## Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

# Justice and Peace News

**Summer 2026**

***Welcome to the Summer 2026 newsletter from the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council.***

**Items in this newsletter are as follows:**

1. **Hexham & Newcastle Diocese Justice & Peace AGM**
2. **National Justice and Peace Network conference July 2026**
3. **Stella Maris**
4. **CAFOD**

***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 clare.myersmyers@btinternet.com***

***We aim to 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***

# Hexham & Newcastle Justice & Peace AGM April 2026

The theme of this year's AGM was "Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency". Prof Hayley Fowler (professor of Climate Change Impacts, Newcastle University) introduced the powerful film; 'Peoples National Emergency Briefing', about the Climate and Nature Emergency. Professor Fowler then led the discussion on how we, as a society, should respond.

If you are interested in organising a screening, please see National Emergency Briefing on climate & nature or for further support contact Chris Myers chrisj.myers57@gmail.com

The afternoon session included a report from Asad giving an update on the work in the Justice & Peace Refugee Project and delighted us by sharing the news of a very successful visit from the Papal Nuncio Miguel Maury Buendia, and Bishop Stephen to the centre when the Papal Nuncio was able to speak directly with clients.

Marjory presented the Treasurers Report explaining that although many Schools and Parishes continue to support the project income is reduced; it was acknowledged that a lot of charities are struggling. For further information on how you can support this project please see Justice & Peace Refugee Project - Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle and for the most recent project news Justice & Peace Refugee Project August - Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

Chris gave his detailed environment report also reminding us that 2025 was the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' written by Pope Francis. Chris shared his personal journey as an environmental advocate. He also shared a list of Diocesan Events and Activities in 2026.

Chris concluded that the Diocese is not doing enough. We have a vision to care for our home and environment, but we need to engage with others highlighting

- The vision is for a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.
- Screenings of the National Emergency Briefing to be held in schools and parishes

Clare presented the Chairs report having taken the role in October. She stepped down with the following quote from Pope Leo at the Raising Hope conference, "God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that He created, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters. What will be our answer?".

The AGM was closed with the following elected to post

Chair – Phil
Vice chair – Marjory
Treasurer – Marjory
Communications officer – Clare
Environment officer – Chris
Please see the Diocesan webpage for the full minutes of the AGM Justice & Peace - Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

# National Justice and Peace Network conference July 2026

The NJPN conference this year was entitled 'Just Talk' and it focused on the importance of dialogue in a world of division and conflict, an emphasis being on how we build authentic unity, dialogue and relationships with all people, and especially with those with whom we might disagree. It was a challenging couple of days. The emphasis on listening and encounter came across strongly in the conference. Seven of us attended from the north east this year and our delegation included Azad Hasan, our project worker who works alongside people seeking asylum and refugees. Azad led a challenging and informative workshop on resilience and dialogue in war torn zones.

Liz Archibald shared moving experiences of being involved in organising the vigils held for women who have been refused asylum and are detained at the Medomsley camp in County Durham. One of the memorable things that Liz said was around how this vigil had also brought people from different faith backgrounds together in silent prayer and solidarity with the women.

Michael Thompson, another delegate who is employed by Tyne and Wear Citizens, spoke from the platform at the end of the conference about his work in reaching out and building relationships with people with whom we might not agree, working relationally with politicians of all stripes and the power of community organising.

The conversations that people have over meals and in the bar are often as challenging and thought provoking as those of the main speakers. Returning back to those, I was especially concerned by the information conveyed by Billy Vaughan who works as a Public Affairs officer for Quakers in Britain. Billy's talk focused on the ways in which public protest is being made increasingly difficult in the UK and the ways that discourses are being challenged. His talk conveyed how governments have introduced legislation that make challenging governments and issues such as the arms trade and environmental destruction much harder, something that should challenge all of us who believe in democracy.

The conference was facilitated skilfully, thoughtfully and with good humour by Brian O'Toole who works for the Presentation Sisters and Sir John Battle who always astounds me with his knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching and its contemporary relevance. I have attended several of these conferences over the years. The highlight of these continues to be taking part in the Saturday evening Mass. If you have never been to a NJPN conference I would encourage you to go.

***Phil Watson***

See also the report in the ICN 'Just Talk' - Courageous conversations at heart of NJPN 2026 conference | ICN

If you would like to understand more about why we attend these vigils it is worth listening to Liz speaking about this at the NJPN conference this year Sir John Battle - Listening on local practice Encountering Others With Billy, Liz and Paul Liz speaks from about 53 minutes into the recording. (This is recording is available to all.)

## Stella Maris

Stella Maris - Providing welfare support for victims of modern slavery
Stella Maris - Year in Review 2025

Stella Maris has been involved in supporting fishers for many years, our support being most crucial when fishers have been victims of modern slavery. One specific Scottish company, TN Trawlers, have been at the centre of a number of these cases. A disclosure episode looked more closely at this issue: Disclosure: Slavery at Sea

A court case occurred early in June -
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvg7d83nl7no
With the sentencing in July - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cqj19xzwjydo

Stella Maris stands with fishers and have signed a joint letter to the home secretary, raising concerns about the exploitation of overseas fishers and the systemic conditions that can leave them vulnerable to abuse - Letter to the Home Secretary

20,000 seafarers were trapped in and around the Strait of Hormuz and there are around 8000 seafarers in and around the region presently.
An example of how your support is used following an earthquake in S. Philippines, Stella Maris UK donated £15000 for food supplies etc. all support is hugely valued and appreciated.

Thanks also to all those who attended the Holy Island Pilgrimage 200 in all made it a wonderful event.

***Steven Willows***
**Northumberland, North and South Tyneside**
**Regional Port Chaplain**
**Stella Maris**

## CAFOD

**CAFOD's plea to end Settlement Trade**

One of the greatest obstacles to building peace in the Holy Land is the ongoing expansion of illegal settlements which displace Palestinian families.

As Palestinians are forced from their home, settlers are using this land to grow and export produce – such as dates and wine - across the world.

We must stop the trading of all goods and services produced on land that has been illegally occupied.

CAFOD are encouraging people to write to the trade secretary, demanding that the UK follows in the footsteps of countries such as Spain and Ireland and bans trade with illegally occupied Palestinian land. You can find more details here End settlement trade

**Venezuela Earthquake Appeal:**

Caritas Venezuela have been supporting the most affected communities with emergency food and water and will continue to support in the long process of recovery.

"What consoles me most is the great solidarity of the Venezuelan people. We will move forward because we love one another as Venezuelans," Archbishop Raúl Biord of Caracas.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, support from across the international Caritas family and the tireless commitment of local volunteers, Caritas Venezuela has already reached thousands of families affected by the earthquakes.

So far, your donations have helped in the following ways:

22,924 families have received food and hygiene supplies
99,608 medical supplies and medicines have been distributed
13,760 food parcels have been provided
9,164 hygiene kits have been distributed
Around 10,000 volunteers have stepped forward to help
Thank you for your generosity. YOU can still help here: Venezuela Earthquake Appeal

**Tackling the Global Debt Crisis:**

CAFOD is calling for a reformed system for lending and borrowing that is fair, transparent and sustainable would be transformational for low-income countries.

This campaign isn't just about cancelling debts – it's about calling for a transformed system which will safeguard against irresponsible lending and irresponsible borrowing. Some element of debt relief will be necessary, as current debt burdens are unsustainable – but this campaign is about fixing the current crisis by creating a fair and robust system for the future. We are supporting calls from campaigners and activists across the global south who working to improve transparency and accountability from all parties involved in lending and borrowing. You can sign our petition here Tackle the global debt crisis now or get in touch if you would like to take action in your parish.

*Rachel Blaylock*
CAFOD
Community Participation Coordinator
Hexham and Newcastle Diocese & Middlesbrough Diocese

*Thank you for reading*