



# Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter

[www.birminghamjandp.org.uk](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk)



Issue 55

Winter 2024

## Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our latest Diocesan Justice and Peace Newsletter as we enter the season of Lent and Spring makes its appearance. Thank you to all our contributors and editor.

There is much to challenge and encourage us as we seek to make our personal response to the call of Lent and to grow in our Christian life. Pope Francis in his Lenten message encourages us to pause for prayer, to assist our brothers and sisters in their need in order to change our own lives and the lives of our communities. He says love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Our contemplation and reflection can release new energies helping us to be more sensitive to one another, in place of threats and enemies we discover companions and fellow travellers.

May the Lord bless and inspire us as we begin our Lenten journeys.

Fr. Gerard Murray (Chair)

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## Dates for your diary:

### Date for 2024

Monday 19th February	Commission meeting, 11am
Monday 15th April	Commission meeting, 11am
Tuesday 21st May	Discussion Forum 7pm
Saturday 29th June	Retreat – Selly Park
Monday 8th July	Commission meeting, 11am
Friday – Sunday 19th – 21st July	
NJPN Annual conference	
Monday 9th September	Commission meeting, 11am
Saturday 26th October	Our Assembly
Grimshaw Room	
Monday 11th November	Commission meeting, 11am
Tuesday 26th November	Discussion Forum 7pm
All Justice and Peace Commission Meetings are held online via Zoom at 11am.	

The Forum meetings are on Zoom at 7pm

Recording of Forums can be viewed on YouTube

<https://bit.ly/BirminghamJP>



## Tax Justice Sunday 9th June, 2024

The Christian call to justice is a familiar one; it's a calling rooted in scripture, revealed in the words of the Prophets, exemplified through Christ himself and a constant throughout our faith's rich history. At the JustMoney Movement we believe it's time to have the BIG conversations about injustice, about how we shape a fairer, greener world, and challenge the systems and structures which drive the inequalities and injustices we are unfortunately all too familiar with.

That's why we're inviting you to mark Tax Justice Sunday 2024 which will take place on Sunday 9th June.

Tax Justice Sunday is an opportunity for your small group or congregation to reflect on tax as a way of showing love, caring for creation and bringing about a fairer, more just society.

Register your interest to receive updates, resources, invitations to events and more.

If you'd like to invite a JustMoney Movement speaker to join you this Tax Justice Sunday, contact us via [info@justmoney.org.uk](mailto:info@justmoney.org.uk)

<https://justmoney.org.uk/event/tax-justice-sunday-2024/>



# THE BIG PLASTIC COUNT

Companies produce more plastic than our planet can cope with. We all do our bit to recycle, but much of the plastic we throw away is dumped or burned, polluting our air and endangering wildlife. This can't carry on.

By taking part in The Big Plastic Count, you can help uncover the true scale of the problem and pressure the government on their plastic policy.

Will you join the investigation with me and over 30,000 people from across the UK?

Get your free pack ready for Count week - 11-17 March [Sign up today](#)

[Unearthed investigation: UK waste incinerators three times more likely to be in poorer areas](#)

## A Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family,  
you created all human beings equal in dignity:  
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit  
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,  
dialogue, justice and peace.

Move us to create healthier societies  
and a more dignified world,  
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open  
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.

May we recognize the goodness and beauty  
that you have sown in each of us,  
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,  
and shared dreams. Amen.

From 'Fratelli Tutti', Pope Francis

# **Archdiocese of Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission. Statement on Refugees, Migrants, Asylum Seekers.**

The Bishops Conference of England and Wales have produced a document explaining all the principles which we need to observe in dealing with refugees and migration and in responding to their needs.

These Principles are listed below:

1. Our response to migrants and refugees is rooted in the innate worth of each human person.
2. Recognising the universal destination of goods, we must not exclude others from having the means to flourish simply because of where they were born.
3. Nationalist or individualistic tendencies should not be allowed to take hold and prevent us seeing humanity as a single family
4. We recognise the right of all people to flourish in their homeland; every nation has a duty to uphold this by working for peace, promoting good governance and tackling the causes of poverty.
5. We ask our own government to help other countries address the factors that drive people from their homelands, including through the provision of a just aid budget, control of the arms trade, promotion of human rights and action to tackle the climate emergency.
6. We affirm the responsibility of the Church and civil society to help people in their homelands, including through the work of organisations such as CAFOD, Missio, Pax Christi, and Aid to the Church in Need.
7. We uphold the right to migrate, which may be exercised not only by those fleeing threats to their safety but also by those seeking to build a better life for themselves and their families.
8. We recognise that states have a right to control their borders; however, such measures cannot be based on economic factors alone; states have a responsibility to promote the common good of the people within their boundaries, but they also have obligations to the wider world.
9. We encourage the extension of safe routes such as resettlement programmes, visa schemes and humanitarian corridors, so that people can exercise their right to migrate in a dignified and humane manner.
10. We must not allow the concerns that some communities might have about migration to be exploited for political purposes or allow such concerns to develop into a xenophobic attitude; Christian communities must play their part in providing a genuine welcome to migrants and refugees.
11. We seek and promote dialogue with the local Church in people's countries of origin, and the countries through which they have travelled, so that we can better understand their stories.
12. We defend the fundamental human dignity of all migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status, including through policies providing access to decent accommodation, healthcare, and childhood education, as well as facilitating family reunification.
13. We call for the sanctity of life to be prioritised in all border security arrangements and reject measures that place people in danger or deny reasonable assistance to those in need.
14. We call upon the government to avoid the use of immigration detention, arbitrary expulsion and other practices which violate human dignity.
15. We urge the fulfilment of obligations under international frameworks protecting migrants and refugees, such as the Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Global Compact on Refugees, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
16. Recognising the practical contribution that our Church can make, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as Caritas, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and the St Vincent De Paul Society, as well as parish and diocesan initiatives, in upholding the human dignity of migrants and refugees.
17. Reaffirming the Church's responsibility to help eliminate the evils of trafficking and slavery, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as the Santa Marta Group
18. We recognise that trafficking and slavery are exacerbated by a lack of accessible alternatives for migration or seeking sanctuary – efforts to tackle trafficking and slavery must therefore go beyond more active law enforcement; we also need to support people to flourish in their homelands, establish more safe routes for migrants and refugees, and work to eliminate the demand for those services that slave labour continues to meet.

19. Migration enriches our culture – we must welcome migrants and refugees so that they can live fulfilled lives in their new country.
20. We support the simplification of routes to citizenship and opportunities for people to regularise their immigration status.
21. We celebrate the vital contribution of migrants and refugees to our parishes and the life of the Church in England and Wales.
22. We recognise the gifts that migrants and refugees bring which can enrich our society in many ways, including economically.
23. We encourage policies that give migrants and refugees the right to work, to facilitate their contribution to the common good of our society.
24. We call upon all those who employ migrants and refugees to treat them in a dignified and humane way.

A little further in this document the bishops say:

“The Church understands the concern that some countries and communities might have about high levels of migration. Pope Francis noted in *Fratelli Tutti*: “in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm”

30. and he recognised that this is part of our natural instinct. Governments have to balance the protection of the rights of their citizens with their duty to welcome migrants and refugees, but it is important that we do not allow this to result in hostility. Pope Francis has warned that fear and alarm about migration is often exploited for political purposes, leading to a xenophobic mentality as people close in on themselves. As Christians, we must never view migrants as less worthy, less important or less human. Indeed, we should promote a better life for those coming to our country and appreciate the many riches that people bring with them. Echoing Pope Francis, we affirm that our country will be more fruitful and productive the more it is able to develop a creative openness to others.

31. As part of the Universal Church, we also have an opportunity and a responsibility to understand the stories of migrants and refugees, through dialogue with the Church in their home countries and those they have passed through during their journeys. In doing so we can better respond to Pope Francis’ call to remember that migrants and refugees “rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all persons who have faces, names and individual stories”

32 and to offer a more human response, rooted in the reality of people’s experiences.

## Our principles

- We uphold the right to migrate, which may be exercised not only by those fleeing threats to their safety but also by those seeking to build a better life for themselves and their families
- We recognise that states have a right to control their borders; however, such measures cannot be based on economic factors alone; states have a responsibility to promote the common good of the people within their boundaries, but they also have obligations to the wider world.
- We encourage the extension of safe routes such as resettlement programmes, visa schemes and humanitarian corridors, so that people can exercise their right to migrate in a dignified and humane manner.
- We must not allow the concerns that some communities might have about migration to be exploited for political purposes or allow such concerns to develop into a xenophobic attitude; Christian communities must play their part in providing a genuine welcome to migrants and refugees.
- We seek and promote dialogue with the local Church in people’s countries of origin, and the countries through which they have travelled, so that we can better understand their stories.”

The full document can be viewed here:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/love-the-stranger>



THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM

At all times we all need to remember that every person is a human being, created in the likeness of God. Every person should be treated with dignity and respect.

Phil Mayland. 31/01/24



## Family Fast Day this Lent

Family Fast Day is on Friday 23 February  
17-18th Feb Usual weekend for reading the short talk  
24-25th Feb Usual collection weekend.

Please join one of our local gatherings:

Monday 19 February at 11.00am to 12.30pm - CAFOD  
Birmingham Lenten led by Deacon Sean Loone. We  
gather online as a community of faith from the  
Archdiocese of Birmingham to deepen our spiritual  
journey in preparation for Lent. [Register here to join.](#)

Friday 23 February at 12.00pm to 1.30pm – Lent  
Volunteer gathering at St Peter Apostle Roman Catholic  
Church, 3A Dormer Place, Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire, CV32 5AA

## Big Lent Walk

Sign up for CAFOD's Big Lent Walk and challenge  
yourself to walk 200km in 40 days. You can sign up as  
an individual, parish or school by [clicking this link](#). Is  
there someone you know who can walk for the Parish  
and then get everyone to sponsor them? Or could you  
get together for a one-off event to stand in solidarity  
with communities around the world?



Disadvantaged girls in Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi  
were some of the biggest winners in Global Care's  
40th anniversary year.

The Coventry-based international children's charity  
dedicated its anniversary year in 2023 to marginalised  
girls, following the devastation of the Covid pandemic,  
which saw the gender equity gap widen, undoing  
years of progress for girls worldwide.

The Global Care team were able to start three new  
initiatives in the anniversary year, with more in the  
pipeline, and raised over £95,500 from generous  
donors. Thank you so much to everyone who gave!

In Ethiopia Global Care launched a new project  
tackling so-called 'period poverty' – where girls don't  
have the knowledge or resources to safely manage  
menstruation. This is a huge challenge for girls in  
poverty, frequently disrupting their education and  
causing health problems as they struggle to manage  
their periods with grass, old rags and newspaper.



Global Care's Ethiopian  
partners were able to start a  
new project helping 50 girls  
with the resources they need  
to be able to manage their  
periods without missing  
school, whilst also tackling  
the stigma which makes  
menstruation a taboo  
subject, leading to ignorance  
and unnecessary suffering.

They delivered a series of health education workshops and provided the girls with a supply of sanitary towels, soap, underwear and tights. Sadly, during the training several girls disclosed sexual abuse, leading to safeguarding measures being taken. As a result, Global Care's partners also incorporated sessions on violence prevention and self-defence into the workshop programme.



In Soroti, Uganda, a new three-year initiative is providing short skills courses in tailoring, baking and hairdressing for 100 girls who have dropped out of education following the pandemic.

Many are teen mums and giving them a skill to support themselves in future, despite the premature end to their education, provides additional protection for their young children.

In Malawi, a new initiative is providing mentoring, peer support and school supplies for girls in two secondary schools. This was reported in the June 2023 edition of this newsletter.

CEO John White said: "Targeting support at girls is an important part of breaking the poverty cycle and creating communities in which peace and justice can flourish. We want to break down the barriers which keep girls out of education and limit their prospects. We're so grateful to all the donors who have worked with us to make these initiatives happen and to create a fund to support similar projects in the months ahead."

More information about Global Care at [www.globalcare.org](http://www.globalcare.org)



# THE SEASON OF CREATION 2024

## To Hope And Act With Creation

The Season of Creation is the annual Christian celebration to pray and respond together to the cry of Creation: the ecumenical family around the world unites to listen and care for our common home. The "Celebration" begins 1 September, the Feast of Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations.

The "Preparation" stage for Season of Creation this year begins in February. God is calling us to prepare in different ways in our diverse contexts. To celebrate the Season ecumenically we are invited to reach out to other ecumenical leaders and call our communities to discern how to listen to and respond to the cry of Creation, together. The "Preparation" stage is key for the Season of Creation, creating bonds and relationships, renewing the joy of meeting and embracing each other, and cultivating the gifts of communion and peace as the People of God together with our common home.

## Theme And Symbol For 2024

The theme for Season of Creation this year is To hope and act with Creation, and the symbol is The firstfruits of hope, inspired by Romans 8:19-25

The biblical image pictures the Earth as a Mother, groaning as in childbirth (Rom 8:22). Saint Francis of Assisi understood this when he referred to the Earth as our sister and our mother in his Canticle of Creatures. The times we live in show that we are not relating to the Earth as a gift from our Creator, but rather as a resource to be used. "Creation is groaning" (Rom 8:22) because of our selfishness and our unsustainable actions that harm her. Along with our Sister, Mother Earth, creatures of all kinds, including humans, cry out because of our destructive actions causing climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and human suffering as well as Creation's suffering.

And yet Creation teaches us that hope is present in the waiting, in the expectation for a better future (cf. Rom 8:20-21). To hope in biblical context does not mean standing still and quiet, but rather groaning, crying, and actively striving for new life amidst the struggles.

Creation and all of us are called to worship the Creator,  
working together for a future of active hope and action. Only when we work together with Creation can the **firstfruits of hope** be born. Just as in childbirth, we go through a period of intense pain, but new life is coming forth.

### Prepare For Season Of Creation

We hope that this Season of Creation renews and unites us by the one baptism and call to care for our common home. We invite you to plan and prepare your own participation in this celebration.

Go to [SeasonOfCreation.org](https://SeasonOfCreation.org) where you will find the Faith Leaders' Invitation video calling us to join the celebration. We are launching the theme in February, after the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity celebrated in the Northern Hemisphere. Then, after Pentecost, when the Southern Hemisphere celebrates the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the official Celebration Guide will be available in several languages on the website as well. Make sure to include in your calendar these key dates for the Season of Creation 2024:

June: Webinar for the launch of the Season of Creation Celebration Guide.

- 1st September: Season of Creation Opening Prayer Service with global faith leaders.
- 21st September: Day of action to endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT) and online webinar to explain and reflect on phasing out of fossil fuels.
- 4th October: Season of Creation Closing Event with youth voices from around the globe.



*The firstfruits of hope*  
(Rom 8:19-25)

**TO HOPE AND ACT  
WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2024



## Archdiocese of Birmingham Care for Creation Sub-Committee.

A few years ago, the Commission arranged a number of online meetings to discuss what an Environmental Policy for the Diocese would look like. We produced a Policy which helped to form a Statement of Intent from the Diocesan Trustees. In 2022, a Climate Action Group was appointed.

Included are members from this Commission; from Kenelm Youth Trust; the Diocesan Communications Office; the two Education Advisors for Primary and Secondary; the Properties Department; the Adviser on Rural Affairs; the Columbans; Lay Chaplains; Trustees; and Eric Kirwan, the Chief Operating Officer for the Archdiocese.

A number of initiatives have begun. The Archdiocese has withdrawn any investments in fossil fuels industries. We are looking at gathering data on energy use, to use as a base line for future developments, and also to check which parishes are on IFM, the Church scheme to use green energy. We have had an excellent response from schools. Almost every school is registered as a Live Simply School, with many having achieved the Award. Parishes, notably, have been slow in responding.

We have produced a monthly newsletter which is aimed at encouraging all of us to Live Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity. We hope to continue with this as well as produce a quarterly newsletter with more in-depth articles about all aspects of responding to Pope Francis' Encyclicals, *Laudato Si'*, *Fratelli Tutti* and *Laudate Deum*.

Now for the future. Archbishop Bernard and the Trustees have decided to raise the profile of this Group. We are now to be called **The Care for Creation Sub-Committee of the Trustees**. We have recently held two meetings to discuss Terms of Reference and Objectives.



I cannot reproduce all the details here. However, broadly, the Objectives fall under Headings responding to Laudato Si:

**Response to the Cry of the Earth:** Here we are looking at the energy use of all Diocesan properties; Church buildings, Presbyteries, schools etc We intend to encourage all parishes to be on the IFM Scheme, as mentioned earlier. Much technical work is ongoing, with the Properties Dept. and the C.O.O. fully engaged.

**Ecological Economics:** Investigating with the Pensions provider what 'ethical' and 'sustainable' mean to them.

**Adoption of sustainable lifestyles:** We are looking at developing strategies for this in Parishes and the Curia. Schools have been much more responsive. We are encouraging parishes to register for the Live Simply Award. In addition, the Laudato Si Action Platform is an excellent scheme. This can be included in a Live Simply programme, or used to follow on after achieving this.

**Ecological Education:** Clergy Day, in June, will have Care for Creation on the Agenda. Oscott College are ensuring that Laudato Si' will be included in the teaching plans.

**Ecological Spirituality:** Sharing of Resources should not just be for the Season of Creation, but we should provide resources for Laudato Si' Week, in May.

The work of this new Care for Creation Committee will affect all aspects of Diocesan Life in the future.

Phil Mayland.  
February, 2024.

Useful links:

<https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/Listing/Category/environment>

<https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/news/environment-bishop-there-is-no-option-but-for-cop28-to-succeed>

## Lent Practices of the Laudato Si' Animators



Lent begins on 14th February this year, until 28th March.

My daughter, a very orthodox Catholic, and I have a difference of opinion about what are the best kinds of penances in Lent. She agrees with the traditional idea of temporarily giving up something one enjoys. I feel that this is a wasted opportunity. My daughter argues, as does the Church, that it strengthens one's will power as well as makes an offering to God. My choice is to give up something that one should not be consuming, getting into the habit of doing without it during Lent, then continuing without it after Lent. Or start doing something that you should be doing, and keep on after Lent.

This regular discussion with my daughter came about again this year, and caused me to wonder what were the thoughts of my fellow Animators concerning Lent. Did they have views about what people could or should be doing? If penance, what sort of penance? If resolutions, what sort of resolutions? Is it time to bring something new to Lent, or are the traditional actions the best?

The Animators are people, mainly Catholics, who have been trained by the Vatican-backed Laudato Si' Movement to inform and inspire others to engage in dialogue and action on the current environmental crises. To register for the online Course, [see here](#).

I think my favourite option for living Lent, given the massive over-consumption that the world is drowning under, is to buy nothing at all that isn't essential. And if we carried that on after Lent, what a success!

Having garnered views from the Animators, I find that Anita shares my antipathy for over-consumption, and recommends that we don't buy more than we need. She has joined her parish's project of a community garden where they grow food for themselves!

Clare, while appreciating the positive sacrifice of buying nothing, prefers "to do something extra, something which has often become a part of my



everyday life". One example she gives is 'Meditation Monday', the aim of which is to manage stress, improve mood and find peace in one's daily life. Another extra she does is a 'Lenten Pilgrimage, where local people are invited to attend a different denominational church each Sunday afternoon'. John likes to do a variety of positive things, so he joins ecumenical Lent groups and reads daily spiritual writings. To add to the variety, he also gives up alcohol. But he feels that the best thing would be to do practical action and outreach, such as helping refugees.

Geraldine is not so keen on "sudden, major change". She feels that slow, gradual change suits some people better, despite her having successfully given up things permanently after giving them up during Lent - sugar for example. She would encourage both sacrificial penance and doing something extra.

Susan believes that Lent is a good time "to examine our lifestyles and change our hearts so that love for God's creation is expanded". Especially, she says, to consider how ethical the products we buy are.

The Animators are agreed on restraint in buying being a good commitment for Lent, and Kevin adds that he tries not to buy anything new at all, reminding us that plenty of items, especially clothes, are available 'pre-loved'. Along with other Animators, he also likes to give something up – Guinness in his case - and to add spiritual activity, like going to Mass as much as possible.

Menchu is all for not buying anything unnecessary in Lent, and also for continuing the habit permanently. The Ignatian Solidarity Network has a [Lenten No-Buy Challenge](#) initiative which she joins in with. She previously committed to not eating processed food, and changed to a vegetarian diet, which she continued after Lent. She was very busy last Lent organising a Laudato Si' Lent Awareness Campaign and a Laudato Si' Lent Day in her parish, as well as presenting Laudato Si' Stations of the Cross online. She joined in with several other Lenten activities as well! She encourages us to make our own poster display for Lent.



Stephen agrees with the idea of Lent being about doing more. "Giving up our precious time for others can be penitential, but so often brings unexpected spiritual benefits". He sees giving up treats as "an opportunity to give more resources to others", which is making something negative into something positive.

Like Susan, he thinks it's important to find out how ethical the brands we buy are; he subscribes to Ethical Consumer magazine, and advises googling the name of a product or company followed by ownership. I would recommend also, before buying a product, to google it adding the words 'ecologically friendly' to find the greenest version.

David agrees with Stephen about positive thinking - "thinking in a positive way and creating awareness is the way to go". He also likes to add a spiritual exercise – in his case, the Stations of the Cross. Another spiritual exercise that he recommends is a nature walk, as a "helpful reflection on creation".

While Sean agrees with the tradition of almsgiving during Lent, and donates to various campaign and charity groups, he thinks Lent is also an opportunity to spend more time in prayer and discernment, for instance studying the Mass Readings.

He prefers to think of resolutions as 'objectives', and to be realistic about them by using the SMART technique - Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic, Time Related.

He sounds a smart man! Not like me. I would rashly make a commitment, then find to my astonishment that it is doable, the hardest part having turned out to be the decision to make the commitment.

One surprise from this survey is that no-one seems keen on fasting. Not only is fasting traditional in Lent, it can have positive health benefits. Still, it's not for me!

It seems to me that we Animators agree with each other in most ways – buying little, having a positive attitude when giving up things, continuing after Lent if we can, adding a spiritual activity. So, a mixture of the old and the new perhaps. It's typical of the Animators that the new embraces concern for the natural environment.

V Bell for the Laudato Si' Animators UK Lent 2024

## Discussion Forum

23rd January 2024



### How do we make the climate crisis a priority election issue?

This forum followed on from the one in November last year on Laudate Deum, Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on the climate crisis. That concluded with the question "Where do we go from here?" One of the suggested starting points to answer this was to address the forthcoming election. The forum, which was attended by 16 participants, was chaired by Barbara Nicholson, assisted by myself.

#### Introduction

Following Fr Gerry's welcome and beautiful opening prayer, Symphony of Prayer and Praise ([Year of Prayer cafod.org.uk](http://Year of Prayer cafod.org.uk)), Barbara introduced the evening with a summary of Laudate Deum. She reminded us that Pope Francis said the most effective solutions come from political solutions at the national and international level. So, she asked, how can we engage with our politicians? Pointing out that Pope Francis emphasizes the 'bottom up' approach and that he points to civil society movements developing from the bottom can influence action on so many fronts. Such movements can support one another and put pressure on the sources of power – and may be listened to all the more during an election year! Our actions, Pope Francis notes, "should bring about transformation"

Barbara concluded by quoting from paragraph 38 of Laudate Deum "unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment"

This was followed by an introduction to the discussion questions.

#### The questions

Barbara's quote from paragraph 38 is, in turn, a direct quote from Laudato Si. This reminded me that in Laudato Si, Francis refers to political action as an act of love.

This was our inspirational context, our call to action, to put pressure on the sources of power. To engage with politicians, but also not to forget the value of community action. These were the questions for discussion in the groups.

- A. How do we make the climate crisis a priority for the general election as individuals?
- B. How do we achieve this at parish level?
- C. How are climate changes being felt in my life/my parish and how can I/we help make a difference or how have I/we made a difference?
- D. Has the local community been involved or can they become involved? Are we involved in action which encompasses the wider community?
- E. How can the Justice & Peace Commission help?

The discussion groups were not recorded but the forum up to that point can be viewed at:

<https://youtu.be/2aRpTBam38s?si=CnO34u7ffocAcv0i>  
<https://youtu.be/2aRpTBam38s?si=ILsQFGDJm-P6kd1>

#### Discussion Feedback

There was 30 minutes of discussion followed by feedback and general discussion. A very creative and productive session leading to nearly 30 points or suggestions. Too many to include here but the list is available on the Commission's website at: <https://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/discussion-forums.html>

There was, inevitably, overlap so my summary combines them into the broad headings of: difficulties, methods, tools and resources.

#### Difficulties

The recurring one was working at parish level: people may feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the climate crisis; may have difficulty seeing it as a faith issue; not making the link between their faith and political action or simple lack of interest. It was felt that there needed to be more dissemination of Catholic Social Teaching and in particular Pope Francis' teaching on our common home.

The practical difficulty of people not being able to afford to make their homes more energy efficient. Signposting was suggested to agencies or sources of funding that could assist.

The tendency of politicians to compartmentalize issues creates difficulties due to policies not joining up the climate crisis dots.

## Methods

The overwhelming consensus was the value of working together: with each other, existing parish groups, ecumenically, schools and established climate crisis groups such as Christian Climate Action, Greenpeace, etc. Use an event's publicity value, for example at a community tree planting invite local politicians.

Using the synodal process (conversations in the Spirit etc.) could be a useful way of progressing at parish level.

Many areas will have council elections in May – engage with the parties in the run up.

Many parliamentary constituency boundaries have changed. Check them in advance of the general election. It will help you understand your local situation.

## Tools

Online campaigning organisations such as: 38 degrees, Change.org or Avazz.

Social media, local newspapers, radio stations. But don't forget to challenge fake news and untruths from extreme ring wing media.

Working towards the Live Simply award can be a useful for community engagement in a parish and political lobbying can form part of the Action Plan.

## Resources

The May edition of the Columban magazine, Vocation for Justice, will be an election special. It is intended to widely distribute it as a useful resource for engaging with the electoral process. James Trewby, (Columban JPIC Team), invited suggestions of what people would find useful. Ideas included, how to hold a hustings, understanding manifestos, homily notes and brief inserts for parish newsletters. **If you have any suggestions please send them to James at: [education@columbans.co.uk](mailto:education@columbans.co.uk) as soon as possible.**

The expected pre-election statement from the Bishops' Conference.

The Laudato Si Movement. Particular reference was made to their animators, the Laudato Si Action Platform and the film The Letter.

The Diocesan Trustees now have a sub group responsible for environmental matters and may be a source of information or ideas.

The Jesuit's Noviciate at Manresa House in Birmingham (Harborne).

If you live in one of the west midlands conurbation council areas (Dudley, B'ham, Coventry etc.) then The West Midlands Climate Coalition may be useful.

## Follow up action by the Commission

1. Preparation for the general election to be a commission priority.
2. To advise Archbishop Bishop Bernard on what we feel should be included in general election guidance.
3. To prepare climate crisis related questions for use when engaging with political candidates.

The feedback can be viewed at: [https://youtu.be/2aRpTBam38s?si=uz4dGP9iMgkQz\\_2h](https://youtu.be/2aRpTBam38s?si=uz4dGP9iMgkQz_2h)

## A concluding personal reflection

Barbara's introduction included the final bit of paragraph 38 of Laudato Deum. It is worth sharing the preceding sentences.

*The demands that rise up from below throughout the world, where activists from very different countries help and support one another, can end up pressuring the sources of power. It is to be hoped that this will happen with respect to the climate crisis. For this reason, I reiterate that “unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment”.*

This is radical stuff and I hope that what the Diocese and the Bishop's Conference publish lives up to it. However I suspect that many parishes will have difficulty with it. There is not much of a tradition of political action at parish level. But it is not unknown, pro-life issues are a good example. We can counter accusations that Catholics are one issue voters by reference to paragraph 101 of Pope Francis' 2018 exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

