

# Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter

[www.birminghamjandp.org.uk](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk)



Issue 54

Summer 2023

## Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased as always to introduce our next Justice and Peace Newsletter. Its wide and varied contents have been submitted by members of the Commissions and others. I hope you will find something to inspire and challenge you.

I am particularly pleased to share the good news that Brian and Janice Austin who have for many years been active in social justice and justice and peace work in St Peters Leamington have been awarded the Papal Medal Bene Merenti. This is in recognition of the many and various ministries they have created and been involved in their parish and beyond.

For many years Brian has been a valuable and active member of the Justice and Peace Commission where we benefitted greatly from his organisational and others skills and enthusiasm and hard work. Many of you will remember their contribution to the organisations and running of our J&P Assemblies at St Peter's School Solihull.

They have now recently moved to Bristol and their awards will be formally presented in their new parish in Filton at the end of this month. I am sure we would want to congratulate them and wish them every blessing in the future. This newsletter has a tribute to their work at St Peters and in our diocese.

May the Lord bless and inspire us in all that we do. Fr. Gerard Murray (Chair)

## In this issue:

Comments on Forum held in May on

Catholic Social Teaching:	Page 2
West Midlands Pension Fund:	Page 3
Comments on J&P Retreat:	Page 3
Friends of the Holy Land:	Page 4
Catholics and God's animals:	Page 5
Sustainability? Survival or Shutdown:	Page 6
Congratulations to Cardinal School:	Page 7
Peace Picnic in Peace Orchard:	Page 7
Global Care:	Page 8
Plastic waste:	Page 9
Pax Christi AGM:	Page 11
Diocesan Vision: Unfolding God's Plan:	Page 13
CAFOD Schools Visiting:	Page 13
The Power of Forgiveness in Public Life	Page 14
Writing to my MP	Page 14
Horn of Africa	Page 15
Brian and Janice Austin	Page 16
Season of Creation 2023	Page 16

## Dates for your diary:

### Date for 2023

Monday 3rd July	Commission meeting,
21st—13rd July	NJPN
Monday 4th September	Annual Conference
Saturday 23rd September	Commission meeting,
Saturday 28th October	NJPN Birmingham
Monday 6th November	Our Assembly
Tuesday 21st November	Grimshaw Room
	St Chad's
	Birmingham
	B4 6EU
	Commission meeting,
	Discussion Forum 7pm
	All Justice and Peace Commission Meetings are
	held online via Zoom at 11am.
	The Forum meetings are also on Zoom at 7pm



## Comments on May's Justice and Peace Forum on Catholic Social Teaching

The Online Forum looked at whether the principles of Catholic Social Teaching were evident in our society today, and if not, what needs to be done by us, as Christians.

I quoted from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium' (E.G.), The Joy of the Gospel in which Pope Francis explains how we must proclaim the Gospel in today's world.

Three quotes were "To Evangelize is to make the Kingdom of God present in our world." E.G.183 "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society." E.G. 187

"This means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor." E.G. 188.

If anyone doubts that it is our duty as Christians to be involved in politics, in problems of our society today, then please read this document.

"The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission". from "The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" The principles of C.S.T. were outlined, together with definitions taken from the Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church

Human Dignity: "A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person". Gaudium et Spes

the Common Good: the principle of the Common Good stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people.

"The sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily." Gaudium et Spes

The Universal Destination of Goods: "God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity." Gaudium et Spes

The Preferential Option for the Poor: This Principle requires that the poor, the marginalized and in those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. Subsidiarity: "Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish themselves and give to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right orders to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do." Pius XI. Quadragesima Anno.

Participation: The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially as a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he belongs. Gaudium et Spes.

Solidarity: Solidarity highlights the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity. It is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the Common Good.

Stewardship: Care for our Common Home: Pope Francis has developed the Church's teachings in his Encyclical 'to Si'. He calls us to an ecological conversion.

Peace: Peace is a value and a universal duty founded on a rational and moral order of society that has its

roots in God himself, the first source of being, the essential truth and the supreme good.

Peace is not merely the absence of war, nor can it be reduced to a balance of power between enemies. Rather it is founded on a correct understanding of the human person and requires the establishment of an order based on justice and charity.

Besides these Principles the Church's Social Doctrine also indicates four fundamental values of Truth, Freedom, Justice and Love.

We went into small discussion groups to consider these principles, or the lack of these, in our society today. We highlighted the cost-of-living crisis; the National Health Service; the rhetoric and new laws around refugees; new laws restricting protests; expansion of fossil fuel licences; growth in inequality in society ( home ownership for young couples out of reach, expansion of numbers using foodbanks etc); the reduction in Governments commitment to Overseas Aid, were a few of the topics mentioned.

Of course, with such a wide-ranging subject, it was not possible to focus on just one area in society, but it is clear that we are all called to put these principles into our lives and into our society. We can really only do this through deepening our own prayer life and being open to the Holy Spirit.

protect the environment in one country while our money is being used to damage the environment in another.

When we say 'our money', we refer to the use of Council Tax revenues to fund the investments of the WMPF. Anyone paying the tax in the Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Solihull districts is inevitably contributing to the Fund's investments.

To return to the immediate problem. Valero Energy Corporation is in the refining business. It takes crude oil from the Amazonian rainforest in Ecuador, transports it to its refineries in California and sells the finished product in various ways. Some of it may make its way to your local Texaco filling station, since Valero now owns the brand name.

If you would like to add your support to the campaign to engage with Valero over its activities, the best way right now, as time is short, is to email – today - the Chair of the WMPF Pensions Committee. This committee oversees all aspects of the Fund's activities. It meets next Wednesday, June 21, at 1.30pm.

The Chair is Councillor Milkinderpal Jaspal of Wolverhampton District Council. Email contact: [milkinder.jaspal@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:milkinder.jaspal@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Phil Mayland June 2023.

Sent in by Paul McGowan

## **Urgent lobbying of the West Midlands Pension Fund**

A group of churches in Coventry has been lobbying our local Councillor/Trustee in relation to the WMPF's investments in the Valero Energy Corporation. We feel we have made some progress in this work, and would like to share it. Time is short, though, as I will explain.

Our group of churches has been committed for some time to responding in various ways to the urgency of the climate and environmental crisis. To name but one example, we have undertaken to support the work of a nature reserve in Belize, Central America. But we have become aware of how this commitment is being undercut by our investments in the extraction of crude oil from parts of the same region. It makes no sense to



## **Comments on the Justice and Peace Retreat**

Theme:  
The Fruits Of The Holy Spirit

Led by: Sister Brigid McNally, Sister of Mercy Handsworth

The Justice and Peace Commission held their annual retreat on 10th June at St. Paul's Convent, Selly Park. It was led by Sr. Brigid of the Sisters of Mercy, Handsworth who used the theme fruits of the Holy Spirit : love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

which are given to us all at Confirmation with the laying-on of hands and waiting for us to use as and when we need them.

The morning began by contemplating the story of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, cried out to Jesus to have pity on him. In response Jesus asks him 'What do you want me to do for you?' How often do we ask the same question as Bartimaeus? Do we really know what we are asking for? Bartimaeus wanted to see yet his life up to then had been one of sitting by the roadside with his begging bowl and cloak so what is he to do with his life now, how would he live? How would we live if all our requests were granted? Bartimaeus, as soon as his sight was restored left his cloak and begging bowl behind and followed Jesus - who was Himself on his final journey to Jerusalem. What would we have to leave behind us, do we have anything which lies between us and our following Jesus?

We then contemplated the story of the Bent Woman, Jesus curing a crippled woman on the Sabbath. Unlike Bartimaeus, the woman did not ask for help. Here was a woman bent double, could only see her feet and not the world around her, considered cursed by God and probably an embarrassment to friends and family alike, socially isolated yet is able to hold onto her faith enough to be prepared to go publicly to the synagogue on the Sabbath. How strong is our faith under our vulnerabilities and infirmities? Jesus saw the woman in the synagogue who had been bent double for 18 years, was filled with compassion and heals her. Jesus scandalises those present by crossing the synagogue to the woman's section and compounds this scandal by curing her on the Sabbath, the day of rest. How often do we use rules, regulations and custom to excuse ourselves from reaching out to others? How often do we live by the letter of the law rather than the spirit? Jesus points out to those present that they would take an ox or an ass to water on the Sabbath for its welfare thus implying that they are treating this woman less than an animal. He further raises her status by calling her a Daughter of Abraham. Do we perhaps look at social outcasts, those on the margin of society, those who are not quite like us and treat them less than they deserve instead of treating all with dignity as they too are children of Abraham, children of God?

Contemplation of these two events and how the fruits of the Holy Spirit could, and perhaps should, move us and

guide us in our actions, within the grounds of St. Paul's convent, with the sun shining down upon us, made this first face-to-face retreat for three years a holy, spiritual and memorable occasion.

The Justice and Peace Commission would like to thank all who attended and helped make the day so wonderful and a special thanks to Sr. Brigid for giving us her time and for her insightful words.

Let me walk with you on the journey, open your heart to me, share with me your story and you will come to see that I am always beside you, walking the way with you. I am always beside you, living my life through you.

Sent in by Barbara



## Friends of the Holy Land – School of Joy 25th Anniversary

Friends of the Holy Land's mission is to secure a resilient and enduring community for Christians in the birthplace of Christianity. One of the projects we support is the School of Joy.



School of Joy was founded by Father Mamdouh Abusada in 1998. He was working at a family centre in Bethlehem when parents started asking him for help. Their children were being excluded from schools who couldn't cope with them. They were saying they must go to a special needs school instead – but there weren't any of those. With no school place, these children would have no education and little hope for the future. In fact, many Palestinian children with disabilities end up as street children, roaming around



while their parents' work. In some cases, having a child with a disability carries a stigma and they can be abandoned or shut away at home alone. God put these children in Father Mamdouh's heart, and he began to research what it would take to start a specialist school for them. He wanted love and joy to be at its core – things these children had too often been missing. God opened a way through many challenges and School of Joy was born. In the first year, they had 13 students. This year there are 60. Some are behind in their education due to trauma or vision problems. Others have cerebral palsy, autism, severe dyslexia, or ADHD. Some travel 25 miles from Hebron to attend – because there's no other provision like this anywhere in the West Bank. You can read more about School of Joy's wonderful ministry at <https://www.friendsoftheholylnd.org.uk/school-of-joy>



School of Joy accepts children from all religious backgrounds with a range of conditions like cerebral palsy, autism, severe dyslexia, or ADHD – many of whom have been either orphaned, abandoned, neglected, or misunderstood. In the 25 years since the school opened its doors, 1,241 students have graduated. Some have been able to catch up and return to mainstream schooling after a couple of years, while others have stayed for special education. The staff help the children discover their talents and teach them skills that will help them support themselves. Many now have fulfilling careers – from olive wood carving to taxi driving, construction, floristry, and hairdressing. What they achieve thanks to School of Joy surprises and delights the local community, challenging their preconceptions.

School of Joy is the only specialist school provision in the West Bank and has a waiting list – but it still

receives no state funding and relies on Friends of the Holy Land's generosity to exist. Since 2020, grants from Friends of the Holy Land have been the only funding keeping the school operating. We don't want them to be worrying about funds as they celebrate their 25th year.

For more information on Friends of the Holy Land, please visit our website

[www.friendsoftheholylnd.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylnd.org.uk)



## Catholics and God's animals - report summary Barbara Niedźwiedzka

The original article is available here: <https://wiesz.pl/2023/05/12/katolicy-i-boze-zwierzeta/> and the full text of the report here: <https://kongreskk.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Katolicy-i-Boze-zwierzeta.pdf>

(below is an abridged version of the report)

A report entitled "Catholics and God's Animals. How We Fulfil the Task of Being Human," prepared in Poland by the "Care for Creation" team of the Reformist Congress of Catholic Women and Men, is not about animals. It's about us - humans, entrusted by God to care for the Earth, to cultivate it and care for His Creation (Gen. 2:15).

The current ecological crisis is a crisis of man's relationship with the rest of the created world. Christian integral ecology, in its diagnoses, demands and solutions, wants to repair these relations: it talks about how to prevent climate change, water shortages, pollution, biodiversity loss, it talks about the bad consequences for humans and societies of mismanagement of the Earth. However, it almost

completely ignores in his recommendations sentient animals, which not only need ecological caution, but also a completely different kind of care than rocks, streams and air. They need, like us, human sensitivity and morality.

In 2021, more than one billion animals were killed in Poland. Most of them lived in conditions contrary to their nature, in cages, in industrial halls, under stress, in suffering. In a year, hunters kill about 2.5 million wild animals in Poland: deer, roe deer, wild boar, birds. Still on short chains, starving dogs freeze in the Polish countryside in winter, and litters of puppies and cats are drowned or buried alive. Not a week goes by without the discovery of crimes against livestock. Foxes and minks are kept in small wire cages for their entire lives, and then they are yanked out of them and killed with electricity.

Still before Christmas, people incompetently kill mangled carp. The average prosecutor's office registers several to dozens of criminal cases for crimes against animals each year, 70 percent of which are dropped. What forms human cruelty can take, say two reports based on court and police documents: "How Poles Bully Animals" and "Unpunished. Crimes against animals" by Mr. Cat's Black Sheep Foundation and the Ekostraż Association. Everyone should read them, keeping in mind that crimes reported to law enforcement agencies are the tip of the iceberg.

### **A necessary change of heart**

Changing the way we think about our animal brothers and sisters, embracing them with compassion, moving away from arrogant exploitation, and stopping human evil with detailed moral guidelines are a necessity in the modern Church. At all levels of it.

People who, following Christ's instructions, believe that the weak, small and disadvantaged should be protected, believe it should be so for all sentient beings, even at the expense of their own self-restraint. Just as they were once in the vanguard of legislating human rights, now is the time for them to stand up for animal rights.

Human morality is developing all the time, and we know and understand more and more on our way to God's desired harmony and peace in Creation. After all, "creation eagerly awaits the manifestation of the

sons of God" (Romans 8:19-23). Without an end to harming animals, humanity will never get rid of aggression, the desire to dominate, and evil.

The report "Catholics and God's Animals. How We Fulfil the Task of Being Human" was created by Barbara Niedzwiedzka in cooperation with Barbara Bik, Grażyna Derlaga, Bartholomew Gardolinski, Małgorzata Hanzl, Andrzej Kozielski, Grzegorz Pienkowski, Marta Saratowicz, Joanna Zatylna Barbara Niedzwiedzka - member of the World Movement of Catholics for the Environment and the group Christians for Animals, PhD, editor and author of the "Ecology" section of the "Tygodnik Powszechny" clubs portal, coordinator of the group Concern for Creation of the Congress of Catholic Women and Catholics, author of the blog [www.OpowiedzZwierze.pl](http://www.OpowiedzZwierze.pl)

## **Sustainability? Survival or Shutdown**



Spaces available for 45th Annual NJPN Conference, Hayes, Swanwick from Friday 21 – Sunday 23 July.



The subtitle Survival or Shutdown presents each of us with the reality of the current state of our planet, the major challenges we face and the informed choices we must all make so that those who come after us may experience the beauty of creation, living secure and sustainable lives.

Following Conferences 2021 and 2022, Conference 2023 aims to continue the process of journeying in hope as we try to discern a more sustainable path to the future for all Creation. Brian O'Toole, Presentation Order's Justice Desk will be introducing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and making links with Laudato Si and Catholic Social Teaching.

Christine Allen, CAFOD, will be a keynote speaker on Saturday morning. There will also be a range of workshops and the Just Fair. (Look out for more details on each of the workshops on NJPN website) Sunday morning will be a period of discernment, a gathering together of strands that have emerged over the weekend, opportunity to listen, consider what shared actions could be taken individually and collectively. The hoped for outcome to be the producing and sharing of a statement as a guide for all until the next conference in 2024.

Anne Peacey 29 May 2023



## Congratulations to Cardinal School Coventry



Certificate of Membership

UNESCO Associated Schools Network

Cardinal Newman Catholic School  
Coventr, United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland

*Audrey Azoulay*

Audrey Azoulay  
Director General of UNESCO

June 2023



## Peace Picnic in Peace Orchard



Heart of England Rotary District 1060 Peace Officer Margaret Morley was invited by Cardinal Newman School in Coventry to attend their annual Peace Picnic in the Peace Orchard created by D'Day veteran Dennis Davison. As a D'Day veteran he wanted to leave a legacy to those who fought for peace in 1944. This is Margaret's report of the day.

"What an experience , I arrived to see a whole year of young people celebrating peace in so many ways. Poems were written and read out, songs were sung, games were played. Some just took the opportunity to sit and reflect. Peace was at the heart of the day. The whole atmosphere of the day was just wonderful. You could see the young people just loved it and the teachers had made something of it."



The picnics have been part of the school ethos for many years and as teacher Rhys Davies organiser of the day said “ The younger we start with young people to encourage them to think about peace and what it means the more hope we have for a better world and we can do this in so many ways”

Rhys is very keen to support Rotary in whatever way he can as he recognises we too are very keen to support Peace Education Initiatives. He was extremely appreciative of Coventry Phoenix Rotary Club as they presented them with a Peace Pole for their Peace Garden. He is also very keen to organise an event around this on International Peace Day in September.

Isn't it wonderful when we have people like Rhys that we can work with. as together we can achieve so much.

The Peace Orchard also offers Rotary so many opportunities to promote not only Peace but our Environmental projects too. They would welcome any support from Rotary. Look at the picture can you see the connections?



To find out more about their events and how we can support. They are linking up with Eden Project so could be good PR for us too.

[www.peaceorchard.co.uk](http://www.peaceorchard.co.uk)

Rotary will be providing a Peace Pole for the orchard.  
Margaret Morley Rotary Club Peace Officer



## Coventry's international children's charity Global Care is supporting a new project in Malawi, helping vulnerable teenage girls.

Despite supporting children in 43 countries over the last 40 years, Global Care has not previously worked in Malawi. As elsewhere, the charity has identified a grassroots Christian group with a passion for supporting vulnerable children in their own community and will come alongside them to develop their skills and capacity and help them grow their work.

The new partner is called Muthange CBO. Muthange came into being after members of the group met a 15-year-old girl who started having sex with a primary school teacher to get money to pay her secondary school fees. Determined to help prevent this abuse, they developed a mentoring programme for teenage girls and began giving school essentials to a tiny handful of children in one primary and two secondary schools.





Muthange have a particular focus on girls as they recognise their additional vulnerabilities, but also support some marginalised boys. They aim for a caseload of 70% girls, and also have a strong focus on children living in families affected by HIV/AIDS.

Now, thanks to their new partnership with Global Care, they are expanding their ministry to support more children with school fees and supplies, as well as improving the effectiveness of their mentoring programme by meeting the girls monthly instead of termly. They are also now launching a special termly gathering of up to 50 students, drawn from both secondary schools and identified in consultation with teachers.

Global Care is initially funding a 12-month pilot programme, equipping Muthange to provide school fees, uniform, shoes, a school bag and essential stationery for 30 children identified as especially vulnerable, across the three schools. Global Care will also cover the costs of all mentoring sessions and materials, including the new joint gathering, and associated transport costs.



The entire programme will cost a total of £9,528, funded through the charity's Children at Risk\* programme. At the end of the pilot year, Global Care will review the project, with a view to expanding into a new three-year partnership if appropriate.

CEO John White said: "We are very excited about the potential of this new partnership, in a country which

has long been on our hearts. We are also delighted to be able to start this initiative in our 40th anniversary year, during which we are focussing on the needs of marginalised girls worldwide\*\*. This is a timely – and awful – example of the very real need for this work, as the barriers preventing girls from accessing or continuing in education are greater than ever in our post-Covid world."

\*Children At Risk is a fund used to help children in crisis, to provide emergency medical care and to start new projects. Becoming a Children At Risk partner costs from just £3 per month.

[www.globalcare.org/children-at-risk](http://www.globalcare.org/children-at-risk)

\*\*Learn more about Global Care's 40th Anniversary Appeal in support of marginalised girls at [www.globalcare.org/girls](http://www.globalcare.org/girls)

Article sent in by Carolyn - Global Care



**Plastic waste**, when it appears on the surface of the sea or at the side of a road, is a problem that's easy to recognise. Much more plastic is made each year than can be safely absorbed by the systems built to recycle it, and the result is mounting pollution. Talks are under way in Paris this week to agree the terms of an international treaty which could do something about this issue.

What is often overlooked, however, is the plastic industry's role in fuelling climate change. A study published in 2019 found that making, using and disposing of plastic accounts for 3.8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

"That's [almost double the emissions of the aviation sector](#)," says Laurie Wright, a senior lecturer in sustainability at Solent University. "If it were a country, the 'Plastic Kingdom' would be the fifth-highest emitter in the world."

You're reading the Imagine newsletter – a weekly synthesis of academic insight on solutions to climate change, brought to you by The Conversation. I'm Jack Marley, energy and environment editor. This week we're discussing what plastic pollution and climate change have in common.

Every stage of a plastic product's lifecycle can be a potential source of climate-damaging emissions, Wright explains.

More than 99% of plastic starts life as petroleum or natural gas, and is refined by the petrochemical industry using a process which releases carbon dioxide and methane to form basic plastic building blocks such as ethylene. Transporting this resin consumes fuel, and so also generates emissions. These steps account for 61% of the total emissions originating from plastic. A further 30% is emitted while making the plastic bags, bottles and other items we use each day. The remainder is released when plastic is thrown away. It can take centuries for plastic to decompose and slowly return its stored carbon (and other harmful chemicals) to the atmosphere. But when this waste is incinerated, as a lot of landfill waste is, the process is dramatically sped up.

Petrochemical firms at the plastic treaty negotiations favour an agreement that would aim to recycle all of that waste. But researchers like Cressida Bowyer, who studies plastic pollution at the University of Portsmouth, are sceptical.



"Only 6-9% of all plastic ever produced has been sent for recycling," she says, writing with fellow Portsmouth academics Keiron Roberts and Stephanie Northen. "Although plastic and other waste is collected for recycling in most countries, the amount of material that is remade into the same or similar products (what is called closed-loop recycling) is extremely low.

["Only 2% of plastic waste is recycled"](#) in a closed loop and not turned into something of lower quality, which is called downcycling. Recycling cannot fully replace virgin material as it can only be recycled twice before losing necessary properties, and so most recycling results in a downgraded material that cannot be used for the same purpose."

Not only would ramping up recycling fail to curb the greenhouse gas emissions from making all that plastic, attempting to recycle it could create other kinds of pollution, the team point out. A recent study highlighted how recycling facilities can release hundreds of tonnes of microplastics each year. Another report showed how attempting to recycle plastics containing toxic additives can contaminate subsequent batches.

Pascal Scherrer, a senior lecturer in environmental science at Southern Cross University in Australia, argues that there are more reasons to be [wary of recycling](#) as a supposed solution to the plastic problem.

"I explore opportunities to reduce plastic waste in sectors such as tourism, hospitality and meat production," he says. "I know how quickly we could make big changes. But I've also seen how quick-fix solutions can create complex future problems. So we must proceed with caution."

One example is swapping wood for recycled plastic. Trading a material which would otherwise be a living tree keeping carbon out of the atmosphere for something made from an abundant waste product sounds ideal. No wonder benches, tables and bollards are increasingly made from recycled plastic. But, Scherrer cautions, wood is at least biodegradable. Plastic, even when it has been recycled, breaks down into smaller and smaller fragments which now contaminate virtually every environment on Earth – including the human blood stream.

Bowyer, Roberts and Northen suggest that the simplest solution to all this pollution is also the best: stop making so much plastic in the first place. Extending the lifespan of the average plastic item by reusing it can also help reduce demand for more plastic.



"Manufacturers must stop making so much unnecessary plastic to reduce the amount entering the economy," they say.

"There is no case for making plastics that are impossible to collect, reuse or recycle, or are toxic. Yet they are abundant: think multilayered sachets, thin films and wrappers. These should be phased out as a priority."

As with the fossil fuel industry and climate change, petrochemical companies are unlikely to willingly make and sell less of their product to reduce pollution. And the parallels between the two problems don't end there, according to Deirdre McKay, a reader in geography and environmental politics at Keele University.

"The environment appears to be drowning in plastic for the same reason that global temperatures continue to rise – fossil fuels have remained cheap and abundant," she says.

The advent of hydraulic fracturing (better known as fracking) to acquire fossil fuels such as shale gas during the first decade of the 21st century made the raw materials for plastic manufacturing significantly cheaper, McKay explains. The result has been a glut of plastic packaging on supermarket shelves that is difficult to recycle and overwhelmingly ends up in landfill, incinerators – or the environment.

As oil demand wanes with the rise of electric vehicles, McKay warns that fossil fuel companies will pivot to producing plastic instead – with all the greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution such a move entails. "Concern about plastic pollution isn't distracting people from a more serious problem – plastic is the problem. If we see plastics as ['solid climate change'](#), they become central to the climate crisis."

Jack Marley, Environment commissioning editor



The vast majority of used plastic ends up as waste. EPA-EFE/Sedat Suna



## Pax Christi AGM - Remaining faithful to the peace movement

Archbishop Malcom McMahon of Liverpool, President of Pax Christi England and Wales, encouraged members at their AGM in London on Saturday to "remain faithful to Christ's teaching and to the peace movement." He complimented the staff and executive for work on such issues as the war in Ukraine and added that "it's so important that we keep going and don't give up."



Archbishop Malcolm McMahon.  
Image ICN/JS

Representatives of the National Justice and Peace Network, Christian CND, Sisters of St Joseph of Peace and Columbans joined individual members hearing him remember Bruce Kent who died a year ago and was "much loved" and dedicated to supporting Pax Christi's work.



In the Chair's Report, Ann Farr lamented the refusal of UK government to turn from nuclear weapons and indeed bringing back US weapons to the UK. She highlighted speaking out against violations of international law in the Holy Land, and spotlighting arms trading. She called for new members to join Pax Christi at a time of its recovery from the impact of Covid, and welcomed Andrew Jackson who became the new Chief Executive Officer in late 2022. A message from secretary general of Pax Christi International, Martha Inés Romero, offered best wishes for a "fruitful assembly".

Andrew Jackson and Joan Sharples reported on the July 2022 National Justice and Peace Network Conference which 23 Pax Christi members attended and the commemorations of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear attacks in August. On Peace Sunday 2023 not only did members promote Pope Francis' message in parishes, but Masses for peace were celebrated at the cathedrals of Southwark, Birmingham, Middlesbrough, Lancaster and Liverpool. Ash Wednesday saw a national online witness with Christian CND.

In Liverpool, members processed to the Town Hall, asking that Liverpool should become a Nuclear Ban City. Pax Christi joined colleagues in the Network of Christian Peace Organisations in signing and delivering a letter to the Foreign Secretary urging the UK Government to engage more effectively with the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The 60th anniversary of 'Pacem in Terris' was marked, alongside CAFOD.

The Administration and Finance Manager, Fausta Valentine, reported that 12 percent of Pax Christi's income is from January's Peace Sunday and 20 dioceses out of 22 in England and Wales contributed. Valerie Flessati was thanked for producing Peace Sunday materials. Further income is from legacy gifts, grants and other donations. It was much appreciated that some schools and parishes purchased crosses from Bethlehem for their leavers and Confirmation groups. Nonviolence prayer cards have also been popular as gifts for young people.

Aisling Griffin, Pax Christi's Schools and Youth Education Officer, visited 15 schools across seven dioceses during the year, reaching around 1,500 young people. There was a Faith in Action Day with schools in Northampton Diocese, a Peace Day with an

academy in Birmingham and a Confirmation Retreat in a London parish. She joined the Columbans, Religious of the Assumption and Million Minutes to run a lunchtime activity at the Flame Conference of the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation in March and produced four Peace Education e-bulletins.

In April Aisling joined colleagues from Quakers in Britain and ForcesWatch to represent the Peace Education Network on a stall at the National Education Union's annual conference in Harrogate. Pax Christi also took part with other faith organisations in 'The Big One' climate protest weekend in London, raising the inter-connectedness of climate change and conflict. The Pax Christi website offers extensive resources on peace education.

After the formalities of the AGM, Archbishop McMahon presented Pax Christi Peace Awards 2023 to four UK peacemakers: Sally Reynolds, Jennifer Rowlands, Janette Harper and Martin Birdseye.

Each received a medal created by Natasha Ratcliffe and is called the P.E.A.C.E. (Please Engage All Communities on Earth) medal. On one side it has the image of a person's face with a bird carrying a sprig of foliage. On the reverse is the tree of life.

Sally Reynolds was a founder member of the Abingdon Peace Group in the 1980s and has organised events and campaigning actions over four decades. She said, "thank you for thinking of me and for all your work to encourage a culture of peace."

Jennifer Rowlands is currently Head of Religious Studies at Bellerive Catholic College, Liverpool and is a longstanding member of Pax Christi. She said, "I see peace education as an incredibly important part of my work as a teacher."

Janette Harper is active with Pax Christi Liverpool, organising speakers, film nights, petitions and letters to MPs and running stalls. She has campaigned for Liverpool to become a nuclear free zone. She ensures the Liverpool group works with Liverpool Friends of Palestine to send cards to Palestinian Parishes as an act of solidarity.

Martin Birdseye is a longstanding member of Pax Christi and a dedicated campaigner with Christian CND. He created and disseminated 'The Nuclear Morality Flowchart' which helps people decide where they stand on nuclear weapons and to make national decision makers more accountable.

The AGM was held at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in Shaftsbury Avenue. Around 25 people attended in person and another 28 took part online. See more pictures on ICN's Facebook page.

#### LINKS

Pax Christi England and Wales:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/>

Morality of Nuclear Deterrent:

<https://nuclearmorality.com/>



Jo Siedlecka



## Diocesan Vision: Unfolding God's Plan.

Recently, in our Deanery, we have been looking at the Archbishop's Vision for the Diocese. I have been privileged to assist a couple of colleagues in preparing and delivering three sessions which we hope will inspire parishes to continue to develop their own journeys towards seeing the Vision reach fulfilment.

The Vision states "Our Vision is to be a Catholic Diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour."

Archbishop Bernard began this process in summer 2021. As we came out of the pandemic, we were asked to take part in the Synod. Some parishes were able to begin and fully participate in the synodal process, some were not and only did a little, some not at all. What matters is that a similar process needs to happen in our parishes now.

From the document The Diocesan Vision: Unfolding God's Plan: "The recent Synod encouraged us to look anew at our Church, in a spirit of discernment, with every Catholic being co-responsible with the clergy for the depth of our Communion, Participation and Mission. This meant a prayerful examination of our own discipleship, with the aim of us working together to become missionary parishes, and therefore a missionary Church."

We are asked to prayerfully look at our own parish. We are asked to consider the four pillars of Evangelisation, Formation, Liturgy and Worship, and Social Outreach, with special focus on families and young people and also, co-responsibility. What more can be done in each of these. We are further encouraged to examine the 'culture' of our parish, and to make necessary changes, whatever these may be.

We do need to face up to the fact that "our priests will be asked to serve more and more communities, and so it is likely that Leadership Groups or Parish Pastoral Councils need to be considered more broadly across the Archdiocese".

I am excited by Archbishop Bernard's Vision. It is not the role of the priest to undertake every part of the Church's Mission. We all have to accept our responsibilities as well. My view is we do need to understand a lot more about Evangelisation, by reading and studying the suggested writings which are on the website, but especially, *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of The Gospel. This is Formation, my Formation.

I will close with Archbishop Bernard's own words: "I will ensure that priests, deacons, Religious and lay faithful are supported to work together in true partnership, being co-responsible, for the mission of the Church and deepening our relationship with God. Clergy and laity working side by side using their unique talents to create those vibrant and joyful communities."

For much more, visit the Diocesan website Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham ([birminghamdiocese.org.uk](http://birminghamdiocese.org.uk))



## CAFOD Schools Visiting

I have been a CAFOD Schools Volunteer for a number of years now. I have found it exciting, interesting and very rewarding. When I was asked to join a team of School Visitors, I thought this could be something I can do. I wondered about what exactly I would need to prepare and how much time I would need to devote to this. The CAFOD Education Team are really wonderful. We have regular briefings, online or in-person, (my choice), where we are kept informed of the work done in the previous term, we can raise and discuss any problems that may have arisen and share our experiences. We are shown the material for the next terms assemblies, and/or workshops, and we are given the background to the materials which gives us confidence in talking about the topics.

The local CAFOD Diocesan team write to schools offering visits, and then I follow up to check if a school wants a visit and then make the necessary arrangements about dates and time. For each visit, I send a feedback form for the school to complete, and I complete my own feedback form. These are useful to make sure there is a record of the visit and how it went.

During the last two years CAFOD have provided the materials for workshops about Catholic Social Teaching. These have proved to be very popular, and credit needs to go to the Education Team for providing such wonderful materials. (I never imagined that I could present a workshop for 4- and 5-year-olds talking about Human Dignity).

“The children were extremely engaged whilst answering questions, collaborating in discussion during and after the Assembly.” “This Session will be a catalyst for our Discipleship Team and whole school discussion into a range of CST related activities.”

You do not have to be a retired teacher to become a Schools Volunteer. Anyone who is interested in supporting CAFOD and passing on our values can become a Schools Visitor. The training and support is there. Unfortunately, there are schools in our Archdiocese who do not receive these visits because there are not enough volunteers. Is this something you may be interested in? If so, contact the CAFOD Birmingham Office on 01922 722 944 or email [birmingham@cafod.org.uk](mailto:birmingham@cafod.org.uk)

**CAFOD**  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development



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How many times have you said, “I’m going to write to my MP about this”, but you have not done so? Perhaps you have never written to your MP and are worried about doing so.

It is very important that our MP or Councillor knows what we care about, even if s/he doesn't agree with us. S/he is our representative and we will be raising awareness and understanding of our issue with him/her. We will be encouraging them to support policies and activities that need to be improved or changed for the better.

14



When you write, write about one single topic, and make it short and sweet, i.e. be concise and be polite, and write to the point. Angry or abusive language is counter-productive; you don't want to be labelled as one of the 'eco-mob'. Use your own words; copied and pasted identical messages could be ignored or even blocked.

You don't need to be an expert. Obviously, you need to show that you know what you are talking about, so do a bit of homework before you write, but today it is so much easier to research your topic using the internet, especially with sites that you trust, such as reliable non-governmental organizations. Some of these are listed below.

In addition, you can find out about what your MP supports, at another mySociety site: [www.theyworkforyou.com/mps](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/mps), which may be helpful to know.

Last but not least, ask your MP to do something specific for you, e.g. give your support to the Climate and Energy Bill; or urge the Minister for Energy to ... ; or explain what the Government is doing about ..., etc. Your letters and emails to MPs will have a huge impact, especially if you personalise them and say why you care about the issue. They know that if one constituent writes to them on an issue, there are at least ten others who care about it, but who don't put pen to paper.

Some sources of information:

On climate change: [www.theclimatecoalition.org](http://www.theclimatecoalition.org) ;

<https://christianclimateaction.org/>

On environmental issues: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>

On animal suffering: <https://www.peta.org.uk/issues/>;

<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/>

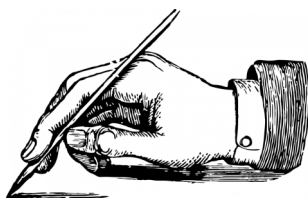
On environmental justice:

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/>

We hope this helps.

[Sources for this article: mySociety and CAFOD].

Brian Austin, for Laudato Si' Animators' Writing Group  
27th June, 2023



**LAUDATO SI'  
MOVEMENT**  
Catholics for Our Common Home

**CAFOD**  
Just one world



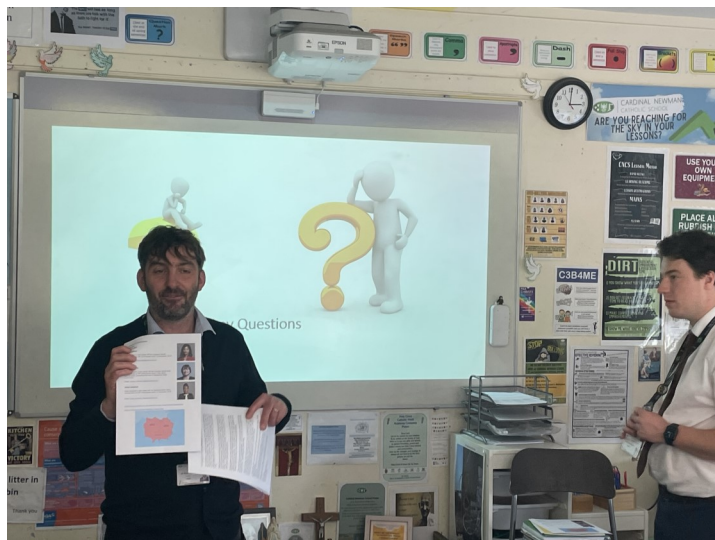
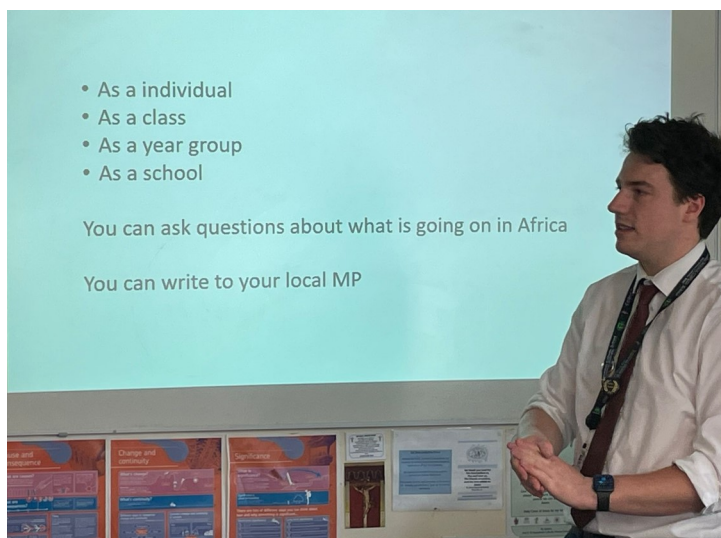
## Horn of Africa

A group of students at Cardinal Newman School in Coventry attended a talk on the plight of the people in the Horn of Africa. At the start of the talk, Janet tried to link together Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Francis Laudato Si', the work of CAFOD and One Champaign. During the talk they watched part of a zoom meeting with Rose in Pabbo Uganda. Where she talked about the effects of Climate Change.

<https://youtu.be/9M5dGSltpxw>

At the end of the talk the students were encouraged to write to their MP's and to invite their local MP's into the school.

Thanks to Mr Alfred McMillan: Lay Chaplain and Teacher of History: Mr Rhys Davies who organised the event.





## BRIAN AND JANICE AUSTIN

On 23rd July Brian and Janice Austin will both be awarded the Bene Merenti medal for their many and various ministries within the Church over many years.

This award is so richly deserved and many in the Diocesan Justice and Peace Community will be very aware of their dedicated service. In putting together this information in Leamington we were astonished at the extent of their work.

From their marriage they belonged to the Christian Life Community and their inspiration came from Ignation spirituality, bringing their faith into the everyday and making their calling to serve Christ in the home, at work in the parish and local community and very much in their work for Justice and Peace.

As teachers they inspired their pupils in science and the natural world, in their family they led by example, bearing much fruit with their children, at Church they were active in many roles, particularly music in the liturgies, the Baptism group and promoting and expanding the work of CLC. They started the first group in Leamington which rose to 5 groups at their peak. Nationally they served as President, Treasurer, and many supporting roles attending many national and international events

In the Leamington community they were part of One World Link, which established links with Bo, in Sierra Leone, taking part in exchanges and work with schools to encourage understanding between countries and cultures. When they retired from teaching they upped a gear! They started a Justice and Peace group at St Peter's, raising awareness of the many issues of concern through liturgies and events, sending cards to prisoners of conscience, making the Church a Fair Trade Church, and promoting CAFOD. In 2014 St Peter's became a 'Live simply' Church, the first in the Diocese through their efforts and Brian has become a champion for 'Laudato Si'.

In 2009 they instigated a Poverty and Homelessness forum from which sprung a partnership with the Salvation Army which has lasted until recently whereby the 'Saturday Friendship Group' supported the work of the local drop in for homeless and vulnerable people with money and volunteers.

Brian has worked with the Justice and Peace Commission over many years and his many skills with computer expertise have been used, and they have both used their communication and organisational skills to the full. Many people attest to their power to inspire and encourage others. Their energy and dedication shone through whatever activity they undertook, always self-critical, pushing for the best that could be achieved in whatever field.

As they have moved to Bristol to be near their family, we miss them and say a heartfelt 'Thank you' for

inspiring us and enabling us to try to carry on the work they started. Work continues in Bristol as they are working with the CAFOD group in their church.

As Brian and Janice say ' God has no hands but ours',  
God bless you both.



## Season of Creation 2023

### Let Justice and Peace Flow

"Let Justice and Peace Flow" is the theme chosen for Season of Creation 2023, the ecumenical celebration we hold each year from September 1, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

Are you making any preparations to celebrate this Season? If not, Why not? May I suggest you begin by reading Pope Francis' message for this Season. It can be found here: [Pope Francis' Message for Creation Day 2023 - Laudato Si' Movement](#)

<https://laudatosimovement.org/>



How can we honour this Season? First, do we need to be convinced that we are in the middle of the most serious threat to our existence? The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, the world's leading scientists, have consistently warned us that action need to be taken and time has almost run out. People are dying because of climate change. Hunger is increasing because of climate change.

Do we need to be convinced that we are in the middle of a World Extinction? The number of species which have been declared extinct in recent years is increasing. The number of species which have been added to the endangered lists is increasing.



This is God's Creation. We are destroying God's Creation. We, in the Western, developed, post-industrial world, have to accept our responsibility for our part.

This Season of Creation, can you do some simple things? Each week, at the beginning of Mass, can we acknowledge this responsibility and ask for forgiveness during the Penitential Act. Ask your parish priest to specifically mention this. Can we include in the Bidding Prayers a petition about one aspect of this crisis?

Can your parish arrange for a special Vigil for Creation? There are a number of formats which have been prepared which can be found. Our Commission will be presenting one such for the whole Archdiocese which will be available shortly. Perhaps your prayer groups can arrange to pray especially for Creation. May I recommend offering the Rosary for Creation. The Season closes on October 4th, the Feast of St Francis. Perhaps you and your parish could pray this Novena to St Francis? <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/novena-to-st-francis>

There are other forms of Novena to St Francis which can be found online.

Eight years ago, Pope Francis published Laudato Si', on Care for our Common Home, his encyclical addressed to you, to every person on the planet. Have you read it? Can you begin a study group to read through this wonderful and inspiring letter?

And finally, these suggestions are not exhaustive. Visit the Season of Creation website, and others for more ideas. My last suggestion is watch the film [The Letter](#), produced by the Laudato Si Movement. Arrange to show this film to your parish.

Phil Mayland June 2023

## Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.



<https://seasonofcreation.org/>



If you have a contribution you would like included in the **June 2023** newsletter please send it by Email for consideration to:

The Administrator, J&P Commission.

Email: [admin.jandp@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:admin.jandp@rcaob.org.uk)

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*The views expressed in this newsletter are the view of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission or the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.*

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