



NJPN Comment

Sampling a better life

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This year's NJPN conference was scheduled for 17-19 July, and it had an environmental theme. It has been postponed. A sub-theme was 'Ecological Conversion: necessity, dream or delusion?'

To support the 'necessity' part, promotional material described how 'Five years on from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, we are learning that ecological conversion is a matter of life and death.

Scientists first announced this warning three decades ago, and they have been joined in recent years by non-governmental organisations, young people and older activists trying to save humanity and 'our common home'. Surprisingly, little has been done by the Church to implement Pope Francis' encyclical; and, as the conference title suggests, at the start of this year we had no way of knowing whether the necessary systemic change was a 'dream' or a 'delusion'.

Before I explain my own perspectives on lockdown, I have to state that I practice not 'social' but 'media' distancing. I cancelled my TV licence many years ago and simultaneously switched off the propaganda from mainstream newspapers. I therefore have my own opinions on what has been behind these recent times, and with this I have observed the following. Over a few months, people who don't normally talk about wildlife have been talking about it. Wildlife has come back. People have walked down empty roads which were once traffic-jammed, and cycled along them with family members, free from the constant assault of traffic and noise. They have seen beautiful sunny skies, of a blue which they probably never knew existed, free from aeroplane contrails. They have had a temporary respite from full-stretch living and had time to slow down and experience God's creation, and they have sampled how a better life could be.

'God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform' said William Cowper in 1773. And, coincident with spring sunshine, in a matter of months we have been shown that rapid systemic change is neither a 'dream' nor a 'delusion'. We now know that it is possible.

The NJPN conference will go ahead, but rescheduled for 23-25 July 2021.

In the meantime, two mini conferences by Zoom will be held on 18 July this year with the theme: 'Post-Pandemic Church: paralysed or energised? Recovered or re-imagined?' This will lead into preparations for '2021 – Action for Life on Earth'.

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

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