

# NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin mid November 2021

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

## DOWN TO EARTH

**Frank Regan** September 2021

We all remember being stunned and delighted upon seeing the photograph of Earth rise in outer space. There it was, a blue-green amethyst, floating serenely on a dark galactic ocean within a Milky Way with a visible diameter of 100,000-200,000 light-years.

We could see only one world, without frontiers or boundaries. All one. When we zoomed in we could see the Great Wall, built by the Han emperors. Boundaries and frontiers, enclosures and clearings, private property and spaces have become an integral part of our human history. We have only to look at the English Channel.

Every tribe, every nation, every people has its foundational myth. We can read ours in chapter one of Genesis. God spoke a word into the infinite abyss. It spread over the waters of chaos. The word came from the breath of God. God's breath, or spirit (*ruach* in Hebrew), breathed upon the waters and life flared forth. Over the course of six eons God created out of the 'material' of the fullness of her being, exhaled over the evolving creation. At the end of each day or eon God paused to look at this handiwork and saw that it was good, and blessed it. Our story, first told by the Hebrew storytellers returning from exile in Babylon, is of a world which is good because it is made and blessed by God.

The Greeks told a similar story. Their gods created a world they called *cosmos*, which means *beautiful*. The Latins came along later and called their world *mundus* which means 'world' and also 'clean'.

Our western, post-Christian culture has been created on a triple foundation of Hebrew, Greek and Latin stories. Our cultural DNA points to our emerging in a world which is good, blessed, beautiful and clean. If we were Japanese we would know the story of the Shinto myth of the creation of Japan by gods who then descended to earth using a rainbow.

We have forgotten those old stories, having dismissed or demythologized them as fairy tales from a primitive, infantile past. Nowadays our stories are of science, progress, growth, individual freedom, commerce and the 'creative destruction' (as the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter put it) of earth's bounty for the creation of mostly private wealth.

The world has become a vast marketplace where everything has a price, even human bodies. But the world is also in danger of becoming a vast wasteland depredated of its natural wealth and a cemetery for millions of workers or slaves killed by overwork, violence, starvation, environmental disaster, famine, illnesses or maltreatment by other human beings. This is the context of the millions forced to migrate every year.

An awakening has occurred, spurred, perhaps, by the founding of Friends of the Earth (1969), Greenpeace and similar organizations in the 1970s. It is possible that we have entered upon a new era: the Ecozoic.

The word 'ecozoic' was coined in 1992 by Thomas Berry and Brien Swimme. It conveys the idea that our various eco-systems are interconnected and interrelated. To harm one is to harm the others. No ecosystem has more of a right to live and prosper than any other. All of life is one, from the simplest one-celled to the complex billion-celled.

We have created a planet in peril. Our activity has had a deleterious effect on eco-systems and human beings. We could wonder what the billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos saw from their spacecraft. Did they see the melting icecaps, the retreating glaciers, the disappearing Greenland ice in the Arctic region? Did their nostrils twitch at the smell of methane gas escaping from the Siberian tundra? Did they see the wild fires and flash flooding occurring in the temperate zone of the planet? Did they view with alarm the shrinking Amazon rainforest, the resultant species loss? Did they flinch at the more intense hurricanes and tornados lashing the equatorial region of the planet? Or was their vision full of the profits they could accrue from their new space travel enterprise?

The world meeting in Glasgow was of great concern to a fast-growing movement of Christian groups which has emerged to add its voice and energy to the secular ecological movement already on the march. Their presence is motivated by the ecological challenges crying out for engagement. They are aware that God's Spirit is a life-giving spirit of love for all of creation, a creation formed of the very breath of God who breathes ('enspirits') her life into all she has made.

The work of ecological defence and repair is God's ecozoic work. That work becomes 'workship' when the Christian communities gather around a table to share in a meal of bread and wine, fruits of the earth and the work of human hands; or when communities gather together to pray, to reverence the earth, to renew their sacred commitment to cooperate with the Spirit to defend, repair, nurture and create new spaces, new ideas that will redound to the Earth's renewal.

But there are other gods with their theologies and their forms of worship. Millions live under the power of Moloch who demands human sacrifice under various guises. Many others worship at the altar of Mammon (money). Thousands live and die as the victims of Mars (war). They are gods of death. The ecozoic God invites us to choose life.

We are on the threshold of a new age, a new chapter, in the human saga: the Ecozoic Age, when all of life is recognised as sacred, as interconnected, as intimate part of the human being and human being as the conscience of all of life. That process can be called 'Christification'. The word conveys the perception that the historical and biological processes are growing into the fullness of the risen Christ, sign of a new creation and a new humanity. St Irenaeus (ca 150) wrote beautifully that the glory of God is seen in the person fully alive; and the glory of the human being is to see God.

It is a sobering thought that we are the only species on the planet capable of suicide. Overdose is a frequent cause of accidental suicide. And we have overdosed. An unnamed writer from the Amazonian region of Peru visualises the harm being done to the Pachamama by our overdosing: "...her trees—her arms—were cut; her soil—her flesh—was perforated; her minerals—her organs—were extracted; her rivers—her veins—were polluted".

Prophets of the calibre of Greta Thunberg have warned us that so far, our leaders have only "blah blah blah". As the new age begins we remember the question Jonas Salk, who gave us the polio vaccine, asked long ago: "Are we being good ancestors?".

## THE BIG PLAYER EXCLUDED AT COP26 IN GLASGOW

Leonardo Boff | Nov 3, 2021

From 31 October to 12 November, the 26th edition of the UN Conference of the Parties on Climate Change is taking place in Glasgow, Scotland. The great subject that will be discussed by the 191 participant countries is how to control the global warming caused by the greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the recent report by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), the world scenario is, more than ever, bleak. We have only one decade to reduce at least half the emissions of carbon dioxide. Otherwise, we will reach a heating of 1.5 Celsius. At this temperature there would be a serious devastation of nature, as most living beings would not adapt and could disappear.

Such a warming would also dramatically affect humanity, with millions of climate migrants, since their regions will become too hot to live and produce. Moreover, there could be the intrusion of a wide range of viruses that would surely sacrifice an unimaginable number of human lives, far greater than the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to what has already accumulated in the atmosphere, given that CO<sub>2</sub> remains there for 100 to 120 years, the changes we make now will not change the increasing course of extreme events caused by this accumulation. Not even geoengineering, proposed by science, can stop this climate crisis in the near future. Which is why many climate scholars maintain that we're too late and there's no going back. This finding makes many scientists become sceptics and techno-fatalists. However, they claim that if we can no longer change the course of increasing warming, we can at least use available science and technology to minimize its disastrous effects. The current climate, compared to what is to come, could seem mild.

The recent IPCC report in blunt assurance states that this situation is a consequence of human activities that are harmful to nature (deforestation, excessive use of fossil energy, erosion of biodiversity, growing desertification and poor treatment of soils, etc.).

It is imperative to recognize that these climatic disorders have little to do with the vast majority of humanity, who are impoverished and victims of the prevailing system. Unfortunately, this produces a double injustice: one ecological by devastating entire ecosystems and one social by increasing poverty and misery worldwide.

The real causes are the globalized industrialist and extractive mega corporations that do not respect the limits of nature and that start from the false assumption of unlimited growth/development because natural resources would also be unlimited. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* declares this presupposition to be a lie (n.106).

"It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit" (LS 106).

What to expect from COP26 in Glasgow? There are many who doubt whether there will be enough consensus to maintain the Paris Agreement, with the commitment to reduce the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases until reaching zero around 2050.

We know, however, from previous COPs, that the agenda is controlled by agents of mega corporations, particularly oil and food, among others. They tend to maintain the status quo that benefits them and are opposed to fundamental transformations that would compel them to also change their way of production and reduce their profits in terms of the general planetary good. So they create obstacles to consensus and stop more drastic measures in view of the evident deterioration of the Earth's climate balance.

Observing a long argument, I would simply say what the *Earth Charter* (2003) and the two ecological encyclicals of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, affirm with all conviction: we have to carry out a "deep ecological conversion" because "we are in the same boat; either we all are saved or no one is saved" (*Earth Charter*, preamble and conclusion; *Fratelli Tutti* n. 30 and 34).

The question arises: how is our relationship with nature: Is it a relationship of robbery or care? Are we preserving its biocapacity or exhausting its goods and services necessary for our life and survival? Because these questions are not proposed in these conferences. They are also not considered nor answered.

Earth and nature constitute, however, the Great Player. All the other projects of the players and the future of our civilization depend on its preservation. The analysis of the Earth's degraded situation, undeniable and unrestrained, is never considered in the various COPs. The centrality is occupied by the current political economy, the dominant player, the real cause of climate imbalances. This player is never questioned.

The real saviour player is nature, Terra-Gaia, but completely absent from all COPs and will be as well, we assume, in Glasgow. From the perspective of *Fratelli Tutti*: either we go from the paradigm of the dominus, the human being disconnected from nature and understanding itself as owner and dominator to the paradigm of the frater, of the human being feeling part of nature and brother and sister with humans and with all other beings of nature or else we are going to meet the worst. This is the quaestio stantis et cadentis, that is to say, the fundamental question, without which all other questions are invalidated.

This time, the future is in our hands. As the Earth Charter states at its end: "Like never before in history, common destiny calls us to seek a new beginning."

In its deepest sense, this is the lesson that Covid-19 wants to teach us. Will we go back to before, terrifying for the majority of humanity, or will we have the courage for a "new beginning," contrary to the Great Reset of the billionaires?

We long for a true "new beginning" beneficial for the whole community of life, especially for the common home and for us, its inhabitants, nature included. It is the condition of our continuity on this small and splendid planet Earth.

<https://laudatosimovement.org/2021/11/03/the-big-player-excluded-at-cop26-in-glasgow/>

## **COP26 BLOG 15: 'GLASGOW ENDS TODAY, BUT THE REAL WORK BEGINS NOW'**

**Ellen Teague** 13 November 2021

This is my final blog on COP26. So here goes - if you can bear just one more reflection!

Have you ever experienced fried Macaroni Cheese or had two weeks of conversations through masks? Have you sung for a climate vigil that was broadcast globally or marched beside an indigenous woman from Brazil and a 'polar bear'?

But among my best memories of the Glasgow Climate Summit in November 2021 will be meeting a Syrian refugee family on the second day of COP26, the day the world leaders first gathered.

Security was especially tight at the conference centre so Jo Siedlecka of ICN and I were not surprised to see hundreds of police lined up as we left that evening. But we soon discovered that the local train station was blocked off and were told to walk a few hundred yards up the road and seek alternative transport. After nearly an hour of trying to secure a taxi it was clear that walking was the only option. The free Travel Passes for delegates were of no use that night. Apparently, the most powerful world leaders were being shielded while they enjoyed a banquet.

It was dark and freezing cold, and we were not alone. Hundreds of conference delegates, mostly from the global south, were also stranded in a city where we were all strangers. As we walked, guided by our phones, we passed delegates from Africa praying in a park and other sole delegates were running by us, unsure of their safety if they stood still. In fact, Glasgow is a very safe and friendly city but we didn't yet know that. This was the first of several four-five mile walks for me in Glasgow and after the first mile I just wanted to return to London.

A man with three young children, one holding a carton of milk, was suddenly walking beside us. "Are you OK" he asked. "Not really" we answered. "My family's flat is just over there, why don't you come in for a cup of tea and the bathroom?" he said. We accepted his offer. The family was out late searching for milk because the local supermarket - and indeed the children's school - had been closed for three days of COP26. The wife and baby welcomed us at the door despite being rather shocked at the unplanned visitation during these days of Covid. We left their humble home refreshed after about 20 minutes and made it back to our accommodation, accompanied part of the way by the man and two children. But not before discovering that the couple had escaped to Scotland from Syria's Civil War, which had destroyed their home city of Aleppo.

Their story had a link with our conference. Climate change alone cannot be blamed for the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011, but it was an amplifier and multiplier of the political crisis building up there. The country had been hit by three droughts since the 1980s and the stretch from 2006 to 2010 was recorded as the worst multiyear drought in around 900 years. Decreased rainfall combined with rising temperatures resulted in desertification and devastation of agricultural land. Along with this, 800,000 people lost their income, 85% of the country's livestock died and food prices doubled. Amidst the instability and conflict our new friends had to flee their native land. But they had not left behind their commitment to hospitality and welcoming strangers.

Today, as COP26 concluded, ordinary people came to the forefront in the final plenary session. "This agreement has made some progress and we cannot afford no progress," said the envoy from the vulnerable Marshall Islands in the Pacific. But is the change happening fast enough? Bill McKibben of the influential 350 Degrees organisation said last week: "Winning slowly, in relation to climate change, is the same as losing."

The final document responded to the scientists' call to close the gap towards 1.5C, and coal is in the text. But many, such as CAFOD, described COP26 as "a major disappointment". The commitments and claims of the first week on finance, forests, end of public finance for fossil fuel, methane and cars must now be translated into real policy. Finance for loss and damage must be at the top of the agenda for COP27.

"Glasgow ends today, but the real work begins now," said Seve Paeniu, the charismatic Finance and Climate Minister from Tuvalu. And that was picked up today by the zoom quarterly meeting of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) of England and Wales. It reflected on COP26 and considered where the movement goes from here.

Personal lifestyle transformations would go alongside existing programmes to continue supporting. These would include Live Simply and Fossil Fuel divestment and making use of the trained *Laudato Si'* Animators. Advocacy with politicians and the corporate world would be strengthened plus a push for bishops to build up the network of Justice and Peace workers who have a broad brief to address social justice, environmental justice and peace. When the Vatican launches its *Laudato Si'* Platform within days, the NJPN will support it. One said: "Pope Francis has used the wonderful phrase 'I will persist in pestering'. Maybe it should become our motto on climate change and our other issues!"

The Columban Missionaries supported me to go to Glasgow and they are now heads down preparing for the next Conference of Parties - COP15 - on Biodiversity, which will be held in Kunming, China, in May 2022. This too is an issue close to the heart of Pope Francis and featured in *Laudato Si'*. The Columbans have urged, "increased commitment to phasing out the extraction and burning of fossil fuels to limit global warming, a key driver of biodiversity loss." COP26 is now over but campaigning, educating and praying for Climate Justice continues.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/43459>

## **COP SUMMIT 'DISAPPOINTING' SAYS BISHOP**

**Ellen Teague**\_14 November 2021, *The Tablet*

The outcome of the COP26 Climate summit in Glasgow has been described as "disappointing" by the lead bishop on the environment for England and Wales.

Bishop of Salford John Arnold, who was in Glasgow for the conference, said: "Having seen the enthusiasm of so many people, expressing their hopes for the COP26 conference, having read so much about the science that has accurately explained what damage we have done to our climate and our world... the plan is not there." He added: "It is to our shame that we have failed in our negotiations to provide the funding required by the poorest nations to repair the damage done."

CAFOD said: "COP26 has handed a threadbare lifeline to the world's most vulnerable people," after the Glasgow climate pact was released yesterday, a day after the summit was due to finish."

CAFOD director Christine Allen said: "The question is, are we travelling far enough, fast enough and fairly enough – to which the answer is no. In the end it wasn't enough but we have a year to keep pushing." There will be a drive in the leadup to COP27 in Egypt a year from now, to limit temperature increases to 1.5C and deliver the climate finance so desperately needed, she said.

CAFOD believes steps were taken in the right direction, with a call to accelerate the phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, even without a clear deadline. However, the nearly 200 countries at COP26 failed to deliver on loss and damage experienced by countries at the front line of climate catastrophes.

Lorna Gold, based in Ireland and board chair of the *Laudato Si'* movement, suggested that “a big COP26 win in my eyes is the fact they need to come back next year with better plans, not in 2025, and we have a year to ratchet up pressure now.”

The movement led a flurry of online activity during the final discussions, galvanising more than 60 Catholic organisations, missionary groups and prominent Catholics within a few hours to issue a statement on the CO26 draft agreement, lobbying to strengthen it. “We must reach an agreement in Glasgow that sets a clear and ambitious timeline for a just transition away from harmful fossil fuels,” said the statement, and as Catholics other priorities included “ensuring human rights and environmental safeguards, recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities and keeping the commitment of 1.5C.”

Paul Chitnis, director of Jesuit Missions, said that it is “vital that people of faith remain hopeful”. That hope, he felt, has come from the demonstrations outside the summit and from the pilgrimages praying for the success of the conference.

Amanda Mukwashi, chief executive of Christian Aid, said: “Throughout COP26, people of faith united with activists from the Global South, feminists, youth and indigenous people to demand climate justice. Our movement has never been stronger and this must be the legacy from Glasgow to keep hope alive.”

Tearfund recognised steps forward, but said: “We lament that the talks have fallen short of delivering justice and a safer future for millions of people.”

Ecumenical conservation charity A Rocha said: “COP26 failed to deliver on its key objectives but holds out hope of progress next year.”

While the agreement won applause for keeping alive the hope of capping global warming at 1.5C, many of the nearly 200 national delegations wished they'd come away with more. National pledges currently have the world on track for about 2.4C of warming. The Glasgow climate pact, does, however, request countries to update their pledges in line with 1.5C in the next year, and commits to considering the adequacy of the aggregated pledges at the COP in 2022, instead of waiting until 2025 as originally planned.

The British COP26 president, Alok Sharma, was visibly emotional after a last-minute drama as India, backed by China and other coal-dependent developing nations, rejected a clause calling for the “phase-out” of coal-fired power and it was amended to “phase down”.

Small island nations were dismayed but the delegate from the vulnerable Marshall Islands in the Pacific said: “This agreement has made some progress and we cannot afford no progress.”

Sharma described the deal struck as a “fragile win”. At a post COP26 press conference on Sunday afternoon, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: “We’ve kept alive the ambition to do something about the warming of the planet.”

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14703/cop-summit-disappointing-says-bishop>

## THE WORST THING

*The worst thing we ever did  
was put God in the sky  
out of reach  
pulling the divinity  
from the leaf,  
sifting out the holy from our bones,  
insisting God isn't bursting dazzlement  
through everything we've made  
a hard commitment to see as ordinary,  
stripping the sacred from everywhere  
to put in a cloud man elsewhere,  
prying closeness from your heart.*

*The worst thing we ever did  
was take the dance and the song  
out of prayer*

*made it sit up straight  
and cross its legs  
removed it of rejoicing  
wiped clean its hip sway,  
its questions,  
its ecstatic yowl,  
its tears.*

*The worst thing we ever did is pretend  
God isn't the easiest thing  
in this Universe  
available to every soul  
in every breath.*

**Chelan Harkin, 'Susceptible to Light'**

<https://www.pauljhowell.com/poetry/the-worst-thing-chelan-harkin>



## COP26: MILITARY POLLUTION IS THE SKELETON IN THE WEST'S CLIMATE CLOSET

Jonathan Cook 8 November 2021

Leaders at the COP26 summit have no intention of tackling the growing environmental impacts caused by their 'defence' spending:

World leaders gathered in Glasgow last week for the COP26 summit in a bid to demonstrate how they are belatedly getting to grips with the climate crisis. Agreements to protect forests, cut carbon and methane emissions and promote green tech are all being hammered out in front of a watching world. Western politicians, in particular, want to emerge from the summit with their green credentials burnished, proving that they have done everything in their power to prevent a future global temperature rise of more than 1.5C. They fear the verdict of unhappy electorates if they come back empty-handed.

Climate scientists are already doubtful whether the pledges being made go far enough, or can be implemented fast enough, to make a difference. They have warned that drastic action has to be taken by the end of this decade to avert climate catastrophe.

But the visible activity at the summit hides a much starker reality. The very nations proclaiming moral leadership in tackling the climate crisis are also the ones doing most to sabotage a meaningful agreement to reduce humanity's global carbon footprint. A photo from the opening of COP26 showed British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit's host, warmly greeting US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. But rather than fete them, we should treat this triumvirate as the big villains of the climate talks. Their armed forces are the most polluting on the planet - and the goal at COP26 is to keep that fact a closely guarded secret.

US expenditure on its military far outstrips that of any other country - except for Israel, when measured relative to population size. Although the UK trails behind, it still has the fifth largest military budget in the world, while its arms manufacturers busily supply weapons to countries others have shunned. The US military alone is estimated to have a larger carbon footprint than most countries. It is widely assumed to be the world's largest institutional consumer of crude oil. And emissions from the West's militaries and arms makers appear to be growing each year rather than shrinking - though no one can be certain because they are being actively hidden from view.

Washington insisted on an exemption from reporting on, and reducing, its military emissions at the Kyoto summit, 24 years ago. Unsurprisingly, everyone else jumped on that bandwagon. Since the Paris summit of 2015, military emissions have been partially reported. But all too often the figures are disguised - lumped in with emissions from other sectors, such as transport. And emissions from overseas operations - in the case of the US, 70 percent of its military activity - are excluded from the balance sheet entirely. Most of Europe has refused to come clean, too. France, with the continent's most active military, reports none of its emissions.

According to research by Scientists for Global Responsibility, the UK's military emissions were three times larger than those it reported - even after supply chains, as well as weapons and equipment production, were excluded. The military was responsible for the overwhelming majority of British government emissions. And new technology, rather than turning the military green, is often making things much worse. The latest fighter jet developed by the US, the F-35, is reported to burn 5,600 litres of fuel an hour. It would take 1,900 cars to guzzle a similar amount of fuel over the same period. Norway, like many other countries, has been queuing up to get its hands on this new-generation jet. According to the Norwegian newspaper *Dagsavisen*, the total emissions by the Norwegian military over the next decade will rise by 30 percent as a result of its F-35 purchases alone.

As well as discounting the environmental harm caused by military equipment procurement and supply chains, countries are also excluding the significant impacts of conflicts and wars. Each year of the US occupation of Iraq that began in 2003, for example, is conservatively estimated to have generated emissions equivalent to putting an additional 25m cars on the road.

Unlike the farming and logging industries, or the manufacturing industries, or the fossil fuel industries, efforts to curb the growth in military spending - let alone reverse it - are off the table at the COP26 summit. And for that, Washington has to take the major share of the blame. Its "defence" budget already comprises about 40 percent of the \$2tn spent annually on militaries worldwide. China and Russia - ostensibly the two bogeymen of the COP26 summit - lag far behind.

The government of Boris Johnson unveiled last year what it called "the biggest programme of investment in British defence since the end of the Cold War". Britain is no outlier. After a short-lived "peace dividend" caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union, global military expenditure has been on an almost continuous upward trend since 1998, led by the US. Paradoxically, the upturn began about the time western politicians began paying lip service to tackling "climate change" at the Kyoto summit.

US military spending has been rising steadily since 2018. It is set to continue doing so for at least another two decades - way past the deadline set by climate scientists for turning things around. The same global upward trend has been fed by a surge in military expenditure by Middle Eastern countries - notably Saudi Arabia and the UAE - since 2013. That appears to reflect two trends rooted in Washington's changing approach to the region. First, as it has withdrawn its overstretched occupation forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, the US has increasingly outsourced its military role to wealthy client states in this oil-rich region.

And second, as Israel and the Gulf states have been encouraged to forge closer military and intelligence ties against Iran, these same Gulf states have been allowed to play military catch-up with Israel. Its famed “qualitative military edge” is being gradually eroded. Propping up this Middle East arms spree is the UK, which has been exporting to the Saudis, and the US, which heavily subsidises Israel’s military industries.

All this means that, while western politicians promise to cut emissions at COP26, they are actually busy preparing to increase those emissions out of view. Ultimately, the problem is that little can be done to green our militaries, either substantively or through a greenwashing makeover. The military’s rationale is neither to be sustainable nor to be kind to the planet.

The arms manufacturers’ business model is to offer clients - from the Pentagon to every tinpot dictator - weapons and machines that are bigger, better or faster than their competitors. Aircraft carriers must be larger. Fighter jets quicker and more agile. And missiles more destructive. Consumption and competition are at the heart of the military mission, whether armies are waging war or marketing their activities as purely “defensive”. “Security”, premised on a fear of neighbours and rivals, can never be satiated. There is always another tank, plane or anti-missile system that

can be purchased to create greater “deterrence”, to protect borders more effectively, to intimidate an enemy.

And war provides even greater reasons to consume more of the planet’s finite resources and wreak yet more harm on ecosystems. Lives are taken, buildings levelled, territories contaminated. The UK has 145 military bases in 42 countries, securing what it perceives to be its “national interests”. But that is dwarfed by more than 750 US military bases spread over 80 countries. Shuffling off this energy-hungry power projection around the globe will be much harder than protecting forests or investing in green technology.

The US and its western allies would first have to agree to relinquish their grip on the planet’s energy resources, and to give up policing the globe in the interests of their transnational corporations. It is precisely this full-spectrum power competition - economic, ideologic and military - that propelled us into the current climate disaster. Tackling it will require looking much deeper into our priorities than any leader at COP26 appears ready to do.

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/cop26-climate-change-west-defence-skeleton-closet>

• *The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Middle East Eye.*

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## **MORE THAN 60 CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS SIGN STATEMENT ON COP26 DRAFT AGREEMENT**

12 November 2021: More than 60 Catholic organizations have signed the following Statement on COP26 Draft Agreement by Laudato Si' Movement:

“As Catholics, united for our common home, we urgently ask leaders at the United Nations 26th Climate Change Conference to follow Pope Francis’ leadership in reaching a prophetic final agreement.

The science is clear: an extractive, unsustainable economy, fuelled by fossil fuels, is causing the climate crisis that’s destroying God’s creation and harming the most vulnerable among us the most, those who have done little to cause the crisis.

We owe it to our poorest sisters and brothers, future generations, and all of God’s creation to seize this historic opportunity. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si’* that fossil fuels need “to be progressively replaced without delay.” Now, in 2021, we have reached a decisive moment. We must reach an agreement in Glasgow that sets a clear and ambitious timeline for a just transition away from harmful fossil fuels. Setting out such a pathway is an essential step to accelerating investment in a clean energy future for all.

As Catholics, we have other priorities for the final agreement as well, including recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and keeping the commitment of 1.5 degrees. It is also essential that the final declaration reaffirms the commitment to climate finance for adaptation, as well as loss and damage.

But above all, a final agreement must deliver on a clear pathway forward to a just transition away from an extractive economy based on fossil fuels, the root cause of the climate crisis. We will continue working and praying for that prophetic outcome.”

Signatories include: Bishop John Arnold, Environment spokesperson for Bishops of England and Wales; Bishop Martin Hayes, Laudato Si Coordinator, Irish Episcopal Conference; Christine Allen, Director, CAFOD; Alistair Dutton, Chief Executive, SCIAF (Caritas Scotland); Paul Southgate, Chair, National Justice and Peace Network for England and Wales; Lorna Gold, President, and Tomas Insua, Executive Director, Laudato Si’ Movement.

**For a full list of worldwide signatories go to:** <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/43451>

## CODE RED/ STREET LEVEL

CODE RED is a print installation by artist Peter Kennard for Street Level Photoworks, presented at Gallery 103 to coincide with the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow - continuing until December 19. <https://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/code-red-peter-kennard>

**Peter Kennard statement:** In August this year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released their report. Their findings, prepared by 234 scientists from 66 countries, warn that human activity has warmed the climate to a point that is unparalleled by anything in the last 2,000 years and that by 2019 atmospheric CO2 concentrations were higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. The United Nations Secretary – General Antonio Guterres said the IPCC report was the ‘code red for humanity, the alarm bells are deafening and the evidence is irrefutable’. Hence the title for this installation which I’ve made specifically for the public space of Trongate 103 where the entrance to Street Level Photoworks (Glasgow) is located.



The empty words issuing from the mouths of government leaders worldwide on the climate crisis continue to be backed up and supported by corporate profit for the good of share prices rather than human beings. The military-industrial complex is eating up the earth, spitting out the poorest people and waging war on them. The countries from which refugees flock have often been destroyed by the rapacious policies and weaponry of the very same countries that are refusing them entry.

Through photomontage I’m trying to turn my outrage into image. In *Code Red* a recurring image I use and abuse is the beautiful photo of the whole earth taken by the Apollo astronauts in 1972. I cut it up, tear it, pummel it, add industrial chimneys, oil refineries exploding, polluted dust, gas masks, parched earth and floods. But I also show a montage of the earth surrounded by a clock, symbolising climate/nuclear destruction, its hands being pulled back from midnight by climate protesters. There is also an image of planet earth transformed into a seed sprouting a tree.



Photos can become entwined through photomontage so that the increasing destruction of the natural world can be envisaged and revealed not as inevitable but the result of human activity. The resulting montage can then be used a visual arm of the struggle for climate justice.

In a photomontage two clicks of the camera shutter can be brought together to reveal a third meaning. What is shown in *Code Red* is that oil is still flowing freely out of the ground, the chimneys are still belching out their pollutants and luxury yachts are growing longer by the day. E.M Forster’s dictum ‘only connect’ applies equally to making montages connecting the catastrophe that is climate destruction and its relationship to military power. They are both existentially and physically deeply connected. The U.S military is the largest single consumer of petroleum in the world.

We’re living in a time of absolute emergency. We’re tottering through the rubble of the rampant free market. It’s a time in which images can open up a critical space that can jolt assumptions and break through denial. The poet Shelley wrote that ‘we must imagine what we know’. By picturing the result of extracting wealth out of the ground by every means possible I’m trying to picture what we know will happen if we don’t stop this plunder.

<https://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/mediaLibrary/other/english/33099.pdf>

- Peter Kennard is one of Britain’s foremost political artists and has spent over fifty years creating uncompromising and hard-hitting protest art. He is Professor of Political Art at the Royal College of Art and he is the author of *Images for End of Century: Photomontage Equations* (Pluto, 1999). Since then, he has published numerous art monographs, and contributed his visuals to publications, magazines and news stories in the press. The exhibition ‘Award’ by Kennard and Phillipps was exhibited at Street Level in 2004, and he launched his recent monograph ‘Visual Dissent’ at Street Level in 2019.

## FOREVER CHANGES

FOREVER CHANGES – a contemporary photography from the Nordic nations addressing climate change and protection of the planet. 30th October 2021 - 30th January 2022 at Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow

This exhibition brings together a range of artists from Nordic countries whose work aligns with, or intersects with themes of climate change, protection of the environment, the conflict between man and the natural world. A range of approaches are embraced from documentary to conceptual - from issue-driven photography to the poetic. The exhibition is a call to action and addresses the urgent need to influence change not only for the preservation of the planet but also for a better world. Organised in partnership with the Nordic Embassies with representation in the UK: Finland; Sweden; Denmark; Iceland; Norway; Faroe Islands; and the Finnish Institute in the UK and Ireland. The exhibition will run to the end of January 2022 with a series of online talks and events taking place alongside this, which will be presented in partnership with arts and photography organisations in these countries. <https://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/forever-changes-2021>



## PHOTO EXHIBITION PORTRAYS STARK REALITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

An online photo exhibition with new daily additions is available from the World Council of Churches for media and member churches worldwide beginning 9 November.

Through photos by Sean Hawkey, a British photographer who has worked extensively on the ecumenical movement and climate change, we learn the stories of people like Oscar Alexis Maldonado Ramírez, portrayed riding his horse, “Palomo,” along a stretch of the Rio Nacaome. “We’re in the middle of the river, in the middle of what was the river—it shouldn’t be like this should it?” asks Ramírez. “Even when it rains, which is rare now, the water disappears quickly, the crops fail without irrigation, but now the wells keep drying up so we can’t irrigate. I’ve just taken my cattle away; they can’t survive here without water. In fact, we can’t survive here without water.”

The first day, “Drought” depicts how communities in Nicaragua and Honduras are facing loss of livestock, dying crops, and water scarcity. Five more days of new photo collections will become available as well, expanding the repertoire of stories and images.

As media discussions around COP26 tend to focus on peripheral details of the negotiations, it is easy to forget what climate change is about for ordinary people around the world, particularly the poorest, said a concerned Rev. James Bhagwan, general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches. “These images remind us of the devastating impacts of climate change, and how dangerous it is for all of us if we don’t act now,” he said. “Let’s not lose sight of the reality of climate chaos. We call on negotiators to agree on urgent and concrete actions to curb greenhouse gas emissions.”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/care-for-creation-and-climate-justice#climate-change-images>

## A POEM ON HOPE

**Heather Kiernan writes:** From the migrant crisis in Belarus, to the war in Tigray and the state of emergency declared in British Columbia due to the effects of climate change, it’s been a week of bad news. So how can we find hope amid uncertainty, conflict, or loss? When I feel that I have lost hope, I find inspiration in the words and deeds of others. This poem by **Wendell Berry** speaks to the importance of hope and of resilience:

*It is hard to have hope. It is harder as you grow old,  
For hope must not depend on feeling good  
And there is the dream of loneliness at absolute midnight.  
You also have withdrawn belief in the present reality  
Of the future, which surely will surprise us,  
...And hope is harder when it cannot come by prediction  
Any more than by wishing. But stop dithering.  
The young ask the old to hope. What will you tell them?  
Tell them at least what you say to yourself.*

*Because we have not made our lives to fit  
Our places, the forests are ruined, the fields eroded,  
The streams polluted, the mountains overturned. Hope  
Then to belong to your place by your own knowledge  
Of what it is that no other place is, and by  
Your caring for it as you care for no other place, this  
Place that you belong to though it is not yours,  
For it was from the beginning and will be to the end*

*Belong to your place by knowledge of the others who are  
Your neighbours in it: the old man, sick and poor,  
Who comes like a heron to fish in the creek,  
And the fish in the creek, and the heron who manlike  
Fishes for the fish in the creek, and the birds who sing  
In the trees in the silence of the fisherman  
And the heron, and the trees that keep the land  
They stand upon as we too must keep it, or die.*

*This knowledge cannot be taken from you by power  
Or by wealth. It will stop your ears to the powerful  
when they ask for your faith, and to the wealthy  
when they ask for your land and your work.  
Answer with knowledge of the others who are here*

*And how to be here with them. By this knowledge  
Make the sense you need to make. By it stand  
In the dignity of good sense, whatever may follow.  
Speak to your fellow humans as your place  
Has taught you to speak, as it has spoken to you.  
Speak its dialect as your old compatriots spoke it  
Before they had heard a radio. Speak  
Publicly what cannot be taught or learned in public.*

*Listen privately, silently to the voices that rise up  
From the pages of books and from your own heart.  
Be still and listen to the voices that belong  
To the streambanks and the trees and the open fields.  
There are songs and sayings that belong to this place,  
By which it speaks for itself and no other.*

*Found your hope, then, on the ground under your feet.  
Your hope of Heaven, let it rest on the ground  
Underfoot. Be it lighted by the light that falls  
Freely upon it after the darkness of the nights  
And the darkness of our ignorance and madness.  
Let it be lighted also by the light that is within you,  
Which is the light of imagination. By it you see  
The likeness of people in other places to yourself  
In your place. It lights invariably the need for care  
Toward other people, other creatures, in other places  
As you would ask them for care toward your place and you.*

*No place at last is better than the world. The world  
Is no better than its places. Its places at last  
Are no better than their people while their people  
Continue in them. When the people make  
Dark the light within them, the world darkens.*

## PAX CHRISTI USA RESPONSE TO CRITICISM OF TODAY'S MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

9 Nov 2021: In a speech given to the Congress of Catholics and Public Life in Madrid, Spain on November 4, Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, characterized today's movements for social justice as anti-Christian pseudo-religions. We reject this negative and misleading stereotype of movements which we support and with whom we act for justice in solidarity. We are motivated by their very commitment to the values that we believe to be at the heart of the gospel of Jesus and expressed so eloquently in Catholic social teaching.

There are too many mistaken charges and judgements made by the archbishop to address comprehensively, but we want to raise one that we find particularly scandalous. Archbishop Gomez condemns what he calls 'woke' movements that he believes are 'dangerous substitutes for true religion'. His derisive use of the term 'woke' is commonplace among those who feel the power they have traditionally wielded is threatened by those who call for greater justice, equity and social change.

But the concept of 'waking up', of having one's eyes opened to see more clearly what was hidden or ignored should sound familiar to Catholics. To lament 'becoming woke' is to miss the message of the gospel, the language of Jesus, John the Baptist, the apostles and the early Christian community for whom 'waking up' was a metaphor for an experience of transformation, the Christian concept of conversion, *metanoia*.

Whether one finds themselves inside or outside the world of institutional religion, the hunger for justice that results from a change of heart and mind and is incarnated in new attitudes and actions is something to be celebrated, not condemned. The language may not always resemble traditional 'church-talk' but the prophetic work of today's social justice movements all across the globe provides a crucial contribution to our ability to 'read the signs of the times'. Like John the Baptist, these prophetic figures are not necessarily found in churches on Sunday, nor do they find favour in the halls of religious power, but their message is as challenging as John's: "Repent, for the reign of heaven has come near" (Matt. 3:2).

We need look no further than Pope Francis for the antidote to the criticism levied by Archbishop Gomez. When the Pope addressed the Fourth World Meeting of Popular Movements in October, his words — directed specifically at young people who are so often the engines of today's movements for social justice — were words of encouragement and praise. He called them "social poets" because they have "the ability and the courage to create hope where there appears to be only waste and exclusion."

Recognizing the importance of listening to the voices of those who live on the peripheries of power and entitlement, Pope Francis told these social justice activists: "Sisters and brothers, I am convinced that the world can be seen more clearly from the peripheries. We must listen to the peripheries, open the doors to them and allow them to participate. The suffering of the world is better understood alongside those who suffer. In my experience, when people, men and women, have suffered injustice, inequality, abuse of power, deprivations, and xenophobia in their own flesh — in my experience, I can see that they understand much better what others are experiencing and are able to help them realistically to open up paths of hope."

Where some like Archbishop Gomez have chosen to condemn, Pope Francis chooses to "bless the ones who stay awake" (Rev. 16:15).

"Do you know what comes to mind now when... I think of the Good Samaritan? ...The protests over George Floyd," stated Pope Francis. "This movement did not pass by on the other side of the road when it saw the injury to human dignity caused by an abuse of power."

We will always stand with the marginalized, the discounted and those demonized by the powerful. We stand with all our friends in social movements in the U.S. and around the world who live on the peripheries and call out for all of us to awaken to the promise of social justice. We hear in these voices St. Paul who encouraged the Ephesians, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph. 5:14).

**Full list of signatories here:** <https://paxchristiusa.org/2021/11/09/blessed-is-the-one-who-stays-awake-our-response-to-criticism-of-todays-movements-for-social-justice/>

## THE INJUSTICE ADVENT CALENDAR - 24 DAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD-

Forget chocolate. Forget beauty samples. Forget beard oil, tiny gin bottles and small portions of cheese...

***This is the advent calendar that matters.***

For Christmas 2021 we're partnering with a hand-picked selection of world changing organisations to provide you with 24 simple ways to make the world a better place. Every day until Christmas we'll send you an opportunity to stand up for justice in a simple way.

Here are the rules... It will always be free. It will always take less than 5 minutes to complete.

So you'll be signing petitions, sending short emails, maybe even texting a friend... but you won't be giving any money and you won't be losing hours of your day either. **Sign up here:** [https://traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar?utm\\_source=All+Constituents&utm\\_campaign=4a39d20993-](https://traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar?utm_source=All+Constituents&utm_campaign=4a39d20993-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_11_09_12_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c18b31d37d-4a39d20993-20756925)

[EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2021\\_11\\_09\\_12\\_07&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c18b31d37d-4a39d20993-20756925](https://traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar?utm_source=All+Constituents&utm_campaign=4a39d20993-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_11_09_12_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c18b31d37d-4a39d20993-20756925)

## ANGLICAN DIOCESE PASSES HISTORIC CRY FOR HOPE MOTION FOR PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

On Saturday 9 October 60 members of the Church of England gathered together under the leadership of the Bishop of Carlisle, The Rt Revd James Newcome for their autumn Diocesan Synod meeting. Members included clergy and lay people. On their agenda was a motion passed by Solway Deanery, calling on the Church of England to be more proactive in its support and solidarity with Palestinian Christians.

The motion, presented by Solway Deanery member Valerie Hallard, read as follows:

That This Synod

Endorses the "Cry for Hope"[1] expressed by Palestinian Christians and the 'Global Kairos for Justice' coalition[2] (GKfJ); Requests that the Faith and Order Commission produce a report which analyses and refutes any theological justifications, for example, those promoted by some Christian Zionists, for the oppression of Palestinians.

Instructs the Ethical Investment Advisory Group to provide guidance to the National Investing Bodies (NIBs) and Dioceses that will enable them to screen their investments and thereby make decisions regarding engagement with, and divestment from, companies which profit from the occupation.

Valerie Hallard proposed the motion during the Diocesan Synod meeting and gave a powerful address, highlighting the ongoing injustices and the deteriorating situation in Palestine. She quoted directly from Cry for Hope in which Palestinian Christians describe their situation as 'beyond urgent' and that as Christians

'We have come to the end of the illusion that Israel and the world powers intend to honour and defend the rights of the Palestinian people to dignity, self-determination, and the fundamental human rights guaranteed under international law'.

During the debate that followed, several members of the Synod expressed support for the motion, speaking about the importance of challenging injustice, not being silenced on this issue, and how it could be used to set a precedent for the Church to challenge situations of injustice across the world. The Bishop of Carlisle gave a short speech of support during which he described that during a visit to the Holy Land, a former female soldier in the Israeli Defence Forces had spoken powerfully against the occupation and the actions of the Israeli military in how they treated Palestinians.

The debate was followed by a vote, in which the motion was passed unopposed.

This vote has historic consequences for the Church of England. Firstly, and perhaps of greatest importance is that the Carlisle Diocese offers a beacon of light and hope to the Palestinian Christian community, being the first Diocese to officially endorse the Cry for Hope.

Secondly, this motion will now proceed to General Synod, where it will be debated in due course. Although this may be some time away, it will be the first time in many years in which the Palestinian cause has been raised in a significant way in the national decision-making body of the Church of England.

Following the Synod meeting, proposer of the motion on behalf of Solway Deanery, Valerie Hallard: "I have been humbled by the resilience and hospitality of Christians who have been present in the land since the time of Christ. They are living in the face of discrimination and hardship, and I see it as the duty of the church to amplify their voice in the face of so much that seeks to silence it."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/43440>

[1] "Cry for Hope: A call to decisive action" July 2020: [www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)

[2] Global Kairos for Justice: <https://cryforhope.org/index.php/about-global-kairos>

### **Additional resources:**

You can listen to the full debate during the Carlisle Diocesan Synod meeting here, from 1.46 hours in:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFm5bZr8KN0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFm5bZr8KN0)

There is also a briefing paper which accompanies the motion, and speaker notes. These are available by contacting us on [advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk)

Please contact [advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk) if you are interested in bringing the motion to your own deanery or diocese and would like help/support.

## ADVENT REFLECTIONS FOR PEACEMAKERS

Advent Reflection sheets for the four weeks of Advent. Download from Pax Christi:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/advent-reflections-for-peacemakers/>

## A NEW FORMATION FOR A NEW ERA

**Jenny Sinclair, founder director of Together for the Common Good**, addresses the causes of the spiritual malaise across the West, the corresponding degradation experienced by people and the desecration of places in our country. Lamenting that church leaders were not trained for this moment, and recognising the profound changes going on in the church, she proposes a new formation to equip the people of the churches for the new era, based on an openness to the Spirit and the restoration of the relationship between church, people and with place:

I spend my life listening and learning across many churches. My typical week includes conversations with friends who are prophetic, charismatic, church planters and members of religious orders (both men and women); Pentecostal, Evangelical, Free Church, Catholic and Anglican; liberal, conservative and everything in between; from many different political and cultural backgrounds. But I do not only hang out with Christians. I am also influenced by the Jewish tradition, and I value my relationships with non-religious friends in civil society, business and politics. I soak it all up and it filters through to our work.

This last couple of years have exposed some hard realities. Hard truths for many of us personally, for our society, and of course about the church. The pandemic has brought our troubles into sharp focus, but they are not new. We are in the middle of a very deep spiritual malaise, driven by forces which have been corroding our civic life for over forty years, with deeper roots going back at least two centuries.

These forces were unleashed by an individualistic, hyper-liberal philosophy that has had catastrophic effects on our institutional and social relationships and our sense of belonging. The family, community and place have all been undermined. The most devastating impact has been on the economy, leading to the degradation of parts of our country.

It's what we call the era of 'contract'. It has been hostile to human beings – and now it's unravelling. We are on the cusp of a very big change. The church needs to respond. And here is what all my conversations and encounters tell me about the right response. Our country needs a church that is:

- a gateway to the Holy Spirit
- and which understands and takes its place in society.

But my experience has shown me that the church is nowhere near what it could and should be, because the formation of so many Christians is deeply flawed. Too many of us

- have not had the experience of the Holy Spirit
- are unaware of the extent of the profound changes underway
- are unaware that our formation has not equipped us for this moment.

Of course, church leaders recognise that there is a problem. The trajectory of decline in parts of the church is driving them to throw the kitchen sink at the latest project, perhaps evangelism, maybe social action. The result is that many Christians, including leaders, are overwhelmed and exhausted by the latest programme or outreach initiative.

Something much deeper is needed. The gifts are present in the churches, but they are fragmented.

We need to be open to what works and stop being tribal. Our formation for the new era should draw on the gifts of all the churches.

For example:

- the Pentecostal trust in the primacy of God
- the charismatic knowledge and experience of the Holy Spirit
- the Anglican and Free church commitment to place
- the evangelical passion for Scripture
- the neighbourhood church sense of family
- the prophetic gift for reading the signs of the times.
- And of course, I also draw Catholic social thought, for its way of reading the world, to uphold the integrity of the human person and to understand the forces we are up against.

Catholic social thought is a body of thinking that is rooted in the gospel, generated by deep theological discernment and informed by the learned experience of the church in every nation over a hundred and thirty years, building on centuries of tradition and natural law. It is a gift to all people of goodwill, not only to Catholics. It helps us understand how political and philosophical ideas and policies can affect the human person, and to recognise when social systems and cultural values are dehumanising. It helps us to be politically literate in a way that is aligned with our faith, and to avoid the risk of mission drift and the corrosive influence of modernism and post-modernism.

In particular, this social teaching teaches that neither human beings nor nature should be commodified and that capital has a tendency to do exactly that: to turn people and everything in the created world into commodities. Any formation that neglects to recognise the demonic power of capital will take us in the wrong direction. It won't work if we don't understand the powers at work.

But Catholic social thought is not an anti-capitalist ideology. Rather, it transcends left and right. It seeks to achieve a balance of interests between capital and the human being. Capital can be creative and that creativity should be encouraged. But capital can easily become anti-human, and that capacity must be constrained. Neither is it a pro- or anti-state ideology. It calls out state systems when they oppress or dehumanise, when they usurp the autonomy of the family or undermine democracy. Catholic social thought encourages distribution of power through local institutions and critiques the administrative state when it is overcentralised.

There are three kinds of power: money power, state power and relational power, which is the power that people generate by relating together. The churches must be at the heart of creating that relational power, in order to resist the dominance of money power and state power, so as to uphold the human space. And this must be at the heart of the new formation. The renewal of relationships will lead to a new politics of grace, to a new settlement for the common good.

But the pernicious individualism of the modern world has infected the church. The experience of most Christians is still in the consumerist model of going to church, getting something and going home again. All too often, the Christian life is not taking place within a community of mutual love and support.

Here is an example. A woman told me she had been struggling with terrible debt for two years. She had gone to church every week but hadn't told a soul. Why didn't that church have a culture where she was known, where she could be real, loved and supported? And are our churches ready to welcome an ex-offender and his family?

To develop relational power, we need to become a relational church. That requires reframing our conception of 'church' as more than a local institution, more than a place of worship. It is to conceive of church as a group of faithful people committed to a place.

We need to become communities of place, to be outward facing, living in loving friendship with others in the neighbourhood, with a commitment to civic friendship – especially in places that have been abandoned, both economically and spiritually. We need to move from 'contract' to 'covenant'.

The truth is that the church itself is vulnerable and in need of friendship. For evangelisation and social action to be meaningful, the church needs to recognise that it needs help.

It is no longer really viable for the local church to think of itself as 'host'. It has to be more like a 'neighbour', a neighbour who:

- is the gateway to an encounter with the Holy Spirit,
- is distinctively and confidently Christian,
- is not subordinated to secular agendas
- is outward facing, able and ready to play a full and active role in civil society.

Relationship with place is central to this new formation. To be with our neighbours, we must be at home together. But the truth of church decline is that it has fallen out of relationship with large parts of the population. It is no longer the object of affection, it doesn't speak people's language.

In particular, too much of the church suffers from middle-class dominance. The class issue in the church reflects similar issues in our politics. When we welcome diversity, we need to include class. Otherwise, we will draw the wrong conclusions. When we hear Pope Francis call for a poor church for and of the poor, we must remember that the poor are not only the destitute. They include working class communities, which includes all ethnicities and political opinions.

Pope Francis is right when he says it is necessary to let ourselves be evangelized by the poor. To do that, we need to build a shared life, to promote and build a common good between people and to resist the temptation to dominate the space.

Along with a relationship with place, a recognition of people must be part of the new formation. This means the church must be able not just to give, but to receive. We're not on safari – this is not missionary work at arm's length. The new formation means evangelisation needs to be holistic – less proselytising and providing, and more engaging the whole of our lives: being real with our neighbours, being honest and vulnerable.



Christians are called to be their embodied selves acting in the world, to be the embodiment of love in a desecrated world. The covenantal promise of a local church and its leaders requires accompanying people and staying for the long term. It means walking with neighbours in shared grief and in the trauma and the struggle of everyday life.

The right position for the new formation – commitment to place, solidarity with poor people, the covenantal embodiment of love – is incompatible with the service provider posture that many churches have come to adopt. We can no longer be the patrician church ‘giving to the poor’, or running social action franchises if there is no reciprocity. Working class communities have much to teach the church and the dynamic of service-client is often perceived as a separation between ‘us’ from ‘them’. What is needed is mutuality, respect and genuine loving friendship. Justice flows from love, not the other way round.

There are profound changes going on in the church. Parts are dying, and Covid has accelerated this trend. But I am not among those who are panicking. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is at work in the church, bringing energy and new things. To make room for the Spirit to make things new, the formation of church leadership must include the skill of letting go of old things. We need to understand how to be undertaker as well as midwife. To learn that, we need to be attentive to the Spirit. This receptivity has been missing from the formation of large parts of the church.

People need to be introduced to prayer, to what being in relationship with God is actually like. The vast majority of our population have absolutely no idea. This can be taught. It’s not rocket science. It is done so well in brilliant tools like the Alpha course. I don’t mind admitting that I was prejudiced against the course before I did it. Now I recommend it to churches that aren’t growing.

The cell group, which is central to Alpha, is a key component of the new formation. People need to be on a journey together, to see where the Spirit is leading them, to be in regular nurturing conversations with others who can spot what is happening. People can navigate life together, be accountable to each other, engage deeply with scripture together, talk about what matters to them. In the new formation, we should always be asking the question: “Lord what are you asking of us?”

My own journey of discipleship and vocation has been most profound in the small group setting, and particularly during the pandemic. I am blessed to be in groups where we travel together, where we are able to be real with each other. It is through our brokenness that the light gets in.

We must learn to discern the work of the Spirit and be open to surprise. The new things may not fit our own spirituality or practices. I am seeing this all the time, I’m sure you are too.

So the new formation needs to cultivate leaders with generous hearts, people who can become attuned to new energy and to nurture it. If we do this, new vocations will emerge. What it does not need is more glamorous or ‘professionalised’ leadership. It does not need more leaders, ordained or non-ordained, who are concerned with career, management and administration. It needs a ministry devoted to accompaniment, loving, listening, and staying.

The Holy Spirit is disrupting the church. How much is the church missing while it is not in relationship with people? It really is that simple. Get out more, walk the parish, meet with our neighbours on a regular basis. Get to know each other. Receive as well as give.

We need a holistic evangelisation, not a narrow understanding restricted to proselytising. We need groups of faithful people journeying together who have a commitment to people and place. The local is where change will happen.

To restore the soul of the nation the formation of the people of God needs to be grounded in an accurate understanding of what is going on, and an openness to the Spirit.

The work of the local church then, is to

- keep alive and strengthen the human space that builds a relational power that can resist the dehumanising forces at work in the world
- act as a gateway to the Spirit.

The new formation needs to draw on the gifts of the whole people of God. To accompany people as they are called in their daily lives. To recognise their gifts and skills that God wants to bring into His mission, to bring people into the reality of His great creative participation.

“...that they may all be one.... that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:21

<https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/leading-thinkers/a-new-formation-for-a-new-era>

## HOW GRASSROOTS FILMS CHANGE VIEWS OF POVERTY

Film is a powerful way of accelerating and effecting social change. Like other artistic forms of storytelling, it can shine a spotlight on unjust systems, and make a compelling and memorable case for change.

One person who knows that well is Brody Salmon, a film-maker in North West England who has highlighted many of the social issues in his communities. Church Action on Poverty has worked with Brody twice in recent years, supporting his work on the *Edgelands* film and then again on the *Same Boat?* film in 2020, during the pandemic. *Same Boat?* (4.09 mins) was written by Ellis Howard and directed by Brody. It was made as a result of creative workshops run by Church Action on Poverty during summer 2020, and launched during the first Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales.

*Edgelands* (13.48 mins) was made by the young people involved in the Darwen Gets Hangry campaign, and explores the reality of poverty, hunger and welfare on forgotten estates.

**Note**, this film includes strong language from the start, and addresses issues including drug use and sexual exploitation

Brody says: "Working with CAP over the years has been both challenging and rewarding as a filmmaker. Challenging because of the reality faced by so many in this country, but rewarding because of the effects that we have seen our work have. From raising funds to generally raising awareness, it's a privilege to have been a small part of CAP's journey so far. By shooting my films on location, and with improvised dialogue from street cast actors, we have worked hard together to ensure our approach is always both accessible and meaningful."

[https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/how-grassroots-films-change-views-of-poverty/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=engagingnetworks&utm\\_campaign=dignityagencypower&utm\\_content=2021+11+15+calendar+blog+email](https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/how-grassroots-films-change-views-of-poverty/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=dignityagencypower&utm_content=2021+11+15+calendar+blog+email)

## FILM INSTALLATION

Tate Liverpool EMILY SPEED: FLATLAND Until 5 JUNE 2022

A new film installation by North West based artist Emily Speed. The film is inspired by Edwin Abbott's 1884 novella *Flatland*, a satire of Victorian society, where all existence is limited to two dimensions. In this society men may have any number of sides depending on their status. Women, on the other hand, are thin, straight lines who are at the bottom of the hierarchy. As their pointed ends are considered to be dangerous, they are restricted to separate entrances and must paint one end of their line-body orange as well as swaying continuously to alert others to their presence. A satire of Victorian society and the role of women within it, the book poses provocative questions about perception, reality and metaphysics and has influenced and inspired artists and scientists alike.

Known for her work examining the relationship between the body and architecture, Speed's practice considers how a person is shaped by the buildings they have occupied and how a person occupies their own psychological space. Working in many different media, including sculpture, drawing, performance and film, Speed regularly collaborates with choreographers, dancers and filmmakers and embeds community groups and real-life narratives within her work.

Emily Speed was announced as the successful applicant of the inaugural Art North West scheme; an open call issued by our gallery for artists based in the north west of England to submit ideas for a project or exhibition to be shown at Tate Liverpool.

*Flatland* is centred around a new film installation, which uses set design, choreography, and costume to depict flattened hierarchies within a close-knit community of women. This is accompanied by a second film that focuses on a single performer, signing a text written by author Eley Williams in British Sign Language.

Echoing Abbott's novella, the performers in Speed's film begin line-like and rigid before working together and unfolding to create more colourful, layered and complex shapes through increasingly vibrant movement. This evolution is also realised through costume. The performers wear functional housework garments, such as aprons and tabards that contain hidden elements relating to the set design.

The work can be understood through a mixture of audio and visual components. These include text and on-screen visuals alongside British Sign Language interpretation.

**Audio description:** <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/emily-speed-flatland/exhibition-guide>

[https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/emily-speed-flatland?utm\\_source=emarsys&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=CRM\\_TL\\_MAA\\_Nov\\_w3\\_2021\\_Winter\\_At\\_TL&src=email\\_3347191&sc\\_customer=994796&sc\\_lid=238876920&sc\\_uid=OqgMTkDR9j&sc\\_lid=3545&sc\\_eh=80bc33d031413e6b1](https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/emily-speed-flatland?utm_source=emarsys&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CRM_TL_MAA_Nov_w3_2021_Winter_At_TL&src=email_3347191&sc_customer=994796&sc_lid=238876920&sc_uid=OqgMTkDR9j&sc_lid=3545&sc_eh=80bc33d031413e6b1)

## DIARY DATES

### NOVEMBER

#### CAFOD Online talks and presentations

Thursday, 25 November 7:00pm-8:00pm

#### Looking back to a year with challenges and joys. A reflection with our Director Christine Allen

Hear from CAFOD Director Christine Allen and CAFOD trustees about CAFOD's challenges, joys and achievements of the past year and about our hopes for the future. With the participation also of Neil Thorns Head of Advocacy, Communication and Education, Maria Gonzalez Head of International programmes, Kayode Akintola Country Representative - Sierra Leone & Liberia. <https://cafod.org.uk/Volunteer/Online-talks>

Monday, 29 November 5:00pm-6:00pm

#### Why Does Biodiversity Matter to Us All?

The London Global Gateway is running a series of lectures inspired by Pope Francis' vision set out in '*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*', which calls all people to respond to the "cry of the earth" and the "cry of the poor". The issue of climate change has sunk into the public and religious consciousness, even if controversial in some quarters, but many don't really understand why we need to care about biodiversity from a religious and moral perspective. Professor Celia Deane-Drummond, Director of the *Laudato Si'* Research Institute and Senior Research Fellow in theology at Campion Hall, University of Oxford, will discuss this in the first lecture of the series, entitled '*Why Does Biodiversity Matter to Us All?*'

Tuesday, 30 November 5:00pm-6:15pm

#### The *Laudato Si* Action Platform and livesimply

Join us to find out how the new *Laudato Si* Action Platform will work and how we as livesimply communities can be part of this Global Catholic journey of ecological conversion being promoted by Pope Francis and the Vatican. With Monica Conmee, CAFOD's Head of Education and Maria Elena Arana, livesimply Award Coordinator.

### DECEMBER

**1 Post-COP Outcomes & What Next?** 7pm to 8.15pm. This is an opportunity to hear key outcomes from COP26, to explore our responses, and to ask the question: *Where next as people of faith?* Zoom meeting - register at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpcequqToiHtZVpL\\_WAchUJnKbZDps50Ea](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpcequqToiHtZVpL_WAchUJnKbZDps50Ea)

● **Read NJPN's weekly column** online on Independent Catholic News [www.indcatholicnews.com](http://www.indcatholicnews.com) or find articles be uploaded onto our website at [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk)

● 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 [ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org](mailto:ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org) or [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*