



Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Justice and Peace News

Spring 2025

Welcome to the Spring 2025 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](#)

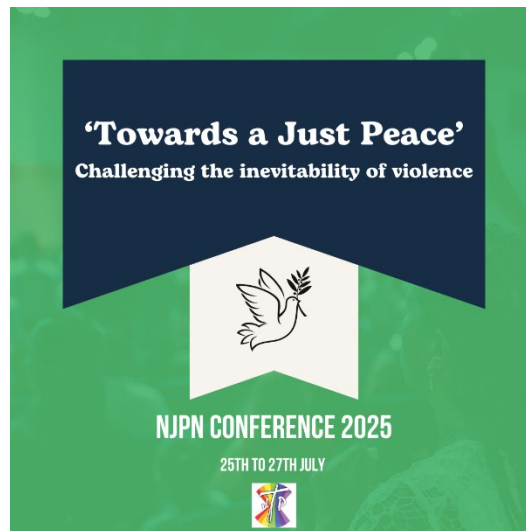
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National Justice and Peace Network

47th Annual Conference

25 – 27 July 2025

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire



Keynote Speakers:

Dr Rowan Williams: former Archbishop of Canterbury

Dr. Joanna Frew: Rethinking Security

‘Is Violence and War Inevitable?’

At this year's conference we will be focussing on the spirituality and practice of nonviolence....

Various speakers will be sharing their experiences, coming from different angles, calling people to reclaim our Spirituality and praxis of Gospel nonviolence.

An incredible and prayerful weekend of interesting speakers, workshops, exhibitions, and stalls – along with good food, company and down time (or a Ceilidh if you are up to it!).

For further details please contact Sharon Chambers;

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How do we reclaim our spirituality and praxis of Gospel nonviolence?

Andrew Jackson and Sr. Katrina Alton – Pax Christi - *the campaign work of the Catholic Church to reclaim nonviolence, and the role of nonviolent direct action.*

George White – Trans Catholic Teacher – *speaking from experience of the culture wars facing the LGBTQ community and how to respond from a Christian perspective of nonviolence.*

Dr. Joanna Frew - Rethinking Security - *what does real and just security look like in the community, society and globally. How do we make it real in our own context*

Other contributors include: Operation Noah, CAFOD, the Columbans, NJPN Environment Group, CSAN, Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS), LoudFence and more...

We will be pondering questions such as...

- Is peace the absence of war ?
- Is war ever justifiable?
- How do you find peace in your heart when you feel rejected because of your gender, sexuality, health or disability ?
- How do you find peace when you have been abused?
- How to you resist violence when you are under attack , when you feel marginalised, powerless and fearful?
- How do you find peace when your lifestyle is destroying the world you live in?
- How to you find peace and reconciliation when you are living in a war zone?

**A full and informative weekend in which we will be rethinking what it means to
create a just peace for all through the lens of Gospel nonviolence**

**There will also be time to relax, chat, attend our Just Fair (or have a stall!), and even
enjoy a Ceilidh!**

Enjoy excellent accommodation, food and drink!

Limited spaces, and if you book before 15th May the price is slightly cheaper.

2. Big Bank Switch

Are you ready to join others in making a statement about your personal faith commitments? Instead of giving something up this Lent could you do something extra, something which could have a powerful influence for the 'common good'.

As we all know, the extraction and use of fossil fuels has a disproportionate impact upon the poorest in our global society. If together we help end the dependence on fossil fuels, we can create a greater community cohesion.

This is not just about environmental justice, but it is a social justice issue, a racial justice and intergenerational justice issue. As Christians we have a moral duty to work for the love of all creation. As Pope Francis has said 'The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. (LSi23)

Did you know that banks are amongst the biggest funders of fossil fuel industries? This means that they are part of the driving cause of climate change!

Why would we switch our personal banks?

James Buchanan, Climate Finance Campaign Manager at Laudato Si' Movement, said: "This largest-ever call for action from Christian organisations to UK banks financing new fossil fuels demonstrates the significant concern of faith groups about the role of banks in fuelling the climate crisis. <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/catholic-religious-orders-among-70-organisations-calling-on-major-uk-banks-to-stop-financing-new-fossil-fuels/>

The opportunity to make a difference is presented to us by The Big Bank Switch everyone is invited to review their bank credentials <https://justmoney.org.uk/the-big-bank-switch/>

The Big Bank Switch supported by; just money movement, Just Love Operation Noah and the Laudato Si Movement. Easy links to the information can be found at <https://justmoney.org.uk/the-big-bank-switch/>

The 3 main banks being recommended for their green credentials i.e. banks that **don't** finance fossil fuels are Nationwide, Triodos and The Co-op Bank

To make the switch 'doable' all three banks are covered by the [Current Account Switch service](#). Please remember to tell your old bank why you are leaving! Download a [template letter](#) to adapt.

How will you respond to the 'Cry of the earth'? Will you support a future for the benefit of all by making this switch to 'Care for Our Common Home'?

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Clare Myers, Justice and Peace Coordinating Council

3. Some facts and figures on refugees and asylum seekers in the UK

The debate about illegal migration into the UK is frequently hostile and toxic, driven by claims, usually false or exaggerated, propagated by people operating from the political fringes. Worryingly, in recent years, many mainstream politicians, afraid of public concerns and the fearful of social unrest, have begun to accept similar rhetoric.

It is in their interests of these fringe actors to spread fear and anxiety. There is a reason for this. Fear creates obedience: fearful citizens are less likely to question authority and to do what they are told. *Fear is the mind-killer*, wrote Frank Herbert in *Dune*. It's a simple yet profound statement that captures the essence of what fear does. It paralyzes critical thinking, clouds judgment, and keeps us compliant. When people are afraid, they're more likely to trade freedom for the perception of safety. This was illustrated by recent surveys which showed that over half of people aged 13-27 think the UK would be a better place if a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections was in charge.

The fear, anxiety and hatreds created by the sight of boats filled with asylum seekers crossing the channel, in particular, has been weaponised and has infected all levels of society and political debate. We have now become used to seeing politicians of a certain type shouting about an invasion and warning about how dangerous criminals and extremists can enter the country at will, without providing any evidence that this is happening. Emotions are manipulated in certain parts of the press and on social media, which is increasingly becoming an unregulated, uncontrollable frontier.

In the face of this, it is important not to adopt the attitude of, "If you can't beat them, join them". The debate will ultimately be won by those who can remain calm and marshal facts, not fiction. So, it is worthwhile perhaps to establish what some of those facts are.

- Most refugees don't want to come to the UK. They flee persecution and life-threatening situations, seeking safety and protection but would prefer to stay in their home country. It is worth asking the question, how desperate would you need to be in order for your preferred option to be putting your children in a flimsy boat to cross twenty-two miles of open, dangerous water?
- In mid-2023 almost 120 million people had been displaced from their homes as a result of violence or persecution. According to the UNHCR, there are almost 44 million refugees across the world. 75% of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection are currently living in low and middle-income countries. Wealthy western countries take relatively few refugees. The burden of caring for these people is carried mainly by the poor.
- Based on the number of asylum applications per head of population, the UK currently ranks 20th highest in Europe.

There is no refugee crisis in Europe or the UK. Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK form only a small part of the total inward immigration into this country. The crisis is in care and compassion in the face of hysterical over reaction by elements in our society who see to benefit from spreading fear and discontent.

It is up to us to make sure that they don't win.

John Dowling

4. The Mystery of the Multiplying Shopping Trolleys.

Have you ever opened your wardrobe door and been surprised at the number of coat hangers? **You** didn't put them there. well not all of them - there's only one explanation; they're up to something when you're not looking. We faced a similar conundrum recently at the Hexham & Newcastle Justice & Peace Refugee Project but this time with shopping trolleys: we are limited to five because of the congestion on our premises but unaccountably we now had thirteen. How did that happen?

First some background: the Refugee Project was set up in 2001 by John and Audrey Marshall with the strong support of the then Bishop, Ambrose Griffiths – which happily continues with our present bishop.

We now share the Saint Vincent's Centre with the SVP - older readers will remember it as the Saint Dominic's Parish Hall and Social Club in Byker, Newcastle.

Parishes donate food and bathroom products which we receive on Monday mornings: local supermarkets donate items which we collect; we also buy food and toiletries ourselves with donated funds. The items are made up into plastic bags for distribution; they are collected on Wednesday and Friday by the Asylum Seekers though some are delivered individually to people's homes if they have difficulty coming to the centre. We support more than 500 individuals and their families.



Bags bags bags

Azad

That requires storage space and sorting, done by 45 volunteers managed by Azad, himself an ex-asylum seeker. The premises are on two levels but there is a lift, so we can manage, quite efficiently actually, using our trolleys.



Wednesday session

Herding trolleys

So back to our problem: how did we come to possess 13 shopping trolleys and not the five we were limited to? A mystery, though we knew we'd been donated a couple by local supermarkets; but the remaining six?? **You** might have some ideas but those of us working in the centre suspect that they'd been up to something in the night just like coat hangers everywhere.

The solution? – distressingly prosaic, I'm afraid, though not without incident – three volunteers wheeled the surplus trolleys to a nearby supermarket; not so easy, these things have a will of their own.

If you'd like to volunteer with us you know where we are - you might be surprised at the fun activities you could end up involved in.

Paddy Harrigan, chair of J and P Co-ordinating council

5. St Benet Biscop Partnership Conference: Caring for our Common Home

St Benet Biscop Partnership held a conference “Caring for our Common Home” on Sep 14 2024 at St Bedes Bedlington, attended by 32 people across our Partnership including St Benet Biscop Academy School.

The first half focused on what is happening to our common home from a scientific and faith perspective. Chris Myers highlighted the record temperatures in 2023 & 2024 with extreme weather causing much suffering especially in the global south. We must act now to reduce emissions, restore nature to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown. Scientists have identified 9 planetary boundaries which are crucial to sustain life on earth. We can navigate towards a brighter future if we have the courage, wisdom and vision to act now.

Fr Chris Hughes explored the theological/spiritual resources which enable us to meet the climate and nature crisis. He explored how spiritual/ material dichotomy has not always been helpful in enabling a faith-based response. He spoke of a “God in all things” and the need to appreciate the sacred dimension of God’s creation which leads us to a sense of awe, beauty, wonder and gratitude. Finally, Fr Chris spoke about the call in Laudato Si’ for an ecological conversion – to live in harmony with each other and the whole of creation.

Attendees then had the opportunity to reflect on the two sessions and consider how the world could be transformed by 2050 if we make the right decisions now.

The second part of the morning focused on the actions we can take to live more sustainably. Rachel Blaylock, our CAFOD regional coordinator spoke about CAFOD’s Live Simply Award which encourages Parishes and Schools to engage in faith inspired actions focused on living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people around the world experiencing poverty.

Representatives from different groups then shared how they were seeking to Care for our Common Home: Bridgid Duffy (Academy Chaplain) spoke about the Laudato Si’ Award which had been introduced in the School, Neil Hurn (Esh Green Team) described the work to enhance biodiversity in their 3 Parish grounds, Dot Fahey (St Wilfrid, Blyth) spoke of community work by the Knitters & Natterers and Clare Myers (Our Lady & St Joseph, New Hartley) described the changes she has made to live more sustainably.

Attendees were then given leaflets with sustainable living tips to share within the Parishes along with an invitation for parishioners to make pledges to live more sustainably.

Finally, a Partnership Mass for Creation Care led by Fr Quinn was held at St Wilfrid, Blyth on Oct 11. 40 people attended, along with 120 pledges to live sustainably which were offered during the Mass as our commitment to our Common Home. We appreciated the artwork produced by the Academy and St Wilfrid Primary School along with their pledges.

The Partnership Council consider the conference to have been a success – we recognise the need to engage with everyone in our Partnership, Schools and Parishes if we are to make a real impact on the climate and ecological crisis. We plan to follow this up with an event to celebrate the Jubilee Year 2025 – a year of hope for people and planet.

Chris Myers, Partnership Council email: chrisj.myers57@gmail.com

6. Fundraiser for AMOS Trust Emergency Appeal



Join Bubamara, Chris Milner - Journeyman and special guests in a fundraiser for the Amos Trust Emergency Appeal for Gaza and the West Bank



Tickets are priced at £10, which can be purchased from the reception, our website or by calling 01325 363135



Thursday 15th May



The Forum Music Studios



Doors: 7:30pm (for an 8:30pm start)



theforumonline.co.uk/events/gig-for-gaza-bubamara-chris-milner-journeyman-with-special-guests