



Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Justice and Peace News

Autumn 2024

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 newsletter from the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council.

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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 regularly update our webpage on the Diocesan website. This can be accessed by going to our page on the [Diocesan website](#)

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

1. Reflections on the NJPN conference “Just Politics”

I was truly empowered at the national Justice and Peace Network conference as I was able to meet so many likeminded people who are passionate in fighting for change. Speaking to each other allowed us to share our concerns about the issues surrounding the areas we lived in, that really impacted people's lives. The highlight of the conference for me was that I was able to share what me and my sixth form were able to accomplish with regards to bus fare costs. We noticed an issue regarding the bus fares for young people, it was simply unfair that most of their wages were being spent on bus fares to school, so we spoke up on this issue. By bringing this issue to light, by building connections with the mayor of north of Tyne, Jamie Driscoll at the time, as well as working alongside Tyne and Wear citizens, we were able to tackle this issue in a peaceful manner. I loved sharing about the success of our campaign with everyone at the conference. Being part of the 'fairer fares' campaign taught us the importance of persistence as it took facing many rejections to finally meet with the CEO of Arriva to create change.

I really enjoyed the interactive workshops at the conference. I attended a pax christi workshop in which we were discussing violence and non-violence. Lessons from this workshop perfectly translated into our campaign as it was important that we approached this campaign in a peaceful manner. Because of this strategy, we were able to see first-hand that it was the best way to approach the situation as well as to being about the best outcome.

Overall, this conference has been such an amazing opportunity for me. Meeting like-minded people has only inspired me to continue to fight for justice in the future.

Shantel Suneesh



Shantel and the other speakers at this year's NJPN conference, “Just Politics”

When you go to conference, you meet many inspiring people. Michael and Patricia are one such couple. They are truly committed to working for justice and peace. I asked them to share their story so far and here it is.....

2.How We Got There

It all began in the physics lab. Six girls from St Angela's Convent School joined the boys of St. Bonaventure's for "A Level" physics classes - but it wasn't just the physics course that interested us. 5 years later, Michael and I were married. Maybe if we had paid more attention to our physics lessons, we wouldn't have chosen the Hiroshima Anniversary for our wedding day! By then, Michael had done his National Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, a non-combatant corps, and we had both trained as teachers. 64 years later we helped on the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND) stall in Swanwick.

But what happened in between?

Remembrance Sunday was approaching. I got back from a Women's Peace Group meeting. "What can we do for Remembrance Sunday?" I asked Michael. He suggested we held an "All-Night Vigil" near the War Memorial outside then Cathedral. The others agreed and he painted a big sign, (which we still have) "We Mourn the Dead. We Respect Their Sacrifice and, in Their Memory, Let Us All Work for Peace."

I thought we'd better ask the Dean as the Memorial was on Cathedral ground and he thought it was a good idea. We asked the Lord Mayor, who was happy if we didn't interrupt the Parade, and we thought we'd better inform the Police as it was the height of I.R.A hostilities - but then hostilities to our plan began- the Police forbade it.

"Riots in the Streets of Chester" the tabloids screamed. Then the National Press got interested and I had a phone call from the local Police Station. "We have decided to allow your little Vigil."

We then realised that peace work was a threatening concept to many- and too important to ignore. We joined Pax Christi and Christian CND. Near Chester, is the British Nuclear Fuels Plant at Capenhurst, which was enriching Uranium for nuclear submarines. This became the focus of our activities for the next 5 years, and protests still go on there.

Each Friday, we held a vigil outside the main gate and spoke to the workers and the Atomic Energy Police. (One policeman even gave me a lift home, provided no-one saw us!) Michael, in his Careers Counsellor's work, made sure young people knew what they were involved with. We held a sponsored walk round the base to raise funds for more treatment for a sergeant's disabled son. When we decided to join the "Snowball Campaign" I explained to the Chief Superintendent how it worked.

Surprisingly we were not stopped from cutting a single strand of wire, although arrests followed, but what was odd was that we were prevented from placing our Palm Sunday Crosses on the fence.

The advantage of working as a couple is that we can each bring our skills and opportunities to our work for peace. Michael is artistic and a skilled craftsman but had to keep his job to support our large family. I had the freedom to immerse myself more deeply in protest, but we always prayed together and decided together, the best way ahead. This resulted, for me, in 13 prison sentences, but that's another story. Now, in our eighties, we are more limited in what we can do and focus on Parish work. Without the love and support of each other, none of this would have happened. We're sure we could have done more and done it better - but it has been - for better or worse - our life.

Michael & Patricia Pulham

3. Briefing on the Climate and Nature Bill

What is the Climate and Nature Bill (CAN)?

The CAN Bill is a private member's bill that was drafted by leading climate scientists, ecologists, conservationists, legal experts and campaigners. It's the only proposed legislation that can deliver a comprehensive and integrated approach to the interlinked climate and nature emergency we face.

CAN Bill: publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0192/230192.pdf

The CAN Bill recognises that climate and nature crises are two aspects of the same emergency — and that only by tackling them together can we effectively address their root causes—rising greenhouse gas emissions and the destruction of nature.

Our current climate and nature laws are out of date. They're not aligned to what scientists are telling us is required for a liveable future—even though this is exactly what the UK has agreed to do on the international stage.

The aim of the CAN Bill is to deliver a UK-wide, whole-of-government strategy that prioritises climate and nature action at the heart of political decision-making. As part of creating this strategy, the CAN Bill includes a Climate and Nature Assembly of citizens, advised by experts, to give politicians the strongest mandate to act.

The CAN Bill has three fundamental aims:

1. To reduce emissions in line with the UK's proportionate share of the remaining global carbon budget for 1.5°C—our globally agreed [Paris Agreement 2015](#) pledge.
2. To halt and reverse biodiversity loss—our globally agreed [Kunming-Montreal Agreement](#) 2022 pledge.
3. To involve us, the public, by giving us a say in finding a fair way forward via a Climate and Nature Assembly.

CAN Bill briefing: www.zerohour.uk/reports/

Since 2020, the CAN Bill has attracted the support of a wide range of politicians and political parties—including MPs, peers, councillors, mayors, MSPs, MSs and MLAs—and it's now backed by the largest, cross-party group of politicians in the UK Parliament. The Lib Dems, Greens, Plaid Cymru, SDLP and Alliance parties are officially on board, as are MPs and peers from the Labour, Conservative, SNP and DUP parties, alongside independent MPs, plus Bishops and Crossbenchers in the House of Lords.

The Labour Party supports the CAN Bill's "ambition and objectives" but it was not included in their 2024 manifesto or announced in the recent King's Speech, which set out the new Government's legislation for 2024-25.

However, there is an opportunity for the Bill to be re-introduced to Parliament as a private members bill during this session of Parliament. To do this we need to get as many MPs on board as possible so that when the Private Members' Bills are selected this Autumn the CAN will one of those selected.

Further information about CAN and the campaign can be found at:

[The campaign for the Climate & Nature Bill](#) www.zerohour.uk/

How you can help?

Please write to your MP either by email or preferably by a letter posted to the Houses of Parliament and ask them to support the CAN Bill. A template letter which you can use is included below – please feel free to amend and add your own comments about why you consider this an important matter.

For details for your MP please visit: members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP

Thank You.

Chris Myers

Environment Lead

Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council mail: chrisj.myers57@gmail.com

Template Letter to your MP about CAN

{Name of MP}

House of Commons

Westminster

London SW1A 0AA

Dear

The Climate and Nature Bill

I am writing to you about a subject which concerns me greatly – the climate and ecological emergency. Specifically, the need to ensure that the UK has the strongest laws in place to reverse the destruction of nature, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5°C: two key targets that are essential to the UK's future.

Specifically, I'm writing to ask if you will support the Climate and Nature Bill [1], so that it may be considered during this Parliamentary session. It is a vital, new, cross-party proposal—drafted by world-leading scientists—to ensure that the UK plays its full role in tackling biodiversity loss and climate change.

Though the UK has a record of environmental legislation, from the Climate Change Act 2008 to the 2050

Target Amendment Order 2019, there is a gap between what is currently being delivered—and what the Government needs to do to act in line with the latest science.

The Climate and Nature Bill, or CAN Bill, would:

- Provide a clear, joined-up plan—as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, requiring a plan that considers both together.
- Reduce UK emissions in line with the Paris Agreement—ensuring that UK emissions are reduced rapidly, for the best chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.
- Halt and reverse the decline in nature—setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030, as agreed at COP15.
- Ensure that the UK takes responsibility for our overseas footprint—both emissions and ecological.
- Involve the public—giving people a say in finding a fair way forward through a “climate and nature assembly.”

Thank you for considering your support for the CAN Bill. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Name

Address including Postcode

Please note your address inc. post code must be included for your MP to respond

[1] [Zero Hour - The Climate & Nature Bill](http://www.zerohour.uk/) www.zerohour.uk/

4. Sister Imelda Poole, Human Rights Activist

Over 50 years, human rights activist Sister Imelda, IBVM, MBE, has been committed to a ministry dedicated to caring for those living in the most deprived and forgotten margins of society around the world.

Her Congregation, The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded in 1609 by fellow educationalist and human rights champion, doughty Yorkshire woman Mary Ward. Mary pioneered apostolic religious life for women and founded schools for girls from Liège and Cologne to Vienna and Bratislava, in the teeth of opposition from many powerful men. When a man challenged Mary's empowerment of women, she declared unequivocally “There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things.”

Imelda read History & English at Manchester University, later earning her PGCE from Newcastle, a Certificate in Counselling at Manchester University and a Certificate in Human Trafficking at Rhode Island University.

Her professional life began as a secondary school teacher in around England and in Port Glasgow. She then moved to the impoverished area of The Clarences community near Middlesbrough,

where she worked for 16 years living and missioning on a local council estate, advocating for human rights, and the empowerment of the community.

In 2005, Imelda went to Albania where the Archbishop of Tirana invited IBVM to respond to a ground-breaking mission to combat human trafficking and slavery. This led to the foundation of Mary Ward Loreto (Albania) in 2009. For ten years Imelda was CEO of MWL Albania and is now President of the Foundation.

Under her energetic leadership and strategic direction, MWL continues to address the root causes of human trafficking, focusing on highly vulnerable and exploited communities. Imelda and her staff have worked with more than 3,000 women and over 10,000 beneficiaries since the foundation was established.

Through targeted community education, extensive counselling, training programmes, and coordination of government and social services - all enhanced by her unique blend of humour, passion, and drive – Imelda has created new insights and impact which will last generations. MWL has brought together civic, commercial, and social leaders, in collaboration with religious congregations, to engender systemic change to bring an end to the brutality and injustice of trafficking.

Imelda co-founded 'Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation' (RENATE) in 2010, an NGO of European women religious from 30 countries. She is often called upon as an expert by government, education, and the media. She is a board member of UK charity, Mary Ward Loreto (UK), which works to raise funding for anti- trafficking efforts led by MWL in the UK and Albania.

Her dedication and impact were recognised by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 2018 when Imelda was made MBE. In 2021, she received the Trafficking in Persons - TIP Hero Award from the US State Department.

On 27 July 2024 Liverpool Hope University conferred an honorary doctorate on Imelda in recognition of her work. Her response was:

"This is an honour which I accept on behalf of the dedicated staff of Mary Ward Loreto in Albania and the many female Religious and co-workers across Europe in RENATE. .. May this privileged award from Liverpool Hope University highlight even further the terrible crime of human trafficking which, as Pope Francis has declared, is a crime against humanity itself."

All donations, large or small, help to support MWL's work against people-trafficking and modern slavery. Payments may be made by bank transfer to: Mary Ward Loreto UK, CAF BANK LTD, sort code 40-52-40, account: 00034322 Alternatively cheques payable to Mary Ward Loreto UK may be posted to:

Mary Ward Loreto UK, 6 Albert Street, Durham DH1 4RL

5. Standing for Peace: thoughts.

On Saturday morning, the small group of us standing outside Hexham Abbey, witnessing to our desire for peace in Israel and Palestine, stood in hot sunshine. The first morning we stood there, back in January, we were frozen – a wicked wind blew around us, exacerbating the already cold day. Freezing cold and hot sun: for half an hour we stand, and then return to our 'normal' lives. And over these weeks and months the people of Gaza have lived permanently, amidst cold and hot, amidst sun and rain, with perpetual uncertainty as to what the rest of their days will look like, no safe home or 'normal' life to return to....

As we stood outside the Abbey this morning I was aware of people going about their normal Saturday lives, all the comings and goings of whatever happens on Beaumont Street on a Saturday morning. And I thought of the people of Gaza and the West Bank, metaphorically 'standing', watching the rest of the world going about, apparently, its 'normal' life – all the comings and goings of whatever daily life means for people around the world. I thought too of the people of Israel, so many of them also watching a world that seems, perhaps, not to understand the dilemmas they are living amongst. I know that I have no answers... But standing there for half an hour on a Saturday morning does help to keep the situation alive in our hearts and minds, perhaps a brief reminder of the luxury of 'normal'.

For me too there is something important about standing outside the Abbey. We are not shut away inside, but nor are we totally distanced. Whatever the Abbey stands for, something about standing in this liminal space, this doorway space, neither inside nor properly outside, says some-thing, I feel, about the call of faith. As we witness to our longing for peace, so too we may witness to a God who is beyond borders, God of all peoples. And a God who we surely see amidst the suffering...

We are called, we are judged, we are loved, forgiven – and asked to carry on the message, to search for ways of peace – within our own hearts and within the world.

Bridget Hewitt

6. Prayer vigil for peace in the Holy Land

A short vigil for peace in Palestine and Israel takes place at 7pm every Thursday evening at Our Lady Immaculate and St Cuthbert RC Church, Crook.

We started holding a weekly vigil shortly after the horrific events in Israel on 7 October 2023. Never did we think that almost a year later it would still be ongoing.

The vigil includes prayers specific to the ongoing violence, general prayers for peace, survivor stories and poems.

During the vigil we light our candles as a gesture of hope for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land. We remember all those affected by the events of the last year and pray for an end to atrocities in Gaza and the West Bank, and for peace in the wider region.

Peace service for Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The annual peace service to commemorate the 79 th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place at Our Lady Immaculate and St Cuthbert RC Church, Crook on Sunday, 11 August.

The service was led by the Justice and Peace group and was attended by around 20 people. It started with the sombre ringing of the church bells as we gathered to pray in solidarity with the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In our prayers we remembered the terrible events of 6 and 9 August and the legacy that this has created.

We took pause and reflected as we listened to survivor stories and, together, we mourned the tragic loss of life. The 300,000 people who died as a result of the atomic bombs, and those killed in ongoing conflicts, as every day brings news of more violence in our world. We gave thanks for the peacemakers who came before us - for their courage and commitment - and we prayed in hope for healing and a lasting peace in our world. It was fitting that the service ended with the sign of peace.

Julie Maguire

Inter faith prayer vigil at Derwentside IRC

There is a monthly Inter faith Prayer vigil at the barrier to the Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre Medomsley DH8 6QY on the first Sunday of each month from 3pm to 3.45pm . For more details email lizarchibald.justiceandpeace@gmail.com

If you cannot attend in person, perhaps you could pray at home.

Watch the online prayer service through YouTube [here](#).

7. Reasons to be Cheerful

It is difficult sometimes not to feel hopelessness at the state of the world. Those who interests are advanced by disseminating a message of doom, despair and despondency and those who encourage rage, over-reaction and anger through social media, a politically aligned press and the 24-hour rolling news cycle would have us believe that things are getting worse, but they are wrong.

It is worth remembering that we live lives that are infinitely better than our parents and grandparents. It is easy to forget this when positive, ambitious change happens slowly and incrementally, oftentimes with several steps forwards matched by an almost equal number of steps back, and negativity is everywhere.

Amongst those who have promoted a more positive message was Barack Obama. In 2016 he gave a speech which included this statement: *"If you had to choose a moment in history to be born, and you did not know in advance who you would be.....if you had to choose blindly what moment you'd want to be born, you'd choose now."*

Two (relatively) recent books, *Enlightenment Now*, by Steven Pinker and *Factfulness*, by Hans Rosling address this issue head-on. It's worth looking at a (very) small selection of the issues that they highlight:

- Life expectancy is rising across the world. In the year in which I was born, 1960, it was 65 in Europe. It is now almost twenty years greater than that. (Compare this with the years my grandfathers were born. In the 1870s, average life expectancy in Newcastle was less than 30 years).
- In 1966, the number of people in the world living in extreme poverty was 50%. Today, it is less than 10%
- Wars are becoming rarer, and the numbers of people killed in wars has fallen rapidly since the 1940s. Western Europe has now been at peace since 1945, an event unprecedented in history.
- In 1980, 22% of one-year old children in the world got at least one vaccination. By 2016, this was 88%.
- In 1970, 65% of girls of primary school age worldwide were enrolled in a school. By 2015 it was 90%.

This list could cover many pages.

We live in a world that is slowly, steadily improving. But that hasn't happened by chance. Most of the advances in our society have taken place because individuals like the people reading this newsletter refuse to shut up or give up. We keep shouting and we keep getting things done, one small bit at a time. And sometimes we perhaps need to remind ourselves that, in the long run, we usually win. A quote which is frequently attributed to Ghandi goes as follows: *"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall."*

John Dowling