

# NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin June 2020

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to [anneoc980@hotmail.com](mailto:anneoc980@hotmail.com)

## LAUDATO SI' WEEK 16-24 MAY

**Margaret McSherry, Administrator Lancaster Diocesan Faith & Justice Commission writes:** On the Feast of Pentecost five years ago (24 May 2015), Pope Francis unveiled his great encyclical letter on the environment: *Laudato Si' (Praise Be)*. It is subtitled "*On Care for our Common Home*" and is addressed not just to the Catholic Church, but to the whole of humanity as we face the global climate emergency. The week of 16-24 May 2020 has been designated "*Laudato Si' Week*" when we are asked to pray about caring for Our Common Home. The week will end on Sunday, 24 May, with a global day of prayer.

The weeklong celebration is to honour Pope Francis' encyclical on ecology and climate change, and to encourage us to build a better world together. Pope Francis has encouraged us all to participate in *Laudato Si' Week* through a video message: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHLzOWp8ZQY&amp=&feature=youtu.be>

Previously planned events for *Laudato Si' Week* are now not possible, but we can grow through the crisis of the current moment by praying, reflecting, and preparing together for a better world to come. The lessons of the encyclical are particularly relevant in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, which has brought many parts of the world to a halt.

Pope Francis in a recent weekly address said, "As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst." He went on to say, "As a single and interdependent family, we require a common plan in order to avert the threats to our common home." *Laudato Si'* offers a vision for building a more just and sustainable world.

### Reflection from Sr Margaret Atkins

Out of the blue, most of the world was invited on retreat. We were forced to ponder our mortality, our vulnerability, our weakness, our ignorance. We were prompted to repent of the collective thoughtlessness of our modern way of life and its side-effects. We have had to slow down, to abandon our ordinary routines, to wean ourselves from the addictions of 'business as usual'. Our values have been overturned: care workers, fruit pickers, parcel packers and cleaners have become our new saints, while go-getters, celebrities and billionaires kick their feet in their own homes.

We have rediscovered our neighbours, and even our own families. We have shared our fears and anxieties; we have grieved together, even at a distance, for the wonderful individual human beings we have lost. We have publicly honoured courage, fidelity, and simple acts of kindness. We have learnt to value statesmanlike modesty, honesty and truthfulness over political bluster.

The religious among us have been praying more intensely, with more focus, than for decades, despite the disruption of our normal supports. And many many others, who do not normally pray, have begun to join us, without embarrassment. We know that we cannot do this by ourselves.

And we have all been in this together: rich and poor, famous and unknown, old and young, strong and weak, from every corner of the globe, together, we have shared fear, anxiety, sorrow, compassion and love.

In our own country, at least, we were blessed with a backdrop of a glorious springtime. It was filled with birdsong we could hear, flowers we had time to notice, birds and animals that grew in confidence when we withdrew.

"Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise?" wrote Pope Francis five years ago in *Laudato Si'*. Suddenly, the noise has stopped, and we have a chance to listen. Let us listen to the sounds of nature, let us listen to the tradition of our faith, and let us listen once again to the Holy Father's appeal. Re-reading *Laudato Si'* would not be a bad place to start.

*God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good,  
advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you! Amen.*

By our actions, we can mitigate the effects of climate change stop the destruction of habitats and reverse the decline of species worldwide. The way we treat the earth today is already affecting the poorest and most vulnerable in the world and, in time, will affect us all. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

**Pope Francis, *Laudato' Si***

**Download *Laudato Si'* at:**

[https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25373/182331/file/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25373/182331/file/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf)

**Summary of *Laudato Si'* written by Sr Margaret:**

<http://www.lancasterfaithandjustice.co.uk/newsletter/Laudato%20Si'%20summary%20Sr%20Margaret%20Atkins.docx>

Five years on Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, remains a profound invitation to everyone on the planet to care for our common home.

St Vincent de Paul Society (E&W) and Caritas Social Action Network have released a toolkit to help Catholic parishes and groups develop safe, local responses to people in need during the Covid-19 pandemic. The toolkit addresses the Christian call to step out in love to those excluded and at risk, throughout a time when the Government has asked people to stay at home as far as possible. It includes examples of how parishes can offer support, advice and guidance on safeguarding, communication, dealing with health and other risks, referring people on as needed and to volunteer with other initiatives. Help could include keeping in touch with a friendly chat on the phone, shopping for food and other essential items, dog walking, help with prayer and advice on how to get involved with other initiatives locally. It can be adapted to local circumstances.

Please give a thought to those who do not have access to the internet, nor the use of a mobile phone as they can feel quite cut off from society and perhaps unaware of the help that is on offer to them.

If a parish does not already have its own befriending group, local outreach group or equivalent (with strong procedures in place) then the temporary or full membership to the SVP is a safe, quick and effective response to the current crisis.

**For individuals seeking to help, for more information about this please visit:** [www.svp.org.uk/svps-response-covid-19](http://www.svp.org.uk/svps-response-covid-19) to join with the efforts in your local area.

**To download the SVP toolkit:** <https://www.svp.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/Covid-19-Response-Toolkit-Apr20.pdf>

**To donate to the work of the SVP:** [www.svp.org.uk/donate-now](http://www.svp.org.uk/donate-now)

*Laudato Si' Week* is sponsored by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and facilitated by Global Catholic Climate Movement and Renova+ in collaboration with a cohort of Catholic partners. More information can be found at: [LaudatoSiWeek.org](http://LaudatoSiWeek.org)

## A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH

*All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe  
and in the smallest of your creatures.  
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.*

*Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.*

*Fill us with peace, that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.*

*O God of the poor,  
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.*

*Bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.*

*Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.*

*Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognise that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.*

*We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.*

## REFLECTION – IN AWE OF DAILY MIRACLES

**Bernadette Bailey, St Alban's Macclesfield writes:** In this season of Eastertide we continue to read about the miracles that the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles in the early church and these experiences can seem miles away from our daily lives in Macclesfield. In a *Living Faith* - daily devotion Steve Givens shared his reflections on "*In Awe of Daily Miracles*". He described times in his life where the wonders in front of him overwhelmed him and were so awe inspiring that he knew they were the work of God. These included his first sight of the Grand Canyon and the birth of his children.

As we are in this slower time of the Coronavirus lockdown take time to slow down and notice the miracles in your life? Do you see the beauty in nature – a new baby, blossom on the trees, blue bells, tomato plants germinating, a butterfly, bird song, a golden sunset, as daily miracles and acknowledge these as the work of God?

Let us use this unusual time try to live simply by taking time to be filled with wonder at the work of God in our daily lives.

## RESOURCES

**From the Bishops Conference of England & Wales:**  
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/>

**Film resources for on-line discussion groups**  
<http://www.ourcommonhome.co.uk>

**Global Catholic Climate Movement:**  
<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/laudatosi/>  
<http://www.laudatosiweek.org>

**CAFOD *Laudato Si'* study guide and prayers:**  
<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Laudato-Si-encyclical>

**Columbans *Laudato Si'* study guide:**  
<http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/laudato-si-columban-study-and-action-guide/>

**CAFOD Climate Campaigns:**  
<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Climate>

**Becoming a *livesimply* community**  
<http://becoming%20a%20livesimply%20community%20>  
<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Livesimply-award>

**Praying with the Gospels** - stories from around the world and excerpts from *Laudato Si'* from Liverpool J&P and CAFOD  
<http://jp.liverpool.org.uk/resources>

## JUBILEE FOR THE EARTH - LOOKING TO LAUDATO SI' WEEK

**Ellen Teague** 10/5/2020: *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis' groundbreaking encyclical, is five years old this month. It's a time to celebrate the beginnings of "ecological conversion" in our lives and Churches. We've seen such initiatives as a growth in Livesimply parishes and schools, the planting of trees to celebrate sacramental occasions, and advocacy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

But, how relevant is *Laudato Si' Week* 16-24 May in the context of the coronavirus pandemic? We have seen the October Biodiversity conference in China and the November climate conference in Scotland postponed. The Climate Coalition Lenten vigil for the climate at Westminster had to go virtual after lockdown. Yet, the new quietness has revealed that the birds sing beautifully, the resurgent Spring blossoms lift the human spirit, and that Earth can heal.

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic prompts greater appreciation of God's creation; and also a deeper understanding of global links that should help us address the on-going public health threats of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. We understand better how any emergency, such as the expanding range and spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria or dengue, or the increasing frequency and strength of extreme weather events, hit the most vulnerable and poorest the hardest. But they hit us too.

Nature is sending us a message with the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis, according to the UN's environment chief, Inger Andersen. Destructive practices - such as logging, mining, industrial farming - which drive wildlife into contact with people must be reviewed. Live animal markets - an ideal mixing bowl for disease - must end. She highlighted other environmental impacts in 2020, such as the huge Australian bushfires and the worst ever locust invasion in West Africa. "The financial and social support packages to maintain and eventually resuscitate the global economy post-pandemic should therefore promote health, equity, and environmental protection" Anderson said; "we must transition to a more resilient, zero-carbon, just and healthier future, and resources must be directed this way". She reflected that, "the virus reminds us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in this world whose whole life is spent in oppression".

*'Jubilee for the Earth'* is the theme of Autumn's Season of Creation. And a *'Creation Sunday'* in September will be introduced. Let us note that high biodiversity reduces the risk of animal-vector-borne diseases in human populations, yet three-quarters of the earth's land surface and 66% of the marine is significantly altered by human activity, habitats are destroyed and degraded, and one million species are at risk of extinction. A Jubilee will mean strangleholds of debt and poverty being lifted, and the planet being delivered from human-induced environmental disasters.

Hopefully, the pandemic has taught us to see security in a new way. For decades, experts have warned of the risks of global threats that are simply too big for one country to handle, such as disease pandemics, climate change, and nuclear war. The response of our political leaders has fallen short. Spending priorities and modes of thinking about security have been defined in military terms.

In early April, Pope Francis and Pax Christi endorsed the United Nations' call for a global ceasefire. "The threats we face as a planet, health pandemics and climate change among them, demand a coordinated international response with no room for continuing to waste resources on armed conflict," said Pax Christi.

We have also learnt that global challenges require systemic changes by government, the corporate world, and individual behaviour. We have seen over recent weeks that governments can take radical action and that we can change our behaviour quickly. This crisis is teaching the world much about the values of compassion and fairness, and the ability of societies to care for the most vulnerable as the basis of security. We have been heartened by the strengthening of community bonds across the nation.

We have learnt that prevention is better than cure. It's cheaper and safer to prevent people from catching and spreading a virus than to treat huge numbers of cases at once. With climate change, it is better to prevent runaway temperature rises than to figure out how to deal with the consequences.

Our amazing planet is in peril from climate change and the loss of habitats and species. And yet this moment of eclipse, where darkness is passing in front of our normally ordered lives, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stop, and to say that real, lasting change is possible. We have stopped for a virus. Let's use this time to think hard about what we want the world to look like when we come out the other side. We must recognise climate instability and biodiversity loss as crises and tackle them with the same conviction as demonstrated during the pandemic. We must learn basic lessons about cooperating with each other, about listening to experts, and about the role that governments can play when they put their minds to it. *'Jubilee for the Earth'* is a timely theme for the *Season of Creation* - 1 September to 4 October. Bishop Marc Stenger of Troyes, Co-President of Pax Christi, said last month: *Laudato Si'* "is a monumental gift which could become more and more our Charter in the post-coronavirus era".

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39543>

This editorial was first published by Editor Ellen Teague, in the latest edition of *Vocation for Justice* a 12-page magazine sent out three times a year by the Columbans to partners and friends working on Justice, Peace and Ecology.

Read *Vocation for Justice* Summer 2020 online at: <https://columbans.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Newsletter-May-2020.pdf>

Request hard copies of *Vocation for Justice* magazine at: [v4j@columbans.co.uk](mailto:v4j@columbans.co.uk)

## LAUDATO SI' AND COVID-19: CAN PRAISES STILL BE SUNG IN A STRANGE LAND?

Celia Deane-Drummond 30/4/2020

*The coronavirus pandemic is highlighting in a new and acute way the vulnerability of the human race, and our interconnection with one another and with other creatures, something of which the poorest communities in the world are already well aware. Celia Deane-Drummond of the Laudato Si' Research Institute alerts us to the wake-up call that we are hearing to preserve and celebrate every part of our common home.*

This year was supposed to be a year of celebration in Rome, commemorating five years since the release of *Laudato Si'*, the papal encyclical on care for our common home. However, instead of the gratitude that ought to have characterised the marking of that anniversary, the underlying public sentiment when witnessing the unfolding events first in China, then Italy, Spain and now the UK, USA and so many other countries, is panic, horror and anxiety.

Some reporters have tried to find examples of good news in order to lift the prevailing angst and heaviness. One is that stopping or drastically reducing flying and other activities does literally clean up our air. But before making too hasty a judgment about this, we must acknowledge that vulnerable, poor communities, such as those of the Pacific Islands, are losing their economic foothold as an indirect result of Covid-19. The very factors that lead to 'ecological virtues', such as halting the carbon footprint of global exchange, also open up other threats to the means of addressing basic human need. It shows how entangled our lives are and how extremely complicated it is to try and solve threats to our common home.

In the Western hemisphere, we have also largely forgotten what entanglement with other species means. Yes, we keep a pet dog or cat, or perhaps see an urban fox or mouse. But our interconnectedness is not just with the species that we encounter daily, but myriad creatures of the biological world of which we are part. What is significant in the case of Covid-19, like other new diseases of the last century such as SARS or HIV, is that it is zoonotic – it has jumped across a species boundary. Some scientists say it comes from bats, others from snakes, possibly through a mammalian intermediary like Malayan pangolins. Crowded 'wet' live animal markets are potential sources. Often these are illicit markets housing rare species or parts of species in some cases, as with the rhino horn, parts of some snakes or others thought to provide aphrodisiac potency to satisfy an ever-present market, including that in the Western world.

What is really surprising is that something like this has not happened on this scale before. The global market disrupts the delicate ecological balance and protection of species that often characterise indigenous communities living within fragile ecologies. There are political, social, moral and biological aspects to why Covid-19 has appeared on the global scene in the twenty-first century.

Much of the public ethical discussion about Covid-19 is about issues of justice. Who gets access to what has increasingly become a lottery in availability of healthcare, testing and personal protective equipment. Political experimentation costs lives. The most vulnerable suffer directly from this disease, but the indirect national and global economic and social impacts cut deep. Short of finding a cure or vaccine, social distancing or isolation is the only possible way forward. We are asked to remain distant. It's a self-emptying sacrifice of love, reminiscent of Good Friday, that brings pain of absence – the pain of not being able to be present with those we love or even gather in communion for burial of the dead. Dying alone or with masked carers is not the kind of death any would wish for. It feels counterintuitive.

The more fundamental issue to consider is our common shared humanity, to which this pain points us. Evolutionary anthropology highlights our co-evolution with other species and our highly distinctive 'hyper' sociality. Cutting out the opportunity for that sociality is deeply disturbing for many people. But there seems to be no other choice.

Pope Francis argues in *Laudato Si'* that technology is a poor substitute for human relationships. He welcomes technology that is at the service of the common good, but not when it replaces social bonds. We are now finding the deep truth in what he says. Doing everything through FaceTime or other virtual tools is dissatisfying and feels odd to most people. We are now in a strange land, in spite of familiarity, where we cannot even properly weep and mourn with others. Even papal Masses and eucharistic communion, the liturgical highlight of the Christian year in the Triduum, and the material incarnate source of Christian life, are virtual. What are the spiritual lessons in this dark night, that the early mystics knew so well? The shadow of the empty tomb lingers.

So, can we still find a voice to sing praises, or would such a gesture be hollow in the wake of such an outcry of suffering? Kierkegaard believed that anxiety is the root of sin, and when we consider many aspects of this crisis, we can see that he was at least partly correct. It is from anxiety that politicians distort what is really happening in the public sphere; it is from anxiety that desires seem to be unsatisfied and solace sought in animal products; it is through anxiety that we remain paralysed in our everyday lives, uncertain what to do; it is through anxious desires to relax that we flout social distancing regulations. But a counter to such anxiety is gratitude. In Rome, nuns continue to sing the Divine Office from their apartments and others join in. In Madrid, every evening people gather on balconies to applaud health workers going into a night shift. In the UK, many thousands clap each Thursday evening for the NHS and social care workers. Various support groups have formed all over the world to help those who are housebound or self-isolating. Covid-19 has a relatively low death rate compared with many other parasitic relationships, so perhaps we also need to be grateful for that. Indeed, the most successful parasites do not kill their hosts.

Let's also consider those millions of microorganisms living within us that help us stay healthy and live long lives. Not all microorganisms are parasitic; some are mutualistic. Our microbiome is complex. Further, let us consider those other living species who share our common home, and celebrate and protect the life and health that they and we have, while we have it.



We need to try and understand this virus as a newcomer in an existing panoply of creatures who are associated with us – some kill, yes, but many do not. We can mourn in deep solidarity with those who mourn, but anxiety will not help those left behind. The next time a cloud of anxiety rises up within us, let us reflect that the flowers, birds, trees and other living creatures around us even in an urban environment are not in lockdown. Stop to listen to the birdsong. Their praises cannot be stamped out, in spite of our mortality and disease. The Christian hopeful message of Easter cannot be suppressed. God's grace is continuously at work in unselfish acts of self-emptying, love and sacrifice even in the midst of the pandemic.

Before we knew about evolution many theologians had trouble squaring belief in God with those creatures that seemed to us to be immoral or positively evil. But there is nothing explicitly evil about Covid-19. It is doing what it is made to do: multiply in its hosts, keeping many alive to pass it on to new hosts. It does not 'intend' to kill. We use anthropomorphic language of 'battle' and 'starvation' in our relationship with the virus as it helps us to deal with its dark and negative consequences on our lives. Rather like climate change, it is portrayed as a horrendous 'natural evil', but its impact is a consequence of our daily decisions and relationships, many of which may seem to us to be innocuous but have devastating consequences for other innocent parties. It is a moral, political and natural phenomenon, but also has theological meaning.

Covid-19 is teaching the human race important lessons that it first learnt in the crucible of its early emergence in deep time. Our lives are entangled with each other and with other species and this is the source of both our unique strength but also our vulnerability. We will best honour those who have suffered and died by learning to take our interconnectedness with God, each other, and other creatures much more seriously. Further, even the deepest and darkest suffering is not beyond the reach of God's mercy and grace, thus providing an occasion for change and renewal. <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/laudato-si'-and-covid-19-can-praises-still-be-sung-strange-land>

## LOCKDOWN BRINGS US CLOSER TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

**Calum McGregor, Digital Engagement Office for CPRE, The countryside charity reports:**

"Connecting with nature and the countryside on our doorstep has been vital to the wellbeing of millions of us during the pandemic. Working together with the WI we asked over 2000 people about their experiences of lockdown. Over half said they are appreciating our local green spaces more since the country adopted social distancing. Lynne Stubbings, chair of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, said: 'So many of us have discovered pockets of green right on our doorsteps – a chance to get out in the fresh air, exercise, and support our mental wellbeing, which has been an oasis in difficult times.' Two-thirds of those polled said they thought that protecting and enhancing these green spaces should be a higher priority for the government after lockdown.

Despite the rules around distancing in place, happily, only 11% of people reported feeling less connected to their communities at the moment, with over a third, (40%) saying they actually feel more connected during lockdown. And community spirit has surged. Our poll discovered that over half of us (54%) agree that people are doing more to help their communities right now. Kindness and connection are the order of the day, with 42% of us actually communicating more with people in their local community than before – and one in six people communicating twice as much or more with their neighbours!"

**Read more:** [https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/how-lockdown-has-brought-us-closer/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=engagingnetworks&utm\\_campaign=non-members-no-action-yet&utm\\_content=Campaigns+Update+May+2020+-+non-members,+not+taken+planning+supporter+action](https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/how-lockdown-has-brought-us-closer/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=non-members-no-action-yet&utm_content=Campaigns+Update+May+2020+-+non-members,+not+taken+planning+supporter+action)

## CHURCHES SING 'THE BLESSING' OVER THE UK

Churches of different denominations across the UK have joined together in song to send a powerful message of hope. Called **The UK Blessing**, members of more than 65 churches and movements up and down the country have filmed themselves singing along to the song *The Blessing*, based on Numbers 6:24-26:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.*

The individual recordings have then been stitched together to create a six-minute long video, which it is hoped will offer people comfort while churches buildings are closed during the coronavirus pandemic.

A message alongside the video reads: "At this unique and challenging time in the United Kingdom over 65 churches and movements, representing hundreds of others, have come together online to sing a blessing over our land. Standing together as one, our desire is that this song will fill you with hope and encourage you." The message continues: "But the church is not simply singing a blessing, each day we're looking to practically be a blessing. Many of the churches included in this song have assisted with supplying over 400,000 meals to the most vulnerable and isolated in our nation since COVID-19 lockdown began. This alongside phone calls to the isolated, pharmacy delivery drops and hot meals to the NHS frontline hospital staff. Our buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive!" <https://youtu.be/PUtl3mNj5U>

## GIFT OF LOVE, DAWNING BRIGHT

Another one to lift the spirits – a lovely hymn (to the perhaps more familiar tune of *God is love, His the care*) on a Youtube video clip from Adam (choir soloist) and Gillian (organist and choral singer) at St Vincent's Altrincham - sung in isolation and mixed at home by Adam: <https://youtu.be/nrPOVbatuqU>

## A TRIBUTE TO SIR JOHN HOUGHTON (1931-2020)

Ellen Teague 1/5/2020 *The Tablet*

The eminent meteorologist, climate change expert and Christian, Sir John Houghton, has died at the age of 88 of suspected Covid-19.

He has been described as a “towering figure” in the world of climate science. Among many achievements, he was co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) scientific assessment working group and lead editor of the first three IPCC reports. In December 2007 he received the Nobel Peace Prize as part of the IPCC delegation, alongside the former vice-president of the United States of America, Al Gore. He was also professor in atmospheric physics at the University of Oxford and Chief Executive of the Met Office. He was once invited by Margaret Thatcher to brief the cabinet about Climate Change.

I would add to the many tributes paid to him by drawing attention to the use of his retirement to lobby on Climate Change. He gave his time and expertise generously to prompting the Churches to recognise the importance of the issue to humanity’s sustainable development.

The first time I heard him speak was at the October 2003 launch at the Methodist Central Hall in Coventry of Operation Noah, the Churches’ new ecumenical Climate Change campaign. Sir John was a patron of Operation Noah. His chart showing average global temperature variations over the last 10,000 years persuaded any doubters that the current rise was beyond normal variation and that Churches should engage with the issue. In his gentle and knowledgeable way, he highlighted countries in the global south which faced disaster over the rise of a warming and expanding ocean – for example Bangladesh, with 10 million people living on the coast below a one-metre above sea-level contour. He made startling predictions about an increase in disasters, such as typhoons strengthened by a warming ocean, and a huge rise in displaced people over coming decades. Sir John brought weight to the whole occasion, and later joined a ‘rainbow’ parade through Coventry, followed by a service at the city’s Anglican Cathedral.

Earlier in 2003, his article in *The Guardian*, “*Global warming is now a weapon of mass destruction*”, attracted international attention. It was a warning to leaders – particularly political – but to all leaders to work towards the stabilisation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a sufficiently low level to stave off dangerous climate change.

In February 2004 he was a speaker at Belmont Abbey in Hereford at a conference on ‘*Faith and the Environmental Imperative: Responding to the Call of Creation*’, organised by the Newman Association and Christian Ecology Link, now Green Christian. He talked about Climate Change being a “sign of the times”. He said: “We are changing the CO2 content of the atmosphere very rapidly indeed. The changes are not occurring within a few thousand years (as in the Ice Ages) but within a hundred years – and that is very serious news for all of us.” He spoke about atmospheric changes having impacts on water, agriculture, migration, and human health and could envisage more conflict over resources. And he suggested that lacking the will to do anything about it is “actually a spiritual problem as well as any other sort of problem”. He felt, “we just do not take seriously enough our God-given responsibility to care for the Earth and to care for our fellow human beings, especially for those who are poor or disadvantaged”. At the end of his presentation, he held up a Celtic Cross “because it is the Cross of Jesus surrounded by the world”.

He was invited to speak on Climate Change at a Consultation on the Environment by the International Department of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales on 12 October 2004 in London. Eco-theologian Columban Sean McDonagh was the other keynote speaker, on Biodiversity, at a meeting convened by Archbishop Patrick Kelly of Liverpool. The small group of scientists, theologians and representatives of groups which had worked on the environment examined these two key issues and spoke about their work to take forward action on them. I remember the National Board of Catholic Women calling for a dedicated staff person on the environment at the Bishops’ Conference, and a Creation Sunday, both of which have come to pass more than a decade later. The National Justice and Peace Network took up the environment in its education work, stressing that creation care is an element in Catholic Social Teaching, and it set up an Environmental Working Group in October 2005. CAFOD spoke of its education and advocacy on Climate Change. Yet, the consultation had no follow up at the time by the Catholic bishops and, over tea afterwards, Sir John noted that the bishops were clearly cautious but he would be willing to be of further support, such as addressing the whole bishops’ conference direct and any training work. As far as I know these didn’t happen. The incentive given by *Laudato Si’* came eleven years later.

As an evangelical Christian himself he put great effort into urging American evangelicals to understand that they could trust the IPCC and should reverse their policy of denying Climate Change. They did, and their statement, *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*, was produced in 2006. Sir John firmly believed that faith and science belonged together. He founded the John Ray Initiative, an organisation connecting environment, science and Christianity, in 1998. In one of their briefing papers in 2010, he challenged climate sceptics, saying that many of the voices of scepticism had been orchestrated by vested interests, especially in the United States, with the intent of discrediting and silencing the IPCC. He said there is no doubt that carbon dioxide has increased in the atmosphere over the last 200 years by about 40 per cent, largely due to the burning of coal, oil and gas by human society. And that carbon dioxide absorbs infrared radiation and acts like a blanket over the earth’s surface, increasing its average temperature. Sir John had extraordinary sensitivity to human destruction of God’s creation and compassion for the first victims – the poorest communities in the global south. But ultimately, he said many times that the instability of Climate Change was a terrible and looming legacy for future generations and that his advocacy work was prompted by concern for his own grandchildren.

In a moving tribute on Twitter, one of those grandchildren, Hannah Malcolm, said last week that, “my consistent memory will be his deep faith that he was doing work in service of the God he loved, and in service of the world he loved”. She reported that Sir John spent his final years living by the sea in his native Wales.

Paul Bodenham, Operation Noah founder, recalls: “John spent many hours, over many years, touring churches in Britain and the United States, making the case for Christians to act on Climate Change. It was a ministry in which he was quietly tenacious, and I was struck by the integrity with which he spoke, fully both a scientist and a disciple”.

Sir John said himself in 2013: “People say, ‘Let’s wait and see if it really happens.’ That’s not a good thing to do at all, because even if we turned off all carbon emissions tomorrow, the climate would continue to warm. We can’t turn the clocks back when we’ve found out we don’t like it; we really have to get on with it now. It’s very urgent.”

*Ellen Teague is a member of the National Justice and Peace Network Environment Working Group and the Columban team for Justice, Peace and Ecology.*

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/texts-speeches-homilies/4/1426/a-tribute-to-sir-john-houghton-1931-2020->

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**Tuesday May 26:** The European Commission’s Green Deal chief, Frans Timmermans, assured EU lawmakers that “every euro” spent on economic recovery measures after the COVID-19 crisis would be linked to the green and digital transitions. “Every euro we invest must flow into a new economy rather than old structures. We must avoid that at all costs,” he told the European Parliament’s environment committee during a video conference. “The European Green Deal is a growth strategy and a winning strategy,” the Dutchman said on Twitter after the meeting. The exchange with Parliament took place two days before EU heads of state and government hold a video summit to agree a recovery plan after the coronavirus crisis. <https://www.edie.net/news/11/European-Commission-promises-green-recovery-to-EU-lawmakers/>

**Wednesday May 27:** The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to cause the biggest fall in carbon dioxide emissions since World War Two but it will likely be short-lived and will not stop climate change, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Wednesday. The WMO expects a 6% drop in carbon emissions this year, an estimate on the high end of a range given by scientists, but the U.N. agency warned that it could be followed by even higher emissions growth than before the crisis. In fact, the drop is not even enough to get the world back on track to meet the target of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims for global temperature rise of no more than 1.5 degree above pre-industrial levels. That would require at least a 7% annual drop in emissions. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200422094646-h27g6/>

**Thursday May 28:** Oxford City Council adds electric vehicles to fleet as part of net-zero journey Oxford Direct Services (ODS), which is owned by the city council, has added six EVs to its fleet, with an additional 27 low-emission vehicles set to be delivered and integrated over the next four months. ODS is aiming to electrify 25% of its 330-strong fleet by 2023 and future EVs will include passenger vehicles, street sweepers, vans and an excavator. The vehicles will be funded by a £41m ESO project that has been backed by £10m in Government funding from the Prospering from the Energy Revolution Challenge. <https://www.edie.net/news/8/Oxford-City-Council-adds-electric-vehicles-to-fleet-as-part-of-net-zero-journey/>

**Friday May 29:** Plans to develop the world’s first zero-carbon industrial cluster in the Humber region have been boosted after leading energy companies joined an existing consortium of project partners in the same week that Government funding was secured for the project. Last year, Drax, Equinor and National Grid published a roadmap fleshing out their plans to create the world’s first zero-carbon industrial hub in the Humber region by 2040. The roadmap sets out proposals to build a demonstration hydrogen production facility in the region by 2025 and install carbon capture equipment on one of the four biomass units at Drax’s power station in Selby two years later. The project now consists of a consortium of 11 businesses that have signed a formal agreement to support the zero-carbon cluster. <https://www.edie.net/news/6/First-funding-phase-approved-for-Humber-net-zero-industrial-cluster/>

**Saturday May 30:** The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has pushed back the ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds set to come into force later this month to October 2020, to the dismay of campaigners. In May 2019, the UK Government formally confirmed the phase-out date for plastic straws and drink stirrers, and cotton buds with plastic stems, banning the items from being sold in England from April 2020. However, Defra has moved the ban date back to October 2020 in response to challenges imposed by the coronavirus outbreak. City to Sea’s chief executive Rebecca Burgess said: “We’re now looking to government to provide reassurance that this isn’t the start of slippery slope of watering down and delaying legislation to tackle the plastics crisis”. <https://www.edie.net/news/5/Ban-on-plastic-straws-in-England-pushed-back-to-October-2020/>

**Sunday May 31:** Father, you know that listening is hard for us. We are so action-oriented, so product-driven, that doing is easier for us than being. Help us to be still and to listen. We want to learn how to sink into the light of your presence until we can be comfortable in that light. Help us, dear Father, to try now. **(Richard Foster)**  
*Text and links compiled by Emma King. Links accessed April 26 2020.*

## A TRIBUTE TO WILL COCHRANE, CHAIR OF ST VINCENT'S PARISH CAFOD GROUP

*Will Cochrane of St Vincent de Paul Church, Altrincham, well-loved chair of the parish CAFOD group, died in hospital from coronavirus on 3 May 2020. This is a tribute by friends, John Mulholland, a co-founder of the group and Terry Morris, who joined in 1984.*

**John writes:** Shortly after his appointment in 1980 as parish priest of St. Vincent's the late Canon John Burgon called a meeting of parishioners. We were asked to sit in groups or societies (e.g. UCM and SVP) to which people belonged. Cards were already on the tables to show where people should sit but some of us sat together at a table for which we made our own card reading 'Third World'. Thus was the parish CAFOD group born. At our first group meeting Will Cochrane was elected chairman and, to the group's satisfaction, has remained so until his untimely death from the corona virus on 3rd May. Under his leadership during the past forty years the group has raised over £300,000 for CAFOD through monthly after-Mass collections, taken part in its national campaigns such as those to ban land mines, raise environmental awareness and cancel third world debt (we were part of the vast throng in Birmingham in 1998 lobbying the then G7 Summit on that issue) and run monthly sales of Traidcraft's fairly traded goods.

CAFOD was one way in which Will worked tirelessly for the needy; another was his membership of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society to which he belonged for over 41 years and in which he was still active in collecting for and visiting needier parishioners. His driving force for those and many other related activities was his deep faith."

Will and his beloved Christine had been married for almost 58 years and their deep, mutual love was evident to all who knew them. He was proud of their two sons, Richard and Jamie, and daughter Elizabeth and their family was his greatest joy. The Cochrane home was always a place of warm welcome and generous hospitality. Will's bear-hug greeting, with beaming smile, was enjoyed by men and women alike. He was an always attentive, gracious host. At Will and Chris's wedding in St. Alphonsus' church, Old Trafford, in 1962, brother Ian was naturally best man. The two brothers worked harmoniously together in the family wholesale clothing business in Manchester, established by their father, for over forty years until their retirement. Golf was another bond between them and one which they shared with their sister Jeannie. Will was a sportsman of considerable ability, having played tennis, as captain, at county level for Cheshire and won numerous cups. (Christine would relate how, in the early days of their courtship, she sat behind one end of the court to make sure that she caught Will's eye, only to be asked by him to move to the side lest she be struck by the ball!) Sadly, in recent years, serious hip and knee problems restricted his mobility though they never lessened his determination to be active.

A regular reader of *The Tablet*, Will loved discussing religious topics, always with sensitivity, conviction and humour, at home or over a pint in the pub; he was very much 'a Pope Francis Catholic'. The many blessed to be his close friends, like my wife Maureen and me, share in Christine's and the family's profound grief and disbelieving sense of loss, but are greatly thankful, too, to have known and loved a man so genial, gracious and good.

**Terry writes:** Will has always keenly embraced justice and peace initiatives. Despite a painful joint condition he travelled backwards and forwards to our church in Altrincham and other parishes across the diocese and to Manchester, Cheshire and London venues for meetings and campaign trails: "Make Poverty History" and other campaigns, Water Aid – including a personal welcome for a touring Ethiopian water engineer and other CAFOD-sponsored speakers in Altrincham, looking after lost or lonely visitors, mounting stalls for parish pastoral ministry days, Eucharistic ministry, preparing and placing regular CAFOD collection boards, for a long time counting and banking funds with his wife Christine – together they welcomed and sold tickets for cross-UK and Ireland concert performers playing in church for Manchester-based refugees. A typical statement of Will's in a parish magazine is reported here: "On 28 September, the St Vincent's CAFOD team sat together in the Westleigh centre stapling CAFOD envelopes to the Parish newsletter, reminding us all of the CAFOD Family Fast on the following weekend. As usual, our generous parish rose to the occasion. We collected over £1800.00. We were able to send this amount to help towards the Tsunami relief fund in Indonesia and also to Yemen." It was typical of Will's humour that he referred to this mechanical and repetitive meet up as an invitation to a 'stapling party'!

**Sue Bownas and Liz Aiello, former Shrewsbury Diocese CAFOD Co-ordinators add:** We both feel privileged that through our work for CAFOD in the diocese we came to know Will, and are saddened to learn of his death. Will was a true gentleman, in all aspects of the word, - a quiet, gentle man, kind, welcoming and respectful, happy to take the lead but often quietly in the background, organising, supporting, listening, and encouraging. But we remember too, occasions when he was unhappy about a proposal or confronted by an injustice or unacceptable situation, when Will, in his passion for justice and right action would speak out to question and to challenge, ever respectful, but no less uncompromising.

Our particular memories are of Will, on behalf of St Vincent's CAFOD Group, warmly welcoming Lem Lem, a young woman from Ethiopia who was a qualified water engineer, when she visited Westleigh. It was the first time Lem Lem had travelled outside Ethiopia and everything must have been very strange, but responding to Will's quiet friendly manner and genuine interest, she happily chatted with him. Another event found Will, along with other members of the group, at Westminster Cathedral after making the journey to London to join CAFOD supporters from Shrewsbury Diocese at CAFOD's official Mass in celebration of its 50th Anniversary. Later that same year, participating in our own Diocesan 50th Anniversary Mass in St Columba's, Will readily agreed to help narrate the story of the CAFOD family which began our celebration. But both our immediate thoughts of Will upon learning of his death were of the many times when, opening the post in the CAFOD office it was a real delight to Liz and I to discover a letter from Will, accompanying the regular generous donations from the group, in which he would share news of their activities or plans or sometimes write of his own thoughts and hopes but always written with care, with an ink pen, in his beautiful handwriting and on very attractive note cards of beautiful rural scenes. When we remarked on how lovely these were, Will proudly told us that they were the work of his artist daughter, Elizabeth, who lives in Tuscany.



## GOOD FRIDAY EVENING 2020

*Down below the virus hems us in,  
Painfully separating one from another,  
Instilling fear in all  
And searing grief in those so cruelly bereaved -  
A kind of darkness over all the earth.*

*But, up above, perched on the highest branch,  
A blackbird sings his sumptuous song,  
So many variations on a theme  
To call his mate and thrill the human ear,  
While the sun streams down  
From a cloudless, azure sky.  
I, in self-isolated garden, sit entranced  
By this glimpse of the heaven to come.*

**John Mulholland**

Good Friday, April 10, 2020

## IMAGINE ANOTHER WORLD

What is this thing that has happened to us? It's a virus, yes. In and out of itself it holds no moral brief. But it is definitely more than a virus ... it has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could.

Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to 'normality', trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves.

Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

**Arundati Roy**

## AND PEOPLE STAYED HOME

*And people stayed home and read books and listened and rested and exercised and made art and played and learned new ways of being and stopped and listened deeper. Someone meditated, someone prayed, someone danced, someone met their shadow and people began to think differently. And people healed and in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways, dangerous, meaningless and heartless, even the earth began to heal. And when the danger ended and people found each other and grieved for the dead people, they made new choices and dreamed of new visions and created new ways of life and healed the earth completely, just as they were healed themselves.*

**Kathleen O'Meara, 'And People Stayed Home'** - written in 1869 after the famine in Ireland.

## EARTH DAY MESSAGE TO UN: COVID-19 RECOVERY MUST ADDRESS CLIMATE EMERGENCY

22/4/2020: An interfaith message issued for Earth Day, 22 April, is calling for ambitious and urgent action to address the climate emergency, urging that "efforts to rebuild economies put people's health before profit." The message acknowledges and mourns the trauma, anxiety, vulnerability and loss of life around the world caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among already vulnerable communities. "We are appalled by the increase in human rights violations, including racism, extreme surveillance, xenophobia, misuses of emergency powers and domestic violence," reads the message.

But their message is ultimately one of hope. "We also witness more time for reflection," reads the text. "We proclaim loudly that we were already living in a state of emergency prior to COVID-19."

The message advocates for a just recovery to build a healthier future where the human family lives in a way that respects nature and Mother Earth on which we all depend. "The choices we now make will shape our society for years and it is crucial that efforts to rebuild economies put people's health before profit," reads the message. "Governments have pledged extraordinary amounts of money to prevent economic disasters because of this pandemic, but that money must not be used to finance future environmental degradation."

We must not return to relaunching fossil fuel subsidies and unhealthy consumption patterns, urges the message. "The plans for a just recovery from COVID-19 must take into account the necessary measures to tackle climate change with a managed, planned and fair approach," reads the text. "We call for a rebuilding which upholds the human rights, health and wellbeing of citizens as critical to the stability and security of all countries." In other words, see beyond this moment of fear with moral courage, urges the message: "This is the time to create a healthier and more resilient society together."

Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, World Council of Churches deputy general secretary, voiced her support for the statement, adding that COVID-19 recovery should move forward with the knowledge that God has entrusted human beings as stewards of the earth. "As we have proven our ability to act together in solidarity for our one human family, now is the opportune time to make fundamental changes to our economic and social systems in order to preserve God's creation and the future of our children and grandchildren," said Phiri. "There can be no real recovery without socio-economic justice."

The interfaith message will be sent from the Interfaith Liaison Committee of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**Read the full message:** <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/an-interfaith-earth-day-message-in-times-of-covid-19-and-climate-emergency/view>

## EDGY JEWISH REFLECTIONS ON A COVID-19 EXIT STRATEGY

Robert A. H. Cohen 18/4/2020

The last blog post I published was sent from a world which no longer exists. It was written in a pre-Covid, pre-lock-down United Kingdom, composed in a place we now call 'normal times'. It was a review of a theatre play in London's West End, which itself feels wildly bizarre. There I was sitting inches away from strangers for two hours. Such crazy times, in those far off days.

I've found it hard to write about Covid-19 for this blog. It's an immense event that touches everything and everyone. It's hard to get your head around it. It can generate a mental paralysis. Even the language that's entered our everyday vocabulary already operates at the extremities of expression. "Unprecedented", "exceptional", "unimaginable". But where do you go when our language has already run out of track? The human mind is forced to hunker down until the virus passes over us, or through us, or does us in.

Our political leaders are keen for us not to let our thoughts become too distracted. Keep it simple and we can get through this. It's a sensible communications plan. So the team that last year gave us 'Get Brexit done' now want us to #StayHome.

And the multi-dimensional way in which Covid-19 operates only tightens the mental lock-down. Personal life is interrupted. Work life changes (or stops). Community life is simultaneously diminished and enhanced.

The national conversation is transformed to a single theme. In the UK, we've finally stopped talking about Brexit and no longer define ourselves in relation to it. The economic consequences of that decision now look miniscule compared to the potential fallout of the government's financial rescue programme. Nobody wants to start thinking about the consequences of another generation of austerity when our social infrastructure still hasn't recovered from the last great recession a decade ago. But that debate can't be postponed for long.

Right now, most of us, are understandably focused on those nearest to us. Our children, our parents, our friends and neighbours. Are they okay? Can I help them? Or, if our own health is fragile, we're rightly concerned about protecting our own wellbeing. "We're all in this together" has become the great mantra of national solidarity. It's both true and false. The biology of the virus could be said to be 'egalitarian' in its behaviour. But the communities it passes through are certainly not. Covid-19 did not emerge from some pristine laboratory (unless you believe the conspiracy theorists) and neither is it travelling through the world vacuum packed. Everything about Covid-19 has context.

The virus moved from animals to humans in a context. That context is highly likely to have some strong climate change related origins along with long standing trends in global food production. Once human to human transmission began it moved swiftly because of international air travel and the route it took reflects our global supply chains and trading relationships. There's nothing random or metaphysical about how any of this has happened.

And when it reaches where you live, there is context too. Authoritarian government, democratic government, political ideologies, strong health systems, weak health systems, religion and culture all play a huge part in what happens next. And even within a single society Covid's impact can be vastly different. Invariably though, the weakest, most vulnerable, least financially secure end up suffering the most. It turns out that in practice Covid-19 does not treat all its hosts in the same way.

In trying to get a mental grip on this multi-tentacled micro-beast and its power to infect every cell of society, I wrote a list of what Covid-19 is capable of doing (in no particular order or ranking of significance):

*Covid-19 is a multiplier of kindness*  
*Covid-19 is a generator of anxiety*  
*Covid-19 is an accelerator of change*  
*Covid-19 is a challenge to accepted wisdom*  
*Covid-19 is a cover for political power grabs*  
*Covid-19 is an exposé of inequality*  
*Covid-19 is an exploiter of vulnerability*  
*Covid-19 is a perpetrator of lies*  
*Covid-19 is a truth teller*

I'm sure you could add to this list. All I'm observing here is that our world, and in particular humanity, is one mass of tangled interconnections. And Covid-19 is nudging, pulling, stretching, and ripping its way through that mass with endless consequences.

Earlier this month we held a Zoom Seder night to connect with our older children for Passover from their lock-down in Leeds. The Exodus story we recount each year is a multi-layered religious myth. That means that although the events we remember may never have happened, they are still packed with truth. The truths Passover can reveal change over time, depending on how our current circumstances influence our reading of the text. So this year, when we retold the story of the ten plagues and their role in the liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, one truth stood out. Plagues can trigger dramatic and transformative change with social, political and ethical consequences. Hang on to that thought, as I'll come back to it.

My normal 'beat' in for this blog is Israel/Palestine and how it plays into the 21st century Jewish condition. Over the last decade of writing, I've tried to challenge what have become accepted wisdoms about the meaning and interpretation of Jewish history. I've questioned our Jewish understanding of safety and security. I've charted how the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian people has distorted our Jewish identity and undermined long standing traditions and values.

But is there a Covid-19 'angle' to my on-going critique of Jewish communal politics? How is Palestinian freedom and Jewish wellbeing infected by coronavirus?

Like everywhere else, Covid-19 arrived in Israel/Palestine within an existing context. The context is the same power imbalance, the same human rights abuses, the same occupation and blockade that existed in pre-Covid 'normal times'. Covid-19 plays out unfairly just as everything else does in that part of the world. The pre-existing dynamics make some minor adaptations and then, by and large, it's business as usual. That's certainly the picture witnessed by Mondoweiss' Palestine reporter Yumna Patel, based in the West Bank:

"Despite widespread shutdowns, curfews, and quarantines, Israel has continued to raid Palestinian cities and towns, arrest and imprison Palestinians, demolish homes and tear down structures, and facilitate attacks carried out by settlers."

The Gaza context for Covid-19 is one of the most frightening on the planet. It's already been globally isolated for the last 13 years thanks to Israel's stance and the co-operation of its western allies. Gaza's economy and health system were shattered long ago. The tiny strip's population of 2 million are the ultimate example of Covid vulnerability.

As Jonathan Cooke wrote recently in *The National*: "Unless Gaza enjoys a miraculous escape, an epidemic is only a matter of time. The consequences hardly bear contemplating." If that happens Israel will undoubtedly put the blame squarely on Hamas. That's despite still being effectively responsible for the territory under international law. Global public opinion may be less willing to see it Israel's way. But that's assuming people have the emotional bandwidth to absorb the news of Covid tragedies beyond their own national borders.

A Covid-19 catastrophe in Gaza will be the next test of Jewish communal leadership around the world. It would be better not to behave as Israel's local public relations officer. But old habits die hard, even when they do more harm than good. Some social distancing from the government in Jerusalem would be a healthier response from the Board of Deputies, and others, this time around. But I'm not optimistic. Covid compassion is likely to run short of supply when it comes to Palestinians.

For the richer Western countries that have experienced the pandemic first, the talk is all of exit strategies. How to end the social distancing, re-boot economies, and return to normal. But 'normal' was not so great for most people. Many of us would like to take the opportunity to be more ambitious. Or is that just too naïve?

In business and in politics, leaders like to say that you should never let a good crisis go to waste. What they mean is that an emergency always creates an opportunity to implement change which would be more difficult in normal times. This is true and we shouldn't shy away from adopting this approach to our Covid-19 exit strategies.

The role of disease in shaping humanity's outlook has always been underestimated. As we're learning today, epidemics and pandemics can be historical 'players' just as much as kings and queens, emperors and tyrants. The question is, are we free to decide what those consequences should be?

Covid-19 is without doubt an accelerator of change and we may see that taking place in everything from the geo-political rivalry between America, Russia and China to how often we need to travel to the office. But can we hope to plan for any of this in a constructive way?

The combination of climate change and globalisation may mean that pandemics, like extreme weather, are no longer freak events that visit us only once or twice a century. Preparing for this and adjusting in ways which avoid economic shocks that hit the most vulnerable ought to be the new priority. There are good signs that this may be possible.

Listening to the science has become the new orthodoxy for our political elites. When we exit this crisis we shouldn't leave that behaviour behind, we should take it with us. It's been the demand of Climate campaigners for years and the current crisis has forced politicians to become accustomed to letting medical and environmental facts dictate social and economic policy. That has to continue but in more managed, sophisticated way that creates just transitions rather than destroying livelihoods overnight.

Some ways of thinking, some political ideologies, some religious attitudes will not serve us well in the years ahead. When it comes to my blogging 'beat', I've said before that Climate change makes Zionism obsolete as a strategy for Jewish security. Pandemics make it redundant too. Fortress states based on ethnic privileges are no longer practical responses to the greatest challenges we face.

As with the biblical epic of liberation we tell to ourselves each Passover, let's make this plague one that changes the course of our history too. In 2020, a nationalist ideology dependent for its continuance on the on-going subjugation of a neighbouring people is not only immoral but unsustainable in every respect. And it's infected every aspect of modern Jewish experience. It's time to let it pass over.

I began this blog by describing the mind numbing effects of Covid-19 and how the new vocabulary it's generated had paralysed my thinking. I've found a way through the writer's block though. I want to turn the language of pandemics into creative metaphors. Let the new words and phrases we've become accustomed to shape our exit from this time of contagion. If you think it sounds naïve, you're right. But if you have a better set of priorities then let me know.

So here's my edgy Jewish exit strategy:

*Source PPE against hypocrisy*

*Make 'key workers' heroes all year round*

*Introduce universal testing for kindness*

*Insist on social distancing from hatred*

*Build up our resilience against fear*

*Develop herd immunity against cynicism*

*Unmute our voices of compassion*

*Scale up the mass production of solidarity*

Most of us will get through this. Sadly, some will not. But in the meantime we need to take good care of ourselves and those around us. Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save lives.

[https://www.patheos.com/blogs/writingfromtheedge/2020/04/edgy-jewish-reflections-on-a-covid-19-exit-strategy/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=BRSS&utm\\_campaign=Jewish&utm\\_content=344](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/writingfromtheedge/2020/04/edgy-jewish-reflections-on-a-covid-19-exit-strategy/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=BRSS&utm_campaign=Jewish&utm_content=344)

## SABEEL KAIROS CONFERENCE 2020 | YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND THE OCCUPATION

We are delighted to confirm details for our yearly conference, which will be held this year on Saturday 19th September at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham B4 7SX. Tickets cost £33.00 per person (including lunch) with \*concessions at £25.00 for unemployed or students. The plans for conference continue and we are still set to go ahead on **Saturday 19 September**. We will be continually reviewing the situation in line with government guidelines regarding the current pandemic and will inform you of any changes or cancellations. (If this event is cancelled please be assured that all tickets will be refunded). **Please check the link at the foot of this page for updates.**

There will be chance to buy Palestinian crafts and food, view exhibitions and information stalls, and meet like-minded supporters from across the UK. We are excited to announce that we will be hosting some fantastic speakers this year. **Yousef Khoury** (*Academic at Bethlehem Bible College and originally from Gaza*) will join us along with **Robert Cohen** (*Jewish activist, blogger and Palestinian Advocate- see lead article in this issue*). We will also host workshops with **Rev Dr Munther Isaac**, **Rev Brian Brown**, **William Bell** and **Charlotte Marshall**.

### About our speakers:

**Yousef Khoury** is a Palestinian theologian and an academic at Bethlehem Bible College. Yousef is originally from Gaza.

**Robert Cohen** is a forthright blogger and one of the leading dissident Jewish voices on Israel-Palestine in Britain. Robert takes a firmly Jewish but non-Zionist position on the conflict. Robert writes a monthly blog for Patheos under the title *'Writing from the Edge'* and his work is regularly featured by Jews for Justice for Palestinians in the UK and at Mondoweiss in the United States. Robert spent ten years as a reporter and producer for BBC news and is now part of the corporate communications team for the Co-op. He was recently appointed a trustee for Amos Trust and acts as an adviser to Sabeel-Kairos UK.

**Rev Dr Munther Isaac** was born in Beit Sahour, Palestine. He is married with two children. Munther is an ordained minister of the Lutheran Church and serves as an Assistant Pastor at Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church Bethlehem. Munther is a speaker on Palestinian theology and the theology of the land, active with Kairos Palestine, and Blogger.

**Rev Brian Brown** is a Methodist minister and came to England as a refugee from apartheid South Africa in 1978 following the regime's imposition of a banning order. He became Africa Secretary for the British Council of Churches for all of the 1980s before taking up a teaching position at Kingsmead College in Birmingham which prepared people for working overseas. This was followed by a lengthy period in the Methodist World Church Office in London with responsibility for African affairs. He acted as a consultant to Kairos South Africa when they produced their document which subsequently became a model for Kairos Palestine.

**William Bell** has worked with Christian Aid for twenty years and is responsible for developing the charity's advocacy and policy on Israel and the Palestinians. He is a frequent visitor to the region and has written numerous reports and briefings on the situation for Palestinians, especially the refugee population. He studied Middle Eastern politics and history at SOAS and Peace Studies at Bradford University.

**Charlotte Marshall** has worked as Advocacy Officer for Sabeel-Kairos for the last 3 years, and prior to the merger with Friends of Sabeel UK was the advocacy worker for Kairos Britain from 2014-17. She has a Masters degree in Conflict, Security and Development from the University of Birmingham and worked for Christian Aid for 10 years prior to joining Kairos in various roles including emergency programme officer for Gaza and Middle East Communications Officer. She has travelled extensively in the Middle East region and considers Bethlehem her second home. Charlotte is married with two children.

Full conference details are available here: <https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/sabeel-kairos-conference-2020/>



## THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

**Joachim Rego** 6/5/2020: The virtue of hope responds to the deepest human desire for happiness which has been placed in our hearts by God. Hope takes up the human desire for happiness and purifies and shapes that desire toward God. The virtue of Christian hope, then, directs our minds and hearts to God. As such, a world without God is a world without hope. In his beautiful encyclical on Hope, *Spe Salvi (Saved by Hope)*, Pope Benedict XVI's opening claim is that "a distinguishing mark of Christians is the fact that they have a future." They do not know the details of that future, but they know that "their life will not end in emptiness."

In the Scriptures, hope is the virtue that keeps us from discouragement in the face of life's anxieties and challenges. Hope re-directs our tired, troubled hearts towards God, opening our heart in expectation of eternal happiness with God. In the New Testament, the virtue of hope is linked to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who place their trust in the saving power of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, are filled with renewed hope which comes from the Father.

The virtue of hope is also linked to faith. In the Letter to the Hebrews we read: "...*faith is the realisation of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen*" (Heb.11:1). Our faith deepens when we place our hope in God; and our hope is strengthened and fulfilled when we see the world around us with the eyes of faith. Hope is also linked to a peaceful confidence, an enduring patience, a deep-seated conviction which is the fundamental attitude of a Christian.

Christian hope is very realistic. It is built on the realisation of our weakness, the limitations of human nature, the many difficulties of human life, and the absolute necessity of God's grace. The Christian's hope is not in himself/herself, but in Jesus Christ. Christian hope is not a wish or a feeling; it is a rock-solid certainty, a guarantee, an anchor – "*the hope set before us...a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul*" (Heb. 6:18-19).

As Passionists – people on mission – we must reflect a hopeful spirituality, i.e. a spirituality trusting in God's help: "*Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labour in vain*" ...a spirituality hoping in the One who made the promise. Such hope is beyond rationality; it allows us to take steps beyond what is purely secure and reliable, trusting only in the One who calls us. The foundation stone of a spirituality of hope is surrender. A spirituality of hope and trust lived to the full is a witness that the Gospel is Good News, and that Jesus is not a moral reformer of humanity but a manifestation of the unlimited and boundless love of God. ("*The Passion is the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love*" ~ Paul of the Cross).

We can be prone to confuse Christian hope with a worldly/secular optimism which believes that things are going to get better in a worldly sense. For example, we feel optimistic when we see many new vocations, our ministries expand, our churches full, when people sing our praises. We tend to measure our ministries by how successful we've been. But even Jesus' ministry did not end on an optimistic note.

Jesus did not ask us to be 'successful'; he asked us to be 'fruitful'. Christianity does not promise success. In fact, Jesus only promised his disciples that the cup he drank of, we would drink. He promised us the Cross: "*If anyone wants to be follower of mine, let him/her take up their cross every day and follow me.*" So, I guess, if we are to measure ourselves, it should be on how we have shared in Jesus' Cross. On the other hand, if we trade true hope for a secular optimism, the Cross of Christ will become a stumbling block for us. "*Christian hope is not a wish or a feeling; it is a rock-solid certainty, a guarantee, an anchor.*"

There is an important distinction between the virtue of Christian hope and optimism. Hope encompasses more than wishful thinking. It must be solidly rooted in reality. Hope remains steadfast even when things are not going well. Hope drives us to action, even in the darkest times. Hope does not dwell in the moment, but clings to God's promise of a better future. Hope is rooted in a blessed future promised by God, secured by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, guaranteed by Jesus' resurrection, and sealed by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hope allows us to remember that no good deed is done in vain, rather our efforts will bear eternal fruit. The theologian Jurgen Moltmann has said it well: "*Genuine hope is not blind optimism. It is hope with open eyes, which sees the suffering and yet believes in the future.*"

The virtue of hope is a call to action; it impels us to get to work rather than simply to hope in a shallow and passive manner. When Jesus teaches us to pray in the 'Our Father': "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*", when he says that "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*", he is inviting us to join with God, in partnership, to make God's dream for our world come true.

The virtue of hope demands human effort. We must work as if it all depends on us and hope as if it all depends upon God. Pope St. John Paul II expressed it like this: "*The basic attitude of hope, on the one hand encourages the Christian not to lose sight of the final goal which gives meaning and value to life, and on the other, offers solid and profound reasons for a daily commitment to transform reality in order to make it correspond to God's plan.*"

*"Our hope is strengthened and fulfilled when we see the world around us with the eyes of faith."*

As we commemorate our Congregation's 300 years of foundation in a historical moment which presents great challenges for the church and religious life, we must re-find hope. Without true hope, we will not feel energised; we will not feel excitingly alive; we will lack energy and a compelling vision. When we re-find true Christian hope, when we experience the powerful presence and work of God all around and in us, we will become alive with the Spirit, we will bring life to others and be generators of life in its many forms, and we will be united in a joy that is attractive and convincing.

*"I know the plans I have in mind for you... plans for peace, not disaster, a future full of hope for you"* (Jer. 29:11).

*“The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.*

*The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognise and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters and let us allow hope to be rekindled. [...] Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.”* **Pope Francis, Homily, Extraordinary Moment of Prayer, 27/3/2020.**  
<https://jp.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/2020/05/06/joachim-rego-on-hope/>

## LIFE ON THE BREADLINE

On 13 September 2019, over 50 people gathered at Coventry University for the *Life on the Breadline* workshop on transforming structural injustice looking at different forms of poverty in the UK.

**Read their in-depth report here:** <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/transforming-structural-injustice/>

### **We have published a new Life on the Breadline blog post *Does Covid-19 mean foodbanks are here for good?***

**Foodbank volunteer Bob Jefford reflects:** The pandemic has just transformed all of our lives, and the Covid-19 stats are spreading like wildfire. But dig beneath the increasing death toll and the controversies over PPE and testing, and you’ll find that the numbers about UK food poverty are already rising at a truly alarming rate. The Trussell Trust, the UK’s biggest foodbank network, has just reported an immediate 81% increase in demand. We’re talking an extrapolated 3 million food parcels a year. And that’s not counting the third of all foodbanks who’re part of the Independent Food Aid Network and having the same experience. But this is just the start. Things will get worse, much worse – that’s a guarantee.

So here’s my fear. In the understandable and heartening rush to provide food for those who suddenly can’t afford to feed themselves, there’s a big risk. The way charities and supermarkets are being left to provide for the needy during the pandemic, could end up cementing foodbanks into the fabric of British society in a way that can never be reversed. That could be the unintended consequence of so much good will coupled with a government that seems entirely happy to allow others to deal with a problem it created long before Covid-19 made the situation unimaginably worse.

Let’s be honest, the pandemic has dealt the government with something akin to a *misère ouverte* hand. But the way it’s played those cards has confirmed its one main enduring focus: “it’s the economy stupid”. What about the weakest and most vulnerable in our society? My experience from five years at a foodbank providing parcels for more than 10,000 people per annum, leads me to a stark and unacceptable answer.

At the moment, in one of the richest countries in the world, those who need support the most get little more than an after-thought. Austerity and universal credit, sanctions and personal independence payment refusals, benefits frozen for five years while pensioners enjoyed their guaranteed triple lock increases – a cynic might point out that poor people generally either don’t vote or vote Labour, and pensioners in very large part vote Conservative ... This governing party believes everybody should just get a job, that’s the *raison d’être* of universal credit. If the government genuinely wanted to support the weakest and most vulnerable, it would have created systems easy to access and easy to navigate. Remember, people with learning difficulties or mental health issues need access to benefits too. The fact that many claimants find these provisions to be impenetrable mysteries, completes the case for the prosecution.

Even before Covid-19, a few million food parcels were being distributed in a year. Even before our lives were turned upside down, there was a serious risk that foodbanks were becoming part of the establishment – just like in the US, where foodbanks are now part of their capitalist economy. In the UK, huge multi-million-pound deals had already been struck between supermarkets and charities that provide food for the needy. And now, it’s difficult to keep up with the number of organisations – old and new – that have recently taken on the vital task of sourcing and distributing emergency food in these troubled times, often funded by supermarket millions not the government.

In purely theoretical terms – and I have to take a gulp before saying this – the heroes who’re providing these essential supplies are allowing the government to ignore the underlying problem of food poverty. What if the third sector simply refused to fill gap? People would starve, that would not play at all well in the media, and the government would feel forced to finally do something about it. In normal times, the real solution to food poverty is not foodbanks. That’s treating the symptoms, not the disease. The cure is decent, regular wages or decent, regular benefits – enough for a reasonable standard of living, not luxuries. But the unintended consequence of these huge new pandemic food networks that will soon be feeding tens of thousands maybe more, is that foodbanks and their like will become a locked-in feature of UK poverty. And how long will it take to get back to a society where foodbanks are no longer needed? Decades? Maybe never. It’s an unprecedented dilemma for unprecedented times. But with a government sitting on its hands, what would you do when individuals and families are literally begging for something to put on the table? Could you turn your back, walk away and tell the government that now’s the time to step up to the plate?

<https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/2020/05/05/does-covid-19-mean-foodbanks-are-here-for-good/>

**READ ALSO: *A neighbourly response to Covid-19*** A blog post is written by Paul Wright, a Street Connector Mentor in Birmingham. (24/3/2020) <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/2020/03/24/a-neighbourly-response-to-covid-19/>  
**Follow project updates** on Twitter at #BreadlineResearch or go to: <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/>

## GROWING HUNGER AND OPPRESSION FACE URBAN POOR

Ellen Teague 6/5/2020 *The Tablet*

“The big issue of the coronavirus in Latin America is hunger” says the head of CAFOD’s Latin America Department. Clare Dixon told *The Tablet* this week that “of course it’s a health crisis but it is also a social catastrophe – one of hunger, and also human rights, inequality and violence against women”.

Draconian clampdowns in El Salvador and Guatemala mean that people are allowed out only once a week to buy food but, as Clare reports, they say “we don’t live week by week but day by day” and “they would rather risk catching the virus on the streets and earn an income than die of hunger”. In both countries, soldiers patrol barrios during strict lockdown, and thousands have been detained.

CAFOD partners working with young people in an area of San Salvador afflicted by gang violence report families having trouble accessing food. Some subsidies are provided by the governments, but many poor people cannot access them because they do not have bank accounts.

In health terms, social distancing is difficult where several generations of the same family live in one or two rooms. El Salvador’s hospitals are ill-equipped and CAFOD supports a clinic set up by the Jesuit Refugee Service which has been co-opted into the national system to tackle the virus, and personal protection equipment has been provided.

CAFOD was already supporting the Church in challenging the government plans to privatise water which would push up its price and make it less accessible for poor communities. In Guatemala, CAFOD supports community-based radio projects which provide virus information, an SOS service and information about food distribution.

In Brazil, Clare highlighted CAFOD’s support for the urban poor in Sao Paulo by funding women’s groups taking the lead in distributing food. It is also working with rural groups, such as the Pastoral Land Commission, to link farmers to city dwellers needing their produce.

In Manaus, the largest city in Amazonas where the virus is causing mounting deaths, Archbishop Leonardo Steiner of Manaus is spearheading calls of bishops of the Amazon region to protect the poor and indigenous communities. CAFOD is providing food and health resources to the most vulnerable families and measures to help indigenous tribal people protect themselves from the virus brought into their traditional lands by loggers and mining companies. “The urban poor are suffering the worst impacts of the virus through hunger and, in many countries such as Colombia and Bolivia, the crisis has brought human rights abuses” Clare reports.

Columban missionaries in Peru also report that food security is a huge problem in the barrios during the eighth week of lockdown. From Lima, Fr Ed O’Connell reports that while “the government’s response to the virus has been compassion and not repression” measures taken to help the poor have left many hungry. “A lot of people not included in the censuses of 2013 and 2017 fell outside of the official lists and many of the municipalities have not had the capacity to distribute food stocks to the most needy”. Seventy per cent of the people get their income in the informal sector but have no work.

Around 42 per cent of Lima’s families are without an income and the most desperate are leaving Lima and walking back to their home towns: along the coast both north and south; up to the Andes mountains and some down the other side into the jungle.

Columbans are supporting San Benito, a barrio on the northern side of Lima, helping 60 families with essentials who “have had no money and no work for seven weeks”. Fr Ed says, “it is a drop in the ocean but to those who do receive it it means everything”. Meanwhile, there are rising numbers of virus infections, with hospitals already full, in a population already coping with TB, HIV, Dengue and Malaria.

Venezuela’s prolonged social, political and economic crisis has only been compounded by the coronavirus pandemic, the archbishop emeritus of Caracas, Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino, said last week. While the cardinal acknowledged the lockdown has prevented the spread of the virus, he pointed out that “informal” workers are “barely surviving,” and only with “the help of family members, social organisations and the Church.” The cardinal felt the government has used the quarantine as an opportunity to strengthen its social and political control.

In South Africa, the government lockdown has been effectively observed, with support from religious leaders. Archbishop William Slattery, Emeritus of Pretoria, told *The Tablet* this week that informal settlements or ghettos around townships have faced greatest health risks with the virus and lockdown. “People are thrown together and it is hard to observe social distancing” he said; “and, yes, people are hungry and much of our work at the moment is trying to help them”. He reported that, “mobile phones are being utilised to identify those in need of food parcels and there is an emergency fund to draw on”.

Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg told *The Tablet* that although there have been just over 100 deaths recorded in South Africa “until we ramp up very substantially the number of people being tested, we will not really know the extent of the infections in a country of 56 million people”. He warned that prevention strategies also highlight the reality of South Africa. “How can the millions of poor people who live in one-room shacks as in this Diocese be expected to maintain social distancing, stay at home, and wash their hands frequently when there is no readily available water?”

The social situation in South Africa is increasingly tense, especially "for both immigrants and South Africans living in townships", according to Scalabrinian missionary Fr Pablo Velasquez. "I receive messages almost every day from desperate immigrant workers, with nothing to eat, among them Mozambicans who are victims of exploitation here in South Africa" he reports. Hundreds came daily to the gates of his parish of St Patrick, south of Johannesburg, to get food parcels, despite the police trying to disperse them. Fr Pablo reports that "among the people queuing in front of the parish, many say "it is better to die of coronavirus than starvation".

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Zimbabwe, the coronavirus emergency exacerbates economic crisis. The government has sent the army to enforce lockdown but, according to Jesuit Fr Brian MacGarry, "forcing people working in the informal sector to stay at home means condemning them to death and I fear there will be riots to which law enforcement agencies will respond with violence". The health system is collapsing, with a lack of personal protective equipment for health staff. Archbishop Robert Ndlovu of Harare has announced that 55 Catholic health institutions have been offered to the government "for use in the fight against the pandemic". In Bulawayo, ongoing drought has depleted reservoirs and some neighbourhoods are facing months cut off from the municipal water supply. Regular washing of hands is impossible in a city of two million people, despite cases of infection.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/12884/growing-hunger-and-oppression-face-urban-poor->

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS PROTEST CARDINAL DOLAN'S SUPPORTIVE WORDS FOR TRUMP

1/5/2020: More than 1,000 Catholics, including the leaders of prominent social justice organisations, have signed a letter to New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan expressing outrage at his recent public displays of support for the president. "Your recent phone call with President [Donald] Trump and appearance on Fox News sends a message that Catholic leaders have aligned themselves with a president who tears apart immigrant families, denies climate change, stokes racial division and supports economic policies that hurt the poor," the letter states. "There is nothing 'pro-life' about Trump's agenda."

The letter, which was made public May 1 and organised by Faith in Public Life Action, includes signatures from Sr. Simone Campbell, executive director of Network, a Catholic social justice lobby; Stephen Schneck, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network; and Sr. Pat McDermott, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Priests and theologians from Catholic universities across the country also signed on, according to a press release from Faith in Public Life Action.

The letter comes in response to two recent incidents in which the cardinal publicly expressed admiration and his apparent support for the president. The first was an April 25 phone call Trump held with 600 Catholics, including Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, the president of the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops. According to *Cruce*, during the call Trump referred to Dolan as a "great friend of mine," to which Dolan joked that he calls the president more than he calls his 90-year-old mother. Trump also identified himself as the "best [president] in the history of the Catholic Church" in the call.

A few days later, on an April 27 appearance on "Fox & Friends," Dolan publicly praised Trump for his leadership and sensitivity "to the feelings of the religious community."

John Gehring, Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life Action, said in a statement that Dolan and other bishops should not "give the appearance of cosying up to a president who makes a mockery of Christian values in his words and policies." "There is nothing 'pro-life' about a leader who uses cruelty as a political weapon and shows contempt for anyone who challenges his reckless agenda," Gehring said.

Campbell said that the president's policies directly violate Catholic social teaching and that "our Church leadership should know better."

During a Facebook Live video event with *America* magazine editor Jesuit Fr. Matt Malone May 1, Dolan defended his decision to take part in the call with Trump and called it part of the "sacred enterprise of accompaniment" to talk to political leaders. The cardinal also said he has had "much more criticism" from Catholics angry at his past efforts to work with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and Senator Chuck Schumer. He said Catholic bishops have to engage with politicians, and "you gotta make gnocchi with the dough you got."

The letter's final paragraph said, "When religious leaders put access to power before principles, they risk losing the moral clarity needed to ensure politics is about the pursuit of the common good. I pray that you and other bishops will show the leadership our country needs at this difficult time."

[By Jesse Remedios NCR staff writer. NCR Vatican Correspondent Joshua J. McElwee contributed to this story.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/catholic-social-justice-leaders-protest-cardinal-dolans-supportive-words-trump>

## PAX CHRISTI CAMPAIGN ON MILITARY SPENDING

Aisling has put together a new online education resource list (with some initial research by Pat). There are links to short films challenging military spending and articulating a better vision for our world, encompassing economics, climate, geography, political decision-making and more. Teachers may find it useful during this season of online learning to promote critical thinking and student research for example. Share the link with teachers/chaplains/youth workers!  
<https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GDAMs-resource.pdf>



## NEW HYMN FOR CHRISTIAN CND 60TH ANNIVERSARY

5/5/2020: A new hymn has been written to mark the 60th anniversary of the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament this year. Composer Christopher Idle has penned the lyrics and a new tune has been written by Sue Gilmurray. Both are Christian CND members. The hymn, *Let us Raise Our Voice*, is available for use by any congregations and groups who dare to hope, work and pray for a more peaceful world.

The 60th anniversary of Christian CND will be marked in a number of ways, although some have been postponed due to the Coronavirus outbreak. An exhibition charting the history of Christian CND will be available to members and supporters to host in a local venue and a conference will take place in Newcastle on 3 October. The year will culminate with an event in London in July 2021. Christian CND Co-Chairs Martin Tiller and David Maxwell said, "We are delighted that Christopher and Sue have come together to write this new hymn. It really captures the essence of our campaign and the urgency of eliminating nuclear weapons for the benefit of everyone."

Christopher Idle said: "Christian CND does important work in highlighting issues around nuclear weapons to believers in the UK and I am pleased to be able to join them in marking their 60th anniversary with this great, playable and singable tune by Sue. Music is a powerful way to deliver a message. I hope people will heed the message in *Let us Raise Our Voice*."

Sue Gilmurray said: "I congratulate Christian CND on 60 years of campaigning for an end to nuclear weapons. Now more than ever, with the UK set to spend billions on a new generation of weapons, we need Christians to intercede for a better future. I hope this hymn, bringing together the global issues with our individual response in the context of God's love, will help in raising our awareness and inspiring action."

Listen to a recording of the hymn here: <https://soundcloud.com/mightierpen/let-us-raise-our-voice-1>  
For full lyrics see: <https://christiancnd.org.uk/let-us-raise-our-voice-a-hymn-for-christian-cnd/>  
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39508>

## DO YOU HAVE TIME ON YOUR HANDS DURING THE LOCKDOWN?

**Church Action on Poverty Communications Manager Liam Purcell suggests** some books, TV and podcasts that could keep you occupied – and help you understand UK poverty and campaigning better!

**READ: *Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in Austerity Britain*** by Stef Benstead. A powerful book by one of our trustees. Professor Peter Beresford, co-chair of *Shaping Our Lives*, said it provides "the definitive verdict on government welfare reform, the UK's shame". (See page 2 of the May 2020 NW NJPN E Bulletin for some lockdown reflections from Stef.)

***Poverty Safari: Understanding the anger of Britain's underclass*** by Darren McGarvey. A challenging, personal perspective on UK poverty and how to tackle it, drawing on Scottish rapper Loki's own experiences of community activism and growing up in poverty.

***The Shame Game: Overturning the toxic poverty narrative*** by Mary O'Hara. Crucially, this book about changing the portrayal of poverty draws on the insights of people who experience it.

***Mission from Below: Building a kingdom community*** by Janet Hodgson and Stephen Conway. How two nuns worked alongside local people to loosen poverty's grip in a North East community. An inspirational story of church on the margins

**LISTEN: *Frame[s] of Mind***. A podcast about how language can help change people's perceptions of issues – by the Frameworks Institute, who have helped develop innovative new frames for talking about UK poverty. Available on iTunes or other podcast providers.

***Social Power***. A podcast from the Sheila McKechnie Foundation about social change and how to bring it about. Available on iTunes or other podcast providers.

***Sound Delivery***. This organisation has a wide range of audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/sounddelivery> all sharing stories from people who have experience of poverty and other issues, and whose voices aren't usually heard.

**WATCH: *Broken***. This 2017 BBC TV series by Jimmy McGovern is about a Catholic priest in a poor Liverpool community. It's a powerful depiction of how the church can make a difference by sharing in people's brokenness on the margins of society. It touches on issues Church Action on Poverty has campaigned on, such as high-cost lending. It's available to watch on Netflix or YouTube.

**BIBLE STUDIES:** You may have a lot of time for quiet reflection at the moment. Why not use our '*Scripture from the Margins*' series to guide you in reading the Bible? They're great for personal reflection, or you could meet virtually with a house group or study group. Each publication uncovers the radical things scripture has to say about poverty and injustice, by focusing on voices and meanings that are usually left on the margins.

***Dangerous Stories*** looks at Jesus' parables. ***Untold Stories*** explores the Gospel of Matthew.

**Download** the Bible studies free at [www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible), or call 0161 872 9294 to request a printed copy.

## WAVES OF DESPAIR, TONGUES OF FIRE: Pentecost message from the World Council of Churches

And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. (Acts 2:2-4)

Last month, Pentecost Island was among those islands in Vanuatu, in the Southeast Pacific, that were most pummelled by Cyclone Harold, a Category 5 hurricane with winds of 165 mph and “king tides” of 20 feet and more. Devastating and lethal, the cyclone ripped roofs away, levelled structures, flooded communities, and took lives. When the fierce storm hit her island home, Moana, owner of a beach resort, woke in fear for her life and her property. For two hours, she stood facing the winds and waves, imploring God to save herself and her property. Fortunately, when the storm had passed, Moana was still standing and her buildings were still intact.

In the *Acts of the Apostles*, the advent of the Spirit is portrayed in similarly dramatic and consequential ways. The earliest followers of Jesus, hiding in fear, were shaken, and then emboldened, by the mighty presence of God, allowing them to overcome even barriers of language and culture to preach the saving message of Jesus’ resurrection. The church was born in tumult yet emerged from the chaos with a potent, indeed life-changing, message relevant to all cultures and contexts.

As at the first Pentecost, so it must be again today.

Now, as we write, a silent, invisible, yet even more lethal natural force has landed. The novel coronavirus has upended the whole world, instilling terror and chaos, causing millions to fall ill and hundreds of thousands to die. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on economies, upset families and community life, eluded the most sophisticated systems of global and local healthcare, tested the mettle and efficacy of governance, and caused outbreaks of hunger.

Yet this Pentecost, across the centuries and around the world, we Christians are linked to each other and to those earliest disciples to proclaim, as they boldly did, that the God of Life is with us still. The Spirit of God lifts our hearts in prayer and longing. The Spirit instils in us courage to face grief and suffering. The Spirit enflames our hearts with love to serve those who suffer and are excluded from society’s systems of care. The Spirit illumines our minds to engage in and support intense scientific research for treatments and vaccines. The Spirit enables us to confront and surmount this virus with generous cooperation, with our best medical and pastoral care, and, above all, with loving kindness toward all God’s children.

The Spirit of God, too, is *pan-demos*. It touches all people and crosses all barriers, yet in a way that spells life, not death. This Pentecost, we pray, may wrestling with this pandemic unleash the Spirit’s energies in the whole people of God and renew, not just the church, but the face of the earth.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-presidents/pentecost-message-from-the-wcc-presidents-2020/view>

## DIARY DATES

### MAY

31 Pentecost Sunday

### JUNE

15-21 Refugee Week <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

### JULY

**17-19 July 42nd Annual Justice and Peace Conference ‘2020 Vision – Action for Life on Earth’** The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Five years on from *Laudato Si’* we are learning that ecological conversion is a matter of life and death. Decisions at United Nations summits in 2020 on both climate and biodiversity will be critical for salvaging a viable future. Join us in Conference 2020 as we make common cause to face the choices, changes and consequences confronting us.

**Book here:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PDF-Booking-form-1-1.pdf>

We are continuing to take bookings at the present for the conference and have arranged the AGM for Sunday July 19 at 1.45 after the conference. We will continue to review the situation in light of any future guidance from the government or action by The Hayes Conference Centre.

**NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe***, and some of these are uploaded onto our website.

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News [www.indcatholicnews.com](http://www.indcatholicnews.com) an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

- Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN including a **new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk) or contact [admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk](mailto:admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk) 020 7901 4864

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