

Shrewsbury Diocese
Commission for the Promotion of Justice, Peace and Social Responsibility

Report on Open Meeting, Saturday 6th October, 2012

The day, organised by Commission member Anne O'Connor, was hosted by Fr. Ned Wall and the parish of All Saints, Ashton on Mersey and facilitated by Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of Pax Christi. About forty people gathered from across the Diocese, from Ludlow and Oswestry; to West Kirby and Ellesmere Port; to Macclesfield and Stockport.

After a welcome coffee, Tony Walsh, Commission Chair, greeted everyone and Pat led us in a simple 'milling' exercise where we were encouraged to feel welcome; to look back; and to lay down our hurts and disappointments. This session concluded with a short reading from, Henri Nouwen, "The House of Love"

The members of the Commission then explained details of, and answered questions concerning, the current position of the Commission; its' finances and other resources.

We then split into groups and addressed the questions,

What is happening now / working well – What is going well – priorities?

What tools are working for us now – support, resources, networks, people?

Responses are summarised in the **attached Appendix**. They indicate that, in a brief reflection on the above questions (which necessarily only gives a glimpse of the current situation), we have a rich variety of concerns, actions and resources through which to tackle the many issues of justice, peace, poverty and social deprivation and ecological concern both at home and abroad which justice and peace groups across the Diocese are addressing with other, ecumenical, charitable and specialist organisations; a vibrant, comprehensive and encouraging picture.

After a generous and delicious lunch supplied by All Saints parishioners, and enjoyed amidst much conversation and networking, we again gathered to summarise and make resolutions for future actions.

We are going forward, as a witness, grounded in Scripture and Word, with a clear focus of what needs to be done to further the cause of God's Kingdom, with ecumenical co-operation and a rich resource base to support us.

Pat then asked, "What **concrete action** can be put in place; what will need more attention; and whose role or responsibility is this?"

The discussion which arose from these questions and the responses offered on the day were taken up at the following Commission Core Group meeting.

Actions already undertaken since Joan's departure include:

- Continuing the production of *MouthPeace*, starting the monthly e bulletin, and producing the Year of Faith Calendar. These tasks have been undertaken by Marian and Anne with Bernard putting items on website, including the provision of a new section devoted to the Year of Faith.

Proposed further initiatives include:

- Increasing the use of *MouthPeace* to disseminate information.
- Holding regular Open Meetings twice a year, probably on Saturdays, in order to offer more opportunities for Commission members and local group members to meet. Non members of the Commission would be invited to attend as observers and to express views if they so wished. It was also agreed that a speaker would be invited to one of those meetings.
- Publicising members of the Commission. Joan Sharples, former Co-ordinator of the Commission, was well known throughout the Diocese whereas Commission members are not, so Bernard is to put on the website photographs of Commission members with information about their area of interest and role on the Commission plus their location/parish.
- Reviewing the Advent Reflection to consider whether current arrangements for this traditional annual event need changing in any way.
- Encouraging discussion via e-groups, (seen as one way to overcome the problem of our geographical dispersal - but we are not suggesting groups on specific issues, such as the environment or poverty, as this risks losing the wider perspective.)
- Working on clarifying what local groups themselves can do, e.g. holding JP&SR events and sending details to the Commission to disseminate throughout the Diocese.
- Working on clarifying what is expected of the Commission, including the development of a satisfactory two way relationship with the Diocesan Curia.
- Working on developing a two way relationship between the Commission and local groups to provide a forum for people across the Diocese to get together and raise issues that are important to them.
- Continuing to seek ways to involve and inspire young people; to promote the J&P Youth page on our website which includes a J&P Youth Pack and Stations of the Cross for Young People; to network via already well established relationships with the Assistant Director for Primary Schools and the Assistant Director for Secondary Schools who kindly circulate the e bulletin and other information on our behalf.

A presentation was made to Joan Sharples to show our appreciation for her long and dedicated service as Co-ordinator of the Commission, and to Ann Gill, former J&P Worker and a previous Treasurer of the Commission in recognition of her many years' service. The day finished with a prayer for the journey, that we may begin again in trust, in love; choosing freedom and joy; with a vision of God's kingdom, to walk with God, Our Father, in faith and with total dependence on Him to guide and support us.

APPENDIX

Shrewsbury Diocese

Commission for the Promotion of Justice, Peace and Social Responsibility

Notes from Open Meeting 6th Oct 2012

What is happening now / working well – What is going well - priorities

J&P workers can be seen as fundraisers, but it is good to have a practical cause eg supporting the drilling of a well in a Nigerian parish. A member of the parish visited Nigeria and reported back to the parish so that people were aware of the impact of their fundraising, a venture which fired up school and parish and brought the community together.

Oscar Romero Mass / anniversary (2)

International mass

supportive Parish priest

CAFOD (5) Youth involvement and school visits, monthly collection (2)

CAFOD important parish activities – fundraising campaigns – spiritual aspect

Livesimply Award campaign

Thirst for change (ignited parish)

Hungry for change – Lent (2)

Peace – monthly peace meeting – Peace Vigil (3) - peace centre (2) - campaigning for peace

Pax Christi (2) exhibition and icon

Palestine/Israel

Focus on injustice touches peoples' hearts

Victims of injustice

SVP (including supporting students abroad)

Credit Union (3)

Input to liturgy

Chester World Development – focus on justice issues

Water campaign

Prisoners of Conscience (5) –Christmas card campaign

Christmas card appeal

Helps to have personal contacts

Show solidarity (2)

Homeless (2) – gifts for homeless at Christmas

Eco issues

international

Fairtrade (6) and Fairtrade stall - especially with young people

Churches together (3) – enabling work to take place co-operation eg Ludlow Churches Together involved in initiative to identify need within the community. Having identified need to act in justice to assist.

Similarly Altrincham benefits from working with other churches, especially through world development issues eg CAFOD campaigns. We have a long standing CAFOD group (30 years)

Ecumenical Group (2)

Special Events

J&P walk

Year of Faith & J&P

NOT fundraising?

fundraising

Tackling poverty eg

- Food Bank (6)– interim help for people awaiting funds (ecumenical – faiths mixing)
- Catholic Clothing Guild

Looking outwards

Careful not to intrude on individual parishioners initiatives

Help in night shelter

Run Advent campaigns to raise funds for various charities & Amnesty cards

Support for women against violence in Palestine (Gwen)

Ethical investment

Traidcraft stalls (2)

It is important to have a nucleus of people

Role to educate and put in front of parish

Visiting speakers

Raise Awareness (2)

Awareness talks

Awareness campaign

Campaigning (3) including National campaigns + lobbying MP's

Communicator of issues, eg Palestine

Being good listeners

What is Truth? – searching for truth

Prayer and reflection (2)

Liturgies – J&P reflections during Advent (2)

Mouthpeace

Young people -Support for all CAFOD campaigns – Advent campaign to raise funds for various charities

Wellspring

De Paul trust

Contact with teachers

Activities to get youngsters involved

New ways of engaging with young people

What tools are working for us now? – support, resources, networks, people

Joan

Each other

Supportive parish priest (6) - even prepared to finance

Support from congregation (2) –parishioners speak

Newsletter

Tablet

A member of Commission visit parishes or groups of parishes

Commission has valuable role in educating people and priests (2)

Representatives on commission

Films – DVD's eg "Soldiers of Peace"

Electronics vital inc. Emails (3) Emails about action and policies/ emails between individuals and between groups

Electronic networking in general

NJPN including Catholic news

communications

Literature

Campaigning agencies

Other organisations

Local charities

Lists of contacts - networking

SVP inc YSVP & Mini Vinnies

CAFOD (2) resources – website, prayers, posters, campaign cards

J&P groups (3) –one says, "active, small J&P group – monthly meetings"

Movement towards sustainability

Ecumenical events eg Bearing Witness)

Ecumenical links (often overseas)

Active letter writer – prisoners of conscience

Speaking events

Good speakers (2) e.g. Peter Fahy, 'Street children of Uganda'

Vist from Lem Lem, water engineer

Progressio gives a sound basis/confidence that we are working out of Church teaching

Authoritative figure – lay person who has experience & expertise

Resources eg Livesimply

Commission meeting (today) where we are able to share vision, facts, expertise

Little Acorns

Mouthpeace (4)

Catholic Social Teaching

E bulletin (2)

Pick up issues from own group

Adult education – thru Mouthpeace

Communication / participation between groups

Year of Faith calendar

Dialogue throughout LPA via leadership team meetings

J&P experience can help other initiatives

SUGGESTIONS FOR YEAR OF FAITH

- J&P calendar on website – additions to this welcome
- Offer JP&SR suggestions for liturgy throughout the year
- Linking faith and life
- Highlight CST – learn a CST quote each week – added bonus; improve your memory
- Make an extra effort to take on a practical project at home or abroad
- Faith demands action
- Programme on Vatican II
- Witness of Faith
- Ask of any initiative or action, how does this bring Good News to the poor?