

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin Mid August 2022

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

GORDON BROWN JOINS FAITH GROUPS CALLING FOR ACTION OVER COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

Ellen Teague *The Tablet* 9 August 2022

Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown has joined more than 50 faith groups, charities and politicians to call on the government to take urgent action to bridge the cost of living gap faced by low income families. He said: "This crisis goes far beyond politics; this is a moral issue – our responsibilities to our neighbours and in particular to those who have the least and whose needs are the greatest."

This follows a report that warned that some low-income families are up to £1,600 a year worse off as a result of the cost of living crisis following a triple blow to their earnings.

Mr Brown, himself an ex-chancellor, is calling for the Cobra emergency committee to sit in "permanent session" during the current crisis. He is also calling for parliament to be recalled as a matter of urgency unless Boris Johnson and both Tory leadership candidates can agree on an emergency budget in the days to come. He warned that some of the tax cuts proposed throughout the leadership race "will not benefit those who are really poor" and urged "targeted support for families on the lowest incomes" and "a permanent increase in Universal Credit".

Mr Brown commissioned the report after warnings about the realities of rising costs from charities and churches in the UK. Written by poverty expert and Loughborough University Professor Donald Hirsch, it reveals a gap between the support the government is currently offering to households and the anticipated rise in living costs.

"This is a crisis that Britain hasn't seen in decades," said Mr Brown. "The most urgent and immediate challenge for the incoming prime minister is to ensure that families with children and disabled people aren't neglected to struggle through the challenges ahead."

The report has been endorsed by more than 50 charities, faith groups and politicians, many of whom are providing front-line support for families hit by rising costs, including the Trussell Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the Child Poverty Action Group. Signatories include Archbishop Leo William Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh; Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary of Churches Together in England; Elizabeth Palmer, CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society in England & Wales; and Paul Southgate, Chair of the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales. Also, Paul Bodenham of Caritas Nottingham, John Coleby of Caritas Westminster, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, Chair of the Justice and Peace Commission in Westminster Diocese and Ben Gilchrist of Caritas Shrewsbury.

Patrick O'Dowd, director of Caritas Salford, told *The Tablet* this week: "With further increases to energy bills when the price cap is lifted in October, it is essential that the UK Government takes action now to provide an adequate, better targeted package of support, particularly for those in communities in the North." He felt this should include increasing benefits and reintroducing the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and implementing longer-term policies like reintroducing the Green Homes Grant Scheme which mitigates the cost of energy and supports carbon reduction. "Action must be taken immediately," he warned.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/15746/gordon-brown-joins-faith-groups-calling-for-action-over-cost-of-living-crisis>

A SIGN OF A CIVILIZED CULTURE

Years ago, anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked by a student what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about fishhooks or clay pots or grinding stones.

But no. Mead said that the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thighbone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger, get to the river for a drink or hunt for food. You are meat for prowling beasts. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal. A broken femur that has healed is evidence that someone has taken time to stay with the one who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery.

Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts, Mead said. We are at our best when we serve others."

*"A poem cannot
stop a bullet.*

*A novel can't
defuse a bomb.*

*But we are not
helpless.*

*We can sing the
truth and name
the liars."*

Salman Rushdie

TAX AND THE COST OF LIVING

Paul Morrison 27 July 2022

The Conservative Party is choosing a new leader, who will become the UK's next Prime Minister. One of the key issues throughout the campaign has been tax cuts. All the candidates – including Sunak and Truss who remain in the contest – wish to cut taxes. The only differences between candidate have been which taxes, by how much and when.

There are lots of reasons given for tax cuts, both good and bad. But it is really important to understand what they are inevitably bad at doing, which is targeting money at the least well-off families.

Under the current tax regime almost all tax cuts necessarily benefit the wealthiest half of the population.

Everyone is being affected by higher prices, and it is a legitimate aim for government to spread money widely throughout society to temper these rises for everyone. Tax cuts can do that. Tax cuts do not, however, target money at those families with the lowest incomes who were already struggling. Usually, they target money at higher earners.

Lots of tax cuts are justified by their benefits to the poorest families, but closer inspection gives a different view. For example, the raising of the income tax personal allowance by over £3000 between 2010 and 2014, took “3 million of the lowest paid workers out of income tax altogether”[1]. This was true, but it also targeted much more money at the top half of the income distribution. Because the poorest don't pay income tax, the cut didn't affect them. To benefit fully from the tax cut, your family needed to have two relatively high earners. The result of a tax cut which took “3 million of the poorest families out of income tax” was that the least well off fifth of households gained around £10 year while the wealthiest fifth of families gained around £500[2].

Despite the fact that raising the personal allowance targets money at wealthier families, it does so less than simply lowering the basic rate of income tax. A basic rate cut of 1% would forgo around £5Bn of revenue – £2.5Bn of which would go to the richest fifth of households.

The same is true of indirect taxes such as VAT or fuel duty. In total, these indirect taxes form around 16% of household of expenditure independent of your household's total level of spending. As the poorest fifth of households spend a lot less per year than the richest fifth (~£25,000pa), cutting direct taxes targets money at the highest spenders.

Simply put, the poorest people in communities earn less and spend less– so cutting taxes on earnings or spending helps them less.

There are multitude of potential reasons to reduce taxes, each with its pros and cons. However, if your justification for cutting taxes is helping the poorest, you should be honest and mention that a “side” effect of helping the poorest will be to give even more money to the richest.

The benefits system targets money at the poorest families

The best way to get money to the poorest families is via the benefit system which is (imperfectly) designed for the job. No contender for the leadership has yet made proposals to do this.

Fuel prices rise by further £800 in October, possibly more. Many of the people I have met in church drop-ins and foodbanks over the past few months just have no idea how their budget can stretch. They will need targeted help, which tax cuts can never be.

[1] Tax change ‘no help’ to the low-paid workers | Autumn statement | *The Times*

[2] A £10,000 personal allowance: who would benefit, and would it boost the economy? – Institute For Fiscal Studies – IFS

• **Paul Morrison** is the policy advisor with particular responsibility for issues around the economy including poverty and inequality for the Joint Public Issues Team. <https://jpit.uk/tax-and-the-cost-of-living>

In 2022, the cost of living is of major concern for many. Rising prices in food, fuel and transport are forcing people to make hard choices over how they spend their money. The least well-off are the worst affected, with those choices being narrowed to heating or eating, or skipping meals to feed their children. How did we get to this point? And what can churches do in response?

Click here to read JPIT's briefing on the cost of living crisis:

<https://jpit.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/202206-Cost-of-Living-Crisis-Briefing.pdf>

Read Paul's analysis on Inflation, interest rates and the poorest: <https://jpit.uk/inflation-interest-rates-and-the-poorest>

#URGENT ACTION: EMAIL YOUR MP TO HELP #STOPE1

Illegal Israeli settlements are the biggest threat to Palestinian rights - their rights to their land, to their livelihoods, to self-determination - including the right to sovereign statehood. The Israeli authorities are advancing plans to build a new illegal settlement in an area known as E1. If built, it will complete the encirclement of East Jerusalem, dividing it from the rest of the West Bank. It will split the northern West Bank cities - Nablus, Jenin etc - from Hebron, Bethlehem and Jericho. It will kill any prospect of a joined-up Palestinian state. That's why the Balfour Project charity asks you to take action.

Our Government has long regarded E1 as a "red line" which Israel must not cross - but has never said what it will do if Israel persists.

The deadline for action is 12 September, when Israel's West Bank Planning Committee is due to finalise its work and endorse the planned construction of E1. Israel's Prime Minister can prevent this. Our Government must prevail on him to stop it.

Please consider writing now to your MP. A draft is attached (see below). Enter your postcode and see the letter <https://balfourproject.eaction.org.uk/StopE1/search> - send it to your MP in one click, or personalise it and send.

Draft letter: Dear MP,

I write to express my deep concern at the prospect that East Jerusalem will be separated from its natural West Bank hinterland by the construction of a new Israeli illegal settlement in the area known as E1. This will constitute a further grave breach of international law. It will have a hugely destructive impact on the human rights of over 2,000 people in vulnerable Palestinian communities, and kill any remaining chances of the two-state solution, the outcome advocated by the United Kingdom Government and the rest of the international community.

The Israeli authorities are moving ahead with the E1 settlement plan. The West Bank Planning Committee will almost certainly approve E1 on 12 September. If approved, we will be two pen strokes away from full statutory validity. The E1 plan can be signed into law in a matter of minutes, at any time and with no advance warning.

The United Kingdom, with its European and US partners, has consistently and successfully opposed this development, deeming such a move to be a "red line." For more than 25 years, given the universal opposition to E1, no Israeli Government has dared proceed to approve E1 – until now. British Prime Ministers – Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Theresa May – have all engaged resolutely against E1, at times playing a decisive role in dissuading Israel from making such a devastating move.

Owing to its size and location, E1 would split the West Bank, separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, and make a viable sovereign independent Palestinian state impossible. It would also see the forced dispossession of over 2,000 people from Palestinian herding communities, including the demolition of the village of Khan Al Ahmar.

Such action underpins Israel's ongoing annexation of Palestinian territory and will further entrench a one-state reality of unequal rights and perpetual occupation. Ireland's Foreign Minister has rightly defined the Israeli illegal settlement project as annexation. The United Kingdom should use the same accurate language.

Please now urge our Government vigorously and publicly to oppose the E1 settlement, and all processes of forcible dispossession of Palestinians from their land. Failure to do so will imperil future chances for peace and further undermine the international rules-based system. Only an urgent, robust response from the UK and our partners will have a chance of preventing this step, which the Israeli Government need not and must not take. The message now to Israel's Prime Minister must be clear: do not do this.

Please draw my urgent request to the attention of the Middle East Minister Amanda Milling, asking our Government to consult our partners and intervene with Prime Minister Yair Lapid now, well before the 12 September Planning Committee meeting, making it clear that there will be severe political and economic consequences for British/Israeli relations if the E1 plan goes forward.

Yours sincerely ...

<https://balfourproject.eaction.org.uk/StopE1>

MESSAGE FROM POPE FRANCIS FOR THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

1 September 2022: Dear brothers and sisters! “Listen to the voice of creation” is the theme and invitation of this year’s Season of Creation. The ecumenical phase begins on 1 September with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and concludes on 4 October with the feast of Saint Francis. It is a special time for all Christians to pray and work together to care for our common home. Originally inspired by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, this Season is an opportunity to cultivate our “ecological conversion”, a conversion encouraged by Saint John Paul II as a response to the “ecological catastrophe” predicted by Saint Paul VI back in 1970.

If we learn how to listen, we can hear in the voice of creation a kind of dissonance. On the one hand, we can hear a sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator; on the other, an anguished plea, lamenting our mistreatment of this our common home.

The sweet song of creation invites us to practise an “ecological spirituality” (*Laudato Si’*, 216), attentive to God’s presence in the natural world. It is a summons to base our spirituality on the “loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion” (*ibid.*, 220). For the followers of Christ in particular, this luminous experience reinforces our awareness that “all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (Jn 1:3). In this Season of Creation, we pray once more in the great cathedral of creation, and revel in the “grandiose cosmic choir” made up of countless creatures, all singing the praises of God. Let us join Saint Francis of Assisi in singing: “Praise be to you, my Lord, for all your creatures” (cf. *Canticle of Brother Sun*). Let us join the psalmist in singing, “Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!” (Ps 150:6).

Tragically, that sweet song is accompanied by a cry of anguish. Or even better: a chorus of cries of anguish. In the first place, it is our sister, mother earth, who cries out. Prey to our consumerist excesses, she weeps and implores us to put an end to our abuses and to her destruction. Then too, there are all those different creatures who cry out. At the mercy of a “tyrannical anthropocentrism” (*Laudato Si’*, 68), completely at odds with Christ’s centrality in the work of creation, countless species are dying out and their hymns of praise silenced. There are also the poorest among us who are crying out. Exposed to the climate crisis, the poor feel even more gravely the impact of the drought, flooding, hurricanes and heat waves that are becoming ever more intense and frequent. Likewise, our brothers and sisters of the native peoples are crying out. As a result of predatory economic interests, their ancestral lands are being invaded and devastated on all sides, “provoking a cry that rises up to heaven” (*Querida Amazonia*, 9). Finally, there is the plea of our children. Feeling menaced by shortsighted and selfish actions, today’s young people are crying out, anxiously asking us adults to do everything possible to prevent, or at least limit, the collapse of our planet’s ecosystems.

Listening to these anguished cries, we must repent and modify our lifestyles and destructive systems. From its very first pages, the Gospel calls us to “repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Mt 3:2); it summons us to a new relationship with God, and also entails a different relationship with others and with creation. The present state of decay of our common home merits the same attention as other global challenges such as grave health crises and wars. “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (*Laudato Si’*, 217).

As persons of faith, we feel ourselves even more responsible for acting each day in accordance with the summons to conversion. Nor is that summons simply individual: “the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion” (*ibid.*, 219). In this regard, commitment and action, in a spirit of maximum cooperation, is likewise demanded of the community of nations, especially in the meetings of the United Nations devoted to the environmental question.

The COP27 conference on climate change, to be held in Egypt in November 2022 represents the next opportunity for all to join in promoting the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. For this reason too, I recently authorized the Holy See, in the name of and on behalf of the Vatican City State, to accede to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, in the hope that the humanity of the 21st century “will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities” (*ibid.*, 65). The effort to achieve the Paris goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C is quite demanding; it calls for responsible cooperation between all nations in presenting climate plans or more ambitious nationally determined contributions in order to reduce to zero, as quickly as possible, net greenhouse gas emissions. This means “converting” models of consumption and production, as well as lifestyles, in a way more respectful of creation and the integral human development of all peoples, present and future, a development grounded in responsibility, prudence/precaution, solidarity, concern for the poor and for future generations. Underlying all this, there is need for a covenant between human beings and the environment, which, for us believers, is a mirror reflecting “the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying”. The transition brought about by this conversion cannot neglect the demands of justice, especially for those workers who are most affected by the impact of climate change.

For its part, the COP15 summit on biodiversity, to be held in Canada in December, will offer to the goodwill of governments a significant opportunity to adopt a new multilateral agreement to halt the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species. According to the ancient wisdom of the Jubilee, we need to “remember, return, rest and restore”. In order to halt the further collapse of biodiversity, our God-given “network of life”, let us pray and urge nations to reach agreement on four key principles: 1. to construct a clear ethical basis for the changes needed to save biodiversity; 2. to combat the loss of biodiversity, to support conservation and cooperation, and to satisfy people’s needs in a sustainable way; 3. to promote global solidarity in light of the fact that biodiversity is a global common good demanding a shared commitment; and 4. to give priority to people in situations of vulnerability, including those most affected by the loss of biodiversity, such as indigenous peoples, the elderly and the young.

Let me repeat: “In the name of God, I ask the great extractive industries – mining, oil, forestry, real estate, agribusiness – to stop destroying forests, wetlands, and mountains, to stop polluting rivers and seas, to stop poisoning food and people”.

How can we fail to acknowledge the existence of an “ecological debt” (*Laudato Si’*, 51) incurred by the economically richer countries, who have polluted most in the last two centuries; this demands that they take more ambitious steps at COP27 and at COP15. In addition to determined action within their borders, this means keeping their promises of financial and technical support for the economically poorer nations, which are already experiencing most of the burden of the climate crisis. It would also be fitting to give urgent consideration to further financial support for the conservation of biodiversity. Even the economically less wealthy countries have significant albeit “diversified” responsibilities (cf. *ibid.*, 52) in this regard; delay on the part of others can never justify our own failure to act. It is necessary for all of us to act decisively. For we are reaching “a breaking point” (cf. *ibid.*, 61).

During this Season of Creation, let us pray that COP27 and COP15 can serve to unite the human family (cf. *ibid.*, 13) in effectively confronting the double crisis of climate change and the reduction of biodiversity. Mindful of the exhortation of Saint Paul to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep (cf. Rom 12:15), let us weep with the anguished plea of creation. Let us hear that plea and respond to it with deeds, so that we and future generations can continue to rejoice in creation’s sweet song of life and hope.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 16 July 2022, Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
<https://seasonofcreation.org/2022/07/21/message-of-his-holiness-pope-francis-for-the-celebration-of-the-world-day-of-prayer-for-the-care-of-creation/>

Summary

For the first time, Pope Francis has published in advance his message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, which is celebrated every September 1. It marks the beginning of the Season of Creation, an ecumenical period that unites Christians to pray and take action for our common home.

What does the message say? We summarize it in four key points:

A time to cultivate our ecological conversion

The Pope defines the Season of Creation as “an opportunity to cultivate our ‘ecological conversion’”, recalling this concept encouraged by St. John Paul II as a response to the ‘ecological catastrophe’ announced by St. Paul VI as early as 1970. In this way, he invites all Christians during this time to “pray once more in the great cathedral of creation, and revel in the “grandiose cosmic choir” made up of countless creatures, all singing the praises of God”.

People of faith, says the Pope, feel “even more responsible for acting each day in accordance with the summons to conversion. Nor is that summons simply individual: “the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion”.

Sweet song and bitter cry

Listening to creation, Francis mentions that there is a “kind of dissonance”: “On the one hand, we can hear a sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator; on the other, an anguished plea, lamenting our mistreatment of this our common home”.

In this regard, the Executive Director of *Laudato Si’* Movement, Tomás Insua, mentioned: “The sweet song of creation is mixed with its bitter cry, as evidenced by the intense heat wave that is experienced in much of the northern hemisphere and that has already killed, only in Spain and Portugal, more than 1000 people or has left 5 million people without water in Monterrey, Mexico”.

Francis encourages people to stop consumerism, change lifestyles and harmful systems. All scientific reports prove it and the Pope reaffirms it: “We are reaching ‘a breaking point’” and we must act now. “The crisis is no longer a hypothesis of a distant future but a tangible reality that is costing human lives,” added Tomás.

A warning message ahead the COPs

Ahead COP 27 on climate (Egypt, November 2022) and COP 15 on biodiversity (Canada, December 2022) Francis recalls in his message the importance of “promoting the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement”, as recently ratified by the Holy See. “Each passing moment is an opportunity for everyone, especially world leaders, to reverse the biodiversity and climate crises. Let COP 27 bring forth ambitious commitments to prevent carbon emissions from fossil fuels and support for clean energy transition as well as efficient relief for our brothers and sisters already within the climate crisis. Let COP 15 bring forth a firm commitment to end any more biodiversity collapse”, said Lindlyn Moma, Advocacy Director of the *Laudato Si’* Movement.

And to the community of Catholics, the Pope calls them to prayer: “In this Season of Creation, let us pray that COP27 and COP15 may unite the human family to decisively address the double crisis of climate and biodiversity reduction”.

Four key principles for biodiversity

Francis also uses his message to call on nations to halt the further collapse of the “web of life” – biodiversity – pointing to four principles:

- Building a clear ethical basis for the transformation we need in order to save biodiversity;
- Fight biodiversity loss, support its conservation and recovery, and meet people’s needs in a sustainable way;
- Promote global solidarity, taking into account that biodiversity is a global common good that requires a shared commitment;
- Put people in vulnerable situations at the centre, including those most affected by biodiversity loss, such as indigenous peoples, older people and youth.

<https://laudatosimovement.org/news/the-4-key-points-of-the-popes-message-for-the-season-of-creation/>

“LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF CREATION” AND UNITING OUR VOICES FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION 2022

The countdown to live the Season of Creation 2022 began with a launch event that was broadcasted live on Thursday, June 23. Representatives of different denominations encouraged reflection on this year’s theme “Listening to the Voice of Creation”, and the symbol of the “burning bush”.

In addition, this year’s Season of Creation Celebration Guide <https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English.pdf> was presented, with practical indications to prepare for this ecumenical time, inviting Christian communities around the world to unite in action and prayer for creation. Suzana Moreira, coordinator of Eco-Conversion programs of the *Laudato Si’* Movement moderated the meeting.

WATCH here: <https://youtu.be/Qv8cOP2SNnI>

THEME: THE BURNING BUSH

Representing the Anglican Alliance <https://acen.anglicancommunion.org/> Dr. Paulo Ueti was in charge of introducing the theme, mentioning the Old Testament and how fire was present. “It is very important to understand that no one should be left voiceless,” he said, mentioning the seriousness of the “silenced voices” of our day. “There are some people to whom creation is speaking and we must listen to them in a careful way,” Dr. Ueti said, highlighting that as Christians it is our duty to pay special attention to this.

Next, Christina Leño, Associate Director of the *Laudato Si’* Movement <https://laudatosimovement.org/> spoke about the symbol of this Season of Creation: “The burning bush is connected to the theme and was chosen for several reasons: firstly, in reference to the physical fires that many of us experience around the world,” she said, mentioning places affected by fires.

On the other hand, the LSM director mentioned the story of the Exodus, from which the symbol was also inspired: “Fire is also a symbol of God’s presence close to each one of us. We are called to listen to the voice of creation with compassion to listen like God and to be present, just as God wanted to be present in our lives”. Finally, she mentioned the symbol of “taking off our shoes, because we are on sacred ground, and our lifestyle is unsustainable, it disconnects us with creation.”

SHARE: This video explains this year’s symbol and theme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyjUTvGmlil>

Later, Rachel Mander, representing A Rocha <https://arocha.org/es/> prayed the Season of Creation 2022 prayer.

Then Fiona Connelly, ACT Alliance <https://actalliance.org/> introduced the Advocacy part of the Celebration Guide: “The oceans are rising and this is very worrying. We want to amplify the voices of those who see these things and are marginalized,” she said.

Mander listed the various ways to take action and connect with these issues and reviewed the Guide’s options to contact governments, for example. “Together we must commit to listening to and amplifying the voices of those who are marginalized by biodiversity loss,” she said.

Next it was the turn of Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer of the Lutheran World Federation <https://www.lutheranworld.org/> who encouraged the audience to reflect and take deep times to pray for creation, for each other and for silenced voices, with the Earth Examen that is in the Celebration Guide. “What is it that we can do to promote the rest and health of this ecological place?” he asked and invited to do this small contemplative practice to reflect and prepare together for the ecumenical season.

Before concluding, Christina Leaña invited people to save the date for the global opening and closing events of the Season of Creation on September 1 and October 4: “These spaces will be a way to show our unity,” she said.

Finally, Rev. Dr Rachel Mash, of the Green Anglicans, invited people to visit the new website <https://preachingforgodsworld.org/> which includes thoughts and reflections on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for each Sunday.

The meeting concluded by listening together to a song depicting the burning bush, called “Blessed Restlessness.” <https://youtu.be/pLAZ9q6JDj0>

2022 SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER

Creator of All, from your communion of love your Word went forth to create a symphony of life that sings your praise.

By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of creatures who praise you in their being. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationships with each creature so that we could listen to their voices, and learn how to safeguard the conditions for life. But we turn in on ourselves and away from our co-creatures.

We close our ears to the counsel of our fellow creatures. We fail to listen to the cries of the poor and the needs of the most vulnerable. We silence the voices of those who hold the traditions that teach us to care for the Earth. We close our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the Scriptures.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats that will never speak again. We grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished. Creation cries out as forests crackle, and animals alike flee the fires of injustice that we have lit by our unwillingness to listen.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that you would call to us, as from the burning bush, with the sustaining fire of your Spirit. Breathe upon us. Open our ears and move our hearts. Turn us from our inward gaze. Teach us to contemplate your creation, and listen for the voice of each creature declaring your glory. For “faith comes from hearing.”

Give us hearts to listen for the good news of your promise to renew the face of the Earth. Enlighten us with the grace to follow the Way of Christ as we learn to walk lightly upon this holy ground. Fill us with the hope to quench the fires of injustice with the light of your healing love that sustains our common home.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

<https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English.pdf>

<https://seasonofcreation.org/2022/06/24/listening-to-the-voice-of-creation-and-uniting-our-voices-for-the-season-of-creation-2022/>

SHOULD BOOK TRIGGER WARNINGS AND BANS AT UNIVERSITIES BE REVERSED?

Chas Newkey-Burden 10 August 2022

At least ten UK universities have removed books from course study lists or made the texts optional in order to protect students from “challenging” content, an investigation has found. According to *The Times*, Colson Whitehead’s novel *The Underground Railroad*, which won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, has been “removed permanently” from a reading list at Essex University because of concerns about graphic depictions of slavery. Other targeted texts include Swedish writer August Strindberg’s 1888 play *Miss Julie*, which has been axed from an undergraduate literature module at Sussex University because it contains discussion of suicide. The two universities “are thought to be the first in the UK that have purged books altogether”, said *The Telegraph*. Another eight institutions, “including Russell Group members Warwick, Exeter and Glasgow, have made texts optional to protect students’ welfare”, *The Times* reported.

The paper sent almost 300 freedom of information requests to officials at universities across the UK, and uncovered 1,081 examples of trigger warnings across undergraduate courses. Influential British authors including William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens were reportedly “among those whose works have been deemed concerning enough to require warnings”. The investigation also found that students had been given trigger warnings before studying *The Bible*, because of “shocking sexual violence”, and *Oliver Twist*, because of “child abuse”.

The practice of censoring “challenging” university texts “should cease before it goes any further”, said *The Times* in its leader yesterday. “Cossetting students is no part of the ethos of education.” The paper described trigger warnings as a “corrosive phenomenon” and argued that students “who take offence at the content of books they are set should be told, civilly but firmly, that if their sensibilities need protecting then the academy is not the place for them”.

<https://www.theweek.co.uk/news/uk-news/957602/trigger-censorship-books-universities-reversed>

A TEXTBOOK CASE OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Trevor Phillips *The Times* 9 August 2022

My great-grandmother, Ellen, born in the mid-19th century on a Caribbean sugar plantation, had long straight hair and light skin that set her apart from other children of slaves. Her eyes were either green or blue, depending on which of my aunts described her. The brutal truth is that Ellen looked the way she did because her father could have been any white man who decided to exercise his right to do as he pleased with any black woman. None of us believes that her mother was a willing participant in the union that created our family.

Would the realities of my great-grandmother’s life be too “graphic” to be studied now at some UK universities? Today’s investigation suggests so. Those on campuses who shriek about “micro-aggressions” could do a little less preaching and a little more reading if they want their students to understand what “white privilege” really means.

Curriculums need to be reviewed all the time, or we’d all still be reading Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* in Greek. But the reasons given — for example that the “graphic description” of slavery and abuse would be emotionally or mentally damaging to students — are fatuous, patronising and profoundly racist. University dons are never slow to point the finger at others, past and present, for racial transgressions. But the cancellation of black lives in order to make other people feel comfortable about their own past tells us what really matters to these self-styled anti-racists — their own refined sensibilities. This is a textbook case of institutional racism. It is shameful. It is also part of a wider wave of censorship on British campuses. Students report that they worry about offering alternative views in tutorials. The suggestion that reading about suicide is a prelude to the act is offensive to any family who has ever had to deal with the consequences of serious teenage mental illness. Mind-numbingly dull as he can be, it takes a lot more than a dose of August Strindberg to induce the urge to self-harm. The trigger warnings, book removals and cancellations are just a disguised campaign of thought control.

I, for one, want all young people to be more aware of the realities of the past, unmediated and unsanitised. One of my better-educated relatives, pointing out that the average life expectancy of a field hand on a West Indian sugar plantation was less than eight seasons, observed sardonically that *12 Years a Slave* was “less a history lesson, more a bloody miracle”. But some dons appear content to allow some kind of “happy negro” narrative to prevail. The one white privilege they seem ready to accommodate. Most importantly, I want the black young people in families like my own to understand exactly where we have come from and to be proud of the extraordinary resilience and courage of those who came before us. But these efforts, supposedly to shield some students from reality, are in practice an attempt to erase black folks from the past. We need to fight back; if anybody wants to organise a public reading of Colson Whitehead’s modern classic on campus, do please let me know.

• Trevor Phillips is chairman of Index on Censorship, which campaigns for free expression
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-textbook-case-of-institutional-racism-gbv83jq5q>

THE BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE

Could you make a pledge to help people reduce their cost of living this winter? This year, Church Action on Poverty is applying once more to take part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge, the UK's biggest online match funding campaign <https://www.thebiggive.org.uk/s/christmas-challenge>. As in 2021 and 2020, we're seeking funds to support our Your Local Pantry Network <https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/> which has grown to 80 Pantries working together to reduce food insecurity for 90,000 adults and children in the UK.

Pantries soften the blow of high living costs, and create the conditions for communities to grow and thrive, by bringing people together around food. Members pay a small weekly fee and can choose a basket of food, saving up to £1,000 a year. As part of our application, we need our key supporters to make promises of funding, called 'Pledges', which will be used as match funds to double online donations made to our charity during the campaign. Your commitment of funding might also help us to secure additional match funds via a Champion (sourced by the Big Give). Last year, people's Pledges helped us raise £10,230 for the Your Local Pantry Network, and this year we are hoping to top this by raising £12,000.

Your Pledge will help Your Local Pantry ensure that more people have access to fresh and healthy food and cupboard essentials over the winter months when budgets have to stretch more than other times of the year; and help grow the network of Pantries across the UK. We need to raise a total of £3,000 in pledges to be eligible to take part in the Christmas Challenge. Would you consider making a minimum pledge of £100 to help us reach our target?

If you would be willing to make a pledge to us, you can do so by following the link below by the deadline of 5pm, Friday 2 September. Pledge here: <https://www.thebiggive.org.uk/s/pledge?campaignId=a056900002OXiyXAAT>

The Christmas Challenge (the UK's biggest online match funding campaign) helps UK-registered charities to raise funds for their projects by doubling donations when the campaign goes live on 29 November 2022. You can find full details of the Christmas Challenge, and how your pledge will enable us to be part of the UK's largest Matched Funding Challenge, on theBigGive.org.uk. Research shows that 84% of donors are more likely to give in a match funding campaign and that donations are on average 2.5 times bigger so we're very excited about the opportunity to take part.

The matching pots used to double donations for charities taking part in the Christmas Challenge are made up of a combination of funds. These are funds sourced by the charity ('Pledges') and funds sourced by the Big Give ('Champions') which are available if we are successfully selected by a Champion.

- The timeline for fulfilling the pledge (i.e. transferring the funds to us) is 6 December 2022 – 16 January 2023.
- Fulfilment of your pledge is conditional on us receiving the appropriate online donations during the campaign. You will only be required to pay a pro-rata amount of your pledge if we don't hit our online target - it's our guarantee to you that we are committed to raising additional donations.
- Please note that if you pledge to Church Action on Poverty, you will not be able to make an online donation to us in December because your pledge will be used to match these donations.

Please don't hesitate to ask if you have questions about the Christmas Challenge and what being a Pledger could mean to Church Action on Poverty, and to the 90,000 members of Local Pantries.

Niall Cooper Director, Church Action on Poverty

Source: Church Action on Poverty 2022 www.church-poverty.org.uk

DAYS OF NONVIOLENCE 21 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER

Theme: Blessed is every step towards nonviolence

We invite you to take part in this project of Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and Pax Christi International. What might you do? A 'menu' of steps and activities for individuals, family, community, school or parish can be found here:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>

- **Celebrate** the creativity of nonviolence. Can you bring a story or prayer for nonviolence and link it to one of the dates/events listed? Share and pray the Vow of Nonviolence on 2 October
- **Amplify** the many ways in which Pope Francis is moving us in the direction of nonviolence at personal, national and global levels.
- **Share the Vow of Nonviolence** <https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Prayer-Vow-October-2022.pdf>

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God... You have learned how it was said, 'You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy'; but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven."

PRISONERS' WEEK 9-15 OCTOBER 2022

Prisons Week was founded by Bishop Victor Guazzelli in 1975. Since then, the Prisons Week group has prepared resources to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by imprisonment.

THE PRISONS WEEK PRAYER

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ, in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. Amen.

<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/prisoners-sunday>

WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR?

For nearly 50 years, Prisons Week has encouraged Christians to pray for all those affected by crime and imprisonment.

The Samaritan leper in Luke 17, inspires us all to seek what he was amazed to find when returning to thank Jesus for his healing ... a new beginning. This year's Gospel reading for Prisons Sunday (Jesus healing ten men with leprosy) shows us the far-reaching impact of thankfulness. From a harsh, hopeless place on the edge of society, the lepers cry out in pain and despair. God answers their prayer through Jesus, already travelling and working in that hostile place.

And Jesus does more than heal them physically, his compassion shows them that they are people loved and valued by God, who can be restored to community and freedom. But the Samaritan who returns to thank Jesus finds an even deeper, everlasting spiritual freedom, amazed by the power and willingness of Christ to make him fully whole – his joy and thanks come straight from the heart.

Our recent campaigns have moved us, like him, from loneliness and despair to hope. And now, like him, we also return with gratitude. So, what are you thankful for?

Check out "What are you thankful for?" from Spread Creative on Vimeo at: <https://vimeo.com/732017840>

It's hard to be thankful when life feels hopeless, lonely or unfair. In saying 'thank you' for the small things, we realise they are often the big things – the new day that brings another chance, family, friends, the air we breathe, shelter, food, the kindness of a stranger, even the loyalty of a pet.

Pray with us each day in Prisons Week as we journey this year through hostility, stigma and despair to move towards hope with thankful hearts for all that is possible. We make our faith journey with Christ at our side, giving thanks to God, always and everywhere.

DAILY PRAYERS FOR PRISONS WEEK

DAY ONE: HOSTILITY

As Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, he went along the border between Samaria and Galilee. Luke 17:11

Lord Jesus, you knew how it felt to be in hostile territory. Send your Holy Spirit to be with everyone who is experiencing fear today and especially those spending their first night in prison. Stay close to guide and strengthen them so that they in their turn may open their hearts to know you, to love you, to serve you and to thank you. And we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Prison volunteer*

DAY TWO: SUFFERING

He was going into a village when he was met by ten men suffering from a dreaded skin disease. They stood at a distance and shouted, "Jesus! Master! Take pity on us!" Luke 17:12

Oh God, you know how depressed I get. You know how time passes so slowly for me. You know how at times I feel bitter and resentful. I am lost without you. Oh God help me to welcome those who offer friendship, to look for those who need to be comforted, so that in giving I might have no time for loneliness. Thank you for promising never to leave me alone, that in quietness and rest I shall find your strength. *Prisoner*

DAY THREE: COMPASSION

Jesus saw them and said to them, "Go and let the priests examine you." Luke 17:14

Father, we bring before you all those in prison. You never turn anyone away who comes to you for help. You have the power to change lives, and so we pray you will reveal Jesus to them. Touch them deeply Lord, and bring healing and deliverance to their lives. Fill them with hope for the future, we give you thanks for all your love and goodness. *Victim of crime*

DAY FOUR: HEALING

...On the way they were made clean. Luke 17:14

Thank you, Lord, for reaching down into the pit and saving me. For healing the pain and self-destruction and setting me a new path. A path of peace. Peace with myself, with you and with those I love and have hurt. Help me to continue, to be grateful each day for what I have received. *Prisoner*

DAY FIVE: GRATITUDE

When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself to the ground at Jesus' feet and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. Jesus said, "There were ten men who were healed; where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who came back to give thanks to God?" Luke 17:15-18

Forgive me Lord, for all that I am and all that I'm not. Praise you Lord, for all that I am and all that I'm not. *Prison chaplain*

Thank you for these kind-hearted people who've helped me through the toughest time in my life. Give us patience when we are tested. Help us see there is no point being lost in bitterness, when we should be grateful to be alive. *Family member*

DAY SIX: SENT

And Jesus said to him, "Get up and go;" Luke 17:19

Dear Jesus, you told the healed man to get up and go, now I am asking you to help me go and do the same; that in this place I might carry your message of love, kindness, gratitude, forgiveness and especially compassion to all. Help me to encourage all I work with, to grow in love for you, for others and most of all for themselves, and may your kindness grow and flourish. *Prison Chaplain*

DAY SEVEN: HOPE

"...your faith has made you well." Luke 17:19

Heavenly Father, I thank you today for the gift of faith you fill my heart with. A Faith that is helping me to hear and believe the 'words of life' that only Jesus can speak. To respond in obedience to his words of salvation and healing, forgiveness and cleansing, of grace and mercy. Words of invitation, comfort and acceptance in every place and circumstance I am in. Bringing hope and love in the Holy Spirit's light. *Prisoner*

<https://www.prisonersweek.org/wp-content/uploads/PW2022-TEXT-ONLY-ENGLISH.pdf>

SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER 2022 PRISONERS' SUNDAY: A FRESH START

Prisoners' Sunday marks the first day of the ecumenical Prisons Week, a dedicated week of prayer across our Christian communities. <https://www.prisonersweek.org/>

On Prisoners' Sunday the Catholic Church encourages everyone to reflect on and pray for prisoners and their families. Prisoners' Sunday is a time to think about how we as individuals, as a Church and as communities are serving those affected by imprisonment.

Prisoners' families, prisoners and people with convictions often find themselves on the margins of our society. Yet Jesus challenges us with His words: 'I was in prison and you came to me.'

Our work at Pact draws on the values of our faith: dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity. We believe that everyone can make a fresh start whatever they may have done.

Bishop Richard Moth, Catholic Liaison Bishop for Prisons, writes to all parishes in the Pact Prisoners' Sunday Pack, to encourage support for this time of reflection and prayer everywhere on Prisoners' Sunday.

We are grateful to parishes who are able to hold a second collection to support the work of Pact - and to individuals who may send a donation at this time. A second collection can also be arranged on an alternative date if that works better for your parish. Perhaps some supporters may be able to hold a simple Prisoners' Sunday fundraising event: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/prisoners-sunday-event-guidance>

Find out more marking Prisoners' Sunday in your Church: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/Pages/Category/markings-prisoners-sunday>

Or contact Theresa Alessandro, Catholic Community Engagement Manager at: parish.action@prisonadvice.org.uk

ISSEY MIYAKE: JAPANESE FASHION DESIGNER DIES AGED 84

At 7, Issey Miyake survived the Hiroshima bombing. He kept it a secret for years. He died one day before the 77th anniversary of his hometown's bombing.

Adrienne Tam 10 August 2022

At 8.15am on August 6, 1945, there was a blinding flash of light above the town of Hiroshima, Japan. The atomic bomb, dropped by the US in the dying stages of World War II, would kill more than sixty thousand people that day – and shatter the lives of hundreds of thousands more left behind.

One of those survivors was a seven-year-old boy named Issey Miyake, who was riding his bicycle to school when the bomb dropped. "When I close my eyes, I still see things no one should ever experience: a bright red light, the black cloud soon after, people running in every direction trying desperately to escape. I remember it all. Within three years, my mother died from radiation exposure," Miyake would go on to write in a 2009 op-ed in *The New York Times* (see below for the article in full – Ed.). By then, he was a world-famous fashion designer. And up until then, he had never spoken – publicly, at least – about what had happened on that terrible day in Hiroshima.

If you don't recognise Issey Miyake's name, there is a high chance you recognise his work. You have probably worn his perfume: A Drop D'Issey or Fusion D'Issey. You've likely seen his signature pleats on both runways and in stores. And you *definitely* know of his turtleneck – after all, it became the staple clothing of late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. "[Miyake] made me like a hundred of them," Jobs told an interviewer in 2011, the year he died. "I have enough to last for the rest of my life."

Miyake's east-meets-west fusion drew worldwide acclaim, and his use of synthetic and natural material consistently added to his unique viewpoint. He also preferred loose clothing over the more traditional "fitted" pieces of his western counterparts. "To me, clothes should not be things which confine or enclose the body," he said in a 1988 lecture. "Clothes should make one free and feel like being oneself. I think they are one of the best ways of expressing the liberation of the body and the mind."

Miyake always wanted his fashion to speak for him, not his personal life. Yet in 2009, just after an agreement was made between the US and Russia to reduce nuclear arms, the designer felt compelled to address the events of the bombing that destroyed his hometown.

"I have never chosen to share my memories or thoughts of that day," he wrote in *The New York Times* op-ed. "I tried never to be defined by my past. I did not want to be labelled 'the designer who survived the atomic bomb', and therefore I have always avoided questions about Hiroshima. They made me uncomfortable. But now I realise it is a subject that must be discussed if we are ever to rid the world of nuclear weapons. There is a movement in Hiroshima to invite Mr. Obama to Universal Peace Day on August 6, the annual commemoration of that fateful day. I hope he will accept. My wish is motivated by a desire not to dwell on the past, but rather to give a sign to the world that the American president's goal is to work to eliminate nuclear wars in the future."

Obama would go on to become the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima in 2016.

While Miyake acknowledged the importance of the agreement between the US and Russia, he also acknowledged that no one person or country can stop nuclear warfare. "For there to be any hope of peace, people around the world must add their voices to President Obama's," he continued in his op-ed.

Issey Miyake passed away from liver cancer on August 5 this year. He was 84 years old. Having lived a fiercely private life, there is no clear indication on whether the designer had children or a partner. But maybe that's the point. Miyake never wanted to be a celebrity or a star. He never wanted to be in the spotlight. He just wanted to create art.

"People refer to clothes that no one can wear as being 'avant garde', but that's not really true. People always refer to the past when they speak, but I just happen to think that the present is a bit behind itself," he said philosophically in a 1998 interview.

"I would be very happy if it was said of me that I had provided some keys to the 21st century. All I can do is to keep experimenting, keep developing my thoughts further. Certain people think that the definition of design is the beauty of the useful, but in my own work I want to integrate feelings, emotion. You have to put life into it."

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/lifestyle/shopping/at--fashion-designer-issey-miyake-survived-the-hiroshima-bombing-he-kept-it-a-secret-for-years/ar-AA10uVUx?ocid=sapphireappshare>

A Flash of Memory *New York Times* | July 14, 2009 By ISSEY MIYAKE Op-Ed Contributor

Tokyo: In April, President Obama pledged to seek peace and security in a world without nuclear weapons. He called for not simply a reduction, but elimination. His words awakened something buried deeply within me, something about which I have until now been reluctant to discuss. I realized that I have, perhaps now more than ever, a personal and moral responsibility to speak out as one who survived what Mr. Obama called the “flash of light.”

On Aug. 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on my hometown, Hiroshima. I was there, and only 7 years old. When I close my eyes, I still see things no one should ever experience: a bright red light, the black cloud soon after, people running in every direction trying desperately to escape — I remember it all. Within three years, my mother died from radiation exposure.

I have never chosen to share my memories or thoughts of that day. I have tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to put them behind me, preferring to think of things that can be created, not destroyed, and that bring beauty and joy. I gravitated toward the field of clothing design, partly because it is a creative format that is modern and optimistic.

I tried never to be defined by my past. I did not want to be labelled “the designer who survived the atomic bomb,” and therefore I have always avoided questions about Hiroshima. They made me uncomfortable. But now I realize it is a subject that must be discussed if we are ever to rid the world of nuclear weapons. There is a movement in Hiroshima to invite Mr. Obama to Universal Peace Day on Aug. 6 — the annual commemoration of that fateful day. I hope he will accept. My wish is motivated by a desire not to dwell on the past, but rather to give a sign to the world that the American president’s goal is to work to eliminate nuclear wars in the future.

Last week, Russia and the United States signed an agreement to reduce nuclear arms. This was an important event. However, we are not naïve: no one person or country can stop nuclear warfare. In Japan, we live with the constant threat from our nuclear-armed neighbour North Korea. There are reports of other countries acquiring nuclear technology, too. For there to be any hope of peace, people around the world must add their voices to President Obama’s.

If Mr. Obama could walk across the Peace Bridge in Hiroshima — whose balustrades were designed by the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi as a reminder both of his ties to East and West and of what humans do to one another out of hatred — it would be both a real and a symbolic step toward creating a world that knows no fear of nuclear threat. Every step taken is another step closer to world peace.

• This article was translated by members of his staff from the Japanese.

<http://lowrie-chin.blogspot.com/2009/07/issey-miyakes-flash-of-memory.html>

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

Tributes have come in to mark the death of author and illustrator Raymond Briggs (18 January 1934 – 9 August 2022). In addition to creating the Christmas classic, *The Snowman*, he is perhaps best known in CND circles for creating the haunting parable about nuclear apocalypse - *When the Wind Blows*. The British Film Institute (BFI) takes a look at the graphic novel and the subsequent film adaptation on its website. **Watch** *When the Wind Blows* on BFI Player: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/rentals/film/watch-when-the-wind-blows-1986-online>

WHY APOCALYPTIC ANIMATION WHEN THE WIND BLOWS IS STILL DEVASTATING

Based on Raymond Briggs’ graphic novel, the 1980s animated classic *When the Wind Blows* is one of the most powerful depictions of nuclear Armageddon ever made. Why does it continue to hit so hard?

Neil Mitchell 22 January 2018 *When the Wind Blows* (1986): As a youngster growing up in the 1980s in a tiny village in the heart of the Cotswolds, I can attest to the fact that no part of the country, however remote and bucolic, was impervious to the threat of the Cold War escalating into a full-blown nuclear conflict. Regular news reports and documentaries reminded us, seemingly daily, of the potential for catastrophic political meltdown and the apocalyptic horrors that would unleash. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) became ever more vocal and visible, and popular culture was awash with nuclear war-themed films, comic strips, songs and novels.

Among these, the anarchic post-apocalyptic world inhabited by Judge Dredd in the weekly comic 2000AD, Mick Jackson’s utterly terrifying 1984 TV docudrama *Threads* and Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s chart-topping pop classic ‘*Two Tribes*’ all had an impact on my raw emotions and impressionable young mind. And then there was Jimmy T. Murakami’s animated version of Raymond Briggs’ *When the Wind Blows*. First published in 1982 as a graphic novel, and subsequently dramatised both for the stage and a BBC Radio 4 play (featuring the voices of Peter Sallis and Brenda Bruce) before Murakami’s version, Briggs’ tale of nuclear war as experienced by loveable elderly couple Jim and Hilda Bloggs is an unforgettable experience in all of its mediums. Briggs was initially inspired after watching a chilling Panorama documentary entitled *If the Bomb Drops*, which exposed the shortcomings in British civil defence spending and preparation.

Adapted for the big screen by Briggs himself, Murakami and his extensive technical crew employed a striking combination of hand-drawn and stop-motion animation to warmly and then devastatingly bring to life Briggs' characters, the numerous fantasy/dream sequences and the soon-to-be nuclear-ravaged, picture-postcard surroundings of the Sussex countryside. To accompany the heart-breaking imagery and dialogue, Roger Waters and the Bleeding Heart Band conjured up as atmospheric and haunting a score as would be expected of an erstwhile member of Pink Floyd.

For any viewers who had experienced Martin Rosen's captivating yet emotionally gut-wrenching animated adaptations of Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1978) and *The Plague Dogs* (1982) and somehow still laboured under the misconception that British animated films were just for kids, *When the Wind Blows* would be the final nail in the coffin.

Unbearably grim, stark in its outcome and stridently anti-war in its message, *When the Wind Blows* is made all the more powerful because of the intimate, beautifully realised portrayal of Jim and Hilda's loving relationship and quiet life. The isolated, rural world of Jim and Hilda (voiced by veteran British stars John Mills and Peggy Ashcroft) is one of plates of sausages and chips, radio plays and proudly tended cabbage patches. Working class, gentle and devoted to each other, the retired couple also naively believe in the wisdom of the powers-that-be; "Ours is not to reason why" as Jim informs Hilda, in a screenplay that's at times pointedly satirical.

The couple are fruitlessly nostalgic for the Blitz spirit of the Second World War, convinced the government-issued Protect and Survive pamphlets are worth the paper they're printed on, and blindly under the assumption that there can be a winner in a nuclear war. These sweet, unassuming retirees represent an ailing, rose-tinted worldview and way of life that's woefully unprepared for the magnitude of devastation wrought by the bomb. When it finally drops, Jim's typically British and succinct reaction is "Blimey".

As frustrating as Jim and Hilda's obliviousness and futile stiff-upper-lip stoicism is, it's overwhelming sadness for the couple's fate that dominates. The film's latter stages are a painful, fittingly bleak portrait of the slow death that radiation sickness brings with it. The final scenes of *When the Wind Blows* in particular are enough to test the emotional resilience of even the hardest of hearts.

While Briggs' original graphic novel was commended by a Labour MP in the House of Commons, the film was criticised in other quarters as "propaganda for unilateral nuclear disarmament", as well as being "smug" and made for "radical yuppies". But if highlighting the insanity of nuclear war and its irreversible apocalyptic effects in an engaging, humane and emotionally resonant manner is "propaganda", then so be it.

Other films of the era with a nuclear theme – such as *The Day After*, *War Games* and *Threads* – may have been more graphic, action-packed and/or sensationalised, but Murakami's take on Briggs' intimate yet universal source material hit just as hard. Given the current fractious state of global politics, *When the Wind Blows* remains a vital and sadly relevant anti-war film.

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/when-wind-blows-raymond-briggs-jimmy-murakami>

Heather Kiernan writes: As we approach the 77th anniversary of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima I decided to post 'At the bomb Testing Site' by William Stafford as our Consequences exhibition Friday poem (see Diary page below).

One of Stafford's best known and most widely anthologised poems, it is an anti-war poem that never directly mentions war. The title refers to the atomic bomb testing in the New Mexico and Nevada deserts that began in 1945.

Although the poem implicitly refers to the horrors of war and the ravages of radiation fallout, it is anything but a "no-nukes" polemic. Instead, it focuses on the behaviour of a lizard that is about to be destroyed in a test explosion, and it implies that humans will be destroyed as well by their obsession with technological progress and political domination.

AT THE BOMB TESTING SITE

~William E. Stafford

*At noon in the desert a panting lizard
waited for history, its elbows tense,
watching the curve of a particular road
as if something might happen.*

*It was looking at something farther off
than people could see, an important scene
acted in stone for little selves
at the flute end of consequences.*

*There was just a continent without much on it
under a sky that never cared less.
Ready for a change, the elbows waited.
The hands gripped hard on the desert.*

And finally ... a story of resilience and hope

'ONE PERSON TURNED UP TO WATCH MY FRINGE SHOW'

Debbie Jackson BBC Scotland 8 August 2022

A Scottish comedian who went ahead with his Fringe show despite having just one person in the audience has become a festival legend.

Robin Grainger was feeling confident when he walked into his opening show in Edinburgh on Friday. The gig marked his return to the Fringe after the pandemic - but it was not the comeback he imagined. However, his decision to carry on sparked a chain of events that has seen ticket sales soar for subsequent shows.

Robin, from Portsoy in Aberdeenshire, told BBC Scotland: "I had been busy doing guest spots, exit flyering, the things you do during the day at the Fringe, and hadn't checked ticket sales. "I'm an optimistic guy, it was the first Friday - everyone was tweeting about busy audiences. I thought it would be fine. My lovely tech operator Eric came to give me my two-minute warning. I asked how it was looking and he winced. "He said 'There's one'."

Robin, who moved to Edinburgh 10 years ago to make a go of comedy, said he went through "every emotion in the space of two minutes". But then he went on stage to speak to the solitary man in the audience. His name was Mike, from Leicester, and he said he would stay if Robin wanted to do the show.

Robin said: "I thought, he had paid his ticket and I've got a microphone and an ego, so I went for it. I did different stuff - it was a lot more convivial than my normal show. I did a lot of adlibs, I wrote a lot of it there on the stage. I tried to tailor it to Mike really. And he was really laughing. "Afterwards, I was outside a bit flustered and he came out and he was crying, laughing, and he gave me a hug and he said that was brilliant."

Robin has enjoyed success in comedy clubs and has supported bigger acts, including Kevin Bridges. His career has also seen him perform in cities such as Cape Town and Berlin. Friday was day one of his run at the Edinburgh Fringe but unbeknown to Robin, one other person had been listening to the show. The Scotsman's veteran comedy critic Kate Copstick had arrived early to review Ryan Cullen in the next show. From outside she had heard a comic "getting into his rhythm" and clearly having a good show. Front of house staff told her there was just one audience member there. She was blown away and the next day posted about it on social media.

Ms Copstick said: "Last night I went to see Ryan Cullen at The Stand. I got there a wee bit early, and listened to the show before his. Robin Grainger. Who was, as we say in Scotland, giving it laldy. It sounded great. The FOH crew told me he had only one person in. Total respect and liking for a comic that can do that. And I spoke to the one person when he came out. Said he had been handed a flyer and had a spare hour so came along. "I cannot remember ever laughing that much," he said. "I might go and see other comedy but it will have to go some to top that".

"Now, to me, that reads like a five."

The reviewer called Mike his "audient" - which means hearer - the singular term for an audience.

Since the post, Robin's phone has rarely stopped ringing. "My tweet about what happened is on 250,000 views. I've had a lot of support from the comedy community and a lot of hugs. On Saturday the show was a couple of seats away from a sell-out. Yesterday I had about 20 people in. Today is a two-for-one offer - the irony of that's not lost on me." Ms Copstick is delighted the city is talking about Robin. She said: "I am so happy for him. The only way you will build an audience is to perform to the small audiences and make each person into a walking flyer. It's down to you. That's what the Fringe is about. If you are good and you do your shows, are positive with your audience, it will come. Good word-of-mouth trumps some PR company."

Ms Copstick added: "It's a brilliant story for that guy who went to see him. He will remember that. Robin gave it all for that one guy and didn't make him feel bad - it was every good thing it should be."

In another coincidence, on Sunday, Robin appeared as a last-minute guest in another show hosted by comedian and presenter Des Clarke. As he was explaining the story of the one-man audient, a shout from the back of the dark room revealed the man himself - Mike. The pair were reunited and managed a photo after the show.

Mike is now a confirmed fan. He tweeted: "I saw Robin Grainger on Friday night, the only person in the audience. He made me laugh so hard, I loved it. I go and see Des Clarke today and one of his guests was Robin telling the story of his only audience member. I feel I should start the Robin Grainger Appreciation Society."

Robin hopes the rest of his shows will be more successful. He said: "Who knows? I'd love an audience of two - the sky's the limit." <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-62464032>

DIARY AUGUST

19 Exhibition launch of Consequences: Art and Activism in the Nuclear Age. Preview over 20 works and hear from 10 poets. 6-10pm. The Out of the Blue Drill Hall, 36 Dalmeny Street, Edinburgh EH6 8RG

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/consequences-art-and-activism-in-the-nuclear-age-exhibition-launch-tickets-385837068057>

• **The exhibition Consequences: Art and Activism in the Nuclear Age** runs 16 August – 3 September 2022 at the Out of the Blue Drill Hall. Free and open daily Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm (except Saturday 27 August 2022). Consequences is part of the Peace Cranes project produced by Peace & Justice (Scotland) and delivered in partnership with the Scottish Poetry Library and promoted by Scottish ICAN Partners on nuclearban.scot. It is funded by Creative Scotland through Sustaining Creative Development Fund, People's Postcode Trust, the European Commission through i-Portunus Mobility Fund and National Lottery Community Fund. Further details: linktr.ee/peacecrane
26-29 Greenbelt Festival: Boughton Hall, Northants greenbelt.org.uk 0207 329 0038

SEPTEMBER

1 September – 4 October, Season of Creation theme: *Listen to the Voice of Creation*. Celebration guide at: <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

21 international Peace Day <https://www.peaceoneday.org/main/>

15-22 Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine & Israel "Faith, Hope and Love in Action: Towards Justice in Israel Palestine" <https://tinyurl.com/3fddjupj> <https://paxchristi.org.uk/campaigns/israel-and-palestine/>
<https://www.oikoumene.org/events/world-week-for-peace-in-palestine-and-israel>

OCTOBER

2 International Day of Nonviolence <https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Prayer-Vow-October-2022.pdf>

16-23 Week of Prayer for World Peace <https://weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk/> Annual Gathering will again this year only be on line. This is to allow as many as possible to participate. It will be held on Sunday, 16 October at 3:30 London Time. The zoom link is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82952967543?pwd=bnJWSzA3U1d3ZzVocDlzbkQ5K3dTz09>

Meeting ID: 829 5296 7543 Passcode: 549956

17–23 Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales - an opportunity to highlight the incredible work being done by community groups around the country, and to show what can and must be done differently. It's an opportunity for voices that are often ignored to be heard loud and clear. It's a chance to focus attention on the need to tackle poverty – and to show the immense difference we could make to our society if we do.

<https://challengepoverty.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Challenge-Poverty-Week-England-Wales-2022-toolkit.pdf>

• **Read The Summer issue of *MouthPeace* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Summer-Mouthpeace-2022.pdf>

• **Read NJPN's weekly column** online on Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com or find articles be uploaded onto our website at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

• Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News 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 or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org or admin@justice-and-peace.org 020 7901 4864

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