

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin – April 2014

The new monthly e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com
Download earlier bulletins at:

<http://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/njpn-north-west-justice-and-peace-e-bulletin-january-2014.pdf>

<http://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/njpn-north-west-justice-and-peace-e-bulletin-february-2014.pdf>

<http://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/njpn-north-west-justice-and-peace-e-bulletin-march-2014.pdf>

NEWS ROUND-UP

CSAN SAYS MARCH BUDGET FAILS THE POOREST IN THE UK

The social action arm of the Catholic Church in England and Wales has said that the Chancellor's Budget Statement fails to get to grips with poverty in the UK. Helen O'Brien, Chief Executive of CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) commented: "Once again we've heard promises to help struggling families through tax and childcare measures, whilst at the same time the significant reduction in support for the poorest people continues. For another year the value of Working Tax Credits, Child Benefit and many disability allowances will decline in real terms. People are already experiencing hardship as a result of this policy and there is a very real danger that it will be compounded by the planned cap on welfare spending. Recent proposals to slash a further £12 billion from the welfare budget, lower the household benefit cap and remove support from young adults are also likely to undermine any positive steps to help people in difficulty. The only consistency we're seeing is a worryingly inconsistent approach to tackling poverty."

Last month CSAN's Patron Cardinal Vincent Nichols expressed his anxiety about the extent of benefit cuts, warning that: "the basic safety net that was there to guarantee that people would not be left in hunger or in destitution has actually been torn apart." CSAN member charities working to support people in poverty have experienced a significant increase in demand for their services since changes to the benefits system began. A large majority have also reported increases in the number of service-users facing housing insecurity, family breakdown and difficulties affording food.

<http://www.csan.org.uk/newsarticle/budget-fails-poorest/#.UzGWEo1F3hE>

NEW ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL WELCOMED

Pax Christi, the international Catholic movement for peace has offered congratulations to its President, Bishop Malcolm McMahon on the news of his appointment to Archbishop of Liverpool. In a statement, Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of Pax Christi said: "We greatly appreciate the engagement that Bishop Malcolm has with us and our work at both national and international levels. In recent years he has helped us champion the cause of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, executed for his refusal to serve in Hitler's army and supported our work on nuclear disarmament and the arms trade. He has taken part in several international assemblies of our movement. His warm, honest and open manner has eased the way of collaboration and cooperation - an important model of work for our Church today."

Steve Atherton writes: "Alleluia! Our new archbishop has a heart for justice and a care for the poor and the marginalised. We expect to be asked to dream of a church that is a part of the world not apart from the world. We look forward to this challenge and hope that we can rise to it."

HOUSING JUSTICE CHIEF IN LONDON MARATHON TO RAISE FUNDS

Alison Gelder, Housing Justice Chief Executive, will be running the London Marathon on 13 April. Alison hopes to raise funds for Housing Justice - to sponsor her please click the following link: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AlisonGelder1>

LIVE BELOW THE LINE CHALLENGE 28 APRIL – 2 MAY

One in six people around the world live below the poverty line, with most of them struggling to survive on less than £1 per day. Over 25,000 people across the world are taking up the challenge to eat and drink on £1 a day for 5 days, to spread awareness and raise funds. Participating charities include Christian Aid, Progressio, Oxfam, ActionAid and Save the Children. Sign up at https://www.livebelowtheline.com/uk/users/sign_up

Live Below the Line is an initiative of the Global Poverty Project, an education and campaigning organisation whose mission is to increase the number and effectiveness of people taking action against extreme poverty. <https://www.livebelowtheline.com/uk/>

MAJOR FAITH INITIATIVE TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Muslims, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have launched a joint project to end human trafficking within a decade. The Global Freedom Network was inaugurated at the Vatican on 17 March. It is estimated that between 12 and 27 million people worldwide are enslaved into forced labour and sexual exploitation. Each year, about 2 million people are victims of sexual trafficking, 60% of whom are girls. Human organ trafficking is rife: annually around 20,000 people are forced or deceived into giving up an organ (liver, kidney, pancreas, cornea, lung, even the heart).

http://anglicancentre.churchinsight.com/Articles/396314/Anglican_Centre_in/Justice_and_Peace/GLOBAL_FREEDOM_NETWORK/Global_Freedom_Network.aspx

MILITARY-STYLE CHALLENGES PROMOTED BY SCHOOLS MINISTER

from the Enfield Independent Newspaper 7 March 2014:

A politician put herself through some gruelling physical challenges at an event to celebrate schoolchildren's achievements in a military challenge. Pupils at the Oasis Hadley Academy in Enfield took part in the Prince's Trust youth charity's xl programme which inspires people to focus on their education. The 13 to 19-year-olds were joined by education minister Elizabeth Truss who attended the event at the West Ham Army Reserve. The politician took part in a series of military-themed challenges led by Commando Joe's, which works closely with the trust and the Department for Education. She said: "I am delighted to celebrate the successes of these innovative and dedicated military ethos schemes, which instil these values and are turning around the lives of thousands of young people. All young people, regardless of their background, deserve the best education possible. That is why we have increased the funding going to these important projects – allowing even more young people to benefit from the military ethos." http://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/localnews/11061767.Pupils_take_part_in_Prince_s_Trust_scheme/

* Forces Watch <http://forceswatch.net/blog/why-are-education-projects-run-ex-services-being-prioritised> has a different opinion.

NEW CHRISTIAN AID REPORT SHOWS HUMAN COST OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Christian Aid has published a new report (27 March), showing the devastating effects of climate change, with communities worldwide, particularly in worst hit poorer countries, being forced to change their way of life. While record-breaking floods in the UK received massive media coverage the voices of those suffering even greater impacts have largely gone unheard. Using personal stories from seven different countries; Bangladesh, Brazil, Kenya, Malawi, El Salvador, Bolivia and the Philippines, the report *Taken by Storm: responding to the impacts of climate change* reveals the stark reality of life as a result of extreme weather events such as drought and flooding. The report puts a human face to the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the impacts of climate change. Among other things it is expected to say that Africa will experience rising temperatures with less rainfall in arid regions. Child malnutrition is likely to be a serious risk as food quality and quantity is affected. As well as showing the different ways people are experiencing a distorted climate, the Christian Aid report outlines some of the ingenious ways people are adapting their lifestyles to survive. Measures range from farmers receiving weather forecasts by text message in Kenya, to the introduction of saltwater resistant ducks in flooded Bangladesh. Despite this resilience, the report is clear that adaptation measures offer only a temporary solution. <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=24444>

GREEN CHRISTIAN PROGRAMME TO DEVELOP 'JOY IN ENOUGH' MANIFESTO

Green Christians have launched a two-year programme to develop a 'Joy in Enough' manifesto. It will rethink how the economy could be restructured to achieve social justice, respect planet Earth's natural limits, and set people free from the obligation to consume beyond their needs. The programme is given a special relevance today, as the UN warns that the impacts of global warming are likely to be "severe, pervasive and irreversible". More than 100 people from across Christian denominations attended the conference 'Joy in Enough: Awakening to a new economics' on 29 March in Birmingham, organised by Christian Ecology Link with A Rocha UK and the student campaign network Speak. Go to: <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=24466>

LOCAL REPORTS

ASH WEDNESDAY ACT OF REPENTANCE

The start of Lent was marked with a number of actions and prayer vigils. In London the Ministry of Defence building was marked with blessed ash during a liturgy of repentance for nuclear war preparations. Members of Pax Christi, London Catholic Worker and Christian CND gathered to pray and take part in symbolic acts of repentance and peacemaking as they processed, with three prayer stops, around the MoD.

Those marking the building included peace campaigner Fr Martin Newell who later received a 28 day jail sentence for non-payment of fines arising from numerous nonviolent peace protests against war and war preparations. Appearing at Westminster Magistrates Court on 15 March Fr. Martin told the court that for "for reasons of faith and conscience" he would not pay fines of £565 that had been imposed following protests against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the UK's use of armed drones and Trident nuclear weapons system.

Fr. Newell said: "Jesus taught us to love not just our neighbours but also our enemies. He showed us by his life and example how to resist evil not with violence but with loving, persistent, firm, active non-violence. It was this revolutionary patience on behalf of the poor and oppressed that, humanly speaking, led to him being arrested, tried, tortured and executed by the powers that be. The acts of witness that resulted in the fines I have refused to pay were a form of conscientious objection. Refusing to pay them is a continuation of that objection. It is a privilege to be able to follow on the path that led Jesus to the way of the cross and resurrection."

Fr. Newell is a member of the Passionist Order. He currently works with homeless refugees at the London Catholic Worker, and is planning to move soon to start a new project in Birmingham.

A key part of the day's message called on the government to cancel Trident, the UK's independent nuclear programme. The government is committed to the replacement of Trident at a cost of £100 billion. A petition calling for the government to cancel the renewal of Trident, and use some of the £100 billion saved on building up the UK's flood defences, can be found at: https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/UK_Government_Cancel_Trident_spending_help_flood_victims/ The Catholic Church has always been clear in its teaching on nuclear issues. This year in his World Peace Day message, Pope Francis said: "I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament. "

Jan Harper writes: Liverpool Pax Christi, joined by members of Justice and Peace groups, CND Liverpool Friends of Palestine, as well as local clergy and religious called for a change of heart from our continued involvement in the research and development of military drones. In the shadows of the University of Liverpool, one of 5 universities involved in the Gamma Programme to develop autonomous systems and costing 4.42 million pounds, we reflected on the effect of military drone strikes around the world and the cost, both physically and psychologically to those living under their constant presence. Marking each other with ashes as a symbol of our sorrow, we resolved to turn away from military security to a way of security built on love, justice and truth. As a symbol of new life we took bulbs freshly planted to the gardens in front of the Harrison Hughes building where much of the research is carried out. After the service we remained to leaflet the public and the students passing by.

FUKUSHIMA VIGIL AT HEYSHAM NUCLEAR POWER STATION

Ellen Teague writes: More than 60 people, including members of Lancaster Diocese Faith and Justice Commission, held a vigil at Heysham Nuclear Power station on 8 March, the third anniversary of the nuclear accident at Fukushima in Japan. In part, they were inspired by Columban Sean McDonagh's book, 'Fukushima: The Death Knell for Nuclear Energy?' which looked at the environmental concerns surrounding nuclear power, particularly learning lessons from what happened at Fukushima. The gathering called upon EDF Energy to publicly answer a number of questions. In the face of climate change, rising sea levels and storm surges, these questions related to the safety of the reactors and the radioactive spent nuclear fuel which is temporarily stored on site at Heysham, prior to its transportation by rail to Sellafield. A further question asked related to the continuing and long-term problem of nuclear waste storage.

Local architect Mo Kelly measured levels during the recent winter storms affecting the Heysham area to demonstrate how high sea levels may be in 2100. Some held a long purple cloth showing where the seas on 3 January 2014 swept across the concrete promenade barely some seven metres from the flood defence wall to the power station. Using a measuring staff, Mo Kelly showed how high a five metre storm surge would be, making reference to the 18 metre storm surges seen on the Dorset coast this winter. The staff reached beyond the height of the security perimeter fence.

Gisela Renolds, a local resident from Lancaster, said: "People are concerned about how flooding will affect Heysham nuclear power station, and would like to know how they are preparing for climate change-induced sea level rises and storm surges. We want the operators of Heysham nuclear power station to tell us 1) How are they preparing for climate change-induced sea level rises and storm surges? 2) How can we be sure that flooding will not cause nuclear waste leaks and 3) How can the nuclear power stations continue producing waste if there are no safe solutions for long-term storage?"

Others expressed concern about the problem of nuclear waste, which will remain highly radioactive for thousands of years. John Hammond from Silverdale said, "Back in the 1970s the nuclear industry said that they would develop the technologies to deal with nuclear waste, but in 2014 there is still no safe way to dispose of it."

Since the vigil, Mo Kelly has been offered a meeting with Heysham's Director. She says, "I'm taking up this offer and also raising the matter of evacuation (in the event of an accident causing a major release of radioactive particles) of the 188,000 population according to the 2001 census, of those towns located within 10 miles of Heysham, from Ulverston and Garstang in the north to Fleetwood in the south." In 1990, her professional body, the RIBA, produced a report entitled 'Nuclear disasters and the built environment.' This report specifically named two nuclear reactor sites which should never have been built, as they are too close

to centres of populations. Those sites are Heysham and Hartlepool, and a new reactor is proposed for Heysham, with a new fast road under construction, linking the M6 motorway with Heysham power station.

According to the Government, as many as 12 of Britain's 19 civil nuclear sites are at risk of flooding and coastal erosion because of climate change. According to *The Guardian* of 7 March 2012, the sites include all of the eight proposed for new nuclear power stations (including Heysham) around the coast, as well as numerous radioactive waste stores, operating reactors and defunct nuclear facilities.

BISHOP BLESSES PEACE GARDEN

All Hallows Catholic College in Macclesfield, has marked one hundred years since the start of the Great War with the opening of The Pax Christi Peace and Memorial Garden in the grounds of its campus on 13 March. A Peace Pole bearing the words '*May peace prevail on earth*' in many languages was ceremonially processed into the garden and the Rt Revd. Mark Davies, the Bishop of Shrewsbury then blessed the garden with a sprinkling of Holy Water.

Following the ceremony guests were invited to scatter poppy and wild flower seeds which will recall the flowers which brought red colour to battle fields after the fighting. Matt Jeziorski Schools and Youth Outreach Worker for Pax Christi, the International Catholic Peace organization said "It is wonderfully encouraging for all of us at Pax Christi to see a school taking up the challenge of peace-making in this way. All Hallows stands as an example to other schools seeking to put their faith into action." The blessing was also attended by the Head teachers and children from partner primary schools, members of St Albans parish Justice and Peace group and Maura Garside, Secretary Shrewsbury Diocese J&P Commission.

On an atmospheric morning with fog looming over the garden the design had added poignancy. At the heart of the garden is a re-creation of a first world war trench, a reminder of the harrowing experience of being in a trench and going 'over the top' into conflict. Railway sleepers lining the trench remind visitors of how the trenches were strengthened, the train journeys taken away from families - and the hopes for reunion and safe return. Sandbags, filled with concrete, form the seating, and a curved display wall provides a place for information, stories, poetry and prayers to be found from the period or written by students.

Chair of Governors, Jacqui Feely expressed her gratitude to all involved "I am so proud that so many students and staff have taken this project to heart and work so hard to complete it. It is so in keeping with our Christian ethos to combine memories of the Great War with prayer for peace." Principal Tony Billings said "All the curriculum subjects are linked with the project and the garden will be a major part of All Hallows' annual November Remembrance Liturgy. The garden also provides a resource for partner schools. The project has been achieved as a result of the support of our local housing association, Cheshire Peaks and Plains who commissioned an inspirational landscape gardener, Mr. John Tilley, to work with our students on the design. It will leave a legacy for many years to come."

* For more information about creating a peace garden in your own school or college, or the other ways in which Pax Christi supports peacemaking in schools, contact Matt education@paxchristi.org.uk or visit www.paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education

POPE FRANCIS APPOINTS FOUR WOMEN TO VATICAN COMMISSION ON SEX ABUSE

Marie Collins, a prominent Irish victim of sexual abuse and campaigner, has been named by Pope Francis as a member of a new Vatican anti-abuse commission. She said of her appointment: "This Pope has been speaking about change, but this shows real action. It's a huge step forward." In December Pope Francis announced that he was going to set up the commission. The Vatican has announced the names of the first eight members. Alongside Marie Collins are psychiatrists Catherine Bonnet, from France, and Sheila Hollins, from Britain; Hanna Suchocka, the former Polish prime minister who has been an ambassador to the Holy See for more than ten years; the Archbishop of Boston, Sean Patrick O'Malley, who has been a vocal spokesman for US victims, Italian lawyer Claudio Papale, an expert in canon law; the Argentinean Jesuit theologian Miguel Yanez, long-time friend of Pope Francis, and Fr Hans Zollner, a German Jesuit psychologist and psychotherapist.

THE UK GOLD FILM

Mary Glennon writes: The UK Gold is a documentary that sets out to expose the extent of tax avoidance by big businesses with the co-operation of legal advisers, financial institutions and government. The film follows Fr William Taylor who recently won a place on the council of the City of London in a by-election (20 March). Fr William is faced with formidable opposition which is supported by the large financial institutions in the borough.

It is claimed that Britain loses £25 bn. annually in unpaid tax from multinational companies. The UK is one of the largest tax avoidance havens in the world. Although many of these tax avoidance schemes are not illegal they are surely extremely immoral. The documentary points to the fact that many of the poorest areas of the world are also suffering badly as a result of the loss of these revenues. It is stated that 85,000 children could be saved if companies paid their tax.

* If you missed the opportunity to see the film you can download it at Vimeo On Demand <http://vimeo.com/ondemand/10298>

JUSTICE AND PEACE CALENDAR

12-16 MAY WALK TO WORK WEEK

Living Streets is a national charity that stands up for pedestrians, working with local communities to create safe, attractive, enjoyable streets where it's great to walk. Walk to Work Week takes place during Living Streets' National Walking Month. Every May we encourage people to feel the benefits of walking: burn calories and get fitter; blow away the cobwebs and relieve stress; go for a stroll together or walk the kids to school; make new discoveries in your area; save your travel fare and cut your environmental footprint.

<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>

<http://walktoworkweek.org.uk/>

19-23 MAY WALK TO SCHOOL WEEK

Every year Walk to School Week brings together nearly one million schoolchildren, teachers and parents. We will build on previous years with: resources to help you set up a Park & Stride area around your school; a policy call asking all relevant government departments to support walking to school, with plenty of fun ideas about how to get pupils involved; fundraising materials enabling pupils to help others walk to school by... walking to school; an updated 5-day Walking Challenge, making it easier than ever before to take part AND to build a legacy of walking after the week is over!

<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school/walk-to-school-week-2014#sthash.mX9Ct28v.dpuf>

21 MAY FEAST OF BLESSED FRANZ JÄGERSTÄTTER

Austrian farmer Franz Jägerstätter refused to fight for the German Army because of his opposition to the Nazi regime. He cited St. Thomas More as a key influence. Executed on 9 August 1943, he was declared a martyr and beatified in 2007.

www.paxchristi.org.uk

22 MAY INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The theme for this year is Marine Biodiversity offering Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and everyone interested in marine life the opportunity to raise awareness of the number of known marine species and the need to protect them. <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/event/international-day-biodiversity-22-may-2014>

24 MAY WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH IN CHINA

In May 2007, Pope Benedict XVI released a Letter to Chinese Catholics, in which he asked that May 24 each year be dedicated a World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. He chose May 24 because it is the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, who is venerated at the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai.

4 JUNE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF INNOCENT CHILDREN VICTIMS OF AGGRESSION

The purpose of the day is to acknowledge the pain suffered by children throughout the world who are the victims of physical, mental and emotional abuse. This day affirms the UN's commitment to protect the rights of children.

www.un.org/en/events/childvictimday

5 JUNE WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY *THINK.EAT.SAVE.*

On 5 June (World Environment Day) 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all UN agencies, funds and programmes to become climate neutral and 'go green'. *Greening the Blue* was launched in 2010 to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability, highlight what's been achieved, and look at future plans.

This year's theme is Think.Eat.Save. - an anti-food waste and food loss campaign that encourages us to reduce our footprint. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), every year 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted - equivalent to the amount produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, 1 in every 7 people in the world go to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 die daily from hunger. Given this enormous imbalance in lifestyles and the resultant devastating effects on the environment, this year's theme - Think.Eat.Save - encourages us to become more aware of the environmental impact of our food choices and empowers us to make informed decisions. To celebrate World Environment Day *Greening the Blue* invites us to make a pledge to reduce our footprint. Find out more at www.greeningtheblue.org

7-15 JUNE A LOAVES & FISHES CELEBRATION ALL AROUND MORECAMBE BAY

People living round the perimeter of Morecambe Bay are invited to hold a 'Loaves & Fishes' event in 7-15 June 2014 - register interest at loavesfishes2014@yahoo.co.uk. This is the initiative of Church Environment groups of the Blackburn Anglican Diocese and Churches Together in Cumbria, the Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocese Faith & Justice Commission and CAFOD Lancaster to celebrate community, wildlife, sustainable food production and good eating, especially local food/environment/ seaside events. The organizing group are encouraging every coastal community and school between Barrow and Fleetwood to host a 'Loaves & Fishes' meal open to people of all faiths or none, sharing fish, seafood and bread in a shore-side picnic, school meal or parish hall party. This will be an opportunity for welcoming those who know little about the wildlife and culinary delights of the sea and shore, who hesitate to cook and eat together or who cannot afford a decently cooked meal.

A FRANCISCAN BLESSING

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

RESOURCES

PAX CHRISTI LAUNCH PEACE STORY BLOG

The mainstream media dedicates overwhelming amounts of space and time to tell stories of violence and war, to explain the reasons why bloody conflicts make sense, and why we cannot expect something different from certain tribes, groups, peoples, or nations. But there is danger in having only one side of the story, and the danger is even more serious when that side is violence. Listening to one story only necessarily leaves behind other stories – sometimes more numerous, which are not heard because their storytellers are not as "powerful" as others. But that does not make their voices disappear. Alicia García, one of the co-founders of the Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared in El Salvador, said once how she and some women friends went to the streets some minutes after they saw how the military shot unarmed university students in a demonstration. Some of the young people had been killed but some others needed help. She and her friends chose to stay and risked their lives, to attend to the young people instead of remaining paralysed. The newspapers reported the massacre, but what Alicia and the others did went unnoticed.

For many years Pax Christi has affirmed the futility of violence as a tool to solve violent conflicts. At the same time, the movement has been fostering cultures of peace among grassroots communities and has helped bring their voices to wider audiences. Pax Christi's efforts are based in a profound belief that peace is possible, that peace is already among us – yet always being created. Pax Christi has started a blog, sharing stories of their peace building work that is taking place all over the world. These are the stories that often get missed by the mainstream media. In a statement Pax Christi says: "We believe that by paying attention to those windows of hope we can bring change and we can build peace. That was the seed planted in the hearts and minds of the first Pax Christi groups after the Second World War, determined to build reconciliation between French and German peoples." Visit the Pax Christi Peace Stories blog: <http://paxchristipeacestories.wordpress.com/>

ROBIN HOOD TAX FILM WITH BILL NIGHY

WELL WORTH WATCHING – a 3.45min film clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ghKdH1iJBc>
Additional campaigning materials can be found here: www.robinhoodtax.org.uk/millionstrong/assets

SILENT VOICES EXHIBITION from now until 20 April at the Hope Park Campus exhibition space and April 2-29 at The Eighth Day Café All Saints, Oxford Road Central Manchester. This thought provoking exhibition displays photographs of the everyday life in the Palestinian village of Bil'in, as seen through the eyes of children.

Elaine Stapleton writes:

In September 2012 a group of more than 80 children aged between 6 and 16 years of age from Bil'in, Palestine took part in a photography workshop. Each of the workshops represented an age group and enabled them to work alongside their peers. Each group was introduced to a basic camera and we discussed the aims of the project. Individuals were encouraged to take on the role of ambassador representing their village. After discussing the aims of the project they were asked "What are the

messages you would like people to hear about your world and what do you want them to learn about your life." The groups explored basic ideas of composition and visual story telling. Once the group felt ready then they were encouraged to take part in their own one hour photo shoot.

The children and young people were given the freedom to take images that told their story and focused on their experience. For most of the young people this was their first opportunity to use a camera and take ownership of their images. Although some of the children had limited access to a camera this was very much restricted to capturing the images from the weekly demonstration. It was important to me that I did not steer the children towards a particular agenda. This project was about claiming back their right to choose and make decisions about the images that are included in this exhibition, have a voice and show their daily life through their eyes. Using a camera can be very liberating, it can remove barriers and provide an opportunity to explore, celebrate, share experiences and develop an understanding of each other and our lives. Photography is a powerful medium that enables children to naturally engage in creative self-expression. This allows us to better understand a child's struggles and can give us a snap shot of their internal world. These images give us a glimpse into their world. It's a playful, painful, honest, truthful account, but it is theirs !

I was asked to facilitate this project by the Liverpool "Friends of Bil'in" in order to raise awareness of the struggles this community face. Specifically we wanted to highlight the Friday demonstrations that have taken place for the last eight years and have led to some bitter sweet successes around the return of their land. We wanted this project to continue to educate beyond my visit. Growing and developing an already well established twinning project. Photography is an exciting and creative form of storytelling and one that will hopefully bring young people together, to share experiences, develop understanding, celebrate difference and unite us in the struggle to eliminate prejudice and violence against children.

This has been a very personal journey for me. I have been in situations that were unfamiliar and sometimes very distressing to me. I was also privileged to meet and share family life with extraordinary people whose generosity, dignity and resilience were impressive and humbling. In much the same way as the children and young people my images reflect one day and a particular event and are not meant to be representative of the full Palestinian story This is the beginning of my journey in understanding *life beyond the wall*.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

4 End Hunger Fast Campaign National Day of Fasting www.endhungerfast.co.uk

8 *How Microfinance transforms lives in the developing world*. Talk by the CEO and Development Director of "Five Talents" to staff and students at the University of Chester, International Development Studies 5-6pm. Members and supporters of the Chester World Development Forum are also very welcome to come to this event. More information about Five Talents, *microfinance for the marginalised* www.fivetalents.org.uk

9 *The Stones Cry Out: the untold story of Palestinian Christians*. Film to be shown by the producer/director, Yasmine Perni at Liverpool Quaker Meeting House 7:15 -9.30pm, with refreshments available from 6:30pm. Following the film there will be a question and answer session with Yasmine and other panel members. Tickets £5 from Susan Murphy 0781 618 1850 or by email susan.murphy@care4free.net

10 Public meeting on fuel poverty hosted by Manchester Friends of the Earth and Energy Bill Revolution 6-8pm Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD. Speakers include: Jonathan Reynolds MP (Shadow Minister for Energy & Climate Change); Kate Green MP (Shadow Spokesperson for Disabled People); Jennifer Gregory (Age Concern Manchester) and Ed Matthew (Energy Bill Revolution). Free but please book at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/no-more-cold-homes-ticket>:

10 Talk by Lord Alton on 'The Right to Life' 7.30pm St Catherine and Martina Parish Centre, Birkenhead Rd, Hoylake, Wirral

10 *Drone Wars* - talk by leading activist Chris Cole 7:30pm St Mary & St Michael Parish Hall, Tillman Close, Settle BD24 9RA

11 50th Anniversary of Pacem in Terris. The International Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs - Pax Romana is promoting a Day of Prayer, Thanksgiving and Action for Human Rights Defenders and Peacebuilders on the 50th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's encyclical.

14 Global Day of Action Against Military Spending - lots of resources on Pax Christi website <http://paxchristi.org.uk/campaigns/security-disarmament/common-security/> plus a simple postcard to give out at any event to make the link between military

spending and poverty at home and overseas. http://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2013/12/GDAMS_Postcard.pdf

If you would like paper copies email Peter on orders@paxchristi.org.uk

15 CWDF Forum meeting with Stephen Mosley MP (Provisional arrangements TBC) 7pm-9pm at The Unity Centre, Cuppin Street Chester, CH1 2BN. An opportunity to meet with our Chester MP for an exchange of news and views at this significant time – just one year before the next General Election. www.chestercwdf.org.uk

23 April-3 May *Hunger for Trade*: an international performing arts response to the global food crisis. At the Studio, Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester. Dates and booking information at www.royalexchange.co.uk

28 Time to Scrap Trident Speaker: Bruce Kent 7pm St Wilfrid's Parish Centre 1 Winckley Square Preston PR1 3JJ
5 minutes walk Preston Railway Station. Contact: Lancaster Faith & Justice Commission St Bernadette's Parish House, Bowerham Road, Lancaster LA1 4HT tel: 01524 383081 or email: lfjc@talktalk.net

28 April -2 May Live Below the Line Challenge https://www.livebelowtheline.com/uk/users/sign_up

29 Trinity URC, Milton Grove, Wigan 1.30 – 3.30 " *The Days that Shook the World – the Christmas Truce.*" This event hopes to stimulate discussion of how we should commemorate the centenary of WW1. 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

30 'Drop-in' event 6.30-9pm at Friends Meeting House, Cooper Street, Stockport SK1 3QL. *Standing together for Stockport 'bringing together people and groups from all backgrounds to promote understanding, peace and harmony in our community'* in an effort to counter the negative stance of the BNP and UKIP ahead of May's European elections. Sign a unity pledge, read poems and share personal experiences of celebrating diversity in Stockport. Musical contributions welcome. Write a short message on a 'wall' on the importance of unity across communities to share with others in your community – to be displayed in the Town Hall, Central Library or Art Gallery. Refreshments, music and time to socialise. Accompanied children welcome. Organised by Stockport for Peace <http://www.stockportforpeace.org.uk/>

MAY

3 Spirituality day with Fr Jim Clarke, director of spiritual formation in the diocese of Los Angeles. St Joseph's, Chorley PR6 0HR 10am – 3.30pm. Details 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

7 Catholic Social Teaching (CAFOD/Katherine House) Led by Phil Doyle and Joy Wanless Katherine House, 26 Singleton Road, Salford, M7 4WL 1.30pm-4pm 0161 708 9744 khousefcj@hotmail.com www.katherinehousefcj.org

10 NJPN AGM and Open Networking Day CAFOD Romero House 55 Westminster Bridge Road, Southwark London SE1 7JB 10.30am -4.00pm *Joy of the Gospel Our response to Pope Francis' call to be "a Church for the Poor"*. Speaker: David McLoughlin Senior Lecturer in Theology at Newman University. There will be opportunity to hear about justice and peace activities from groups around the country. Representatives of Catholic/Christian Agencies will report on their work and suggest practical ways of becoming involved in campaigning for social justice. Tea and coffee provided, bring your own lunch. Further details: Ann Kelly 020 7901 4864 admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

14 Catholic Social Teaching Event repeated from 7 May in the evening 7pm-9.30pm - same details as above

15 International Conscientious Objector Day. Pax Christi has been working hard with others to prepare for this. Descendants of 50 First World War COS will be taking part in this year's event. Information here <http://bit.ly/1m8rVaF>

15 "The days that shook the world – the Christmas Truce" at St Michael's, West Derby Rd, Liverpool L6 5EH 7-9pm Details 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

18 Greater Manchester Run. Manchester City Centre 10.30am-12.30pm. CAFOD is looking to recruit runners for their team in this 10km event. To register, go to www.cafod.org.uk/sponsoredevents

22 9.3am-4pm Housing Justice Roadshow, Quaker Meeting House, L 1 3BT Details 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

24 PAX CHRISTI AGM at the Catholic Chaplaincy 30 Catherine Street, Liverpool L8 7NL. Business in the morning. Symon Hill, writer and peace campaigner, speaking at 2pm. RSVP to admin@paxchristi.org.uk

JUNE

22 Pennine Run for All: 10km. Burnley from 9.30am. The route starts at the Mechanic's Theatre and takes in Thompson Park and Towneley Hall. CAFOD is looking for sponsored runners. To register, go to www.cafod.org.uk/sponsoredevents

JULY

12 10am-4pm Liverpool J&P Commission Annual Assembly. "Wars and Rumours of Wars." LACE L17 1AA Details 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

BOOK NOW - NATIONAL J&P CONFERENCE *Called to life in all its fullness* 18 - 20 JULY 2014

Organised by NJPN Executive Committee with Christians Aware and Vincentians in Partnership. A conference to: empower lay people to accept the responsibility of their baptism; provide an opportunity to bring our life experiences and relate them to our baptismal call; be a celebration of life and a renewal of vision. Speakers Sarah Teather MP; Mary Colwell; Gemma Simmonds CJ; Clare Dixon; Chair: Rev Ruth Gee. The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Booking forms now available from: NJPN, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX. Tel 020 7901 4864 email admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN