

Read more about the Global Catholic Climate Movement here: <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/>

from [NW J&P e-bulletin August 2017](#)

Sign the pledge here: <http://livelaudatosi.org/>

Columbans speak out for persecuted in Myanmar

Columban Superior General, Fr. Kevin O'Neill SSC, has sent a message of solidarity to the minority Muslim population in Myanmar (Burma) being forced to flee their homes to Bangladesh and calls for an end to their persecution.

The following statement has been issued by the Columban General Council.

Columban General Council Urges End to Persecution of Myanmar's Muslim Population

As the persecution of the Muslim minority in Rakhine State in Myanmar/Burma reaches a feverish pitch and forces thousands to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh, **Columban Superior General**, Fr. Kevin O'Neill, sends a message of solidarity saying, "*We reject persecution of any community regardless of religion, race, or ethnic identity. We urge an end to the violence and violation of human rights of the Rohingya people and hope for their peaceful return to their homes in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.*"

Columban missionaries urge the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately allow international humanitarian assistance to reach people in need and to seek long term peace and protection for the Muslim minorities of the Rakhine State and ethnic minorities throughout the country. We support the Caritas Internationalis campaign for refugees and migrants,

"*Share the Journey*" which launches September 27, 2017, and hope that it will contribute to a global response of support for the Muslim minorities forced to flee Myanmar/Burma due to violence and persecution.

In May 2016 **Cardinal Bo**, Myanmar/Burma's first Cardinal, spoke at the United Kingdom's parliament saying of the Rohingya crisis that is, "an appalling scar on the conscience of my country... No human being deserves to be treated this way. Without [a solution], the prospects for genuine peace and true freedom for my country will be denied, for no-one can sleep easy at night knowing how one particular people group are dying simply due to their race and religion."

In February 2017 **Pope Francis** delivered a message of prayer and love for the Rohingya people saying, "*They are good and peaceful people. They are our sisters and brothers.*" Columban missionaries share this feeling of unity with all people of good will and faith. Pope Francis will be visiting Myanmar/Burma in late 2017, the first papal visit to the country in history.

In a joint statement released by the **Catholic National Justice and Peace Commission of Pakistan**, the President of Pakistan Catholic Bishops' Conference His Grace Archbishop Joseph Coutts and His Excellency Bishop Joseph Arshad, Chairperson of National Commission for Justice & Peace, *pleaded that the State Counsellor/Noble Peace Prize Honourable Aung San Suu Kyi being the beacon of peace should ensure the full rights of Rohingya people. Furthermore, they appealed to the democratic Government of Burma/Myanmar to immediately intervene by ceasing all military operations in Northern Rakhine State.* Pakistan is estimated to be home to one of the largest Rohingya population outside of Myanmar/Burma.

Columban missionaries are present in Myanmar/Burma and in Pakistan. We work with the local church in carrying out its mission of evangelization which includes working for peace, justice, and care for creation.

Fr. Kevin O'Neill
Superior General

<http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/columban-statement-on-persecution-of-muslims-in-myanmar/>

13th September 2017 - by Stephen Awre

UN Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons

Churches Worldwide Welcome Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons 9 July 2017: **Nuclear weapons have always been seen as deeply immoral. Now, after years of work, 122 governments out of 192 have adopted a treaty that makes them completely illegal.**

The 7 July decision at the United Nations bans the manufacture, possession and use of nuclear weapons and provides pathways for their eventual elimination. World Council of Churches' members are among the many groups and governments working towards this new international law for the past six years and more. "I welcome this treaty with great thanksgiving. It is designed to protect all countries and the planet that is our home. It could ultimately save millions of lives," said the WCC general secretary, Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. "The WCC called for this very treaty at its Assembly in South Korea in 2013. We vowed there to live in ways that protect life and creation, not in fear, protected by nuclear weapons." The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons recognises that "the catastrophic consequences" of nuclear weapons "cannot be adequately addressed, transcend national boundaries, pose grave implications for human survival" and are the responsibility of all states. The nine countries with nuclear weapons and 30 countries that seek shelter in US nuclear deterrence boycotted the month-long treaty negotiations and largely opposed years of preparatory work.

"The treaty, and the process which led to it, has finally taken the international debate over nuclear weapons beyond the narrow self-serving perspectives of military strategy and political influence to the wider domain of humanitarian principle and fundamental ethics, where the moral imperative against nuclear weapons is clear and categorical," said WCC International Affairs Director Peter Prove.

The nuclear ban treaty requires that states provide assistance to victims of nuclear weapons use and testing, and requires environmental remediation for areas contaminated by radiation. "This historic achievement acknowledges the unconscionable suffering of those affected by nuclear weapons use and testing. The treaty sets a course to ensure that nuclear weapons will never be used under any circumstances," said Dr Emily Welty, Vice Moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. "It has been an honour for World Council of Churches to accompany the process and to highlight the voices of the hibakusha and indigenous groups who cry out for justice."

Welty, other members of the CCIA and members of the Ecumenical Peace Advocacy Network of the WCC have advocated for the negotiations and for specific human-centered provisions in the treaty, of which there are many.

The treaty calls special attention, for example, to the "disproportionate impact" of ionizing radiation on women and girls, based on long-neglected evidence gathered in the Marshall Islands and other territories used for nuclear tests. "This treaty is anticipated to have an impact on all states, whether they join immediately or not, by stigmatising nuclear weapons and making the continued maintenance, development, and possession of nuclear weapons unacceptable," the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons declared. ICAN is playing a key role in the ban process. It has over 400 partner organizations including the WCC.

The treaty puts nuclear weapons in the same category as other indiscriminate, inhumane weapons such as chemical weapons and biological weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. It ends a peculiar exception - that the worst weapon of mass destruction, is the only weapon of mass destruction not expressly prohibited. It therefore fills a gap in the law created and sustained by the ways in which nuclear powers have used their international power and influence. "Recent events that have seen North Korea testing such weapons of mass destruction have for me starkly brought our campaign and advocacy against these weapons into sharp focus," said CCIA commissioner Masimba Kuchera of Zimbabwe, who was in New York to lobby for a strong treaty. "Even those who have stockpiled nuclear weapons are afraid that someone may pull the trigger first. Having no country own these weapons is the best insurance that no one from a country big or small will ever have to fear such irreversible destruction. Christianity and indeed all faiths are premised on loving one another". "Churches now have a fine opportunity to help with the next step," the WCC general secretary said. "We can all urge our governments to sign and ratify the treaty and then to see that it is implemented."

On 6 July, European and US Catholic Bishops issued a joint statement in full support of the treaty, calling for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. They said: "the fact that most of the world's nations are participating in this effort testifies to the urgency of their concern, an urgency intensified by the prospect of nuclear terrorism and proliferation, and to the inequality and dissatisfaction of non-nuclear states about the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament efforts."

See: www.indcatholicnews.com/news/32943

Read more here: www.un.org/disarmament/ptnw/index.html

See also: <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/32952>

from NW J&P e-bulletin August 2017

Brace Yourselves For Costly Palestinian Solidarity

Well, you can't say you haven't been told. The Christian community in Occupied Palestine has just called time on 70 years of world - wide Christian/Jewish collusion in their oppression and slow demise. In an open letter to the World Council of Churches, they're demanding a different course of action from their Christian sisters and brothers because, they write, the situation is now "beyond urgent". The exasperation of the National Coalition of Christian Organisations in Palestine is understandable. The Church around the world has failed them. They've seen year after year of Holy Land reports, theological reflections, pilgrimages, conference debates, and the occasional divestment commitment. But all this softly, softly solidarity has failed to improve their condition, let alone win their liberation. Yes, there've been plenty of carefully worded and balanced calls for "justice" and "security" for Christians, Jews and Muslims. But no calling out of who has the power, who uses it to oppress, who allows it to continue, who excuses it, who remains silent. Nor has there been much willingness to incur a collective cost to any Palestinian solidarity, either financially or reputationally from the leadership of Church denominations.....

25 years of failed peace process, a wave of Palestinian terrorism at the turn of the century, three major Israeli assaults on Gaza and a Jewish Settler population of now more than half a million has done little to shift the interfaith dynamics that the Jewish theologian Marc Ellis described a quarter of a century ago. So it's hardly surprising to see Christians in Palestine despairing of the endless "hiding behind the cover of political neutrality" and the unwillingness of Church leaders "to offend their religious dialogue partners." In Palestine they learnt long ago that liberation doesn't come cheap. What's required from us they say is "costly solidarity" not "shallow diplomacy". And in practice that means: "That you revisit and challenge your religious dialogue partners, and that you are willing to even withdraw from the partnership if needed". So brace yourselves. Jewish-Christian dialogue is about to go through the wringer. And not before time.

To reset the Christian interfaith relationship with the Jewish Community will take boldness and courage on the part of Church leaders, local ministers and their congregants. It will take them far from their ecumenical comfort zone. Long standing relationships with Jewish neighbours and clerical colleagues will deteriorate long before they can be rebuilt with new foundations.....

Costly Christian solidarity with the Palestinian people has the potential to speed up a change in Jewish attitudes. But it requires turning the tables over in the temples of ecumenical deal making. I'm not

underestimating how difficult this will be. The Jewish response to costly Christian solidarity with the Palestinians will be hostile and intolerant, at least to start with. The current Jewish leadership of our communities around the world is conditioned to react like this. They have no other language or thinking available to them. But changing the language of interfaith dialogue is what needs to happen, and the sooner the better. Shallow diplomacy has had its day.

So what should the new dialogue look like? How do we keep the good progress made over the last 70 years but throw out the politics of a silent collusion of injustice? Perhaps a celebration of our creation mythology that makes clear that all humanity is equal in God's eyes. Maybe a common commitment to building communities where all faith traditions are respected and honoured. How about a shared understanding that national chauvinism will always undermine building the Just and Righteous society that Jews and Christians pray for each day? Or how about a firm belief that solidarity with the oppressed comes with a cost that's always worth paying? Otherwise, what exactly are we all being faithful to?

Robert A. H. Cohen

This is an abridged version of Robert Cohen's article. The full article can be viewed at:
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/writingfromtheedge/2017/07/brace-costly-palestinian-solidarity/>

From NJPN NW J&P e-bulletin August 2017

Our New Administrator



As this is the first full Newsletter since I took over as your Administrator I thought that I would tell you a little about myself. But of course, if you read September's edition of Catholic Today you know everything anyway.

My name is Janet Vaughan and for many years I have been an active parishioner at St. Elizabeth's Church in Coventry.

We started a Justice and Peace group in our parish several years ago and have been involved in a variety of activities including fund raising to send a container to Sierra Leone, a water well for the people of Lokiliri Village South Sudan, supporting the Purple Community Fund by having Philipian evenings and collecting ring pulls from drink cans. Last year I attended World Youth Day with one of our Altar Servers. I have been a member of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission for a few years now.

Earlier this year I took over from David Jenkins as the Administrator of the Birmingham Justice and Peace

Commission. David had been in the role since June 2008 and knew who to contact and where to find help when needed. Since taking over this role I have helped to organise this year's Assembly, attended the official opening of Tabor House and Birmingham Poverty Truth.

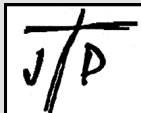
Tabor House is a great initiative to help the growing number of homeless in Birmingham and the accommodation looks welcoming. More information about this can be found at <http://www.fatherhudsons.org.uk/community-projects/tabor-house/191.htm>. Tabor House provides a bed for the night, a shower, food, warm clothes, dignity, respect and the hand of friendship. More than this, it works with local experts, partners and trained volunteers to support people to move on. They are looking for volunteers so if you live in the area why not find out more about how you can help.

Birmingham Poverty Truth begins with the question - what if people who have directly faced poverty were involved in decisions about poverty? Birmingham Poverty Truth brings people who have real experience of living at the sharp end of poverty in Birmingham, together with civic, business and faith leaders, people of influence in Birmingham, to work together on mutually identified issues. <http://brumpovertytruth.org/about/>

I recently attended Coventry YMCA AGM and learnt about the work they are doing to help the homeless in Coventry. <https://ymca-cw.org.uk/>

I am also a member of my local Inner Wheel club and regularly attend my local meetings as well as the Inner Wheel Conference and the Rotary District 1060 Conferences. I not only find these to be nice social events but also very informative. It is at such events that I learn about all the wonderful work that so many different charities do. One of these, Bees Abroad, <http://beesabroad.org.uk/>, I invited to this year's Assembly. The first time I heard Jane Walker MBE, founder of the Purple Community Fund, talk was at one of these events. <http://www.p-c-f.org/> Since then we have been collecting ring pulls for her charity's work. Other charities that interest me include School in a Bag <http://schoolinabag.org/>, Shelterbox

The Birmingham Diocese Justice and Peace Commission



For information on the NJPN [J&P calendar](#) and links to J&P organisations, as well as the J&P Commission, also for downloads from the J&P Resource Pack and much more ... access our website:

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

www.shelterbox.org, Aquabox <https://aquabox.org/> and Wheelchair Foundation <https://www.wheelchairfoundation.org/>. Bar Codes Buy Wheelchairs is one to the foundations slogans because by collecting and sending in Yorkshire Tea bar codes you contribute to buying wheelchairs for those in need.

In this role as administrator, I am always looking for information about Justice and Peace related activities that we can promote on the website (which is updated on a regular basis) and in our newsletters. Please send your information/articles to bham.j&p@gmail.com. I would also like to create working links between all our Justice and Peace groups.

I look forward to working with you all.

Janet Vaughan
Administrator, Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission
www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

Action By Christians Against Torture Christmas Greetings Campaign 2017-18

Cards and messages of support can bring hope to those suffering torture, imprisonment or persecution because of their faith or their work as human Rights defenders.

Can you organise a card signing at your church?

Links to Christmas card list are on the front page of our website.

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

Articles for these Newsletters are always accepted with gratitude since we feel it is crucially important for Justice and Peace Groups around the diocese to publicise their activities for the benefit of us all, and to liaise with each other to share thoughts and ideas, and especially Best Practice.

If you have a contribution you would like included in the **Spring 2018** newsletter please send it by Email for consideration to:

The Administrator, J&P Commission.
Email: bham.jandp@gmail.com

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The views expressed in this newsletter are the view of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission or the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.