

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

EDITORIAL

Over the holiday break I've been going through old files and looking back at the NW Bulletins since they started in January 2014. To kick start 2023 here are a few sample extracts, one from each year. What stands out from the monthly bulletins is that the same issues appear again and again: conflicts; the arms trade; poverty; austerity; homelessness; asylum seekers and refugees; slavery and human trafficking; gender equality; climate change; the list goes on.

FOODBANKS

From the March 2014 bulletin: In an open letter forty-three Christian leaders, including 27 Anglican bishops say "Britain is the world's seventh largest economy and yet people are going hungry." They challenge David Cameron's claim that his reforms are part of a 'moral mission.' The leaders conclude: "We often hear talk of hard choices. Surely few can be harder than that faced by the tens of thousands of older people who must 'heat or eat' each winter, harder than those faced by families whose wages have stayed flat while food prices have gone up 30% in just five years. Yet beyond even this we must, as a society, face up to the fact that over half of people using foodbanks have been put in that situation by cut backs to and failures in the benefit system, whether it be payment delays or punitive sanctions."

Sounds familiar?

REFUGEES

In the November 2015 issue we reported: "the head of the Jesuit Order in Britain, Fr Dermot Preston SJ, has written to the Prime Minister (4/10/15) to urge a change in policy towards refugees in the light of the current crisis in Europe and the Middle East. Fr Preston urges the Prime Minister to have the courage and ambition to use his leadership to set a tone of welcome and hospitality to those seeking our help at this desperate time. He believes the Prime Minister has a unique opportunity to lead Britain in a way that can awaken Gospel values of compassion, decency, responsibility and charity, and that to do so would lay the foundations for a lasting legacy that would outlive any election cycle. His letter calls for Government action on three key needs:

- To work for peace in the Middle East;
- To work together with other European countries to respond humanely to those who seek sanctuary;
- To lead collaboration on long-term planning for the region."

CLIMATE CHANGE

A book review from the November 2016 bulletin – the year Bob Dylan became the surprise recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature: "*HARD RAIN: Our headlong collision with nature. Another song from Freewheelin', a Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall*, written around the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, featured a veiled reference to an impending apocalypse. In a startlingly original book by Mark Edwards (Third revised edition, with an essay by Tim Smit, founder The Eden Project) each line of Dylan's poetic masterpiece *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* is illustrated by leading photographers. *Hard Rain* brings alive our global problems and shows how they are all connected by cause and effect. Poverty, the wasteful use of resources, pollution, the loss of habitats and species, and the summation of our problems, climate change, are all understood by decision-makers but they typically continue to be addressed as separate issues. *Hard Rain* shows that we need to tackle all our problems together if we are to solve any one of them."

THE ARMS TRADE

In October 2017 a news report from 8 September 2017 stated: "A group of six Christian activists were arrested on Wednesday as they took part in a peaceful demonstration against the London Arms Fair. The group from the anti-Trident nonviolent campaign Trident Ploughshares were arrested after blocking the West Gate of the ExCeL Centre in Docklands, ahead of the Defence & Security Equipment International (DSEI) the world's largest arms trade fair, taking place on 12-15 September."

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

September 2018: From the text of Hiroshima Peace Declaration on the 73rd A-Bomb Anniversary: "Last year, the Nobel Peace Prize went to ICAN, an organisation that contributed to the formation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Thus, the spirit of the *hibakusha* is spreading through the world. On the other hand, certain countries are blatantly proclaiming self-centred nationalism and modernising their nuclear arsenals, rekindling tensions that had eased with the end of the Cold War. One *hibakusha* who was 20 makes this appeal: "I hope no such tragedy ever happens again. We must never allow ours to fade into the forgotten past. I hope from the bottom of my heart that humanity will apply our wisdom to making our entire Earth peaceful." If the human family forgets history or stops confronting it, we could again commit a terrible error. That is precisely why we must continue talking about Hiroshima. Efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons must continue based on intelligent action by leaders around the world."

VIOLENT CRIME ON OUR STREETS

From May 2019: “Cardinal Vincent Nichols joined other church leaders at the Standing Together rally in Trafalgar on Saturday 6 April to call for an end to knife crime, to demand action and to stand alongside young people, families and communities affected by the scourge of violent crime. Reflecting afterwards, Cardinal Vincent spoke about the need to warn young people about gangs and to provide them with alternatives: “I know some of our Catholic schools in London are leading the way in the work with the Metropolitan Police to try to explain to young people early in their lives about the dangers, about the risks, and about how to react. The only way of counteracting a gang culture is to create for young people a sense of belonging to something else: something that's positive, creative and attractive to them. I had a request from a priest this week who's looking to start a boxing club in his parish. In my youth in Liverpool there were a lot of Catholic parishes with boxing clubs ... this was the alternative to gang culture ... we need to involve young people in a way that calls out their commitment and helps them to build discipline and self-control in their lives, and that's the best counter to some of the worst influences today.”

BLACK LIVES MATTER

In July 2020 we reprinted a news report from the *El Paso Times* (3/6/2020): “Bishop Mark J. Seitz's act of kneeling in prayer for eight minutes and 46 seconds to remember George Floyd earned an appreciative call from Pope Francis on Wednesday. The bishop and priests from the Diocese of El Paso prayed for Floyd, a black man who died after a Minneapolis police officer knelt for more than eight minutes on his neck during an arrest, on Monday night. Floyd repeatedly cried out saying he couldn't breathe.”

Bishop Selz said later: “As James Cone [American black liberation theologian] put it, in America, the Word comes tortured, black and lynched. Today, we meet Jesus in those tear-gassed, tasered, strangled and snuffed out. That's the reason why the church teaches a preferential option for the poor. And why the church stands up for life wherever and whenever it is devalued and threatened. To say, as all who eat from the table of the Eucharist should be able to say, that black lives matter is just another way of repeating something we in the United States seem to so often forget, that God has a special love for the forgotten and oppressed.”

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

For March 2021 a special issue highlighted violence against women. We reported: “During Thursday's House of Commons debate marking International Women's Day [11 March] Labour MP Jess Phillips read out the names of women killed by men in the past 12 months. It took Phillips, who is shadow minister for domestic violence and safeguarding, four-and-a-half minutes to read out the 117 names of women killed in the UK where a man has been convicted or charged as the primary perpetrator. Phillips said: “Killed women are not vanishingly rare, killed women are common.” The MP for Birmingham Yardley carries out the ritual each year. This year's came a day after human remains were found in the search for missing Sarah Everard, who vanished while walking home from a friend's flat in south London on 3 March. A Metropolitan Police officer has been arrested on suspicion of murder.”

HOPE

It's easy to become disheartened at the scale of the problems facing our country and our world today. So many articles written and talks given, so much campaigning and yet nothing much seems to have changed for the better. **For December 2022** the final bulletin of the year I chose to focus on hope, inspired by the writings of David Gee – see more at <https://hopeswork.org/>

The 2022 NJPN Conference took as its theme “Hope is a word with its sleeves rolled up.”

In an article for Independent Catholic News promoting the conference Ellen Teague wrote: “After months of sadness and uncertainty, the NJPN Conference 'Hope! a verb with its sleeves rolled up' aims to inspire us to look for signs of hope in our communities and in our wider world. It will be held 22-24 July 2022 at Swanwick in Derbyshire. Our hope is that, following the Conference, we will all return to our communities with enthusiasm and increased commitment to work for a more just and peaceful world for all God's creation. We will consider, how, as activists and people of faith, we might support those in most need and enable them to envisage a more hopeful future. Over the weekend we will be identifying hopeful possibilities in our world.”

Now is not the time to be despondent. Now is the time to take that message to heart. Perhaps a good New Year's resolution might be to roll up our sleeves with renewed vigour and commit ourselves to lobbying, campaigning and community action to bring about a kinder, fairer, more peaceful world for all.

Let's be inspired by Greta Thunberg's words, taken from *The Climate Book* (published October 2022):

“Right now, we are in desperate need of hope. But hope is not about pretending that everything will be fine. To me, hope is not something that is given to you, it is something you have to earn, to create. It cannot be gained passively, through standing by and waiting for someone else to do something. Hope is taking action.”

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY: ENACTING HOPE

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

Niall Cooper Director Church Action on Poverty writes: We're very grateful to all the donors who helped us raise £40,000 for our anniversary appeal during 2022. That support will really help to grow the network of Local Pantries and Self-Reliant Groups; to promote a true 'Church on the Margins'; and enable people to Speak Truth to Power together. But these are tough times. We are apparently now living in a time of 'perma-crisis.' To be clear, the crises undoubtedly impact more deeply on increasing numbers of people who are struggling to make ends meet, struggling to keep warm, struggling to eat. In the midst of this, how can we avoid sinking into despair? How can we retain our hope, and offer others a message of hope?

Enacting hope

As we enter 2023, Church Action on Poverty is determined to offer a message of hope. Another world is still possible, and is already struggling to be brought into being by people and communities 'on the margins' across the country.

"There are big powers, big ideas and big things to resist, but the ways to act on hope are local" - Revd Kate Gray, minister of the Dandelion Community in Wythenshawe, south Manchester

Our aim for 2023 is to continue the task of reclaiming dignity, agency and power with local people and communities across the UK. Our vision is to enact hope together. We hope you'll continue to be part of the movement with us. We welcome your continued support – whether through giving, acting or praying – in this vital task, in the year ahead. If you're able to make an extra donation to support this vital work in the coming year, we'd be very grateful. You can donate here: <https://give.church-poverty.org.uk/page/119810/donate/1?ea.tracking.id=email&ea.url.id=6225802>

We start this new year inspired by the wisdom and insight that was shared by participants in the Pilgrimage on the Margins during our anniversary year <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/pilgrimage/margins/> May they offer us all hope for the year ahead. Here's an extract from one of the poems that emerged from the events: (scroll down to read more poems on the Pilgrimage web page)

When we come together we are able to...

Challenge authority
Challenge injustice
Challenge power structures
Create a space for dialogue, where everyone's voice is heard

When we come together we are able to...

Make real changes for the benefit of all
Gain understanding and clarity
Pool resources to make a difference
Some people are big names, others are more effective
Get people to listen who wouldn't listen to us alone
Do God's work: Where two or more come together...

When we come together we are able to...

Make a difference
Lift a heavy burden
Achieve our goals
Have a knock-on effect

Challenge a culture of greed
Change politics and policies
Change the political system

When we come together we are able to...

Comfort one another
Celebrate one another
Encourage one another
Believe in each other
Realise we're loud!

When we come together we are able to...

Say enough is enough

OPINION: IF CHRIST WERE BORN TODAY

Fr Rob Esdaile 24 December 2022

If Christ were to enter our world today, where would he choose to be born?

Bethlehem remains besieged, surrounded by watchtowers, and 'The Wall'. That would still be a fitting place for the birth of this strange Messiah, born in poverty on the edge of Empire in a borrowed stable. But maybe he would take his place instead among our age's refugees, with the millions driven from their homes by violence, climate change or sheer poverty.

Perhaps the shattered frozen homes of Ukraine's towns might be a fitting site for our Silent Night Saviour's birth.

Would Mary and Joseph's journey now lead them to registration at a refugee reception centre far from their bombed-out home, rather than to a Roman census queue?

Might - God forbid - their transport of choice be not a donkey but an unseaworthy (and illegal) rubber boat? To whom might the angel chorus sing: to those gathered at a 'Warm Hub' because they cannot afford to heat their homes? And what of the Magi, setting out in search of the New-Born King? Who has the freedom of heart to undertake such a quest today?

These are not flippant thoughts. At Christmas we meet the One whom Pope Francis has called 'the God of the peripheries', the One who takes flesh among the overlooked and the undervalued, the One who embraces powerlessness as the ultimate sign of the power of divine love. Yes, God still seeks room at the inn, still seeks to enter into our human story - not just in Bethlehem or Ukraine or in refugee camps scattered around the globe but also at our own Christmas table, be we alone or surrounded by family.

As the Book of Revelation has it: "Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal with that person and that person with me." (Rev 3.20) At Christmas God comes close. Indeed, in Jesus, God is truly with us, Emmanuel. May you know that closeness in your keeping of the feast and may his nativity renew in us all the search for peace on earth and goodwill to all.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46184>

• Fr Rob is Parish Priest at St Dunstan's and St Hugh of Lincoln Catholic parishes in Woking. He has published several books of poetry including: '*A Word in Edgeways*' and '*An Invaded Life*'. For more information or to order copies, email: rob.esdaile@abdiocese.org.uk or write to: The Priests' House, St Paul's Road, Woking Surrey GU22,7DZ.

POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2023

18 December 2022: Pope Francis has released his message for the World Day of Peace, to be celebrated on 1 January 2023, stressing that all crises are interconnected and we must not forget any of them, but work for the good of humanity. The Holy Father's message, released on Friday, opens with a quotation from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians (5:1-2). "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." Thus, the Pope recalls that the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian community to remain steadfast. Likewise, he says, "when tragic events seem to overwhelm our lives, we are called to keep our hearts open to hope and to trust in God, who makes himself present, accompanies us with tenderness, sustains us in our weariness and, above all, guides our path."

There is light even in the darkest hour, says Pope Francis, before going on to use the Covid-19 pandemic as an example: "The pandemic seems to have upset even the most peaceful parts of our world, and exposed any number of forms of fragility." Three years later, he stresses, "the time is right to question, learn, grow and allow ourselves to be transformed as individuals and as communities" reminding us, as he has done before, that "we never emerge the same from times of crisis: we emerge either better or worse." This experience has made us all the more aware of the need for everyone, including peoples and nations, to restore the word "together" to a central place in our lexicon. Only the peace that comes from a fraternal and disinterested love can help us overcome personal, societal and global crises. Our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. None of us can be saved alone."

Pope Francis goes on to stress that this is not the post-Covid era we had hoped for or expected. "At the very moment when we dared to hope that the darkest hours of the Covid-19 pandemic were over, a terrible new disaster befell humanity," he said, noting that the world witnessed the onslaught of another scourge: another war, "driven by culpable human decisions."

Pope Francis notes that the war in Ukraine is "reaping innocent victims and spreading insecurity, not only among those directly affected, but in a widespread and indiscriminate way for everyone, also for those who, even thousands of kilometres away, suffer its collateral effects - we need but think of grain shortages and fuel prices. This war," he says, "together with all the other conflicts around the globe, represents a setback for the whole of humanity and not merely for the parties directly involved. While a vaccine has been found for Covid-19, suitable solutions have not yet been found for the war. Certainly, the virus of war is more difficult to overcome than the viruses that compromise our bodies, because it comes, not from outside of us, but from within the human heart corrupted by sin."

"What then is being asked of us?" the Pope asks, in light of all these difficult times: "First of all, to let our hearts be changed by our experience of the crisis." In fact, he explains: "we can no longer think exclusively of carving out space for our personal or national interests, (...) instead we must think in terms of the common good." We cannot, however, ignore one fundamental fact, he continues: "Many moral, social, political and economic crises we are experiencing are all interconnected, and what we see as isolated problems are actually causes and effects of one another."

And he calls on all those in positions of responsibility and on all men and women of goodwill "to revisit the issue of ensuring public health for all"; to "promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death"; "to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change"; "to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty... The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound." Finally, Pope Francis asks that in the coming New Year that "we journey together, valuing the lessons that history has to teach us. To all men and women of goodwill, I express my prayerful trust that, as artisans of peace, they may work, day by day, to make this a good year!"

Read the full text of the 56th World Day of Peace Message here: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46144>

IRELAND: CHURCH LEADERS' 2023 NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Irish Catholic Media Office 30 December 2022: If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

The year 2022 has been one of significant trauma and shock for many, on this island, across Europe, and around the world. As the most significant restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic began to ease, war broke out in Europe with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. When millions of people had to flee their homes there was however an extraordinary compassionate and practical response on our island, north and south, to welcoming and meeting the needs of those who arrived here. However, this has also challenged us all as to our attitudes towards people who have had to flee conflict in other parts of the world. The compassion and care that Christ calls us to offer to the stranger in our midst cannot be conditional on their country of origin or indeed the colour of their skin.

Communities across our island have also experienced a significantly increased cost of living in 2022. This has impacted many areas of life, such as exacerbating the scandal of homelessness and also meaning that many who have a home find themselves unable to afford to heat it during the cold weather. This simply should not be the case in countries of great wealth, and shows the urgent need for a refocusing of government policies in both jurisdictions to deliver real and meaningful social justice and eliminate poverty across this island.

Looking ahead, the year 2023 brings the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement itself transformed the conflict in Northern Ireland, resulting in countless lives being saved. We know that so many continue to live with the pain and trauma inflicted on them and we also recognise that the agreement came at a high price for many, for whom the release of prisoners was, and still is, particularly painful. Its 25th anniversary comes at a time when we have great concern for the state of our fragile peace on this island and we are more aware than ever that the work of peace is unfinished. As individual Christians, and as leaders in our respective Christian traditions, we recommit ourselves to continue our work towards a vision of an island of restored relationships, where all can flourish and fully participate in our common life.

Yet, amidst all that has been in 2022 and all that lies ahead in 2023, as Christians, we have a sure and certain hope of new creation in Christ. Through the miracle of His incarnation, Emmanuel - God with us - came to reconcile us to Himself. In His life, death, resurrection and ascension the Lord Jesus showed us His power to reconcile broken relationships and called us to participate in His ongoing reconciling work in our communities. That remains the task before us in 2023, as we share the Good News of Jesus both in word and deed in our broken and needy world.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46211>

Signed: Right Reverend Andrew Forster President of the Irish Council of Churches, Right Reverend Dr John Kirkpatrick Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Most Reverend John McDowell Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of all Ireland, Most Reverend Eamon Martin Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of all Ireland, Reverend David Nixon President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

POPE PAYS TRIBUTE TO BENEDICT XVI'S WITNESS OF FAITH, PRAYER, KINDNESS

Source: Vatican News 1 January 2023: During the end of year Vespers and Te Deum prayer of thanksgiving on Saturday night, Pope Francis paid tribute to Benedict XVI, recalling his witness of faith, prayer and kindness.

In his homily, the Pope said: "speaking of kindness, at this moment, my thought naturally goes to dear Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who left us this morning. We are moved as we recall him as such a noble person, so kind. And we feel such gratitude in our hearts: gratitude to God for having given him to the Church and to the world; gratitude to him for all the good he accomplished, and above all, for his witness of faith and prayer, especially in these last years of his recollected life. Only God knows the value and the power of his intercession, of the sacrifices he offered for the good of the Church."

Kindness was the main theme of the Pope's homily during this celebration of Evening Prayer of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God. The Pope recalled Mary's "yes" to God and that His will be fulfilled in her "began the slow journey of the gestation of a humanity free from sin and filled with grace and truth, filled with love and faithfulness." The Pope explained how God chose this way to enter into the world and history.

"A beautiful, good and true humanity, made in the image and likeness of God, but at the same time, woven with our flesh offered by Mary...never without her...always with her consent...in freedom, gratuitously, respectfully, in love."

This way that God chose to save us is also how we are asked to follow Him, said the Pope, so that we also may "continue to weave humanity - new, free, reconciled - together with Him." It is about relating to one another drawing on virtues of good and dignified living together, with one in particular being kindness that fosters fraternity and social friendship. Kindness can also be a "civic virtue," the Pope stressed, and it can do wonders in helping improve our societies.

Kindness is a key ingredient for creating a "culture of dialogue, and dialogue is indispensable to live in peace," the Pope stressed, especially since we do not always agree with one another on all matters, which is normal, but we must endeavour to speak and listen to one another to find understanding and draw closer to one another.

The Pope asked us to just think what our world would be like without the "many generous persons who keep families and communities together," keeping families and communities together through patient listening and dialogue. Kindness then is essential to this dialogue, he added, and this does not mean just showing "good manners" but living it as a virtue day in and day out, going against the grain of things in order to make our societies more loving and humane.

The Pope described these individuals who go against the tide of "consumeristic individualism," selfishness and aggressiveness we find in society, as "stars shining in the midst of darkness," since they show how it really is possible to "cultivate kindness" through our daily lives, even in the most difficult situations. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is this kindness, the Pope added, "a benevolent attitude that sustains and comforts others and avoids any form of roughness and harshness. It is a way of treating one's neighbour taking care not to be hurtful through words or actions; trying to lighten others' burdens, to encourage, to comfort, to console, without ever humiliating, mortifying or despising."

Explaining how kindness can be an "antidote" against the ills of society, especially cruelty and selfishness, the Pope said simple gestures such as just asking "permission" or saying "excuse me" or "thank you" can seem to achieve small miracles, since they come as welcome surprise and sign that better relationships and community are possible. "Thanks be to God, there are still kind people who know how to put their own concerns aside to pay attention to others, to offer the gift of a smile, an encouraging word, to listen to someone who needs to confide something, to vent."

Kindness can be promoted as a personal and civic virtue, the Pope went on to say, stressing how it could help improve our families, communities and cities. Speaking of the city of Rome in particular, he encouraged his fellow Romans to strive to grow in this virtue of kindness. "Experience teaches that kindness, if it becomes a style of life, can create a healthy living together, it can humanize social relationships, diffusing aggression and indifference"

Pope Francis concluded his homily by encouraging everyone to look to the icon of the Virgin Mother as today and on New Year's Day we venerate her, and in a special way in St Peter's Basilica through the image of Our Lady of Carmine of Avigliano, near Potenza, Italy. Her divine motherhood needs to be contemplated, he said. "Let us not take her divine motherhood for granted! Let us allow ourselves to be amazed by God's choice who could have come into the world in a thousand ways manifesting his power and, instead, willed to be conceived in full freedom in Mary's womb, wanted to be formed for nine months like every baby and, in the end, to be born of her, to be born of a woman." We need to think about this amazing reality, as it marks "an essential characteristic of the mystery of salvation," showing us God's way of infinite respect and kindness, "because the way for a more human world is found in the divine motherhood of the Virgin." <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46224>

CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS: TRIBUTE FOR BENEDICT XVI

Source: CBCEW 31 December 2022: On hearing the news of the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI this morning, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said he was "deeply saddened". The Cardinal said: "He will be remembered as one of the great theologians of the 20th century. I remember with particular affection the remarkable Papal Visit to these lands in 2010. We saw his courtesy, his gentleness, the perceptiveness of his mind and the openness of his welcome to everybody that he met. He was through and through a gentleman, through and through a scholar, through and through a pastor, through and through a man of God - close to the Lord and always his humble servant. Pope Benedict is very much in my heart and in my prayers. I give thanks to God for his ministry and leadership."

Fr Rob Esdaile writes: Benedict XVI died very fittingly on the last day of the old year, marking the end of an era. One good way of appreciating his acumen and pastoral concern would be to read meditatively his great Encyclical '*Caritas In Veritate*' (2009). It was written in response to the global financial crisis and in critique of prevailing attitudes and policies, calling us to renewed solidarity and to a new attention to the environment - and challenging us to recognise the gratuitous, transcendent dimension of reality: "Truth, and the love which it reveals, cannot be produced: they can only be received as a gift ... That which is prior to us and constitutes us — subsistent Love and Truth — shows us what goodness is, and in what our true happiness consists. It shows us the road to true development." (n.52) May he rest in peace.

THE ECUMENICAL LEGACY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

Dr Stephen G. Brown 31 December 2022: In an address the day after he was elected pope, Benedict XVI pledged to work for the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers and to do everything in his power to promote the fundamental cause of ecumenism. "Good intentions do not suffice for this," he said in his first message at the end of mass with the College of Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel on 20 April 2005. "Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential." Some were sceptical about the German-born pope's ecumenical commitment given his reputation in his previous position as prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In 2000, in the statement "Dominus Iesus," the congregation asserted that Protestant communities "are not Churches in the proper sense." Yet Benedict was the first pope to have come from a country with a roughly equal balance between Protestants and Catholics, and one that had been at the very centre of the 16th-century Reformation.

As Professor Joseph Ratzinger, he was also the first pope to have belonged to a committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1968, when for the first time Roman Catholics were appointed as full members of the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order, Ratzinger was among them. In 1971, he addressed the commission on religion and culture. In Germany, as archbishop of Munich and Freising, Ratzinger became the Roman Catholic co-chair alongside Protestant Bishop Eduard Lohse of a joint ecumenical commission that sought to find ways of bridging the centuries-old rift between the two traditions. Scholars have noted his decisive role in the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, which dealt with one of the central issues in the 16th-century Reformation that divided the followers of Martin Luther and the papacy.

In 2011, he was the first pope since the Reformation to visit the Augustinian monastery – now a Protestant church – in the German city of Erfurt where Luther trained as a monk. At a meeting there with Protestant leaders, Benedict praised Luther's quest to understand how to receive the grace of God as the "the deep passion and driving force of his whole life's journey." However, at the ecumenical prayer service at the monastery, he said that "talk of an 'ecumenical gift'" expected from his visit represented a misreading of faith and of ecumenism. While he said he did not need to specify the gift, it was understood to be a reference to a widespread desire for Protestant–Catholic couples to be able to receive communion together.

Benedict's invitation in 2012 to Dr Rowan Williams to become the first archbishop of Canterbury to address a synod of bishops in Rome said something of the pontiff's appreciation for the Anglican leader. However, the Vatican's decision to set up an "ordinariate" to receive disaffected Anglicans led to widespread irritation. It was with the Orthodox churches of the East to which most hopes for greater unity were directed. In 1976, Ratzinger had suggested that from a theological perspective, the union of the churches of East and West was fundamentally possible, although the spiritual preparation had not advanced sufficiently. Within a short time of Benedict becoming pope, long-standing issues that had prevented meetings of the Catholic–Orthodox international dialogue commission were swept aside.

In November 2006, Pope Benedict visited the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, for the feast day of St Andrew, considered to be the founder of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the former name for present-day Istanbul. By 2007, the Catholic–Orthodox commission had drawn up the Ravenna document on conciliarity and primacy, seen as a first step towards overcoming the thousand-year disagreement on papal primacy, although the early momentum was lost in the years that followed. Nevertheless, by the time of his decision in 2013 to step down as pope – something unprecedented in the modern era – Pope Benedict had set in motion a dynamic that could be continued by his successor, Pope Francis, in his quest for ecumenical dialogue.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/pope-emeritus-benedict-xvi-leaves-a-legacy-of-ecumenical-dialogue>

• Dr Stephen G. Brown is editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, the quarterly journal of the World Council of Churches.

IAN LINDEN: HAS AMERICA HIJACKED CHRISTIANITY?

Ian Linden 4 January 2023: The delayed UK 2021 Census showed that the number of those identifying themselves as Christian had continued to fall and was now less than half of the overall population. A flurry of news stories brought tidings of secular joy at further evidence of Christianity's decline, and variations on 'oh dear' from the different Churches. British politicians still generally don't 'do God', nor are they likely to. In this sense they may reflect public opinion, though the present Prime Minister does Diwali. Pan to President Trump outside St. John's Episcopal church parish house, Washington, Bible in hand. US politicians, predominantly Republicans, for a variety of reasons increasingly do God.

The US Democrats might look enviously at Britain's comfortable secularity. Evangelicals make up almost a quarter of the US population of 332 million and dominate American Protestantism. They share related commitments and attitudes: to biblical literalism, rejection of ideas other than their own, and for many, strange ideas about the end of the world alongside core Christian beliefs. In November 2020, White evangelical Christians voted 84% for Trump - up from 77% in 2016 against Hillary Clinton. The USA is in fact becoming more secular like the UK. Of people born in the US between 1981 and 1996 the respected Pew Foundation reported that 40% said they had no religion. Yet US politics are becoming more religious. Since Reagan (1981-1989), Republicanism has increasingly appropriated the themes of its powerful evangelical backers. Thanks to the Republicans a package of religious issues, notably abortion, gay marriage, and gender, forced their way into Congress and the Supreme Court. In the 1970s abortion, *Roe versus Wade*, was essentially a Catholic issue. It had become a central evangelical concern by the 2020 Presidential election arousing passionate responses on both sides of the argument.

Both the leading British Parties in their pursuit of electoral advantage look over their shoulder at the tactics of the two American Parties. Both have used data collection and targeted campaigning. The Conservative Party has picked up a trick or two from the Republican Party, its wrecking ball tactics, its voter suppression. The Elections Act 2022 demands visual ID on the spurious grounds eliminating virtually non-existent identity fraud. It will have the effect of discouraging minority, younger and poorer voters.

Much of our contemporary insecurity derives from the rise and increased threat of unaccountable, authoritarian regimes, but also from the undermining of democracy by the politics of irrationality, by culture wars, lies and deceit. The takeover of American Protestantism by evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity decoupled faith from reason providing a religious antechamber to QAnon. US democracy itself barely survived the stress-test set by Trump. America's slide in the last decade into near insurrection at the beginning of 2021, the British government's rapid descent into the politics of factional farce, give a whole new meaning to the 'special relationship'.

David Hollinger in his recently published *Christianity's American Fate* presents US Christianity as a religious 'two party' system mapped onto the two political Parties. He labels the old mainstream Churches 'ecumenical': open to multiculturalism and dialogue, at ease with enlightenment and science, committed to social justice - yet finding its congregations drifting away. The alternative - well-defended, populist, aggressive and burgeoning - Christian communities are immersed in culture wars set on winning at all costs. Reality is, of course, more nuanced with Jim Wallis' evangelical Sojourners notable for its 'social Gospel'. Pastor Rick Warren's Saddleback mega-church has charted new territory (see the success of his book *A Purpose Driven Life*) helping minorities and outsiders and working on AIDS and recovery from addiction.

Roman Catholics like the evangelicals now make up nearly a quarter of the US population thanks to the growing number of Hispanic Americans. According to the Pew Foundation, the largely Catholic 32 million Hispanic voters split one third Republican two-thirds Democrat. But interestingly six out of ten White Catholics who attend mass monthly, or more often, voted for Trump in 2020 against 36% for their fellow Catholic Jo Biden. At this time there were 22 Catholic senators of whom 10 were Republican and 12 Democrat compared to 1965 when all but two of the then 14 Catholic senators were Democrats.

Because of the size and wealth of the US Church, the Catholic Church globally has felt the backwash from this growing politicisation. The movement against the present Pope, motivated both by the style and inclusive openness of his papacy, outside the Vatican is primarily US-based. In August 2018 Archbishop Carlo Viganò the Apostolic Nuncio (Vatican ambassador) to the USA from 2011-2016, led attempts to discredit Francis and push him to resign. Viganò was supported by some two dozen US bishops.

The recently elected leading officials of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) give some idea of the Pope's problem. The President is Timothy Broglio, Archbishop to the military services, who in contradiction to the Pope's message to get vaccinated called for a waiver for troops not wanting COVID vaccination. Broglio has also linked clerical homosexuality to sex abuse scandals, a widely rejected assertion.

The Vice-President is Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore chairman of the committee on Pro-Life Activities. Victims of the Maryland clerical sex abuse have called for his resignation. Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma is chairman of the key Committee on Priorities and Plans and current Secretary to the Conference. He has spoken out in favour of abolishing the death penalty but has also expressed "deepest respect for Archbishop Viganò and his personal integrity."

The former President of the USCCB, Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles and Archbishop Coakley both hold advisory roles to a wealthy business association, NAPA (founded in a late 19th century in a small North California town of that name), which attracts super-rich members with strong right-wing views and Republican sympathies. It promotes in sympathy with powerful figures in the US hierarchy an ecclesial-political agenda opposed in most ways to Pope Francis' vision for the Church and Society, expressed in his speeches and encyclicals and shared to a great extent here in Britain by the Anglican and Catholic leaderships.

The late Pope Benedict who died on New Year's Eve will perhaps best be remembered in Britain for his Westminster Hall speech on 17 December 2010 about the moral underpinnings of democracy. He found sympathetic listeners. "I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith - the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief - need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization". A message the USA Republicans would do well to heed.

Thanks to the theological common-sense and caution of the Evangelical Alliance in Britain, the Anglican Church and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales as well as the Scottish Bishops, we have avoided the dangerous ecclesial-political convergence of the USA. Catholicism and mainstream Protestantism remain wedded to both faith and reason and have an important contribution to make to our weakened democracies.

The New Year holds many problems for both President Biden and Pope Francis who face heavy pressures that are related but different. The erosion of democracy on both sides of the Atlantic needs urgent remedy. And in 2023 commentators should resolve to remember that while numbers matter when it comes to church membership, numbers, *vide* the USA, are not necessarily a sign of good health.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/has-america-highjacked-christianity>

- Professor Ian Linden is Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Strawberry Hill, London. A past director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, he was awarded a CMG for his work for human rights in 2000. He has also been an adviser on Europe and Justice and Peace issues to the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Ian chairs a new charity for After-school schooling in Beirut for Syrian refugees and Lebanese kids in danger of dropping out partnering with CARITAS Lebanon and work on board of Las Casas Institute in Oxford with Richard Finn OP. His latest book was Global Catholicism published by Hurst in 2009.

JOB OPPORTUNITY: Project Worker - Faith Communities & Climate Action

An exciting opportunity to join the Faiths4Change Team – we're recruiting a creative, proactive Project Worker to support the delivery of an exciting and diverse portfolio of practical projects with faith and community partners on climate change, including carbon net zero.

Faiths4Change (F4C) is a dynamic environmental charity active at local and strategic level across the Liverpool City Region and beyond; working in partnership to co-create climate action and resilience projects, education, and positive change.

We are not a religious organisation but draw on our multi-faith roots & values for inspiration, engagement and action; our work is deeply rooted in actively caring for the Earth and communities as an integrated whole. You don't need to have religious beliefs to work with us, you will need empathy, understanding and a commitment to equity. Our mission is to work in partnership to achieve a truly just, thriving Earth home for all.

We are a registered Living Wage Employer, offer 31 days annual leave (FTE), an annual pay review, flexible working and a truly supportive Team environment. Hours per week: 24 flexible working & job share applicants welcome. Hourly rate: £12.20 - £13.50. Actual annual salary range: £15,225.60 - £16,848.00

Application information: To apply, please download the job description and skills/experience documents from our website <https://www.faiths4change.org.uk/project-worker---faith--climate-action.html>

Please use these documents to create a covering letter. Send your covering letter and CV to annie@faiths4change.org.uk To discuss the role, please email annie@faiths4change.org.uk to arrange a conversation.

Deadline for completed applications: Wednesday 25th January 2023. Interviews will take place on Wednesday 1st February 2023.

TRANSFORM TRADE – FORMERLY KNOWN AS TRADCRAFT EXCHANGE

Transform Trade is the new name for Traidcraft Exchange. Transform Trade was actually suggested by one of our supporters. Much like our organisation, it is a name that just gets on with it. There's no fuss, no hidden meaning, just one big goal – to see transformation in the world of trade. Globally we face greater challenges than ever before with the impacts of Covid-19, the climate crisis, food supply disruption and polarising inequality. We need a rallying cry for more people to join the movement for trade and climate justice. Changing our name means we can now focus all our resources and energy on fulfilling our mission: to Transform Trade, so everybody benefits.

We are a global community of farmers, workers, collectives, campaigners, donors and supporters, we work together for trade that values people over profit. Right now, corporate greed and destruction still dominate the world of trade. But there is another way to do business. It's called people centred trade.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: Join together to fight fast fashion. The Guardian reported only two weeks ago that Tesco are being sued by 130 former workers at a garment factory where they report they faced "effective forced labour". See: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/dec/18/workers-in-thailand-who-made-ff-jeans-for-tesco-trapped-in-effective-forced-labour>

It's one more sign of a broken industry and something needs to be done. In the early part of this year, we'll be sharing a series of simple ways we can all make a difference. More to come at: <https://www.transform-trade.org/fashion> We are beginning to see momentum build towards holding fashion brands accountable for how their clothes are made – but we will need your help to make this momentum snowball. Together, we can make positive and permanent change in the fashion industry – which means higher incomes, better working conditions and stronger protections for garment workers. There are no quick fixes for fast fashion, which is why we are so glad to have you with us, to seek change together. We will be reaching out with ways you can take tangible, practical action in the weeks and months ahead, and we can't wait for you to get involved!

ABBA TO DONATE ALL ROYALTIES FROM NEW LITTLE THINGS SINGLE TO UNICEF

STOCKHOLM, 3 December 2021: The four members of the pop group ABBA will donate all the royalty payments they receive from their new single *Little Things* to UNICEF. The royalties are generated each time someone purchases the holiday season single, taken from the group's latest Album *Voyage*, or streams it on Spotify, iTunes or YouTube. ABBA's contributions will be paid into UNICEF's Global Child Protection Fund, helping to support the growing number of children who have been affected by economic shocks, school closures and interruptions in social services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programmes supported by the fund aim to protect girls against violence and provide opportunities for empowerment, among other objectives.

More than one billion children experience violence, including sexual violence, every year. The consequences are profound, enduring and often deadly. Every ten minutes, an adolescent girl somewhere in the world dies because of violence. In addition, a growing number of children face mental health challenges that affect their safety and well-being. Girls face specific violations, such as child marriage.

"We are very grateful to the four members of ABBA for their generous commitment to UNICEF. Their support to the Global Child Protection Fund will help us to target our support where we can achieve the greatest impact for children, help tackle the root causes of gender inequality and promote girls' empowerment around the world," said Charlotte Petri Gornitzka Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

ABBA and UNICEF have a longstanding relationship. Since 1979, ABBA have supported UNICEF through royalties earned on their song *Chiquitita*, raising US \$4.8 million to date. ABBA will donate royalty payments from *Little Things* to UNICEF for the next five years. "We think it is impossible to eradicate poverty without the empowerment of women. That is why we support UNICEF in protecting girls from sexual violence and empowering them through the Global Child Protection Fund. We have done so for many years with our song *Chiquitita* and now we have decided to give UNICEF a Christmas gift in the form of a second song: *Little Things* from our album *Voyage*," said Agnetha, Björn, Benny & Anni-Frid.

The donation comes as UNICEF celebrates 75 years of working for children's rights around the world. The organizations' achievements include helping reduce the child marriage rate from one in four girls married last decade to one in five today. UNICEF has established programmes to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse in more than 150 countries. Last year, UNICEF provided mental health support to 31.2 million children in humanitarian settings, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.unicef.org/partnerships/abba-donate-all-royalties-new-single-unicef>

UNICEF is the world's largest children's organization, working in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, they work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit <https://www.unicef.org/>

FILM SCREENING: THE LETTER: A MESSAGE FOR OUR EARTH

Anne Litherland writes: Dear Shrewsbury Justice and Peace contacts, I hope you are well. Although many of you are not local to me, the event is in collaboration with Chester University. We are working with Gill Reeve, one of the chaplains and she may be interested in further screenings at Chester or Warrington. The event below is partly to make people aware of the issues and for them to see that they can act, and act locally. Please could you share with your contacts? The text below is from Zarah.

Zarah Ross writes: As a supporter of environmental activities, I would like to share details of an event that is taking place on Thursday 20th January 2023. The Cool Places of Worship group in conjunction with Faiths4Change and the University of Chester are co-ordinating a community screening of The Letter: A message for Our Earth, hearing from five leaders representing the voices of indigenous people, the youth, the poor and the wildlife of our planet followed by a discussion on how communities can work together to address climate change.

Cool Places of Worship Evening Meeting - The Letter: A message for Our Earth. Climate Crisis & Community Action
Date: 20th January 2023 6.30-8. 30p.m. Venue: Marriss House, University Centre, Birkenhead

We are holding an evening, in person meeting to bring together local councillors, community groups, students, University staff, places of worship and their eco teams to watch a community screening of The Letter, a film by Laudato Si' Movement featuring Pope Francis. People of all faiths and non are welcome to attend. Adults only, sorry. After the screening we will come together to discuss how our communities can work to address the issues raised.

Agenda

- 6.15 Registration
- 6.30 Welcome to the event Gill Reeves University Chaplin & Anne Litherland, Holy Apostles & Martyrs
- 6.35 The Letter Screening
- 7.55 Break with light refreshments
- 8.00 Group discussion: Action – what can you do: At home; In your community; At a national & global level
- 8.25 Prayer & Reflections
- 8.30 Finish event

Please share the invitation to this community screening with your friends and family.

Email zarah@faiths4change.org.uk or pre-book using this link bit.ly/CWTheLetter so we can plan refreshments.

Please contact us for accessibility needs so we can accommodate them. There is parking onsite, and the venue is close to Birkenhead bus station and Conway Park, Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Central Merseyrail stations.

We look forward to seeing you, Zarah Ross Faith and Climate Coordinator | Faiths4Change

(Work days Monday, Tuesday & Thursday) T: 0151 705 2108 /07511 869 659

www.faits4change.org.uk | facebook.com/faiths4change Twitter: [@faiths4change](https://twitter.com/faiths4change)

SEE ALSO: A Community Screening of the Letter 12 January 7pm – 9pm United Reformed Church, Antrobus St. Congleton CW12 1HE GB This film by Laudato Si' Movement features Pope Francis as the protagonist and among five leaders representing the voices of Indigenous people, the youth, the poor and the wildlife of our planet.

<https://actionnetwork.org/events/the-letter-film-how-spiritual-values-call-us-to-take-action-on-the-planetary-crisis-2?source=email> There will be a short introductions and light refreshments served at 7pm. After the showing of the film there will be time for you to reflect and share your thoughts and what actions we should be taking, as well as a Q&A. Karen Sutton: 07714447417

PRAYER VIGIL FOR PEACE

Saturday 14 January 2023, 8-9 pm St Alban's Church, Chester Rd, SK11 8DJ

None of us can be saved alone...

"We cannot continue to focus simply on preserving ourselves; rather, the time has come for all of us

- to endeavour to heal our society and our planet,
- to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and
- to commit ourselves to pursuing a good that is truly common."

(Pope Francis in World Peace Day Message 2023)

Although this year this Vigil falls just outside the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we hope other fellow Christians, members of other churches in Macclesfield and beyond, will be able to attend. Details: mcdavison@hotmail.co.uk

LONDON PRAYER VIGILS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED SEEKING SANCTUARY

The death toll of refugees attempting to seek asylum in the UK increases each week. A limited number of visas are being granted to people from Afghanistan and Ukraine, but there is no 'legal' way for people from other war-torn countries to apply for asylum here until they step on British soil. (The UK takes in just one per cent of the world's refugees at the present time, David Milliband head of the International Rescue Committee stated recently.)

A prayer vigil for those who have died seeking sanctuary takes place on the third Monday of each month - outside the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF from 12.30-1.30pm. All are welcome to join.

The next dates will be 16 January, 20 February and 20 March.

For more information contact: barbarakentish@talktalk.net

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46235>

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY SUNDAY ON 19 FEBRUARY 2023

Liam Purcell Church Action on Poverty writes: the worship and fundraising pack is now available for Church Action on Poverty Sunday on 19 February 2023. Read on to find out more and get your copy so you can be part of it.

Give, Act and Pray as part of the movement to unlock UK poverty

When people come together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power, we can make huge changes. In ourselves. In our communities. In the world.

Building a powerful movement to unlock poverty has never been more important. The cost of living crisis threatens to sweep millions into poverty, threatening their dignity and agency. No one should have to face the choice between heating and eating.

To prevent more people being swept deeper into poverty, it's vital that those of us affected have a say. Now more than ever, churches and communities need to stand together and uphold each other's dignity, agency and power.

On Church Action on Poverty Sunday, 19 February 2023, join with other churches across the UK in giving, action and prayer. Celebrate the transformational possibilities of people coming together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power.

Use our free worship resources to reflect and pray for change, and raise funds to enable more people like Gemma to speak truth to power.

Follow the link below to register and download your free worship and fundraising pack: <https://give.church-poverty.org.uk/page/115061/subscribe/1?ea.url.id=6175899>

LEGENDARY BRITISH FASHION DESIGNER AND ACTIVIST DAME VIVIENNE WESTWOOD 8/04/1941-29/12/2022

"Capitalism is a crime. It's the root cause of war, climate change and corruption.," The words of Dame Vivienne Westwood written in support of Climate Revolution. "It's the economy, stupid! U accept because u think there's no alternative. But we have hope (war is fought 4 land + cheap labour). Change the economy – NO MAN'S LAND. Start by renting use of land, ocean + air – target: sustainability + peace."

Westwood also committed her fashion house to reducing its contributions to climate change. In 2020, her spring/summer collection featured clothes made of organic cotton and natural flax, with thread that had been sourced from trees grown in managed forests.

Throughout the years, Westwood remained an outspoken voice social justice. IN 2005, she teamed up with the civil rights group Liberty to create a collection of t-shirts and baby wear with the slogan: "AM NOT A TERRORIST, please don't arrest me." The designer said the campaign defended habeas corpus.

She also campaigned for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), dedicated a fashion collection to activist and whistle-blower Chelsea Manning, and used her 2012 London Fashion Week shows to support Julian Assange and call for his release. In 2020, she protested his possible extradition to the US outside the Old Bailey, suspending herself in a giant birdcage outside the court.

Following her death many spoke of her kindness and lack of pretension.

DIARY

JANUARY

9 Balfour Project: Launch of “Abandoning Palestine” conference booklet with Layla Moran MP

Please join us on Monday 9 January at 6pm on Zoom for a 45-minute Balfour Project webinar with Layla Moran MP. Layla, our chair Andrew Whitley and trustee John McHugo will launch the Balfour Project booklet recording our 2022 conference “Abandoning Palestine: the end of the British Mandate and our continuing responsibility”. The booklet will be available on-line and in hard copy. They will discuss the prospects for Palestine/Israel in 2023, the role of the United Kingdom - past and present – and our plans for a major conference on 17 May on Equal Rights – 75 years on from Britain’s abandonment of Palestine, with all that entailed. To join the webinar, please click here to register: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_baD8CKtXTjODw-gJWaxzMg

PLEASE NOTE: As usual, the webinar recording will be on our website www.balfourproject.org by 10 January.

10 CWDF Forum meeting, 7pm at the Unity Centre. Gill Miller Professor Emerita in the Department of Geography at the University of Chester will give a talk highlighting key issues arising from the COP27 meetings in Egypt, titled "Loss and damage: understanding the dilemmas and decisions from COP27". 'Loss and damage' was a new element, introduced into international efforts to limit global heating at COP27, and Gill will explain broadly what it is, how it is intended to work, and how it will impact on developing countries.

12 A Community Screening of the Letter 7pm – 9pm United Reformed Church, Antrobus St. Congleton CW12 1HE GB This film by Laudato Si' Movement features Pope Francis as the protagonist and among five leaders representing the voices of Indigenous people, the youth, the poor and the wildlife of our planet. <https://actionnetwork.org/events/the-letter-film-how-spiritual-values-call-us-to-take-action-on-the-planetary-crisis-2?source=email&> There will be a short introductions and light refreshments served at 7pm. After the showing of the film there will be time for you to reflect and share your thoughts and what actions we should be taking, as well as a Q&A. Karen Sutton: 07714447417 ksutton55@outlook.com

13 CAFOD QUIZ in Our Lady's Parish Centre Ellesmere Port starting at 7.30pm. As usual there will be a raffle with good prizes and entry is still only £3 - contact Tony Walsh 0151 355 6419

14 PRAYER VIGIL FOR PEACE 8-9 pm St Alban’s Church, Chester Rd, Macclesfield SK11 8DJ (see above for details)

15 Peace Sunday see Pax Christi: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/>

18 -25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ‘Be-Longing: Praying for Unity amidst Injustice.’ <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023/>

20 Community screening of Screening of the Letter 6.30-8. 30p.m Venue: Marriss House, University Centre, Birkenhead – followed by discussion and action ideas. Email zarah@faiths4change.org.uk or pre-book using this link bit.ly/CWTheLetter so we can plan refreshments.

21 - March 6 Fairtrade Fortnight <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight-125> **4:30 to 5:30pm at the Best Building, University of Chester Parkgate Campus.**

Dr. Rich Waller, Senior Lecturer in Physical Geography at the University of Keele, will give a talk on “Contemporary Energy Crises and Sustainable Energy Futures”. All are welcome, and admission is free.

FEBRUARY

10 CAFOD QUIZ in Our Lady's Parish Centre Ellesmere Port see January 13 for details

19 Church Action on Poverty Sunday 2023 Give, Act and Pray as part of the movement to unlock UK poverty When people come together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power, we can make huge changes - in ourselves - in our communities and in the world. Building a powerful movement to unlock poverty has never been more important. The cost of living crisis threatens to sweep millions into poverty, threatening their dignity and agency. No one should have to face the choice between heating and eating. To prevent more people being swept deeper into poverty, it’s vital that those of us affected have a say. Now more than ever, churches and communities need to stand together and uphold each other’s dignity, agency and power. On Church Action on Poverty Sunday, we are invited to join with other churches across the UK in giving, action and prayer and to celebrate the transformational possibilities of people coming together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power. Use our free worship resources to reflect and pray for change, and raise funds to enable more people to speak truth to power. We’re looking for at least 150 churches across the UK to hold a special service or take a collection on Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Register here to be one of these: <https://churchpoverty.e-activist.com/page/115061/subscribe/1>

25 NJPN Networking Open Day The Cost of Living Crisis: living versus existing 10.45am for 11am–3.30pm on Zoom. Book via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/njpn-networking-day-tickets-466226314457>

MARCH

8 International Women’s Day #EmbraceEquity <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/2023Theme>

21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

22 World Water Day <https://www.worldwaterday.org/>

- Read the Winter issue of *MouthPeace* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Winter-Mouthpeace-2022-3.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