



Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Justice and Peace News

Autumn 2023

Welcome to the Autumn 2023 newsletter from the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council.

Articles in this newsletter are as follows:

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2. World Week for Peace in Palestine.....Pat Devlin
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5. The Season of Creation 2023 Let Justice and Peace FlowChris Myers
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We regularly update our webpage on the Diocesan website. This can be accessed by going to our page on the [Diocesan website](#).

You are receiving this newsletter because you have signed up in the past to receive information from the Justice and Peace Co-Ordinating Council. If you no longer wish to receive this please contact me at lizarchibald.justiceandpeace@gmail.com.

We do not share your details with any other person or group

1. Justice and Peace Network “is needed more than ever before”



Eleven people from our diocese joined over 150 Justice and Peace advocates from across the country at the Hayes Centre in Swanwick over the weekend of July 21-23 for the annual National Justice and Peace conference. We had a great time and returned home energised and encouraged. The theme was “Sustainability or Shutdown” and the aim was to highlight social justice issues, structural injustice, climate change, conflict, and migration and look at how our behaviour can bring about positive outcomes.

Please read the media release below for a summary but I would urge everyone to watch all the recordings of the talks via the NJPN website <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

“Our Network is needed more than ever before,” a former MP and Minister of State at the Foreign Office told the annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales. In a talk entitled, ‘Advocacy and Faith Action’, Sir John Battle, an NJPN patron and activist with Leeds Justice and Peace, said, “we need to shift from charitable action to challenging the causes of injustice in line with the preferential option for the poor.”

The 45th annual conference addressed issues crucial to the common good and the well-being of the natural world, with a particular focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Commitments at the end included lobbying politicians and leaders in general, involving the Bishops’ Conference, to remind the UK government of its promises in terms of the SDG goals. “No new oil, coal and gas” was another call and a promise to live more simply as individuals and in our communities.

“Work for justice is part of preaching the Gospel.” Christine Allen, Executive Director of CAFOD said in her presentation. Christine works closely with partners around the world, putting the SDGs into practice. A video was played of partner Caritas Brazil, which was founded by Dom Helder Camara, which embraces the SDG principle of ‘leave no one behind’. Caritas Brazil works to tackle social injustice and defend indigenous populations, “who are the primary guardians of forests and rivers,” and promotes the rights of nature as well as human rights. Christine also gave examples of CAFOD’s work with partners in drought stricken Marsabit, Northern Kenya and in DR Congo with victims of sexual violence in the context of conflict. All of this was applauded by participants.

In another presentation, Brian O’Toole, Director of the Presentation Sisters Justice Desk for Ireland and England, said the International Presentation Association is committed “to respond to ‘the cry of the Earth and to people kept poor’ and it is doing this by embracing the SDGs in a human rights

framework, addressing such issues as women and children, care of creation and indigenous peoples.

The weekend included a screening of 'The Letter' film. It follows the stories of front-line environmental champions from around the world, each of whom is facing the effects of our planetary crisis, as they come into dialogue with each other and Pope Francis and build new bonds to face the future with hope. A 'Just Fair' hosted more than 20 stalls, including Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Justice for Palestine, and Global Justice Now. Ecumenical partners included Christians Aware, Christian Climate Action, Green Christian and Church Action on Poverty.

Of the 12 workshops, Columban Missionaries explored responses to people seeking asylum in the UK in the light of the Illegal Immigration Bill. Westminster J&P introduced materials for bring the Season of Creation into the life of parishes and schools. Other workshops included, 'Farming in the Future', 'How can we answer Pope Francis's call to live more simply', and 'Being peacemakers in time of war'.

The conference chair was Anne Peacey of Hallam Diocese, vice chair of NJPN. The Conference Mass was celebrated by Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, Chair of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission, accompanied by Columban Fr Ed O'Connell. Fr Dominic highlighted the Hope that Justice and Peace work brings. He talked about "the huge amount of good work going on", singling out support for asylum seekers and people in need of food banks and advocacy on decarbonisation, "but we need more". He called for more integration with local Catholic communities.

The Liturgy was led by the Lay Community of St Benedict, and involved children's contribution of artwork, and hymns with a strong theme of social and environmental justice.

Fr Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development sent a video message to the conference urging participants to promote the SDGs and the Laudato Si Action Platform. "May justice and peace embrace so that the life of all can flourish," he said. Tomas Insua of the Laudato Si Movement in Assisi said in a second video message that, "the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth are deeply connected, and I hope this gathering motivates action for our common home, particularly during the Season of Creation in the Autumn."

Almost eight years have passed since the international community agreed to take bold and transformative steps to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a UN plan to end poverty while protecting the planet. Yet, only about 12% of SDG goals are on track to be achieved by 2030. The international UN [SDG Summit](#), in September 2023, must mobilise the political commitment and breakthroughs our world desperately needs. The NJPN conference showed how people of faith can support that process.

The overall message of the conference was one of Hope. Participants were urged to bring hope by advocating back in their dioceses for the political will to take human rights and sustainability more seriously.

2. World Week for Peace in Palestine & Israel

Sept 16th- 23rd

'No place to lay my head'

During the week the huge increase in demolitions and confiscation of land and property with particular attention to the situation in East Jerusalem was highlighted.

In 2022, 959 Palestinian structures were demolished. In the 1st quarter of this year the figure for East Jerusalem had doubled

A snapshot of the rising Death Toll in the West Bank

At the beginning of August two Palestinian boys, Mohammad Farid al-Za'areer and Mahmoud Abu Sa'n were killed by Israeli forces. Mahmoud Abu Sa'n, was killed from point blank range at the Nour Shams refugee camp, east of Tulkarm. Mohammad Farid al-Za'areer was killed near the illegal Israeli settlement of Shim'a close to Hebron. According to local Palestinian sources Za'areer was one of the top students in his class and had just finished the 9th grade.

On Friday the 4th of August, A mob of armed Israeli settlers stormed Burqa east of Ramallah, torching at least two cars and opening fire at Palestinians who were there. Qusai Jamal Ma'atan, aged 19, he was shot dead by the armed settlers and four other Palestinians were wounded. This marks another death of a young Palestinian by armed settlers this year.

On Tuesday the 15th of August, Israeli forces invaded Aqabat Jabr refugee camp in the city of Jericho and shot 16-year-old Qusay Al-Walaji and Mohammed Nujoom, 25-years-old. Al-Walaji and Nujoom eventually died from their wounds.

This brings the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces so far this year to 216.

'A Secret File': Palestinians in Israeli military court

The use of administrative detention has soared under Israel's new ultranationalist government and National Security Minister, Ben Gvir, has pledged to further worsen conditions for Palestinian detainees. For the past few weeks, a total of 13 Palestinian detainees remain on

an open-ended hunger strike. This is in protest of their unfair administrative detention under Israel's so-called administrative detention policy. According to B'Tselem, (the Israeli Information Centre for human Rights in the Occupied Territories) 2023 has been the year with the most Palestinians in administrative detention since 2003.

Follow the link below to read an Ecumenical Accompanier's account of visiting a military court in the West Bank and the travesty of justice she witnessed there - it echoes very closely my own experience in a military court in 2014,-

Please don't forget the urgent actions at the end!

[Click to read now](#)



3. Justice and Peace Refugee Project Appeal

For more than 21 years the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle has provided basic support for those seeking asylum and refuge in our community. It currently supports over 535 asylum seeker individuals and their families each month. The clients who come to the project are people who are making a claim to stay in Britain because of fear of persecution, violence or threats to their safety in their home country.

Many are facing extreme financial hardship, instability, vulnerability and isolation while they wait for a government decision on whether they can get 'leave to remain' or not. During this time, they are provided by the government with the most basic housing and a very small weekly subsidy, but they are unable to work and have no access to any other public funds. So, there are many families who do not have enough food on the table.

In addition to providing clients with a safe and welcoming space, the service provides:

- Food bags and toiletries
- A place to socialise and access free Wi-Fi
- Informal English lessons
- Signposting to other sources of support.
- Access to second-hand clothing, footwear, blankets, homeware and other essentials –the SVP supports the project with this.

In addition, monthly supermarket vouchers are provided to people who have exhausted all possible claims, have had government support withdrawn and are effectively destitute.

The vast majority of the items and financial support that we provide are generously donated by parishes, schools and individuals and without the support of donors, the project would simply not be possible. We are currently facing increasing demands for our service, with new clients registering every week and resources in short supply. So, the project really does need your help.

The full list of items that are needed is available here:

<https://diocesehn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Requested-Donations-List-2022-Nov-2022.pdf>

More details of our work and details of our bank account/ how to donate can be found on our webpage at:

<https://diocesehn.org.uk/services/caritas/justice-peace-refugee-project/>

We live in a troubled world where people are having to flee from persecution and danger on a daily basis. But your support could really help those in very difficult situations.

4. Inter faith Prayer Vigils at the Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

I first heard of the proposed Immigration Removal Centre at Medomsley in a zoom meeting I was having with Asylum Matters back in 2021.

The then proposed centre would be for 80 women whose right to claim asylum and had been refused and who were waiting to be removed to their place of origin. They would be placed in a detention centre. Unlike a prison, people can be held in a detention centre indefinitely...the thought of women who may well have been traumatised, trafficked and exploited ending up being held in such conditions appalled me.

I heard witness from women who had been detained who explained the horrific toll it takes on their mental health and wellbeing. I had supported a woman in detention by phone during the pandemic and know the unbearable effect it had on her. I also know that other ways of treating people due to be returned to their country of origin without using detention centres have been trialled successfully so there is an alternative.

The words of one of the people I knew through our refugee project who was returned forcibly to Albania haunts me "Bad things happened to me there Liz. . I just cannot return". That had really brought home to me that just because a country is deemed "safe" by our government, it does not mean it's safe for everyone.

The thought that a detention centre was being opened not 20 miles away from where I live appalled me. Pope Francis asks us to make the stranger welcome. If I call myself a Christian I just knew that I had to do something.

So, I joined the NoTo Hassockfield campaign (Hassockfield was the original name of the centre) but along with others in the J and P network we felt challenged to do something in addition. We felt we could do something extra...we could pray....so we then decided to hold a prayer vigil. At first it was online due to the pandemic restrictions but since August 2021 we have held them in person. We have always felt the prayer vigils should be interfaith: the major world religions all speak of welcoming the stranger and as people of Faith that is something we all have in common.

So now, 2 years later we are still meeting at 3 pm on the first Sunday of every month at the barrier to the renamed centre: Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre which fully opened a year ago. We have a prayer vigil, lasting about 45 minutes, which has been put together by a small group of our participants. We usually have between 30 and 40 people in attendance from a wide range of Christian denominations, Quakers and people from the Jewish faith. We would like to expand the participants to include people of other faiths and are always looking to develop contacts from people in other Faith traditions.

As well as praying, we collect toiletries and cash for phone cards for the women in detention and try to get updates on the current situation so we can inform people of any developments. One interesting fact is that when we started, we used to get some abuse from passing cars: now we are much more likely to get encouragement.

It is wonderful to meet with others at the vigils. In a worsening hostile environment for people seeking asylum, it gives me hope that I can meet with others once a month and stand united in prayer for a better, more tolerant world. We will never know the full effect of what we do. But we know that by doing this small act we can commit the women to the care of our Lord and God, raise awareness in our local communities of their situation and in some small way break through the rhetoric of the hostile environment. As Pope Francis said in May this year "*we are called to show maximum respect for the dignity of each migrant; this entails accompanying and managing waves of migration as best we can, constructing bridges and not walls, expanding channels for a safe and regular migration. In whatever place we decide to build our future, in the country of our birth or elsewhere, the important thing is that there*

always be a community ready to welcome, protect, promote and integrate everyone, without distinctions and without excluding anyone.”

Please consider joining us. If you cannot get to Medomsley, perhaps you can commit to joining us in prayer at 3 pm on the first Sunday of each month from wherever you are .

For more information, please contact me at lizarchibald.justiceandpeace@gmail.com



A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

**Let Justice
and Peace Flow**
Season of Creation 2023

The Season of Creation is the annual Christian celebration to listen and respond together to the cry of Creation: the ecumenical family around the world unites to pray and protect our common home.

The Season begins on 1 September, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and ends on 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations. Learn more from this [video](#).

Pope Francis' inspiring message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation can be viewed [here](#). A video reflection on the Pope's message can be viewed [here](#).

This year's theme is "Let Justice and Peace Flow" taking inspiration from the Prophet Amos who declares: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5: 24). And so we are called to join the river of justice and peace, to take up climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice and the loss of biodiversity. As the people of God, we must work together on behalf of all Creation, as part of that mighty river of peace and justice.

Our prayers, sermons and liturgies must call for justice not only for humans but for all creation. Justice, allied with peace, calls us to repent of our ecological sins and to change our attitudes and actions. Righteousness demands that we live in peace, not conflict with our human neighbours, and building right relationships with all of creation. 'Peace' (shalom) involves not only the absence of conflict, but positive, live-giving relationships with God, ourselves, our human neighbours, and the whole of creation.

Indigenous communities that recognize the sacredness of natural elements and so live as an embodiment of an interconnected way of life, expressing a partnership between people and the life of the Earth, have much to teach the rest of the world.

We are invited to join the river of justice and peace on behalf of all Creation and to converge our individual identities, of name, family or faith community, in this greater movement for justice, just like tributaries come together to form a mighty river. As the people of God, we must work together on behalf of all Creation, as part of that mighty river of peace and justice.

Prophet Isaiah proclaims "Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43: 19)

Biodiversity is being lost at a rate not seen since the last mass extinction. The hope of keeping average temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius is fading. The world humans have known, enjoyed and celebrated is changing rapidly beyond repair. The futures of young people are threatened by the cascading impacts of the loss of biodiversity and a changing climate. Industrialization, colonisation and the extraction and consumption of resources have created great wealth, unequally distributed. Powerful Global North nations have grown wealthy at the expense of Global South nations and Indigenous and subsistence communities.

Today's climate and ecological emergency hurts the most vulnerable, many living in the least wealthy nations, who have contributed the fewest emissions. Indigenous peoples make up five percent of the world's population and protect nearly 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity.

We are presently more aware than ever of the link between fossil fuels, and violence and war. We can, however, dream and work for a world where each country produces the energy they need from God-given gifts of the sun and wind, rather than going to war for fossil fuels.

The urgency grows and we must make visible peace with Earth and on Earth, at the same time that justice calls us to repentance and a change of attitude and actions. As we join the river of justice and peace with others then hope is created instead of despair. Streams can rise in the desert. An economy of peace can be built instead of an economy based on conflict.

Celebrating the Season of Creation

Resources are available online for prayer and worship services, [lectionary notes and sermon notes](#). There are also event checklists to help plan ecumenical prayer services and guidance on getting involved in advocacy. Please visit the [Season of Creation website](#) and examine the resources available including the [SoC Creation Guide](#).

Suggestions for Parishes:

- Arrange a showing of the film "[The Letter](#)" which is based on Laudato Si';
- Hold a prayer service to celebrate creation (see [here](#) for a suggested format);
- Include environmental prayers at Masses during September (suggested prayers are available from [here](#));
- Include the Season of Creation prayer in the Parish bulletin (see Appendix 1);
- Organise a prayer walk to celebrate nature in your community;
- Organise a community litter pick;
- Allow a section of the [Parish gardens to go wild](#) and support nature;
- Create a pledge tree and invite parishioners to make pledges to live more sustainably;
- Write to your MP expressing concerns about the lack of Government action on tackling climate change (see the [SoC Creation Guide](#) for ideas, a suggested template letter on energy policy and the [SDGs](#) is available at Appendix 2).

Suggestions for Families and Parishioners

- Start a conversation about the climate crisis and agree on some actions to live more sustainably;

- Make a pledge or pledges to live more sustainability and display them on your fridge door as a reminder;
- Participate in the [Earth Examen](#);
- Calculate your [carbon footprint](#) and identify ways it could be reduced;
- Ideas for [living more sustainably](#).

Want to go further

- Setup a [Parish green team](#);
- Investigate whether your Parish could become a [LiveSimply Parish](#);
- Support CAFOD's campaign for a fairer and more [sustainable global food system](#);
- Sign up to the [Laudato Si' platform](#);
- Become a [Laudato Si' animator](#);
- Explore the [Journey to 2030](#) website which contains excellent resources and ideas.

Diocesan Environment Group webinar with Bishop Stephen on Sept 30th 10 am to 12 noon

Please join the Diocesan Environment Group along with Bishop Stephen for a webinar on Sep 30 to mark the Season of Creation and to reflect on progress over the last year.

More details and to register from [here](#).

Pray, organise, celebrate, act!

Appendix 1: 2023 Season of Creation Prayer

Creator of All,

From your communion of love life sprung forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being.

On this Earth of overflowing love, the Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationship with each creature, but we failed to listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the most vulnerable. We broke with the flowing communion of love and sinned against you by not safeguarding the conditions for life.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats, we grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished, and we ache at the sight of an economy of death, war and violence that we have inflicted on ourselves and on the Earth.

Open our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the book of Scripture and the book of creation. Bless us once again with your life-giving waters so that the Creator Spirit may let justice and peace flow in our hearts and overflow into all creation.

Open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace, and to share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, all creatures around us, and all creation.

Bless us to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters of God's justice and peace may become a mighty river all over the Earth.

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

Amen

Appendix 2 Template MP's letter

Dear [Name of MP]

I am writing to you as your constituent and do so as a citizen who is increasingly concerned about the climate crisis and the failure of Government to respond with the required urgency.

We have all seen the news over the last few weeks of the extreme weather events over large parts of the World - such events will only get worse until we take concerted action to reduce our emissions and dependence on fossil fuels (along with the rest of the International Community).

The recent announcement by the Government to issue over 100 new licenses for oil and gas extraction in the North Sea has only increased my concern that the Government is failing to address the climate crisis. As Chris Skidmore, Conservative MP and former government's net zero tsar has said "this is the wrong decision at precisely the wrong time... a disastrous move for the country as well as the Conservatives."

What we see from the Government is a spectacular failure of policy and commitment to address the climate emergency including accepting the overwhelming scientific evidence that, to keep within the Paris Agreement, there should be no new fossil fuel development and global emissions should reduce by 45% by 2030 [1,2]. The Committee on Climate Change has also recently published its report indicating how far the Government is off track to meet its commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 [3].

It appears that the fossil fuel companies are now in control of Government policy with disastrous consequences for all who inhabit our common home and those who will follow us!

I am well aware that 2024 will see a General Election and all parties will need to publish their manifesto outlining policy, including on climate action. I urge you as my MP to advocate for a change of direction to amend energy policy to focus on investment in renewable energy, reducing emissions and implementing a fair transition to a green economy. Hence, I am advocating for the following policies to be included in the Conservative/Labour Manifesto:

- An end to the development of new fossil fuel fields in the North Sea (we simply do not need more fossil fuels [1]);
- A firm commitment to deliver on the UK's net zero target by 2050 (or sooner), including the important interim steps of achieving a minimum 68% reduction in territorial emissions by 2030, the power grid to be 100% renewable energy by 2030 with a minimum 78% reduction in emissions by 2035;
- A commitment to deliver on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) by 2030 as key to creating a fair, sustainable society where no-one is left behind.

We must seize the opportunities offered by cheap, abundant renewable energy to build a fairer and more sustainable future for all [4,5]. I highly recommend following up these resources [4,5]

which highlight how a much brighter future is possible for all who share this planet if we make the right choices. Do we have the courage, vision, ambition and wisdom to seize this opportunity?

I do hope the Conservative/ Labour Party will be able to present such a vision in its forthcoming manifesto. I look forward to receiving your reply in due course.

Kind Regards

Include address

References

- [1] [Net Zero Coalition | United Nations](#)
- [2] [IEA: End fossil fuel expansion now for net zero energy emissions by 2050](#)
- [3] [2023 Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee](#)
- [4] [rmi renewable revolution.pdf](#)
- [5] [Home - Earth4All](#)



**Let Justice
and Peace Flow**
Season of Creation 2023



**SEASON OF
CREATION**

Season of Creation Events at Ushaw

“Let Justice and Peace Flow....” Two Ecumenical Events celebrating creation and calling us to act to save our common home.

Faith and the Environment

Wednesday 13th September: 10am to 3.30pm

A Day of Reflection, featuring the inspiring film “The Letter”, and including conversation, prayer and practical responses to the urgent call to care for the environment as our common home.

Come and join us for a day celebrating creation and calling us to action to save the environment. We will hear about “Laudato Si’”, Pope Francis’s important letter calling for discussion and dialogue on the environment. We’ll also hear about a range of initiatives – both local and international - to care for the planet which we all depend on.

Tickets: £5, which includes refreshments on arrival, parking and admission to Ushaw.

Lunch can be bought in Welby’s Café, or bring a packed lunch.

Book your ticket at <https://ushaw.org/whats-on-at-ushaw/>, or by phone on 0191 373 8500.

An Ecumenical Prayer Service

Sunday 1st October: 3pm

An ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation, when we are called on to commit to climate and ecological justice, and to speak out for those most affected by the climate and ecological emergency. The theme for 2023’s Season of Creation is “Let Justice and Peace flow.....”. The service will be held in St. Cuthbert’s Chapel at Ushaw. Everyone is welcome to attend. No booking is required.

