

The 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](mailto:anneoc980@hotmail.com)

## THEY WANTED THE AMERICAN DREAM

**Julia Le Duc** is a reporter for *La Jornada* in Matamoros, the Mexican city directly across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas. Her shocking photographs showing the bodies of Salvadoran migrant Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his daughter Valeria cast a fresh spotlight on the migration crisis at America's southern border. Here she describes how the images came into being:

On Sunday 24 June there was an emergency call about a woman who was in a desperate way down by the river. We heard the report and went down to the river where she was shouting and screaming that the current had taken her daughter. Later we found out her name was Vanessa Ávalos. We could hear her telling the officials that they had been in Mexico for two months and wanted to ask for asylum in the US. She said they they'd been in Tapachula in the south of Mexico and they'd applied for a humanitarian visa [allowing them to stay and work in Mexico for a year] but they wanted the American dream – so they took a bus up to the border.

They'd arrived here earlier that morning and they went straight to the [international] bridge to ask about applying for asylum, but they were told the American migration office was closed because it was a weekend – and that there were lots of other people in the line ahead of them. A few months ago there were about 1,800 people waiting in Matamoros for an asylum interview. It's gone down to about 300 now, but there are only three interview slots each week, so they were still looking at a long wait. So the family were walking back from the bridge when [Martínez] stopped and looked at the river – and said "Here's where we cross." He crossed first with the little girl and he left her on the American side. Then he turned back to get his wife, but the girl went into the water after him. When he went to save her, the current took them both.

Someone called the rescue services – on this bank there are always people jogging and riding bikes on the weekend – and the search went on until after 11pm, but even with boats and lamps they couldn't find them. The next morning, they continued in the light of day and, at about 10.15 in the morning, the firemen found the two bodies. That's when I took the pictures, before the scene was taped off.

I've been a crime reporter for many years, and I've seen a lot of bodies – and a lot of drownings. The Río Bravo [Rio Grande] is a very strong river: you think it's just shallow, but there are lots of currents and whirlpools. You get numb to it, but when you see something like this it re-sensitises you. You could see that the father had put her inside his T-shirt so the current wouldn't pull her away. He died trying to save his daughter's life.

Will it change anything? It should. These families have nothing, and they are risking everything for a better life. If scenes like this don't make us think again – if they don't move our decision-makers – then our society is in a bad way.

In Mexico there has been a lot of talk about the crisis on our southern border [where President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has dispatched more than 6,000 members of Mexico's national guard to seal off the frontier with Guatemala]. But there is a crisis on our northern border, too – the border with the United States – and I see it every day. These are desperate families – and desperate people do desperate things.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/25/they-wanted-the-american-dream-reporter-reveals-story-behind-tragic-photo>

## US BISHOPS 'HORRIFIED' AT CONSEQUENCES OF GOVERNMENT REFUGEE POLICIES; DEMAND ACTION

27 June 2019

"The cry of a father and his baby daughter who drowned crossing the Rio Grande reaches heaven itself. This unspeakable consequence of a failed immigration system, together with growing reports of inhumane conditions for children in the custody of the federal government at the border, shock the conscience and demand immediate action."

Cardinal Daniel N DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, joins Bishop Joe S Vásquez of Austin, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, in calling on the federal government to hear the cry of the poor and vulnerable.

Their joint statement follows:

"We join with our Holy Father Pope Francis in immense sadness, having seen the horrific images of Oscar Martínez and his daughter Angie Valeria who drowned in the Rio Grande Valley while attempting to flee persecution and enter the United States. This image cries to heaven for justice. This image silences politics. Who can look on this picture and not see the results of the failures of all of us to find a humane and just solution to the immigration crisis? Sadly, this picture shows the daily plight of our brothers and sisters. Not only does their cry reach heaven. It reaches us. And it must now reach our federal government.

All people, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, are made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity and respect. Recent reports of overcrowded and unsanitary conditions are appalling and unacceptable for any person in U.S. custody, but particularly for children, who are uniquely vulnerable. Such conditions cannot be used as tools of deterrence. We can and must remain a country that provides refuge for children and families fleeing violence, persecution, and acute poverty.

Congress has a duty to provide additional funding to address the needs of children in federal custody. Their supplemental appropriations bill should also increase protections for immigrant children, including heightened standards and oversight for border facilities. It is possible and necessary to care for the safety of migrant children and the security of our citizens. By putting aside partisan interests, a nation as great as ours is able to do both."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37369>

## BISHOP WALKS MIGRANTS ACROSS US BORDER BRIDGE TO PROTEST TRUMP POLICY

**Victoria Gagliardo-Silver** New York 28 June 2019

A Texas bishop walked with Central American migrants across and US-Mexico border bridge in protest of conditions asylum seekers face under the Trump Administration. Mark J Seitz, a Roman Catholic bishop, walked across the Lerdo International Bridge in El Paso with migrants as part of his "Faith Action" protest. The bishop, who is originally from Wisconsin, prayed with and walked a Honduran family of five across the border bridge as they went to make an asylum claim with US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), reports the *Dallas Morning News*.

Bishop Seitz's protest opposes the Trump Administration's immigration policy, specifically the Migrant Protection Protocols which require migrants who seek asylum by crossing the El Paso bridge to return to Mexico as they wait for border agents to process their claims. The waiting period for asylum seekers can last from weeks to months. Over 15,000 migrants have been sent back to Mexico from the US as their asylum claims are reviewed. Anywhere from 100 to 200 migrants are sent back to Mexico daily.

"As a Catholic and Christian leader on the border, I am often called to be a doctor of the soul," said Bishop Seitz to reporters in both Spanish and English. He continued: "Standing here at the US-Mexico border, how do we begin to diagnose the soul of our country? A government and society which view fleeing children and families as threats. A government which treats children in US custody worse than animals. A government and society who turn their backs on pregnant mothers, babies and families and make them wait in Ciudad Juarez without a thought to the crushing consequences on this challenged city."

Decrying the Migrant Protection Protocols, the bishop claims that in Ciudad Juarez, the Mexican town which migrants are forced to return to from El Paso, "there is a critical lack of access to shelter, food, legal aid and basic services."

It is also reported that the Ciudad Juarez has a higher than average murder rate, with smugglers and drug dealers preying on newly arrived migrants.

Bishop Seitz continued: "This government and this society are not well."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/bishop-migrants-border-trump-us-texas-protest-a8979881.html>

## TRAGEDY AT THE RIO GRANDE, BUT THE EU MUST LOOK AT ITS OWN BORDERS

**Caoimhe De Barra** 4 July 2019

On the same day that the European Court of Human Rights denied 42 migrants on board the Sea-Watch ship permission to land, the shocking photograph of the father and daughter who drowned while attempting to cross the Rio Grande provided stark reminders of the extent of human desperation on two different borders.

The image of Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his daughter, Valeria, hauntingly encapsulates the dangers faced by thousands of migrants fleeing poverty, violence and persecution throughout Central America in their efforts to cross the US border. Julia Le Duc's photograph also reminded us of the devastating repercussions of the heartless immigration policies enforced by the Trump administration.

However, while the photograph rightly provoked outrage, closer to home similarly callous decisions have been taken in relation to migrants attempting to enter Europe. The migrant rescue ship, *Sea-Watch 3*, was this week denied permission to allow 42 stranded migrants to disembark in Italy after the European Court of Human Rights ruled against an emergency decree appeal. While the court indicated that Italian authorities must provide assistance to those on board, this does not go far enough in terms of providing the support and respect that should be given to such vulnerable people. Heartless EU policy has previously let children drown and often criminalises those who try to help these people, some of whom are attempting to flee from horrific conditions in prison camps in Libya.

The Trump administration receives deserved criticism in Europe for its brutal policing of its southern border, but equal attention needs to be paid to how Europe has responded to desperation in its neighbouring countries. Our own response has in fact mirrored Trump's approach. De facto, walls have been built, borders have been reinforced and the door has been firmly closed on those seeking safety and refuge. Europe's policy is arguably even more brutal than America's.

In 2018, an average of six people died each day trying to cross the Mediterranean. We are not only letting people die, we are criminalising those who try to help them. People who have provided food and shelter to migrants have been harassed and prosecuted. Caritas, the global body of which Trócaire is a member, has cited examples of this in Belgium, France, Hungary, Greece, Switzerland, Serbia, Spain and along the coast of Italy and Malta.

The upsurge in migration has not appeared out of nowhere. Syria has been destroyed by eight years of brutal war. Much of Libya is controlled by militias and the refugees in its detention centres come from countries such as South Sudan, which have suffered years of conflict. Much of northern Africa has experienced political turmoil, while millions have been affected by drought and conflict in East Africa.

Given our own history, Europe should show compassion to people escaping these brutal situations. The European Court of Human Rights has opted to rule against the EU's founding values by callously rejecting an opportunity to show real compassion to 42 desperate people.

*This letter by Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra was published in the Irish Times on Friday 28 June, 2019.*

[www.trocaire.org/](http://www.trocaire.org/)

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/374319>

## 'TRAPPED IN A HOSTILITY TOWARDS MIGRANTS THAT SEES THEM AS A THREAT TO BE CONTROLLED'

*Scottish Catholic Observer* 28 June 2019

**Sarah Teather, Director Jesuit Refugee Service,** explains how faith can help refugees overcome harrowing experiences:

In the UK, people are incarcerated indefinitely, in prison-like conditions, for the purposes of immigration control. Many of these have come to the UK to seek safety, but fallen foul of a notoriously arbitrary asylum system, blighted by a culture of disbelief. Detention is a profoundly traumatic experience. Torture victims tell us it is like being tortured a second time. People who have worked hard to build a life in adverse circumstances speak of being torn from their families and communities and locked away out of sight. Something has gone badly wrong if we consider this a reasonable way to treat people in the interests of immigration control. Detention is just one facet of a wider context of the hostile, or compliant, environment agenda – an explicit government policy to make life in the UK unliveable for refused asylum seekers and others with precarious immigration status.

We are trapped in a hostility towards migrants that sees them only as a threat to be controlled, and not as people with histories, relationships, hopes and fears. A social life that should be equally available to all members of society has been overshadowed with antagonism and suspicion. This is the society that sees indefinite incarceration as an acceptable means of immigration control. Embedded within this hostility towards vulnerable migrants is fear of 'the other.' Although having a particular social and cultural identity involves aligning oneself with a particular group, being like others from that group and seeing things from the group's perspective, it is also important to understand and transverse these appropriated boundaries. Such an openness enables us to understand new situations, new cultures and new ways of encountering others, while avoiding prejudice and being subject to negative stereotypes that pervade the media. A shift in our moral imagination is dependent on building trust networks, hybrid coalitions forged across a wide range of actors, sharing narratives, and creating a multiplicity of voices.

This openness to others is something we seek to practise on a daily basis at the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). We aim to foster communities of hospitality in places where they are absent, and to forge relationships in hostile spaces. JRS staff and volunteers accompany asylum seekers detained at the Heathrow Immigration Removal Centres (IRC), helping them to keep their spirit of resilience, hope and courage alive. Our detention outreach team visits Heathrow IRC each week. Our main aim is simply to help to build trust between one another, and to combat the toxic 'othering' which has penetrated into the national imagination. Regardless of individual faith or lack thereof, the JRS detention outreach team helps refugees to be recognised as individuals, brothers and sisters – whole people with unique journeys. JRS works in a holistic manner, accompanying people to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, while assuring that people who are out of sight and pushed to the periphery are not forgotten.

Practising faith can act as a cultural exchange that immigration detention and the hostile environment increasingly seeks to thwart. It seeks to humanise all those situations which have been dehumanised and restore pieces of lost dignity. Being detained can bring a sense of loss of agency and choice; multiple people have spoken to me of feeling 'powerless' in detention, at the mercy of a system that will not speak or listen to them. Yet practising faith empowers refugees; many tell us that it was faith in God that helped them to get through detention. One person I know from our work in the community described to a colleague how she was part of a praying community in detention. They would pray for each other especially if they were about to be removed. They would also pray for the detention centre officers. This was an act of faith that was simultaneously an act of love and a recovery of lost agency.

Indefinite immigration detention is a cruel and dehumanising practice. JRS, through accompaniment and the formation of human relationships, seeks to counter it. Faith guides us in both practice and principle as we walk with our global brothers and sisters, advocate social justice and aid in restoring a dignified existence. We wish to see the end of this system of discriminatory borders and, instead, build resilient bridges.

• *Sarah Teather is director of the Jesuit Refugee Service UK. She is a former Liberal Democrat MP, and served as Minister of State in the Department for Education between 2010 and 2012.*

<http://www.sconews.co.uk/opinion/58688/we-are-trapped-in-a-hostility-towards-migrants-that-sees-them-only-as-a-threat-to-be-controlled/>

## WHOSE SIDE ARE WE ON?

During World Refugee Week [17-23 June], I went to a talk by two members of the charity 'Hope and Aid Direct', organised by 'Global Justice Macclesfield' and held at St Peter's church on Windmill Street. 'Hope and Aid Direct' aim to 'take aid not sides' by delivering humanitarian aid to refugees in camps and small communities across Europe. This [talk] showed how vastly the refugee crisis expands past those people trying to enter our country or other countries in mainland Europe. Rather, it is also important to recognise the conditions of those stuck between borders, unable to claim asylum and settle, but also barred from moving to a different country. 'Hope and Aid Direct' focus on such people, driving requested humanitarian aid from the UK to refugee camps in Europe, for example on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios. This gives practical support to refugees who are sometimes kept in camps for up to two years, just waiting.

Earlier this year, I had the chance to choose a topic for my textiles GCSE exam. I chose to focus on refugees and the ways in which politicians have reacted to this crisis. It was quite eye-opening to research quotes which have been said about refugees by politicians, as it seems that this subject is not often brought up by the media, due to how little has changed over the past few years. The reluctance of politicians to see refugees as equal to ourselves creates a hostile environment which pushes them into a situation where they have nowhere to go. We are too quick to judge, so these people are seen as a threat to our country when in reality they are fleeing situations far worse than we could imagine. My piece of stitch work presents images of refugees, many with young children, alongside quotes about them from politicians. Seeing these two aspects together makes us question how anyone could think of a suffering child with no home or safety as a danger. Even if our leaders refuse to help these people, there is nothing to say that we also, should stoop so low as to judge before truly considering the situation.

• *Article written by Bethany, a young member of St Alban's parish, Macclesfield. It is hoped that the textiles she has created for her GCSE course work will be displayed in church in September.*

## POPE FRANCIS PRAYS FOR MIGRANTS KILLED IN LIBYAN DETENTION CAMP

**Source: Vatican Media** 7 July 2019

Addressing pilgrims in St Peter's Square for the Angelus on Sunday, Pope Francis invited them join him in prayer for the "poor, unarmed people who were killed or injured by an air strike on a detention centre for migrants in Libya." The Libyan government blame the air strike on forces loyal to a warlord, General Khalifa Haftar. General Haftar's forces accuse the government of shelling the centre. A UN report said that at least 60 people were killed in the strike, including six children, and that 130 others were injured. It also said "there are reports that following the first impact, some refugees and migrants were fired upon by guards as they tried to escape."

Pope Francis said: "The international community must not tolerate such serious events." He then went on to express his hope that "humanitarian corridors may be opened in an organised and concerted manner for the migrants who are most in need." Finally, the Pope said he wished to remember "all the victims of the recent massacres in Afghanistan, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger," and before saying goodbye to the faithful he had a special greeting for the Eritrean community in Rome to whom he said: "I pray for your people!"

Libya is a key departure point for migrants and refugees trying to reach Italy by boat, but many get picked up by the Libyan coastguard, - an action supported by the European Union. Thousands are now being held in the government-run detention centres in what human rights groups say are inhuman conditions.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37436>

## USA FAITH LEADERS CALL FOR DIPLOMACY, NOT WAR, WITH IRAN

10 July 2019: Faith leaders across the USA released on 9 July a joint statement entitled *Back from the Brink: USA faith leaders call for diplomacy, not war, with Iran*. Coordinated through the Sojourners, the statement describes a USA-Iran war as an unmitigated disaster as well as morally and religiously indefensible.

"Given the escalation of confrontation between the United States and Iran, it is time for leaders from our faith communities to point to more effective ways to transform conflict and to speak strongly against military action that could have enormous human and financial costs, and which could easily and broadly escalate," the statement reads. "While we agree that Iran should repudiate terrorism and not resume uranium enrichment, we stand as religious leader to say that war is not the answer with Iran and is unjustifiable on moral and religious grounds."

The statement urges political leaders to learn from the failed policies of the past. "It is time for a different approach. The United States should end its policy of harsh and punitive trade sanctions against the Iranian people." The statement calls for a different way. "Our scriptures instruct us to avoid war and to live as peaceably as possible with all. We call on all our religious leaders, theologians, clergy, and laypersons to speak out against the option of war with Iran."

**Read the statement in full:** <https://sojo.net/articles/faith-leaders-issue-emphatic-no-war-iran>

## NJPN COMMENT: WAR IS NOT A FUN DAY OUT

**To mark and challenge Armed Forces Day, Aisling Griffin, Pax Christi's Peace Education Worker wrote an article for *The Universe* entitled *War is not a fun day out*:**

This Saturday (29 June), on Armed Forces Day, people across the country will be sharing the message that war is not something for family entertainment. They will protest and distribute leaflets produced by the Peace Pledge Union.

Armed Forces Day is a national day intended to be a show of support for Armed Forces personnel. This year the annual 'National Event' takes place in Salisbury, and there are local events. At some there are stalls and exhibitions, some of which have previously allowed members of the public, including children, to play with weapons. However, guns and weapons are not children's toys. While the day can be seen as a family-fun day out, it enables the military to influence public opinion. It can 'sell' children the idea that a military career is fun while attracting the public more generally. The weapons are not seen in their normal place in conflict but as part of an engaging event that distances us from the realities of war.

The military needs a level of support from the public in order to be able to carry out its duties, which include going to war. These events allow for a public show of support, while also normalising the military through its presence in the streets and interaction with families. This normalisation and military presence can be seen as 'militarism' –when military values and presence become part of our everyday lives. Psalm 34 tells us to 'seek peace and pursue it.' Surely this is calling us to the opposite of militarism! If we are searching for peace, why are we letting young people play with weapons, which are used to perpetuate violence against families in other countries?

It must be noted that some of the stalls may have information and services for veterans and Armed Forces personnel which are vital and are an opportunity to find support. However, it also leads us to consider the potential costs of war that we may not see and to question the injustice of sometimes inadequate support given, or not given, to veterans who have experienced trauma due to conflict.

By allowing a culture of militarism to grow, are we creating a culture which also accepts war as inevitable? Jesus told Peter 'put down your sword.' As groups of people across the country plan to share the message that war is not something for family entertainment, perhaps it is worth considering if He would be asking us to 'put down the gun.'

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NJPN-commentAG2906.pdf>

## CHANGES ON PAX CHRISTI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Pax Christi has said goodbye to three wonderful Executive Committee members –Jan Harper, Helen Gilbert and Emma Atherton and now welcomes former Shrewsbury Diocese J&P Co-ordinator Joan Sharples and London Catholic Worker member Henrietta Cullinan who are joining the team bringing with them a wealth of skills and experience.

## #TIMEISNOW CLIMATE LOBBY: BISHOP PRAISES 'YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING A LEAD'

Ellen Teague 27 June 2019

Faith groups were among thousands of people who took part in a mass lobby of parliament yesterday, 26 June, to urge the UK government to act more seriously on climate change. *'The Time is Now'* lobby attracted around 12,000 people and was organised by the Climate Coalition and Greener UK. The Climate Coalition includes CAFOD, Christian Aid and around 130 other social groups and environmental organisations. Justice and Peace activists from across England and Wales participated, including Westminster, Portsmouth, Southwark and Leeds Diocese.

The whole day event started with a walk of witness down Whitehall, with Columban missionaries, Jesuit Mission, Salesians, A Rocha, Operation Noah, Green Christians and Pax Christi among the Christian groups present. Other faiths and environmental activists walked side by side. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was one of the walkers. Williams said: "we are living in an irrational civilisation, with the irrationality of someone sawing off the branch they are sitting on."

Campaigners met with more than 220 MPs who were taken by rickshaw to speak to their constituents lined up on both sides of the River Thames. At 2pm those present rang alarm clocks, mobile phone alarms and sirens, and cheered loudly to symbolise 'the time is now'. In Church House, Bishop John Arnold of Salford, the bishop with responsibility for the environment, presented winners of the Columban Young Journalists Competition on Climate Change with their certificates.

To round off the day, Bishop Arnold celebrated Mass with around 600 Catholic participants. He called for the government to be held to its promise to work towards net zero carbon emissions, and for industry "to clean up its act". He paid tribute to the young people who have alerted society to the dangers of environmental crises, including the children attending the 208 Salford diocesan schools who regularly raise their concerns when he visits. Around 24 Catholic schools were represented at the lobby, among them Bishop Ullathorne School in Coventry. "It is wonderful to see young people taking a lead" Bishop John said. But he called on everybody of all ages to review their attitudes to such things as waste and recycling and travel.

José Batista Gonçalves Afonso, a CAFOD partner and land rights lawyer working for the Pastoral Land Commission in the Brazilian Amazon, spoke of the importance of links with people internationally. The loss of rainforest and the recent assassinations of 54 people in Pará state means that global solidarity is vital. He had high hopes for October's Synod on Amazonia and urged the congregation to stay engaged with issues affecting Amazonia and the entire planet.

After the Mass many groups headed to their coaches for the lengthy journeys home, excited to have participated. Lancaster Diocesan representatives, for example, had left for London at 4am on Wednesday morning! However, others were still rushing off for meetings with their MPs in Portcullis House into the early evening. Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD, thanked "all the wonderful people in CAFOD tee-shirts", but noted that this was a day when people of all faiths and no faith had stood together for the common good.

Research from the Climate Coalition and Greener UK has found that 69 per cent of Britons "want to see urgent political action to combat climate change and protect the natural environment." They also found that 71 per cent want their MPs to support plans to tackle issues such as rising temperatures and species extinction.

Britain is the favourite to host a major conference to drive forward the 2015 Paris Agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions in late 2020 and negotiators are looking to the government to set an example for other countries to follow. Theresa May, in one of her last acts as Prime Minister, is signing into law a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This was welcomed by lobbyists, although many voiced the hope that the goal would be more like 2030.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37365>

## SEASON OF CREATION 1 September to 4 October 2019

1 September is the World Day of Prayer for Creation, established by Pope Francis. The Season of Creation or Creation Time runs from 1 September to 4 October 2019. The theme this year is *The Web of Life*. <http://seasonofcreation.org/about/>

How do we as individuals and as parish communities mark this season? Well, there are a number of things we can do as individuals. We can use this day (1 September) or this Season to actually begin to take those simple actions we have been meaning to. Begin to take the bus, or walk, instead of the car. If we have to drive, to work for example, can we car share? Give someone a lift or accept a lift. And do the same when we attend Mass. Begin to reduce our meat eating.

Spend some time with nature, perhaps visiting your local park. Take a look at a flower; really look and think about the structure, the petals, smell the perfume, and wonder at the differences between plants and flowers, yet in a way they are all the same. Think about the cycle of life and death in nature and ponder the magnificence of Creation and so the Creator.

As a parish, can we arrange to have bidding prayers each week during Mass? Can we arrange a special Liturgy? There is an excellent vigil for Creation on the CAFOD website: <https://cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/World-Day-of-Prayer>

- Can you arrange to study the papal Encyclical *'Laudato Si'* during this time? CAFOD has produced a guide to *Laudato Si*: <https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/26269/190854/version/4/Laudato%20Si%20study%20guide-gidw-%20leaders%20notes-%20final.pdf> as have the Columbans: <https://columbans.co.uk/news/laudato-si-columban-study-and-action-guide/>
- Can your parish explore the possibility of becoming a *Live Simply Parish*? <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/How-to-Campaign/Livesimply-award>
- Can you arrange to show the *'Global Healing'* film? Download at: <https://www.ourcommonhome.co.uk/download>

These are just some ideas which we have used in our parish of Holy Trinity, Newcastle under Lyme. They are not meant to be prescriptive. Indeed, I hope that we will hear or read about other ideas which we can use in the future.

- *Phil Mayland, Birmingham Justice & Peace Commission Newsletter Summer 2019* [www.birminghamjandp.org.uk](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk) reprinted with thanks

## SALFORD: BISHOP JOHN COMMENDS TODMORDEN PUPILS FOR DEDICATION TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

12 July 2019: On 1 July, the pupils of Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School in Todmorden were presented with a *LiveSimply* award from the charity CAFOD by Bishop of Salford John Arnold for their efforts to live more simply and sustainably. For the past twelve months, the whole school, including teachers and parents, have committed to reduce, reuse and recycle, while also thinking of ways to care for communities, both close to home and around the world. This has included everything from selling bird and bat boxes – which help to develop local biodiversity – to holding collections for the local food bank and speaking to members of the public at Todmorden market about sustainable living.

Assistant Headteacher, Mr Carr, said: "We were visited in May to be assessed for the award. The assessors were particularly impressed with the energy and enthusiasm shown by the pupils, as well as their commitment to live out the positive change they want to see, and how they have encouraged and inspired others. The school were delighted that Bishop John Arnold was able to visit the school, speak to the pupils and present the award. We would like to say thank you to the parish priest, Father Peter McGiveron, and governor, Briege Sivills, for their support and guidance in the school's desire to live simply."

For many at St Joseph's, the *LiveSimply* award is only the beginning of their journey to live more sustainable lifestyles. The school is now looking forward to planning more activities and are committed to responding positively to the challenges – such as avoiding single-use plastic and thinking of alternative ways to travel, such as using public transport – that come with living simply.

Local CAFOD representative for West Yorkshire, Simon Holleron, said: "What an amazing achievement – St Joseph's are one of the few *LiveSimply* schools in the country. The work of the pupils, teachers and parents over the past twelve months has really made a difference both here at home and around the world."

**Find education resources:** [www.cafod.org.uk/schools](http://www.cafod.org.uk/schools)  
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37473>

## EXETER: PARISH BECOMES 50TH IN COUNTRY TO BE AWARDED *LIVESIMPLY* STATUS

8 July 2019: An Exeter parish has become one of a growing number of congregations that have made drastic changes to reduce their environmental impact - and has been earned a *LiveSimply* award from the Catholic aid agency CAFOD.

For more than a year, the parishioners at Blessed Sacrament Church in Heavitree have committed to reduce, reuse and recycle, while also thinking of ways to care for communities, both close to home and around the world. This has included everything from setting up a repair cafe, where people bring items for repair and mending, to organising a walk in solidarity with refugees, and holding weekly collections for the Exeter foodbank. At Christmas, the parish's 'Sewing Bee' group made dresses out of pillowcases, which they sold at the Advent Fayre, raising over £1,000 for an orphanage in Uganda. During Lent, they organised a 'plastic free parish' challenge, where parishioners were encouraged to reduce single-use plastic.

Bernard White, the *LiveSimply* assessor who presented the award, said: "The repair shop, the plastic-free challenge and the dressmaking were particularly noteworthy. The 'Sewing Bee' parish group is innovative and a fine contribution to parish life and others. We were struck by the clear involvement, enthusiasm and support from the Parish Priest, Fr Jonathan Stewart, and the synergy that this produced amongst all the groups in the church. I would also like to draw attention to the excellent work done by Kathrin Forstner both in connection with the activities undertaken and the presentation to us. And it is not only with the parish they have made an impact – they have linked up with St Nicholas Primary School, and run a session about what it means to care for the environment.

After receiving the award the group have many plans for the future, including starting a parish Walking Group and a "Sow and Grow" group. They also hope to link up with other churches in Heavitree and Exeter on sustainability issues. CAFOD's representative in Exeter, Simon Giarchi, said: "This is such a great achievement for the parish. Your efforts over the past year have made a massive difference not only locally, but around the world – and you are definitely an inspiration to others."

**Learn more about *LiveSimply* at:** [www.cafod.org.uk/livesimply](http://www.cafod.org.uk/livesimply)  
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/374741>

## DAVID ATTENBOROUGH PRAISES GLASTONBURY FOR GOING PLASTIC FREE

Sir David Attenborough made a surprise appearance on the final day of the Glastonbury festival (30 June) to thank the crowds for helping reduce the use of plastic at the event. The 93-year-old broadcaster and naturalist began his speech with a montage of ocean scenes from the natural history series *Blue Planet 2*. "Those extraordinary marvellous sounds you've just been listening to were the sounds of the creatures that live in the sea and the great oceans. You may have heard some of them in a series that went out two years ago called *Blue Planet 2*," he said. "There was one sequence which everyone seems to remember. It was one in which we showed what plastic has done to the creatures that live in the ocean. They have had an extraordinary effect. And now, this great festival has gone plastic-free. That is more than a million bottles of water that have not been drunk by you at Glastonbury. Thank you. Thank you."

He continued, "The oceans cover two-thirds of this planet of ours. Land only covers one-third of the globe. There are seven great continents on which we human beings live. Each of them has its own marvellous creatures, birds, mammals and animals. Each of them has its own glory. Each of them has its own heproblems. We have been making, for the last four years, a series about those things, about those seven very different continents. It starts later on this year. It's called *Seven Worlds, One Planet*. Here are a few glimpses of what awaits you in the next few months."

Sir David then played a trailer for the series, featuring a new song, *Out There*, from Australian singer Sia, and film composer Hans Zimmer. **Watch at:** <https://youtu.be/IIFRPKT-hVc>  
BBC Radio 1 debuted the full track at the same time as the prequel played out across screens at Glastonbury. The prequel was also simultaneously broadcast in almost 50 countries globally at the same time as it was shown to Glastonbury audiences.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-48819335>  
**See also:** <https://amp.theguardian.com/music/2019/jun/30/david-attenborough-praises-glastonbury-for-going-plastic-free>

## WILL MORE CLIMATE STRIKES ACHIEVE THE BREAKTHROUGH THAT WE NEED?

**Tim Root** (14 July 2019) writes: "Strengthening the climate movement requires a rethink of strategy and tactics."

The global movement fighting climate breakdown has made some promising advances recently, chiefly thanks to Greta Thunberg and the other admirable school climate strikers. The British, Irish, French and Canadian parliaments have declared a climate emergency. In the European Parliament elections, Green parties and other allies got about 14% of the vote. A twenty-six nation 2018 survey found that of a list of major public concerns, climate change has the most people rating it a "major threat."

However we can't assume that climate action will continue to be a public priority. In a large poll undertaken in early 2019 in 14 EU nations, climate change was rated only the fifth greatest threat, substantially below "Islamic radicals," "immigration" and "the economy." Australia's Labour Party unexpectedly lost the recent "climate election," despite nearly three in ten Australians considering that the environment was the number one issue.

Merely getting more publicity is not enough to make sufficient progress. The celebrity-backed *Mothers Rise Up* climate march on May 12 2019 got substantial advance publicity. However even the sympathetic *Guardian* did not consider it significant enough to do more than include a small photo towards the back of the paper. So what can we do to attract greater support and show that we have the ability to push decision makers effectively?

First of all, substantial research shows that we need to arouse anger, empathy, and hope in order to counter fatalism. Anger is an action-oriented emotion, and it can be sustained constructively provided that people can focus their anger on tackling the problem at source, and feel confident that it will be offset by positive progress. So our communications need to reflect this finding and also arouse empathy at the plight of extreme weather victims, which research shows boosts support for the cause.

We must emphasise the need for urgent action, and show concisely how the situation can be improved. A slogan such as *Clean Energy, Safe Climate*, or *Safe Climate for our Kids* could play an important role here by conveying that solutions exist, while reminding people that the alternative is a catastrophic change in the climate which will harm people like them. Researchers emphasise that "one unified message repeated over and over is stronger than many disconnected messages."

Secondly, it's important that we choose tactics which maximise support from the allies we need from all shades of opinion. Former Conservative chief whip Andrew Mitchell, for example (a supporter of Boris Johnson) recently spoke enthusiastically in favour of large emissions cuts. Former Conservative leader Michael Howard supported the call of the Committee on Climate Change for net zero emissions by 2050. William Hague has commended David Attenborough's call for urgent climate action. We need to remember that about 30-40% of people in most Western countries consider themselves to be broadly conservative, while a similar proportion does not have a strong political allegiance. A recent French poll found little difference in levels of concern about climate change between supporters from different political outlooks. The urgency of the cause requires that we have allies from all civilised strands of opinion. This encourages potential supporters, showing that the cause is very widely supported, thus indicating good prospects of success. It is perfectly possible to frame the action we want in language which appeals to people from a wide political spectrum by emphasising a safe climate, clean energy and green jobs.

In September there will be a week of action initiated by the school climate strikers, starting with a strike that also includes adults on September 20. Unfortunately there's a risk that strikes for adults will mobilise mostly existing adult supporters but few newcomers. Many workers will be sceptical about losing essential money for a strike whose impact they expect to be limited. Creating a successful strike is so difficult that Jonathan Neale, who has helped organize many strikes, wrote a long article recently in the *Ecologist* explaining the long process of preparation recommended, emphasising that "everyone is frightened at work, with reason."

Naming the September 20 action as a climate strike for adults, in addition to children and young people, also means it may be perceived by some as a left-wing activity, enabling sceptics and opponents to portray the climate cause as controversial and the preserve of a fringe minority. If the only big-name supporters of the strike are leftists or climate activists, this could reinforce its peripheral place in society.

Many campaigners have cited the research of Erica Chenoweth which shows that no campaign has failed once it has the sustained participation of 3.5% of the population. This will be much harder to achieve if the climate movement is perceived as the property of one part of the political spectrum, or is only engaged in actions which - to some at least - appear irresponsible and uncaring by withdrawing peoples' labour from important tasks. But if we can show them that there are many other convincing ways in which they can help, they will be more likely to join campaigns. And that brings me to my third set of points - which decision-makers can be moved?

Campaigns to get action by governments need to take into account the deep and widespread cynicism that currently exists about politicians. Less than a quarter of Europeans, for example, believe that "the political system in my country allows people like me to have an influence on politics." In June 2019, Roger Hallam of *Extinction Rebellion* foresaw that legally non-binding recommendations from a citizens' assembly "will...get ignored" by government, just "like people have been ignored for the last 30 years." Caroline Lucas recently condemned governments' "grotesque abdication of responsibility" on climate breakdown, while Bill McKibben, the founder of 350.org, has said that "the politicians are continually failing us."

There are numerous examples of governments' woeful failure to tackle climate breakdown. The European Union recently failed to agree to cut emissions to net zero by 2050, while its member states' national energy and climate plans collectively fall short of its 2030 targets. The World Bank is loaning three times more for fossil fuels than for renewables. Even politicians like Emmanuel Macron, who speak as if they want to prioritise climate breakdown, aren't giving it anything like the urgency required. The head of Greenpeace France recently said that "The ecological transition is still not a priority, despite the fact that it was supposed to be one of four pillars of [Macron's] great national debate."

Therefore, alongside campaigns focused on governments it is important to push big business to cut emissions too. Needing to survive in a competitive market, businesses are ready to react promptly to threats to their profits. The key businesses to target are the world's top banks, which invested \$1.9 trillion in fossil fuels between 2016 and 2018. This dwarfs the amount the EU invests in renewable energy, which only slightly exceeds what it spends on fossil fuel subsidies.

Banks are increasingly worrying about climate risk. Unlike oil companies whose business depends entirely on fossil fuels, banks can readily switch their investments in pursuit of a more reliable profit, and to protect their brand. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has highlighted their vulnerability to public pressure. A recent report emphasised banks' need "to defend market share against an increasing array of competitors," and to place "the consumer...front and centre." Therefore a campaign targeting banks would probably achieve some of the early wins we need to sustain morale and gain vital additional supporters. This should be part of a repeated process of choosing achievable and substantial targets. Campaigns have had many successes in getting banks to cut their investments in dirty energy, including BNP Paribas's recent commitments not to fund major coal producers or high carbon electricity generators, and significant restrictions on coal funding agreed by Cr dit Agricole.

It is also crucial that we combine with campaigners from key nations to target other major polluters, countering the argument that campaigns in smaller nations ignore the misdeeds of certain larger ones. One vital target in this regard is deforestation. New research shows that additional trees could remove two-thirds of CO2 from the atmosphere. In a recent 25 nation European poll, 9/10 Europeans said they cared deeply about forests and agreed that "deforestation is harmful for people and wildlife."

We need to identify radical new methods to combat this problem, which has frustrated campaigners for decades. As tropical forests are perceived as precious by such a large proportion of people, we can be confident that an assertive international campaign could get massive support provided it was run or backed by respected high-profile organisations and individuals. It might involve campaigning for funding to help lower-income nations, conditional on forest preservation. It could also include a campaign to name and shame major companies whose products are suspected of causing deforestation, and banks financing those companies. Failing to make progress on forest preservation could cause a serious loss of campaign morale when future bad climate news emerges.

The rapid emergence of large-scale school climate strikes shows how well understood the issue now is. But this level of energy and participation will be sustained only if we achieve some real emissions-cutting victories quite soon. Therefore it is vital that we concentrate our attacks on a few selected and susceptible decision-makers, draw in the widest possible range of allies, and arouse as much anger, empathy and hope as we can muster.

• *Tim Root is Co-ordinator of the Muswell Hill & Hornsey Friends of the Earth*

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/will-more-climate-strikes-achieve-breakthrough-we-need/>

## AIR POLLUTION IN TRAFFORD

**St Vincent's J&P Group report:** On 18 June Altrincham Preparatory School hosted an evening organised by the Clean Air action group. The evening started with a programme played from BBC Two called "Fighting For Air." It was shocking to hear how damaging the pollution from our cars and vehicles can be to our health.

In the UK alone there are over 40,000 premature deaths due to air pollution a year. 16 cities have recordings of pollution levels that exceed the legal amount. In fact, by 17 January some areas had already exceeded their annual levels. The financial cost is at £20billion a year for loss of earnings and medical bills. But most shocking of all is how pollution contributes to higher blood pressure, narrowing of the arteries and thickening of the blood which leads to more serious health issues such as strokes and heart attacks. Lungs get stunted and even our brains are affected lowering IQ. These facts are really shocking for our children who are still developing and the volume of vehicles on our roads will only increase unless we rethink how we use our cars.

The most damaging vehicles are lorries, with the particular matter coming from diesel exhausts. But an interesting fact that we can be mindful of in our cars is that the stop/start action rather than the speed causes more pollution. For anyone interested in doing their bit to help, we need to try to cut out "idling." This is where we keep our engines running either while dropping someone off or sitting in traffic. The myth is that if you are stopped for less than 30 seconds you are not idling and no harm is done. This isn't true! If you stop even for a few seconds then you should be turning your engine off. If you are in a long traffic jam you should also circulate the air in your vehicle rather than draw air in from outside as the outside air is so polluted. If you can make a journey on roads without speed bumps you will prevent the stop/start acceleration that causes pollution, all of which is directed at a child's level. Speed bumps are often found on roads that the council expect children to use such as near schools or busy housing estates. We were advised not to use Sat Navs around towns if we can help it as they will take you through the areas most popular and so mostly polluted already.

Finally, Trafford Council spoke to us giving us facts and figures relating to our local authority. 80% of pollution in Trafford is created by vehicles. 25% of our journeys are under a mile. If we each considered walking/cycling these journeys then we would be getting enough exercise recommended as well as helping reduce the pollution levels. Hale residents were particularly upset at how people idle in their cars whilst the railway line barrier is closed. Patrick Carrington a consultant haematologist at Trafford Hospital is part of the "Active Travel" group and is encouraging us to think about travelling minus our cars.

If you would like any further information please contact the Clean Air action group at Trafford Council or [sue.hyton@blf.org.uk](mailto:sue.hyton@blf.org.uk) who will also be able to advise anyone who would like to encourage our politicians to be willing to take action to help make our towns and cities cleaner and healthier places for all of us.

<http://www.stvincentsaltrincham.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Air-Pollution-in-Trafford-web-edition.pdf>

**See also** <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/news-and-blog/blog/bbc-experiment-reveals-the-power-of-walking> and <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/environment/environmental-protection/opinion/british-safety-council/1043444/air-pollution-new>

## END HUNGER UK WEEK OF ACTION 11-18 OCTOBER 2019

### **Annie Connolly, End Hunger UK Community Campaigner, Church Action on Poverty**

Calling all those on the frontline of food poverty! Join us during the End Hunger UK Week of Action 2019. We will be raising awareness of hunger in the UK, and telling the government that they must take action to ensure that everyone has enough money to afford good food, and that no one goes to bed hungry.

Church Action on Poverty is a lead partner in the End Hunger coalition, and we urge you to be part of the Week of Action if you can! We will be providing lots of support and resources for anyone who wants to get involved. You can take part by... arranging a meeting with your MP or organising an event locally any time during the Week of Action; coming to London for a Day of Action on Wednesday 16 October – or both!

On the Day of Action, people on the frontline of food poverty – those with lived experience, volunteers providing food aid, those involved in campaigning - will be coming together to share stories, learn new skills, watch (and maybe sing with!) the End Hunger UK Foodbank Choir, and go to the Houses of Parliament to meet MPs. You are the experts – let's make sure that your voices are heard. **Sign up here:** <http://endhungeruk.org/weekofaction2019/>  
If you have any questions, contact me at [annie@church-poverty.org.uk](mailto:annie@church-poverty.org.uk)

## WE NEED KNITTERS AND CROCHETERS!

Calling all those skilled with knitting needles and crochet hooks – take action to fight food poverty!

Over the End Hunger UK Week of Action 2019, people on the frontline of food poverty from all around the UK will be meeting their MPs, either in their local areas, or down in Parliament for the Day of Action on Wednesday 16th October. We will be raising awareness of End Hunger UK's goal – a government commitment to halving household food insecurity by 2025 – and asking MPs to take action on our behalf.

To make sure they remember us, we want to leave each MP with a little gift – a knitted (or crocheted) foodstuff! Not everyone has the skills to make their own unfortunately, so we need the yarn-talented among you to make as many carrots and Cornish pasties and anything else you can think of as possible and send them to us. We will send them on to campaigners who need them. Please could you leave a strand of wool so that we can tie on a label or attach it to a ribbon to make bunting. You can find lots of free patterns online – details at this link: <http://endhungeruk.org/weekofaction2019/knitfood/>

Please send your woolly fruit and veg by Friday 27th September to Annie at:

End Hunger UK, c/o Church Action on Poverty, 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ  
Please email us to let us know if you are going to get busy with those needles, so we can get an idea of how many will be coming our way! It would be fantastic if we got lots extra so that we could make some bunting to take with us when we go to Westminster on the 16th of October.

## COMMUNITY PANTRY OPENS IN PRESTON TO HELP TACKLE FOOD POVERTY

People in Preston will be able to save on their weekly shopping bills, thanks to a new project. The Intact Centre in Whitby Avenue, Ingol, has converted its food project into a community pantry, to be run and used by local people. It will be called Whitby's Pantry and will be officially launched at an event on Wednesday 19 June. The project is the latest in the growing *Your Local Pantry* network <https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk>

Pantries are membership-based food clubs that enable people to access food at a small fraction of its usual supermarket price. The Intact Centre's weekly fee is £3.50 for which members will be able to access approximately £25.00 worth of food, improving household food security and freeing up more money for other essential household costs such as rent and utilities. So far, 25 members have signed up, and the charity's chief executive, Denise Hartley MBE, expects that to rise over the coming months. She said: "Intact has been operating a 'Community Supermarket', a local food club, where Fare Share food is bagged up by staff and volunteers. This club has proven to be very popular and over the last two years around 200 members have accessed the food project 1,821 times. We have about 25 regulars that attend each week and we are hoping to be able to increase this to around 40 to 50"

Pantries are sustainable, long-term, community-led solutions that can loosen the grip of food poverty in a particular neighbourhood. They can be part of a progressive journey to help people move beyond foodbank use, or can help reduce a family's need for a foodbank. Intact's 'Community Supermarket' has provided a valuable service for the past two years, but the pantry approach gives members more choice over the food they get, and more control, strengthening the community's ability to prevent food poverty or to progress out of food crisis. Pantries source their food from a variety of sources, such as supermarket surplus via food recycling charity Fareshare, and by developing relationships with local food businesses who offer surplus food, which helps to reduce food waste and puts savings in the hands of people who are struggling to cover their weekly outgoings. This is potentially a virtuous circle.

Stockport Homes and the charity Church Action on Poverty are supporting the roll-out of pantries across the UK, under the banner of Your Local Pantry, after initial projects in Stockport were shown to have brought social, financial and health benefits including reducing isolation, averting food poverty and improving local people's mental health. An impact report last year found pantry members had saved £650 a year on average on their shopping bills, and that every £1 invested in pantries generated £6 in social value.

Niall Cooper, director of Church Action on Poverty, said: "Pantries are a great way for local people to come together, strengthen their community and loosen the grip of high prices. Rising living costs and stagnating incomes have made life increasingly difficult for many people, but pantries provide immediate, visible support that can protect people from being swept into poverty." Anybody interested in setting up a Your Local Pantry in their community is invited to email [gillian@church-poverty.org.uk](mailto:gillian@church-poverty.org.uk)

## HOPE AMID HARD TIMES IN OLDHAM

*Between silent factories and struggling shops, there's poverty and even hunger. But there's also a steadfast community spirit which holds the key to turning this town around.*

**Jennifer Williams** for **the Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

4 July 2019

There's a particular image of Oldham that goes some way towards encapsulating decades of its history, successes and struggles. In the background stand the long-silent mills, testament to a bountiful, industrious identity reaching back more than 200 years. Terraced houses, built for the thousands of people originally working in those mills and, later, for the engineering giants that flourished here during and after the Second World War, curve into the middle distance.

Yet what's missing from the picture is just as significant. Gone from the frame is the pocket of Oldham's library, police station, youth centre and social services department, including a day centre for the elderly. All of these have shut since the introduction of austerity, within a few years and a few yards of each other. Yorkshire Bank closed its local branch in 2017; the post office went late last year. Not far out of shot, the engineering giant, Avro, once anchored the surrounding community of Chadderton. Home of the Lancaster Bomber and employer to more than 11,000 people, it was eventually subsumed into BAE Systems, before closing in 2012.

The story of Oldham will resonate in many former industrial towns, especially across the North and Midlands, that live in the shadow of a neighbouring city. It is the tale of somewhere, and there are many such places, that feels as if it is considered rarely, if at all, by ministers and officials in faraway London. It is a place where a strong identity fights to flourish under layer upon layer of economic bad fortune. Consequently, Oldham's experience can tell us an awful lot about the ferocious currents swirling through our national politics.

But this is not a story about the "left behind," a phrase that causes eyes to roll when it is uttered here. Those words subtly lay blame with the town itself, suggesting its people were too slow, too short-sighted to keep up with the big boys, be it London or resurgent Manchester next door.

There is much to admire in the Oldham of 2019, and—if you look for it—a great deal of hope. While admitting that times feel tough and power out of reach, people stress in the same breath that their tale is also one of pride and generosity, of hope, resilience, imagination and solutions. It's just that, at times, it can feel like an uphill struggle.

In the 19th century, Oldham was one of the Industrial Revolution's engines, the original "Northern Powerhouse." That legacy can still be seen today in mills, facades and parks scattered across the borough, from the recently-renovated old town hall, dating back to 1841, to the landscaped gardens of Werneth Park, built by three local merchant families seeking resplendent views down towards Manchester's Cottonopolis. There were more looms and *Spinning Jennies* in Oldham than anywhere else in the empire. The bottom slowly fell out of the old textile industry, but in parallel another employment base had developed in engineering. And the manufacturing plants that came into their own during the war became the social as well as the economic heart of their communities.

"Post-World War Two," says Jim McMahon, the Labour (Co-op) MP for Oldham West and Royton and former council leader, who grew up just over the border in north Manchester, "engineering firms had innovated along the way and those skills had been retained. Salaries were good and it was a strongly unionised workforce. Avro had a social club, a tennis court. All of that was part of people's identity—they were proud of the thing they'd created, they had a decent pension, they could see themselves moving up in life. There was immigration, but it wasn't a time of economic strain in the same way, because people had moved from the mills to engineering."

As Britain's manufacturing base began to decline in the 1970s and especially the early 1980s, however, Oldham was hit again. The engineering plants withered just as remorselessly as the mills had, until cotton-spinning stopped altogether here in 1998. But this time the cut-backs and closures of the old factories came with the bitter twist that there was no new industry to ride to the rescue. Simultaneously, higher education was rapidly expanding nationwide and in spades in nearby Manchester, whose universities now include two of the largest in the country. But for a place like Oldham, which has a further education college but no university, the effect was to export many bright young people to the cities, while offering others vocational training—a poor relation in terms of government attention and resources.

"At the height of the industrial revolution," says Graham Foulkes, vice-chair of the local clinical commissioning group, "there were more millionaires here than any other place in the world. If you look now, we have no industries that employ large numbers of people." Perhaps not industries. But retail giants like JD Sports have moved in, bringing zero-hours warehousing contracts with them, with none of the social identity, real career opportunities or anchorage once provided by the likes of Avro. Wages here are, according to official labour market statistics, £96 a week behind England's average. The government's social mobility commission ranks Oldham as one of the nation's "cold spots," places where—by looking across a range of indicators—they judge it unlikely that individuals who have grown up in deprived neighbourhoods will go on and succeed.

England, and the Midlands and North in particular, has no shortage of mid-sized towns which once seemed happier and more desirable than the inner cities whose markets they served. Yet today, those towns can feel overshadowed by local metropolises like Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester itself, which have begun bouncing back in the 21st century. And if Oldham is typical of many an English industrial town in its history and geography, it has the full social mix too. It has thriving middle class neighbourhoods, elegant interwar housing in areas like Coppice, in which university-educated, upwardly-mobile second-generation British Pakistani families have increasingly settled, and also the cluster of pretty villages across Saddleworth, on the edge of Yorkshire. It also has neighbourhoods where working class homes were thrown up fast for workers of the once-burgeoning mills.

"The mills needed large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers to come to Oldham and the housing stock reflected the sudden increase in high numbers of people," says Foulkes, referring to rows of high-density terraces built in the early 20th century, many of which were later lived in by workers from Pakistan and Bangladesh, ushered in to staff the mills particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. "By today's standards, it wouldn't get planning permission. But you still have many, many people living in poor housing, overcrowded. Poor housing stock, poor health." He traces the borough's extreme health inequalities back to that. "In Oldham you have some of the biggest differences in life expectancy, more than 11 years between the wealthier parts of the borough and the poorest. That disparity is one of the widest in the country."

Remarkably, three of the 20 worst wards for child poverty nationwide (and there are 9,000-plus in total) are found in the centre of this modestly-sized town. Improving housing here could not be more urgent, and yet when the cuts hit in 2010, the government immediately axed its housing renewal programme for Werneth, the poorest ward of the lot. The abundance of relatively cheap housing has also led the government to send thousands of asylum seekers to Oldham under its "dispersal" programme, but with no extra money for health or council services. Oldham houses around 800 asylum seekers at present, often people in need of significant support. Oldham is not alone in this respect. Elsewhere on Manchester's peripheries, three other industrial towns—Bolton, Wigan and Rochdale—house around 1,000 asylum seekers each. All are areas that have also suffered disproportionate council cuts. Theresa May's local authority of Windsor and Maidenhead has no asylum seekers. Neither does David Cameron's back yard of west Oxfordshire.

As I write, Phillip Hammond is on television, rejecting the UN rapporteur's scathing report on British poverty.

[Report published 16/11/2018 <https://ctbi.org.uk/united-nations-special-rapporteur-report-uk-poverty> and featured in the December NW NJPN E Bulletin pages 3-8 <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NW-NJPN-Justice-and-Peace-E-Bulletin-December-2018.pdf> ]

"Look around you, Hammond says. "That's not what we see in this country." A few days before, hundreds of miles away from London, where the Chancellor makes his comments, I had been sitting down with three volunteers at Oldham's central foodbank, tired at the end of a busy shift. Their drop-in next to the Spindles shopping centre is packed full of tins and donated children's clothing. Thank you cards are pinned up behind the counter. Two thirds of the people using it are in work, but demand has risen year on year with cumulative benefit cuts, and especially since Oldham's Universal Credit pilot began in 2013.

"I can't even describe it," says volunteer Diana Walsh, 53, looking momentarily lost for words, of the new benefit intended to top up low pay as well as provide for the workless. "But we will give it a good go." Between them Diana and her fellow volunteer Zoey Stansfield, 46, plus manager Lisa Leunig, 52, reel off a catalogue of delays, administrative errors and refusals. "A man came in the other week with a broken foot. He's got a warehouse job," says Diana. "You can't do a warehouse job with a broken foot. They wouldn't give him housing benefit, so he was just on statutory sick. We often see grown men in tears because they can't believe they're here." Men cry through a mixture of humiliation, relief, and being overwhelmed, the women agree. Diana tells, appalled, how earlier this year a television crew from Brazil came to film at the centre, sympathising about the levels of poverty.

At the start of the pilot, when some thought there were just "teething problems," it took two to four months for people to get their payments, says Zoey. "In that time, you had nothing. That's when a lot of people lose their home, lose everything, just trying to survive. They go into arrears and then climbing out of arrears is impossible. And it's not got any better."

Foulkes, of the local NHS commissioning group, agrees with the volunteers: "I've seen it on a personal level in community meetings," he says, adding that people with mental health problems or struggling with literacy have been driven to the brink of suicide trying to fill in forms. "I've seen people drowning in debt and absolute poverty."

Arrears at the borough's social landlord, First Choice, have risen by nearly £500,000 since Universal Credit came in. "Which is shocking," says Zoey, "considering we were one of the initial pilot areas. If anything, we should be seeing things getting better, not worse. Half a decade is long enough to show the government it's not working. But they don't care." In February some men turned up having last worked on Christmas postal and warehousing shifts. The Jobcentre had assessed their income based on their last pay packet, long since gone, and allocated Universal Credit accordingly. "They were coming in with £30 for a month, including housing benefit—£30 to pay your rent, feed yourself and keep warm? In February?"

I meet Peter Russell on a Saturday night in May, at Oldham's *Street Angels* outreach project. Set up by the Dean of Oldham's CoE parish church, Jean Hurston, the team helps people out on the town over the weekend, as well as the homeless. Peter, 26, has been helping since they got him off the streets a few weeks ago. "I think there's just a break in the system," he says. "With zero-hour contracts, it's hard for people to keep their home. I was living in my house six years and getting into debt and arrears and becoming homeless, paying them off then going back into them... It was the month's difference that always set it off, when you lose work and go on to benefits. I feel for people in that situation."

Peter speaks with quiet anger of the spiral he and others have found themselves in. "It's trying to keep a rhythm, trying to keep things flowing," he says of juggling rent with wages. "I've worked on the markets, I've worked cash in hand doing walls and flagstones, painting, bakeries, I've just had to keep a bit of a flow up. While I was homeless, I still had my job over at JD [warehouse]. I was still doing my 12-hour shifts. I struggled to sleep through the day and also do my work. I didn't really have a great Christmas with the weather. It became "harder to hide it for work," he says of sleeping rough. "Luckily they had showers there but people were realising I was staying back to have a shower when everyone else was rushing off. It became noticeable."

Peter came of age roughly as the national economy hit rock bottom. He says he has been in his recent situation "a few times" since he was 16—everything "coming to crash: family, health, one after the other" after losing work. *Street Angels*, he says, was "the first place I'd ever asked for help." And I could fill this article many times over with stories like his.

At 11.30pm, a man called Jim comes in for a brew and some cake, before wandering back into the night. A couple of hours later, Gemma, the team's paramedic—who patrols the area to find people who might need help—appears and says she's found Jim. He's out of it, drunk. They're not sure who to ring. His last house, he mumbled, was in Rochdale, so they call Rochdale council's out-of-hours housing department. Rochdale say he is from Oldham. Oldham council's team say they can help in the morning, but he will need to phone them then. He doesn't have any money or a mobile. He's 69. At 2.45am, we sit looking at him asleep in a chair. "Look at that face, how much character there is in it," says Jean, quietly. "A life well lived."

As they prepare to take him to A&E in a taxi, they have put £2.50 in his pocket with a note asking him to ring the council the following day. They know full well the hospital will quickly realise there's nothing wrong with him, but at least it's warm there. It is ironic that even when this team has an NHS-funded paramedic, intended to relieve pressure on the hospital by bandaging people up when they're out on the town, there's still nowhere for Jim to go: so they end up having to send him to A&E anyway. I'm left feeling angry and guilty. When they go back to A&E the next day, Jim has gone.

If Oldham is to thrive in the 21st century, if people like Peter are to get out of the trap, it will have to adapt its economy. Local leaders know this. Alun Francis, principal of Oldham College, says towns like his—places that don't have the benefit of a university in the "knowledge economy"—tend to be "forgotten." More generally, he admits, former industrial towns on Manchester's northern fringes, from Ashton to Oldham itself, have not benefited from its growth in the way the more degree-educated areas to the south have done.

Greater Manchester has, many people here acknowledge, its own north-south divide. That has been a source of political tension for some time, with council leaders in outlying areas pushing for more focus away from Manchester. But Francis still believes the town can only move forward as part of Greater Manchester. "It can sometimes feel a bit like we are in extra time, 3-2 down and need to score two goals in injury time to turn things around," he says of the conurbation's attempts to punch its economic weight against London. "The teams who succeed in those circumstances are the ones who stick together, keep to their plan, and work very hard. And even if you sometimes lose, you get up and start again the next day."

Greater Manchester's approach, despite tensions, has been one based on collaboration. Its combined authority, with Oldham's council leader Sean Fielding leading on skills, approved a £9m grant to the college to expand its construction courses. Oldham's growth sectors are — and need to be — construction, health and social care, digital and business, says Francis, so the college is trying to skill up the next generation accordingly. Ask him about businesses in the town and he quickly points excitedly to a raft of firms which have been quietly innovating. One of them, *Ultimate Products*, started as two men — Barry Franks and Simon Showman — selling suitcases on Oldham market in 1997. It now has a turnover of more than £100m. The converted mill housing its world headquarters is an Aladdin's Cave of household goods you would never know were distributed from, or developed, branded, even designed in Oldham: Russell Hobbs kettles, Salter kitchenware. Marketing director Craig Holdham admits they could have long ago moved to a distribution hub somewhere on the side of the M6, but chose not to. "Oldham is a fundamental part of our history," he says, adding that their conversion of two local mills into their offices has been a labour of love. It is labour that has created good jobs in the town as well.

But when they started trying to recruit people to their graduate scheme, they quickly noticed a problem: "We found early on that we were getting a lot of people applying that were from outside of Oldham." The firm didn't just want graduates coming across from Liverpool or Manchester, he says, or even Stockport — it wanted young people born and bred in the town, attracted back following their degrees. "So we put a lot of emphasis on trying to redress that. When we started, we had eight people in OL postcodes" applying, but "now we have 80." The firm now goes into universities to explain to students — and, indeed, to the universities themselves — that graduates "don't have to go to the bright lights of London or Manchester." It has also joined up with Oldham College to start an "academy": training people at 18 to have the confidence to work for them. That doesn't just mean in warehousing, he says, but in higher-skilled supply chain jobs, digital, design. "They might not have all the skills or experience," he says, "but we feel they have got the talent. We want to harness it."

Down the road in Glodwick, social entrepreneur Majid Hussain is also positive. In fact, the man behind the *Ghazali Trust* project is relentlessly positive. "Some things have become Manchester-centric," he admits of the way the region's economy has developed. "Not by intent, but by the sheer nature of Manchester. But we are reaching for the sky. Manchester is Manchester and Oldham is going to shine." He says it is his "responsibility" to contribute, particularly in the wake of cuts, which have seen Oldham lose £337 per head in council spending since 2010. Meanwhile, according to Centre for Cities analysis this year, Oxford has by contrast gained £115 per head. The *Ghazali Trust* was established in the aftermath of the Oldham riots in 2001, when tensions between British Asian and white youths erupted in Glodwick. "People don't wake up in the morning and think 'I'm going to start launching bricks at cops and causing chaos,'" he says. "We thought: 'There's something behind this.' That's when we decided we can't wait for someone to come and sort this out. We have to start talking to people." That was the start of what is now 18 years of community engagement.

He gives one recent example that has coincided with a gradual rise of low-level crime as policing and youth services have been depleted. "On Bonfire Night, you get youths throwing fireworks at 999 services," he says. "Last year, we took responsibility [for] managing that with police, council and fire services. We got 50 volunteers to manage those few days." The community essentially grouped together to keep an eye on potential anti-social behaviour, talking to the kids and monitoring for any flashpoints. It worked. "In 2017, Oldham was one of the worst in Greater Manchester for violence around fireworks night. This year in Glodwick, there were zero incidents, down from 40-odd the year before."

Two years ago, the charity bought the old leisure centre that the council was shutting down as it sought to save cash by merging facilities. That story of "rationalisation" is common enough in towns like Oldham, but the trust has set about turning the building into something distinctive. As we stand at the building site, Majid points to where each thing will be. Here will be a dementia-friendly café. There, a community orchard. Here, a space where lads can come in to do wrestling. There, GCSE catch-up courses. Here, a gym. Some will be revenue generating, to cover wages; much of it will be run by volunteers.

If you set a smart and idealistic school student an assignment to design a facility that could help fix Oldham's problems, you can well imagine they might dream up something exactly like this. Its £250,000 build cost has been funded by local donation: some from the council, some from the waste processing firm Viridor, some from the police and some from Sport England. It will have taken vision, energy and enterprise to convince all these outfits and bureaucracies to dig deep. But it is the £80,000 raised from a charity dinner in the local community that stands out. "We said to the community: if you really care, what are you going to sacrifice?" says Majid. "And this guy comes up to the stage with his car key. How much do you think it was worth? £21k. And he wasn't rich, he was a small business owner."

Majid sits on an array of Oldham's public bodies, so he knows the effects of the cuts full well. "Oldham disproportionately has taken a bigger hit than a lot of other places," he says. "But in a place that's on the wrong end of most statistics, for the people in these communities to really take the bull by the horns and say 'we are going to turn our fortunes around' is commendable." When Sport England had come to visit the project earlier this year, declaring a need to engage "hard to reach" communities, Majid was blunt. "Hang on a minute," he told them. "We are not hard to reach. We have been here for 20 years. You've just never tried."

It is three years since Oldham voted for Brexit, and 200 years this summer since thousands of people marched from the town to Manchester, where their peaceful demands for democratic rights would be answered by the Peterloo Massacre. Yet the biggest single obstacle blocking the town's path to a better future is still a lack of control. The overlapping and self-reinforcing effects of all the recent cuts to benefits and services here have come on top of long decades in which Oldham's economy has been subjected to the chill winds of international trade, with little that could be called an industrial strategy to help it compete.

Closing factories have long threatened the town's sense of identity, and now — as shoppers have moved online or jumped on the tram to Manchester — multiple closures on the high street are again straining this place's sense of itself. Control has never felt further away. "We feel ignored, irrelevant to the government and the country," says foodbank volunteer Diana, as she mulls over how the town she loves has changed during her own lifetime.

Bob Kerslake's review of the divides in this country for the UK 2070 commission published in May, was intended to look back 50 years at regional inequality in this country, as well as forward another half-century. It describes how that guttural frustration came about in communities like this. Comprehensively, the former head of the home civil service picks apart decades of what he calls an "unstated" bias within government towards London which consistently "countervails" occasional rhetoric about rebalancing. The result is gaps between the southeast and everywhere else in skills, life expectancy and earnings. Expectations need to be lifted, he says. "Unless we create more centres of decision-making and investment across the country, we will constantly face the sorts of experiences that you've got in places like Oldham, that are seen as, if you like, remote and easily used as guinea pigs, places that are left to their own devices and not supported."

What's needed is a "plan for England" with proper devolution, beefed up local governance and a major programme of infrastructure all now essential. Even Manchester, next door, has been "going up a down escalator," he says, swimming against the tide. At some point, he believes, there will have to be a "break in the clouds"; if nothing else, London and the southeast cannot continue to hoard such a disproportionate chunk of jobs and growth.

Bolton-born Ian Warren, of the *Centre for Towns* think tank, agrees there must be a proper debate about "who holds power," rather than decisions being "reached in rooms in Whitehall with little or no knowledge of the needs of a place like Oldham." Local voters are "not wrong," he says, "when they choose to express their dissatisfaction with an economic and political settlement which appears to prioritise putting the jobs of the future somewhere else. The good news is always the people within these towns themselves," he adds. "They are our best chance to turn around towns like Oldham."

Even without the necessary power to determine its own future, Oldham has proved its mettle time and again. All three of the women at the foodbank speak with emotion about the support they get every single day, especially from people who have the least. "Even though we're classed as a deprived area, the generosity and kindness of people is amazing," says Zoey. "We have a lad, Ibrahim, who is 13. He's on Twitter and he retweets things and donates... every time he gets so many likes. For his last birthday he had no presents and gave everything to charities. I always think teenage boys are much maligned in the mainstream media, but he is my shining light."

Jean, at the *Street Angels* project, does not begrudge the role she and her volunteers undoubtedly play in filling the gaps left by a retreating state. "There are people who will say we shouldn't be doing it, we're propping up failing services," she says. "But actually, I think we should be doing it, because we should practise what we preach." So does Majid Hussain: he sees it as his duty. Acknowledging that Oldham's 2001 riots continue to be exploited by hard-right politicians — in recent weeks by Nigel Farage, but also Tommy Robinson — he insists Oldham is not defined by that, noting they've not yet got very far. "Look, the fact we've never had a BNP councillor here says it all," he says. "Poverty and deprivation affect people of all backgrounds. Oldham, because it gets branded, doesn't get the opportunity to shine when it does awesome stuff. I think there's going to come a day when the good stuff we are doing in Oldham is going to make us a leading light." Or, in the words of Peter Russell, as he spends his Saturday night helping other men back on their feet: "Don't get me wrong though, Oldham's a lovely town. They look after their own."

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/hope-amid-hard-times-in-oldham>

## UK FOOD BANKS FEAR BUSIEST SUMMER EVER IS AHEAD

16 July 2019: New figures released by the Trussell Trust reveal a 20% increase in emergency food parcels for children in the UK last summer, **Ekklesia** reports today. The Trust is urging the public to donate food to their local food bank, as new figures show 87,496 food parcels went to children in the UK during the summer holidays in 2018, a 20% increase on the same period in 2017. Over a third of all emergency food parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK-wide network go to children but there is extra financial pressure during the holiday s for families who are entitled to free school meals during term time. **To read on see:** [www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/28611](http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/28611)

## CATHOLIC BISHOPS, ACW, WELCOME VATICAN DOCUMENT ON GENDER

11 June 2019: The Bishops' Conference of England & Wales and the Association of Catholic Women (ACW) have welcomed the Vatican document *'Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender theory in education'* released yesterday by the Congregation for Education. The new document is intended as an instrument to help guide Catholic contributions to the ongoing debate about human sexuality, and to address the challenges that emerge from gender ideology. A spokesperson said the document is "a welcome contribution to developing Catholic thought on gender."

The statement continues: 'The Vatican document complements the Bishops' Conference of England & Wales statement on gender which was issued last year. That statement expressed both deep concern that the ideology of gender is causing confusion and promoted listening and accompaniment. Both documents note the words of Pope Francis that the ideology of gender: "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual difference, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time" ... It needs to be emphasised that "biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated." (*Amoris Laetitia* 56)

Both of these texts propose listening and dialogue rather than ideology, as the bishops' statement notes: "We recognise that there are people who do not accept their biological sex. We are concerned about and committed to their pastoral care. Through listening to them we seek to understand their experience more deeply and want to accompany them with compassion, emphasising that they are loved by God and valued in their inherent God-given dignity. There is a place of welcome for everyone in the Catholic Church."

The Association of Catholic Women welcomes the document in the following statement issued this morning: 'The Association of Catholic Women expresses its warmest gratitude to the Congregation for Catholic Education for its statement on the question of gender ideology, *Male and Female He Created Them*: towards a path of dialogue on gender theory in education. The document, which offers a practical and well-grounded approach, is timely and important. Catholic families and schools will welcome this insightful message, which offers a genuinely helpful intervention in the confusion that surrounds this delicate subject, and shows a way forward. The topic is discussed with charity and an emphasis on human values and human dignity. We look forward to co-operating with other Catholic organisations in furthering the Church's mission of teaching the truth and meaning of our humanity, created male and female.'

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37263>

**See also:** ICN 10 June 2019 Vatican issues document on gender: *Yes to dialogue, no to ideology*

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37262>

## LISTENING TO GOD'S TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

**Sr Luisa Derouen writes:** For 20 years, I have been trying to help transgender people stay close to God and stay in the Catholic Church. Most of them are staying close to God, but staying in the Catholic Church is quite another matter. Many of my transgender friends have described their hurtful experiences as the door of the Catholic Church slamming in their face. Their most recent experience of this rejection is the document from the Congregation for Catholic Education, *'Male and Female He Created Them.'* Since its publication, there have been many helpful articles reflecting on its meaning and impact. Almost all have expressed gratitude and affirmation for the positive subtitle of the document, *'Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education.'* It's encouraging that the congregation is asking for dialogue. Articles also expressed disappointment and concern that the foundational positions of the document about gender theory are woefully uninformed by contemporary science and by the lived experience of transgender people.

For both of these reasons, my transgender friends (who still care what the Catholic Church says) are hurt by this document and know their lives will be negatively affected by it. Once again people are talking about them and not talking with them. Several of them have read the document and shared their concerns with me. Here's a sample of what they are saying:

Connie, who is faithful to Mass every Sunday, wrote, "I've been finding it harder and harder to continue on with my faith upon each publication that continues to describe how immoral, how wrong being LGBTQ is. I try to ignore it when I go to Mass, but it's right there in front of me each time."

Colette says, "With the grace of God, I'll never leave the church. But I'm also scared and deeply unsettled. I'm trying hard to understand what God is asking of me, and I'm trying to live in trust of where the Spirit will take this."

Scotty laments, "There is actual science and medical knowledge that the hierarchy is choosing to ignore. It's not theory. Once again the hierarchy has chosen to diminish and limit my lived experience while saying that they are listening. They're not." For many Catholic transgender people, it's probably too late for dialogue. They have really tried to stay in the Catholic Church, but there have been too many hurtful words and actions toward them. But there are many who are still willing and eager to dialogue. I beg you, bishops, pastors, parish ministers, educators, formators, and all of us who are God's people, please listen to transgender people! Listen to their personal stories of struggle and transformation. Listen to their love for their families and for God. Listen to their professional competence as medical doctors, psychologists, theologians, attorneys. They are the experts of their own lives.

How should we listen to transgender people? Listen with humility and without judgement. We do not know their lives. They do. Listen as a learner. Listen with a willingness to re-examine your assumptions and beliefs about them. Listen with a willingness to allow yourself to be changed by what they say.

A common uninformed narrative about transgender people is that they are sinful, selfish, delusional and possibly dangerous. If this is what we believe, how can we have an open mind to learn about them and from them? The first time Dawn met with me, she took the courageous step out of years of secrecy and told me her whole story. When I tried to get her to take a break and eat some lunch, she immediately responded, "I'm not hungry for food! I'm hungry for someone to listen to me who won't judge me."

They do not choose their gender. They choose to live as the person they know themselves to be. And they certainly don't choose that on a whim because they just feel like it. Who would choose to be rejected by family, friends and faith communities? Who would choose to lose their job, their homes, their reputation? Many commit to years of counselling doing the hard work of self-knowledge and processing the ramifications of every decision they make along the way. They make herculean efforts to spare their loved ones pain and trauma.

Listen for the ways God is active in their lives. It has been my great privilege all these years to be a witness of their fidelity to God. They are not choosing to separate themselves from God. They are making incredibly difficult life-changing decisions knowing there is the possibility that they will lose everyone they cherish and everything they value. They make these decisions in order to live with integrity and fidelity to God.

Listen with reverence. Everybody's life is a sacred journey. And that includes transgender people. I have learned so much from them about forgiveness, patience, courage and trust in God. Their lives deserve to be honoured and received with respect. Listening well to someone's life is a sacred act for the one speaking and the one listening.

Listening happens when I can allow the word of the other to address my life and when my attentiveness to the other sets us both free, which is redemptive listening. Douglas Steere says it well: "To 'listen' another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being performs for another."

The invitation to dialogue in the document by the Congregation for Catholic Education is addressed to Catholic educators and formators, but we can accept the invitation for ourselves as well. Aren't we all called to be in dialogue with each other as God's people?

When we listen well, we are led into the truth, and the truth always leads us to God, who is Truth.

- *Luisa Derouen, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, began to minister among the transgender community in 1999 and has been a spiritual companion formally and informally to about 250 transgender people across the USA. She is now semi-retired at the St. Catharine Motherhouse in central Kentucky.*

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/equality/listening-gods-transgender-people-56286>

## NEW EDUCATION PACK ON PEACEBUILDING IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

**Quakers in Britain** are launching a new education pack to help young people learn about the impact of conflict and examine stories of peace-building in Palestine and Israel.

Aimed for use with 14 to 18-year-olds, *Razor Wire & Olive Branches* draws on eyewitness accounts of human rights monitors, known as ecumenical accompaniers, to explore the conflict through the lives of those affected by it. With cross-curricular connections, the pack contains more than 80 activities and resources. It features Israeli and Palestinian voices, from the young refugee who says "dance is my resistance", to the Women in Black who inspired a global movement.

Produced in partnership with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, UK & Ireland (EAPPI) it adopts EAPPI's policy of 'principled impartiality'. This means the resource is not about taking sides but rather focuses on the themes of human rights, international law and nonviolence.

Ellis Brooks is Peace Education Coordinator for Quakers in Britain, who also train and manage the human rights monitors for British and Irish churches and church agencies. The monitors' experience is distilled into this resource pack. Ellis Brooks said: "This resource is about peace and hope. The conflict in Palestine and Israel is not easy in any sense, but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be explored in the classroom. Teaching controversial issues provides valuable opportunities for young people to gain knowledge and understanding of issues, critically evaluate their own attitudes, consider different viewpoints and resolve conflicts. *Razor Wire & Olive Branches* seeks to strengthen values of empathy and respect and help young people develop as active global citizens. Young people bring empathy, creativity and sense of fairness to the issue, and those are the ingredients of peace-building the world needs, whether in Jerusalem or London."

As part of their engagement with the resource, schools are encouraged to book a visit from an ecumenical accompanier (EA) – a human rights monitor who has spent time in Israel and Palestine witnessing life under occupation and providing a protective presence.

Students of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in London were on hand at the launch this week to share their learning from this new project working with human rights monitors. Students said they were surprised by the history...the checkpoints...learning about those who do not join the army and by the lack of the denial of human rights. One of the most useful parts was "hearing people's stories from both sides of the border".

Get your copy of this excellent new teaching resource from [www.quaker.org.uk/teaching](http://www.quaker.org.uk/teaching)  
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37385>

## SUMMER READING: CHOOSING PEACE

The Catholic Press Association has awarded **Choosing Peace** first place in the #CatholicSocialTeaching category of the 2019 CPA book awards <https://catholicpress.secure-platform.com/a/gallery/rounds/20/details/21170> *Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence* is edited by out-going Pax Christi International Co-President Marie Dennis and explores the themes of the Catholic Nonviolence initiative. Book plus study guide available from Pax Christi for £19.99 or buy the study guide alone for £1.50 a copy. The guide divides the book into five sections which address five key areas for discussion. Why not use this opportunity to study the book with your Justice and Peace group? Looking ahead, it could make a good Advent discussion series for your group or parish. Order online: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/shop/> or call Pax Christi on 0208 203 4884.

## WRITINGS ON THE WALL: Palestinians tell in their own words of life under Israeli Apartheid

Paperback edition by Thomas Suarez 30 June 2019 ISBN-13: 9781911072409 Skyscraper Publications

The voices of ordinary civilians experiencing the effects of war are often lost in the cacophony of claim and counterclaim by parties in a conflict. This book preserves the testimonies of ordinary Palestinians pasted up on the bare concrete of Israel's illegal Wall, which is designed to disrupt Palestinian lives and appropriate Palestinian land. They have been collected and translated by the Sumud Story House project of Bethlehem's Arab Educational Institute. Each oral history occupies a single page, yet each conveys the fear, the hopes, the resolve, the humility of Palestinians under a brutal military occupation, and their unwavering determination to realise a better future for their children.

## THOMAS BERRY: A BIOGRAPHY

**Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Andrew Angyal** Columbia University Press ISBN 9780231176989 hardcover 360 pages Thomas Berry (1914–2009) was one of the twentieth century's most prescient and profound thinkers. As a cultural historian, he sought a broader perspective on humanity's relationship to the earth in order to respond to the ecological and social challenges of our times. This first biography of Berry illuminates his remarkable vision and its continuing relevance for achieving transformative social change and environmental renewal.

Berry began his studies in Western history and religions and then expanded to include Asian and indigenous religions, which he taught at Fordham University, Barnard College, and Columbia University. Drawing on his explorations of history, he came to see the evolutionary process as a story that could help restore the continuity of humans with the natural world. Berry urged humans to recognize their place on a planet with complex ecosystems in a vast, evolving universe. He sought to replace the modern alienation from nature with a sense of intimacy and responsibility. Berry called for new forms of ecological education, law, and spirituality, as well as the creation of resilient agricultural systems, bioregions, and ecocities. At a time of growing environmental crisis, this biography shows the ongoing significance of Berry's conception of human interdependence with the earth as part of the unfolding journey of the universe.

<https://cup.columbia.edu/books/thomas-berry/9780231176989>

**See also:** [http://thomasberry.org/assets/uploads/Tucker\\_TimesHigherEducation\\_June\\_13\\_2019.pdf](http://thomasberry.org/assets/uploads/Tucker_TimesHigherEducation_June_13_2019.pdf)

## PETERLOO NOVEL TO COINCIDE WITH THE 200 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

**The Song of Peterloo** Legend Press by Carolyn O'Brien. Publication 1 August 2019 to coincide with the 200 year anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre on 16 August 2019. "*The novel shines a light on this now infamous massacre, which is now alarmingly politically relevant today.*" – Lauren Parsons, Commissioning Editor, Legend Press.

**LETTERS** – Readers comments are always welcome. Here are two relating to recent issues:

**June 2019 – TOPIC:** *violence in Gaza and the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Nakba (the forced driving out of Palestinians from their homeland)* pages 8-9 <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/NW-NJPN-Justice-and-Peace-E-Bulletin-June-2019.pdf>

**COMMENT:** Great coverage of issues. I remember the time when it was so difficult even to mention what was happening to Palestinian Human Rights. Thank you – Irene.

**July 2019 – TOPIC:** *Viewpoint: Catholic Bishops and the Environment* by Catholic filmmaker, broadcaster, environmentalist and journalist Mary Colwell pages 1-2 <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NW-NJPN-Justice-and-Peace-E-Bulletin-July-2019-1.pdf>

**COMMENT:** Thank you for the latest bulletin. Unprecedentedly I found myself strongly critical of and disappointed by one item – Mary Colwell's piece which is so depressingly negative in tone. After merely one paragraph welcoming the statement by the Bishops' Conference she devotes seven or eight contentiously finding fault with the details of the language in which it is expressed. It should be a matter of rejoicing for people like us, long involved in these matters, that the bishops have taken this initiative rather than fault-finding over the words and phrases which they used. Their initiative builds on Pope Francis' ground breaking encyclical *Laudato Si*, so powerfully taken up by Bishop John Arnold in his recent pastoral letter. [April 2019 page 5 Ed.] <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NW-NJPN-Justice-and-Peace-E-Bulletin-April-2019.pdf>

It is simply a matter of fact that there is "an unprecedented ecological crisis" – a perfectly clear phrase but one to which Mary Colwell takes exception – and the bishops are right to affirm and remind us of that fact. Still more unfortunate is her complaint about the words "stewardship of creation" for which she wrongly claims there is no biblical precedent; has she forgotten Christ's parable of the good and bad stewards? Stewards are those charged to care for their master's possessions precisely as we are all charged to care for God's earth. Moreover the phrase has a long and distinguished pedigree in Catholic thinking and writing about these matters – I recall the CAFOD campaign *Renewing the Earth* which made such an impact some twenty years ago. And I have in front of me as I write a prayer published by the NJPN in 2014 which contains the beautiful and moving lines "Mindful of our responsibility / as stewards of creation / may we tread lightly on the earth, / respectful of all living things." You will, of course, recognise those lines Anne, since it is you who wrote the prayer – John.

**Read the prayer in full page 1:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015Newsletter3.pdf>

## DIARY DATES

### AUGUST

**3 Summer Concert for Palestine** St Bride's Church, Percy St, Liverpool L8 7LT in aid of St Bride's Church building fund and Medical Aid for Palestinians – including supporting neo-natal projects in Gaza. 6pm onwards featuring Amy Winehouse tribute band, *Addicted to Amy*, and the Greenwich harpist, Glenda Alloway. Tickets £7 waged / £5 unwaged – pay on the door. Finger buffet and alcohol included – hopefully donations will more than cover the cost. Contact [jamesfleming1973@gmail.com](mailto:jamesfleming1973@gmail.com)

**6 Hiroshima and Nagasaki Flower Memorial** 8-9pm The Bandstand, The Groves, Chester – a gathering to remember all those who died and suffered as a result of the atomic bombs dropped in 1945, in the firm belief that it must never happen again. All are welcome to meet at the Bandstand for readings, a period of silent reflection and the dropping of flowers in the river. Bring white flowers if you wish. Organised by Chester CND [chestercnd@gmail.com](mailto:chestercnd@gmail.com)

**6 and 9 Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemorations** [www.paxchristi.org.uk/resources/prayer-and-seasonal](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/resources/prayer-and-seasonal)

**6-9 International Fast for Nuclear Disarmament** [www.networkforpeace.org.uk/calendar](http://www.networkforpeace.org.uk/calendar)

**23-26 Green Christian Stall at Greenbelt** [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk) [www.greenbelt.org.uk](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk)

### SEPTEMBER

**1 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation**

**1-4 OCTOBER Creation Time** [www.columbans.co.uk/justice-and-peace-jpic-2/](http://www.columbans.co.uk/justice-and-peace-jpic-2/)

**2-13 Green Christian *On the Road Together*** Manchester [www.greenchristian.org.uk/events](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/events)

**3 No Faith in War** Say no to the DSEi Arms Fair in London – a day hosted by a variety of faith groups opposing the Fair on the basis of their faith <http://www.faithjustice.org.uk/no-faith-in-war-september-2019/>

**5 DSEi Arms Fair** Excel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16 1XL [www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/](http://www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/)

**10 Quiet Day** 10am-4pm at The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 6TW. Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection. Cost £10. Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. For more information or to book: Tel 0151 722 2271 email: [winniecenacle@mail.com](mailto:winniecenacle@mail.com)

**10 CWDF Forum meeting** 6.45-9pm The Unity Centre, Coppin St, Chester CH1 2BN. Professional photographer Jim Holmes will give an illustrated talk drawn from his various overseas commissions.

**14 NJPN Open Networking Day** York [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-meetings/](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-meetings/)

**14 Green Christian *On the Road Together*** [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk) Details: [info@greenchristian.org.uk](mailto:info@greenchristian.org.uk)

**15-22 World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel** [www.oikumene.org](http://www.oikumene.org) National Week of action, prayer and study in support of the World Council of Churches' annual initiative. This year's theme is *Investing in Young People*. Resources and info at: <http://tinyurl.com/UK-WWPP1>

**16-23 The DSEI arms fair** returns to London's Docklands – Pax Christi and other faith based organisations will be present on the *No Faith in War* day. More details to follow [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

**21 Peace One Day** an annual day of ceasefire and non-violence [campaigns@peaceoneday.org](mailto:campaigns@peaceoneday.org) For 2019 #CyberNonViolence will be part of Peace One Day working with leading experts in child safety to measure and demonstrate a more peaceful digital world.

**28 Quiet Day** 10am-4pm at The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 6TW. Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection. Cost £10. Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. For more information or to book: Tel 0151 722 2271 email: [winniecenacle@mail.com](mailto:winniecenacle@mail.com)

### OCTOBER

**4 CAFOD Harvest Fast Day** [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

**5 Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) Retreat Day** 10am-4pm Lancaster Cathedral. Please bring packed lunch, drinks and biscuits provided. Cost £15 per person. Spaces limited, book ACN NW: 01524 388739 [nw.office@acnuk.org](mailto:nw.office@acnuk.org)

**11-18 End Hunger UK Week of Action** <http://endhungeruk.org/weekofaction2019/>

**26 Quiet Day** 10am-4pm at The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 6TW. Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection. Cost £10. Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. For more information or to book: Tel 0151 722 2271 email: [winniecenacle@mail.com](mailto:winniecenacle@mail.com)

### NOVEMBER

**1-2 Chester Palestine Conference *Palestine: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow***. For further details contact:

[joseph.oneill777@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.oneill777@gmail.com) or [lvtnmail@gmail.com](mailto:lvtnmail@gmail.com)

**A MESSAGE FROM NJPN:** Dear Friends, We're sorry that we haven't been able to bring you any E-Bulletins in the past few months. There are discussions taking place about a way to send a monthly bulletin, so we'll try to keep you posted about that. In the meantime we'll be sharing information on our website [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/) and via Facebook and Twitter: @NJandPNetwork, so do follow us there. Below are links for other news sources which you may find helpful.

#### NEWS LINKS

**NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe***, and some of these are uploaded onto our website.

**Independent Catholic News** <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/justice-peace-environment> Sign up to receive these daily.

**World Council of Churches** <https://www.oikumene.org/en/>

**UK Parliament News** <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/>

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News [www.indcatholicnews.com](http://www.indcatholicnews.com) an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.
- Sign up for weekly e-bulletins from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues) and resources at [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk) or contact [admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk](mailto:admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk) 020 7901 4864

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