

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin May 2021

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

PENTECOST PRAYERS 23 MAY 2021

Whirlwind Spirit of God,
Roar through our timidities and fears,
Shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities,
Sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy,
Blow down the walls that separate us, one from another.

Then into all our empty spaces, breathe
re-strengthened courage to challenge injustice,
renewed belief in the urgency of our vocation,
revitalised passion to change our lifestyles,
re-dedication to speak only words that build and unite.

Let gentle breeze and still small voice
become in us today
mighty wind and loud proclamation.
Make of us a Pentecost people! Amen
Kathleen O'Brien/CAFOD

Spirit of justice and community
Give us the confidence to challenge injustice
And to nurture the flame of justice until it burns brightly
And may the Spirit of justice and community
Accompany you and light your way

May this Spirit move you, heal you,
Guide you and challenge you
Call you to action and to prayer

May this passion for justice burn through you and in you
And may it warm the hearts of those around you
Encouraging hope and overcoming fear. Amen

Linda Jones/CAFOD

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/Pentecost-prayers>

FAIRTRADE SCHOOLS NEWS

20 April 2021: **It's Fashion Revolution Week 19-25 April** <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/> Across the world, millions of cotton farmers and garment workers are struggling to make a decent living. The fashion industry needs to change. Whether it be this week in school, or next month, we're inviting you to join us in learning about the relationships we have with our clothes, with farmers and workers, and with the climate. In this newsletter we've got some fantastic teaching resources, guidance from teachers and testimonies from passionate students to help you bring the revolution to your school.

FAIRTRADE SCHOOL UNIFORM, THE CLIMATE AND YOUR SCHOOL

Are you looking to revolutionise the way your school sources school uniform? This webinar, hosted by Koolskools <https://www.koolskools.co.uk/> gives a fantastic introduction to Fairtrade cotton school uniform and the numerous benefits it can bring to farmers, workers, your students and the wider school community. You'll learn from some inspiring schools across the UK, as well as the CEO of the Koolskools Factory in India.

TEACHING RESOURCES ON FAIRTRADE COTTON

- **Check out** our cotton teaching resources <https://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/teaching-resources/?product=cotton#page-1> to explore where cotton comes and why we need to revolutionise the way the fashion industry works. The resources below are most suitable for students aged 7-14:
- **Introduce** the topic by watching *Look for the Label* and set a home learning challenge https://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/teaching-resources/look-for-the-label-fairtrade-cotton/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=EC_clothes_relationship&utm_content=EC+FashionRev21
- **Watch *Unravelling the Thread*** to explore the difficulties faced in the cotton industry https://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/teaching-resources/unravelling-the-thread/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=EC_clothes_relationship&utm_content=EC+FashionRev21
- **Get students thinking** about the power of their voice, both as a consumer and a campaigner, through this cotton campaigning activity https://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/teaching-resources/cotton-campaigning-activity/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=EC_clothes_relationship&utm_content=EC+FashionRev21
- **Encourage** your students to continue their learning journey through our cotton research activity https://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/teaching-resources/cotton-research-activity/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=EC_clothes_relationship&utm_content=EC+FashionRev21

Follow @FairtradeUKed on Twitter for more teaching inspiration this week and feel free to get in touch with us at schools@fairtrade.org.uk with any questions. Claire & Jo, The Fairtrade Schools Team

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE YOUR FASHION CHOICES MORE SUSTAINABLE?

Maddy Holmes 26 March 2021:

Maddy Holmes is an undergraduate student studying psychology at Sheffield Hallam University. As part of a work placement scheme, Maddy joined the Hope for the Future team for eight weeks at the beginning of the year. Here she reflects on an area she's particularly passionate about: the environmental impact of the fashion industry and how we can overcome it.

The environmental impact of the fashion industry is hugely detrimental to national and local efforts to tackle climate change. It is to blame for 4% of all global carbon emissions and is set to account for ¼ of the world's carbon budget by 2050 if no radical changes are made. Fast fashion is also a huge drain of water, taking a huge 2,700 litres of water to make one cotton t-shirt. That is enough water for one person to drink for 2 and a half years. Not to mention the huge amount of waste caused by the industry, every second the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles is put into landfill or burned.

Many brands are also not transparent when it comes to their supply chain. At every stage of the production of clothing, workers are often enduring unsafe working conditions for next to nothing in return. 90% of clothing produced globally are done so in low and middle-income countries, in order to make use of cheap labour. In fact, an estimated 2% of the workers making our clothes earn a living wage. Unenforced safety standards have reverberations such as forced child and adult labour in cotton fields in Uzbek, garment workers working in dangerous environments without basic human rights, and farmers being exposed to toxic chemicals that detrimentally affect their health.

However, these statistics are useless without practical solutions, so here are some ways you, as a consumer, can do your bit to ensure that fashion is climate conscious.

Commit to your clothes

With the ease and low cost of fast fashion comes thoughtless buying. Commit yourself to the #30wearschallenge and next time you're scrolling, take a minute to consider what you're buying, will it sit at the back of your wardrobe and end up in landfill, or will you wear it at least 30 times?

Buy sustainably

According to the European Parliament, fashion companies have increased the number of collections they release a year from an average of 2 in 2000 to 5 in 2011, with Zara now putting out 24. This considered, the pressure we seem to feel to keep up with trends is understandable. As the importance of sustainability in fashion has become a more widely discussed issue, the amount of sustainable clothing brands has significantly increased. Clothing that doesn't come with the repercussions of fast fashion (minus those on your bank account) is now abundantly available. *Good on you* has a directory of thousands of sustainable brands so that you can be sure you know where your money is going.

However, this clothing can often be out of the price range

of the average consumer. That's why the reopening of UK charity shops on 12 April cannot come soon enough. Nothing beats the satisfaction of finding a good quality or designer piece at charity shop prices. However, if you don't have the time to sift through rails of grandma chic, give online peer-to-peer secondhand resellers such as *Depop* or *vinted a go*.

Breathe new life to old clothes

Although donating to a charity shop is a great way of breathing new life into an item, the Homelessness charity Emmaus estimated that 810 tonnes of goods deemed unfit to sell by their shops were sent to landfill between July 2018 and June 2019. So, consider learning to mend or repurpose clothing. There is a wealth of online resources showing you how to upcycle old items. Or, once lockdown restrictions loosen, have a clothes swap with your friends. Trade in clothes once lost to the back of your wardrobe for that friend's top that you've been eyeing for years.

Less is more

A recent study found a negative correlation between levels of consumption and wellbeing, but no association between green buying and wellbeing at all. Although these relationships are correlational not causal, it suggests that buying green may not make you happy, but buying less may just do the trick! Buying sustainably is all well and good, but those cheap clothes saved from the charity shop are going to end up in landfill eventually. The key to sustainability, and apparently happiness, is to buy in terms of quality not quantity!

Contact your MP

Just 100 companies are responsible for 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988, so all of these tips might feel like a drop in the ocean. It's clear that there needs to be real, legislative change but you can help achieve this too. Whether this blog post has inspired you to call for the Government to enforce more rigid transparency laws for businesses, or to ban mixed fibre textiles which cannot be recycled; lobbying your MP is a great way to achieve change that occurs further than your wardrobe.

Join the Fashion Revolution

24 April marks the 8th anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse. The disaster which killed 1132 garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh and lit the fire behind the organisation Fashion Revolution. Join them on 19-25 April 2021 for Fashion Revolution Week and check out their website to find out more about how to get involved. Take a look at their transparency index, which ranks brands based on what they disclose about their supply chains, and social and environment policies and impacts. Use their slogan and ask yourself, #whomademyclothes?

<https://www.fashionrevolution.org/>

If you're interested in expressing your questions or concerns about fashion's environmental impact to your local MP, why not request a tailored lobbying strategy from our research team? It has all the information you'll need to get started. Get in touch at info@hftf.org.uk for more information.

BALFOUR PROJECT DISMAYED AT PM'S REJECTION OF ICC INVESTIGATION INTO ISRAEL

20 April 2021 **Source: Balfour Project:** The Balfour Project says it has "read with sadness and dismay" the concluding words in the Prime Minister's letter to the Conservative Friends of Israel of 9 April 2021. These words assert that "Palestine is not a sovereign State" and that the investigation by the ICC "gives the impression of being a partial and prejudicial attack on a friend and ally of the UK's." Neither assertion holds water. Each is morally and legally bankrupt. Balfour Project commends the statement made by a number of British charities and NGOs (including CAFOD, Christian Aid and the Amos Trust) in response, and adds the following comments.

The official policy of HM Government on Palestinian statehood is set out in a statement by Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmed in the House of Lords on 7 June 2018: "We will formally recognise the State of Palestine when we believe it best serves the cause of peace." In international law, recognition of one sovereign State by another is an act of political will that lies entirely in the discretion of the recognising State. Lord Ahmed's statement implied an acknowledgement on the part of the Government that Palestine already is a sovereign State. The formal act of British recognition might be withheld for the time being, but Lord Ahmed clearly envisaged it as following in due course at the time when the Government deemed most opportune for peace. It's when, not if -the Balfour Project has consistently urged formal UK recognition now. That urgent call remains valid.

Lord Ahmed's statement was not made in a vacuum. By UNGA67/19 of 29 November 2012, Palestine had been accepted as a sovereign State by the United Nations as a non-member observer State. 139 member States of the UN as well as the Vatican have accorded recognition to Palestine as a fellow sovereign State. In October 2014, a non-binding vote of the House of Commons called on the Government to recognise Palestine alongside Israel as a contribution to negotiating a two-state solution. The vote in favour was by 276 to 14.

Britain today seeks to portray itself as a global power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, keen to exert itself as a positive force in the world and to uphold the rules-based international order. The Prime Minister's assertion that Britain no longer accepts that Palestine is a State, albeit one to which Her Majesty's Government may not yet have accorded recognition, is truly shocking. The Government should correct the record in Parliament as a matter of urgency. But will it?

The Prime Minister's assertion that the ICC investigation "gives the impression of being a partial and prejudicial attack on a friend and ally of the UK's" beggars belief. It is truly bizarre that this assertion should be contained in a letter that also asserts that the UK is "a strong supporter of the ICC in line with its founding statute" and refers to the UK's "enduring commitment to strengthening the Court and serving international justice". Both states, the UK and Palestine, have signed up to the ICC's founding statute. Our Government made no objection when Palestine did so. It is both wrong and harmful of the Prime Minister to seek to disparage an impending investigation by the Court by implying that the findings of that investigation will be prejudiced. Evidently, he is doing this at the behest of a state which is a friend and ally. No state, friend or foe, is above the law.

Since becoming Prime Minister, Mr Johnson's Government has been censured by the U.K. Supreme Court for illegally purporting to prorogue Parliament, and has introduced legislation that it admitted would break an international treaty "in a specific and limited way". The relevant legislative provisions were later withdrawn, partly as a result of international pressure, but the United Kingdom's reputation as an upholder of the international rule of law suffered a severe blow. Unless swiftly corrected, the Prime Minister's misguided assertions will harm the United Kingdom's reputation even further.

Too much damage has already been done.

The statement is signed by John McHugo, Trustee, Balfour Project <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/42024>

BRITISH ACTIVISTS AND CHARITIES CONDEMN PM STATEMENT

UK charities statement on the Prime Minister's comments on the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation 14 April 2021

We condemn the Prime Minister's statement on the ICC's investigation into alleged grave crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). This investigation is bringing victims, survivors and their families one step closer to justice – but political interference by states, such as the UK, risks pushing that out of reach.

The investigation is the first genuine hope that alleged perpetrators of the most serious crimes will be held to account for their actions. The ICC is committed to undertaking an investigation that is "conducted independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favour." Providing impartial justice and ending decades of impunity would bring the prospect of lasting peace closer and would signal an end to the suffering endured by generations across the region.

The UK Government could be a bastion of international law and human rights – but instead it is undermining international criminal proceedings and standing in the way of justice. No longer can the UK Government genuinely assert that "Promoting international criminal justice and the rule of law are fundamental elements of the United Kingdom's foreign policy." Rather, the Prime Minister's statement sets a wholly dangerous precedent by the UK, that may impact victims of grave crimes and threatens the viability, objectives, and the future of the court itself.

The international community must be consistent in its support for accountability and the rule of law, regardless of the context. The UK Government should respect the impartiality and independence of the court, and should support – rather than substantially undermine international legal frameworks and judicial mechanisms.

Signed: Christian Aid; Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights; Medical Aid for Palestinians; Catholic Agency for Overseas Development; Council for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU); Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability (ABCD Bethlehem); Amos Trust; Friends of Birzeit University; War on Want; Welfare Association; Interpal; Embrace the Middle East
<https://balfourproject.org/british-activists-and-charities-condemn-pm-statement/>

DEREK CHAUVIN HAS BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF MURDER IN GEORGE FLOYD'S KILLING

The former Minneapolis cop, who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck until he took his last breath, was convicted of all charges in a defining moment of the country's reckoning over police brutality.

Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter Tuesday in George Floyd's killing, a rare conviction of a police officer that was aided in part by an excruciating video that sparked outrage and demands for racial justice around the world. The former Minneapolis police officer, who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes as the Black man repeatedly cried out "I can't breathe," was convicted of all three charges — second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter.

Chauvin was handcuffed and taken into custody immediately after the judge revoked his bail. He faces 12 and a half years in prison for second-degree murder, according to Minnesota's sentencing guidelines, but prosecutors intend to ask for a higher sentence. The maximum penalty is up to 40 years. The sentencing is expected to take place after eight weeks. Three other officers involved in Floyd's death are scheduled to go on trial in August.

The jury deliberated for around 10 hours before reaching their verdict on Chauvin's actions. After the verdict was read, trial judge Peter Cahill thanked them "for not only jury service, but for heavy-duty jury service."

"Painfully earned justice has arrived for George Floyd's family and the community here in Minneapolis, but today's verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world," attorneys for the Floyd family said in a statement. "Justice for Black America is justice for all of America. This case is a turning point in American history for accountability of law enforcement and sends a clear message we hope is heard clearly in every city and every state," the statement said.

"I'm feeling tears of joy, so emotional that no family in history ever got this far," Floyd's brother Rodney said on MSNBC after the verdict. "You know, to get a guilty charge on all the counts. We got a chance to go to trial and we took it all the way through. So, this right here is for everyone that's been in this situation. Everybody. Everybody."

Speaking to reporters Tuesday afternoon, members of the Floyd family expressed relief, joy, and resolve as they celebrated the verdict and reflected on the legacy of George's death.

"I will salute him at every day of my life," Floyd's brother, Terrence, said. "I'm gonna miss him but now I know he's in history. What a day to be a Floyd, man."

Floyd's nephew Brandon Williams said the verdict was "a pivotal moment" and "something this country's needed for a long time." "Hopefully, our country will take a turn in the right direction today and this day in history proves that it was a turning point," Williams said.

In a tweet, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said, "George Floyd came to Minneapolis to better his life. But ultimately his life will have bettered our city. The jury joined in a shared conviction that has animated Minneapolis for the last 11 months. They refused to look away and affirmed he should still be here today."

"I would not call today's verdict justice, however, because justice implies true restoration," Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said. "But it is accountability, which is the first step towards justice. And now the cause of justice is in your hands."

Read in BuzzFeed News:
https://apple.news/AH7mypjQESHCrOb_XN6MZlW

A prayer by Fr Richard Rohr

God of truth,
we thank you today
for the justice of this moment
and a judgment according to your will.
You have again
inspired action that
brought down the arrogant
and called the powerful to account.

May this give all people hope
For our healing – together!

May you free us
from our need for vengeance
and clear the field
to be ready for new seed.

CHILDREN'S LAUREATES CAMPAIGN FOR £100M A YEAR TO FIX PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Sian Cain 13 April 2021: Current laureate Cressida Cowell leads demands to ringfence funds to renew 'deteriorating' facilities that fail to appeal to students.

All the UK's children's laureates, including Cressida Cowell, Quentin Blake, Malorie Blackman and Michael Rosen, are uniting to call for the government to dedicate £100m a year to revitalising "deteriorating" primary school libraries across the country, amid fears that literacy levels have dropped severely during the pandemic. In an impassioned letter to prime minister Boris Johnson, Cowell, the current laureate, calls for £100m to be ringfenced for building new and restoring neglected libraries every year, saying that millions of children are "missing out on opportunities to discover the life-changing magic of reading".

Decades of research has linked childhood reading to future success, including a 2002 OECD study that found it was a more telling predictor than a family's socio-economic status. At the same time, both public and school libraries have been subject to swingeing cuts over the last decade. Johnson is reportedly set to unveil a "four-year emergency" plan for literacy next month, with the Sunday Times reporting that unpublished government figures have revealed that more than 200,000 pupils are set to enter secondary school this autumn without being able to read properly – a rise of 30,000 since last year.

The £100m in funding would allow schools to establish entirely new libraries, hire professional librarians and buy new stock; by comparison, £320m has been ringfenced to promote physical education in primary schools this year, with hundreds of millions set aside every year since 2013.

"Surely the opportunity to become a reader for pleasure is just as important [as PE]?" reads the letter, also signed by former laureates Julia Donaldson, Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo, and by the heads of several literacy and publishing organisations. "How is it fair that some children are being given this immeasurable advantage in life, but stark book poverty means many more are denied this same chance to change their future?"

"I have visited primary schools across the country over my 20-year career as a children's author/illustrator and it is heart-breaking to see just how unevenly this fundamental opportunity is distributed," Cowell writes. "So often the children who need books the most are in schools that cannot provide them with even an adequate school library, let alone a good one."

While libraries are a statutory requirement in prisons, this is not the case in schools. Several laureates have campaigned for improvements over the last two decades, including Chris Riddell, who called for an investigation into school library closures in 2017. In 2014, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries recommended that the Department for Education gather exact numbers so the "extent of this problem can be understood", but no investigation ever happened. This means that the state of school libraries is harder to pin down.

The Great School Libraries survey of more than 1,700 schools revealed that one in eight had no library at all. Nine in 10 English schools had libraries, compared to 67% in Wales and 57% in Northern Ireland. It also found that 39% of primary school libraries held fewer than 5,000 books, and were only staffed for one hour a day on average, compared with seven among secondaries. Social deprivation was also a key indicator: schools with a higher proportion of children on free school meals were more than twice as likely not to have access to a designated library space.

Despite years of laureates campaigning for improvements, Cowell told the Guardian, "this message isn't getting through to government or the general public. I do not know why."

"The impact of Covid-19 on literacy will be a major challenge, but hopefully it will focus everyone's minds on what we need to do," she said. "Even before the pandemic, children were starting months behind where they should be. It is a major problem. And as a practical person, I am suggesting a practical solution. We ringfence money for sport, why not literacy?"

As part of the campaign, Cowell is spearheading an effort to renovate libraries in six schools around the UK: Benwick primary school in Cambridgeshire, Dinnington community primary school in Rotherham, Griffin primary school in Wandsworth, Saviour CE primary school in Manchester, Skerne Park primary school in Darlington, and Woodchurch C of E primary school in Wirral. A large proportion of students at the six schools are eligible for free school meals.

Each will receive 1,000 books donated by publishers, training for staff in librarianship, new furniture and audiobook technology, and wall art to make the spaces feel more appealing to children – "like a sweetshop", said Cowell, "rather than tired and boring".

The libraries will reopen in June, and the impact on students will be monitored over 12 months.

Kate Chisholm, headteacher at Skerne Park primary, said the school was thrilled to take part, and that the library's current stock was "old and well-used, and not very enticing for children". "I wish I could do this for every school in the UK," said Cowell. "But I think it is so exciting to have a chance to show how transformative a good school library can be."

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/apr/13/childrens-laureates-campaign-for-100m-a-year-to-fix-primary-school-libraries>

CHILDREN ASKED TO SHARE THEIR HOPES FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD IN BIG ASK SURVEY

Charlotte Bateman, Sky News reporter, 19 April 2021: Millions of children will be able to voice their hopes for a post-COVID world in a landmark review backed by footballer Marcus Rashford who has championed measures against child food poverty, and who will make an appearance in an online assembly as part of the initiative. The Big Ask, launched by new children's commissioner for England Dame Rachel de Souza, is the biggest ever survey of children conducted in the UK. The survey is inspired by William Beveridge's report in the 1940s which helped constitute the welfare state.

The results of the online review, titled the Childhood Commission, will highlight the barriers youngsters face today and solutions to help them reach their full potential. It will run online from 19 April to 19 May, with responses kept anonymous and questions tailored to different age groups. Children will be asked about how content they are with aspects of their lives, as well as their views about the future.

The Big Ask will be made available to every school and via the Oak National Academy for those who are home schooled. The review will be distributed to external organisations such as youth groups, charities, mental health services, children's homes and youth justice settings. There will also be focus groups specifically for children with disabilities and special educational needs, and for pre-school infants.

Dame Rachel said: "It is time to give something back to children after the huge sacrifices they have made during the COVID pandemic." She hopes that parents, carers and teachers will encourage children to "take part in this big, exciting opportunity". Dame Rachel will visit schools across the country to hear first-hand the experiences of children in the pandemic and their hopes for the future. She said: "What children tell us will be at the heart of my Childhood Commission and 'Beveridge-style' blueprint for government and others to tackle some of the generational problems that have held back too many children for decades." <https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-children-asked-to-share-their-hopes-for-a-post-pandemic-world-in-big-ask-survey-backed-by-marcus-rashford-12280121>

REFUGEE WEEK SLOW CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS ON ARTS AND CULTURE FOR CHANGE 4 Feb – 11 Mar

It took us a while to decide how to go about the Refugee Week Conference this year. We missed the lively gatherings we've had in London, Bristol and Coventry in recent years, where we came together in our hundreds and made new connections over music and tasty food. We weren't sure how that energy could be achieved over Zoom. In the end, we hit upon the idea of a 'Slow Conference': a series of workshops spread out over six weeks, to minimise screen fatigue and (we hoped) enable more people to take part.

What followed was a month and a half of rich conversations, in which learning was generously shared and many new connections were made. Over 760 people signed up to the programme, which kicked off on 4 February. Most sessions were attended by over 100 people, who joined from across the UK and internationally, including from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Greece. As has often been the case this year, an approach borne of necessity has opened up new possibilities and will no doubt change how we do things for years to come (although we're not giving up on having lunch together again!)

The aim of the Refugee Week Conferences is to prepare together for Refugee Week, a festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees, in which anyone can hold their own event or activity (Refugee Week 2021 is 14-20 June, and the theme is *'We Cannot Walk Alone'*). The conferences are also spaces for the Refugee Week network to build skills and share learning about the wider work we all do on social change, all year round.

The Slow Conference workshops ranged from practical sessions (how to use media and social media to promote

events; how to reach new audiences) to deeper discussions about practice (supporting lived experience leadership; the politics of storytelling). Participants brought curiosity, openness and generosity to the conversations, and told us that there was much they would take away with them. You can see videos and write-ups of the workshops here: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/refugee-week-slow-conference-resources/>.

One thing we kept hearing during the Slow Conference was how much participants valued the opportunity to network. We're proud that Refugee Week is a space where we can come together to deepen our connections, ask ourselves the bigger questions and grow and develop as a movement, all year round.

During one of the Slow Conference workshops, participants said they would continue sharing questions and learning after it was over, so we set up a Googlegroup (email list) for the Refugee Week and Platforma network, which now has over 75 members. You can sign up to the group here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd8WNeNZHb_37qY3emKZpRtD4XXZmVSJc8GdFQxCxrTTNdvwA/viewform

The Refugee Week Slow Conference may be over but the movement continues! We will continue to hold our Refugee Week and Platforma Monthly Meets in the run up to Refugee Week, which are free, friendly online meet-ups on the first Thursday of every month, for people interested in arts, culture and social change to share learning and expand their networks.

Visit our events page: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/refugee-week-international-meet-up/> to see what's coming up.

The timeline to Refugee Week 2021: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Timeline-Refugee-Week-2021.pdf> also shows the resources that we will be sharing in the run up to June.

REFUGEE WEEK 14 – 20 JUNE 2021: WE CANNOT WALK ALONE

Refugee Week has been running each June for more than 20 years in the UK and Australia, growing all the time. Now we'd like to reach out across the world to partners in the arts and refugee/migration sectors who want to join us in celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and asylum seekers. Refugee Week happens around UN World Refugee Day on 20 June, and anyone can take part by running their own event or activity. We will be sharing resources and ideas for activities in the coming months – sign up to our newsletter to keep in touch. <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

We are inviting organisations and individuals (including those based in the UK with international connections) to join us to discuss taking part in Refugee Week 2021, to make connections and see how best we can link up and work together. If you would like to attend, please email: tom@counterpointsarts.org.uk

Life is tough for many of us right now, and the future feels very uncertain. Looking after ourselves, our families and communities takes time and energy. There is so much to do. The challenges of the past year have exposed the deep inequalities between us, including in housing, income and access to healthcare. But the crisis has also shown how interconnected we are – that the wellbeing of each of us depends on the welfare, safety and hard work of others. We are part of a shared 'us'. The theme of Refugee Week 2021, 'We Cannot Walk Alone', is an invitation to extend your hand to someone new. Someone who is outside your current circle, has had an experience you haven't, or is fighting for a cause you aren't yet involved in. We hope you'll join us in making Refugee Week 2021 a bold, collective act of reaching out; a space for us all to listen, to exchange and connect. To find out what we can learn from each other, and what we can build together.

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/theme-of-refugee-week-2021-we-cannot-walk-alone/>

Inspiration: *There is a moment in Martin Luther King's historic 'I have a dream' speech when he turns his attention to the White people who, realising their destiny and that of their Black fellow citizens was intertwined, joined the movement for equal rights. "They have come to realise that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom," he said. "We cannot walk alone."*

Martin Luther King may have been speaking during the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, but his words resonate across space and time. Here in the UK and across the world today, we know that it is only by coming together that we will move forward. That when we choose to walk side by side, to share networks and resources, or make space for others to lead, we create deeper and longer-lasting change than is possible alone.

I Have A Dream: Martin Luther King's speech delivered during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech reimagined by Benjamin Zephaniah

"I am here today my friends to tell you there is hope. As high as that mountain may seem, I must tell you I have dream and my friends there is a tunnel at the end of the light. And beyond that tunnel I see a future, I see a time when all people who live on these green rocks we call the British Isles will know the name of Sean Rigg, Leon Briggs, Christopher Elder, Kingsley Burrell, Mikey Powell, Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman as well as they know the name of Stephen Lawrence.

Our youth are dying in your wars for oil and influence and we are sick and tired of having to prove how British we are. We are nursing COVID-19 patients and then becoming COVID-19 patients and we are sick and tired of having to prove how British we are. From the highlands of Scotland to the beauty of Lands' End, black lives matter. From the lush Brecon Beacons to Bury St Edmunds, Black Lives Matter.

I dream of a time when we will no longer feel forced to take to the streets to demand the right to roam the country of our birth without the fear of being dragged from our cars, searched on our streets and humiliated in front of our children. Yes, oh we dream of a time when every white police officer in our land will be taught at schools that black civilisations were as good and as bad as white civilisations. And his civilisation must abandon the cruel legacy of that evil white supremacy. The empire is dead. The empire is dead. Long dead the empire. I still dream of a time when angry white men and angry white women will unite and fight the system that oppresses us all. For we who stand together, win together. We who dream together, achieve together.

So, let us not wallow in the valley of despair, just be fair. Let's tell ourselves that all men and women were created equal for the time is coming when those who divide us will be judged by us. We will rise up and demand a true history, true democracy and true racial equality.

We have come far but we still have far to go. We are scholars but we still have much to know. I have seen justice. It is within our grasp. I may not get it with you but my eyes have seen it.

I still dream of a time when black people all over this blessed country of ours will play golf. African Caribbean and Asian youth will spend big money on English takeaways. Black people will wear kilts. Black people will speak Welsh. But we are sick and tired of having to prove how British we are.

We live in a nightmare it seems but I must tell you I have a dream that black people and white people, Muslims and Jews, Protestants and Catholics, Sikhs and Hindus, Pagans and Druids, Atheist and Anarchists will join together and sing free at last, free at last, great Britons we are free at last."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/5krQ4FdQc7mrmdQ2YtjvTwL/martin-luther-kings-dream-speech-reimagined-by-poet-benjamin-zephaniah>

RESOURCES FOR REFUGEE WEEK

'Old immigrant meets new immigrant': a short film by LADbible in which Jamaican-born Owen, 45, meets Refugee Week Ambassador Mo, 22, who came to the UK from Syria <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFFuyOH3PuA>

"There's this way when we actually spend time with, speak to, visit with friends from other communities, actually live in community with people that are different from us that we start to be able to see things from their perspective. I see people now trying to take in different media, trying to pay attention to different voices, and that's helpful, but it's actually those intimate relationships... You start to hear the experiences and witness how we're treated differently, how it might feel to be different."

Sebene Selassie: *The Delusion of Separation*, *Hurry Slowly* podcast episode: <https://hurryslowly.co/312-sebene-selassie/>

Events for teachers – latest news from Refugee Week: for our next Monthly Meet on 06 May, we're teaming up with Schools of Sanctuary for a session about taking part in Refugee Week at your school, and what it means to become a School of Sanctuary. Get inspiration from teachers who have been involved in the past, and find out about the theme, resources and activities on offer for Refugee Week 2021. Primary and Secondary School teachers welcome, we hope to see you there. Book your place here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/monthlymeet-refugee-week-at-your-school-tickets-148346726051?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=event_for_teachers_latest_news&utm_term=2021-04-19

A DIFFERENT KIND OF POLICE FAILING TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Abby Robinson 19/04/2021: The hit TV show *Line of Duty* just did something else it's never done before by tackling systemic racism with the 'Lawrence Christopher' case. The fictional Christopher was a young Black man who had been attacked by a gang of white youths. He had been struck on the head with lead piping and was later found wandering nearby in a state of confusion by a member of the public, who called the police. On their arrival, Christopher was "uncooperative" – a symptom of his assault – and was taken into custody. His skull fracture went untreated and he died that night. As he drew his final breaths, the custody officers present made monkey noises and laughed. But despite that, they were all cleared of misconduct and retired early, citing stress as the contributing factor. As well as receiving full pensions, they also claimed tens of thousands of pounds in compensation.

Because he was Black, Christopher, an architect who had never been in trouble with the law and certainly didn't have any gang affiliations, was expected to be an active participant in crime rather than a victim. His family refused to accept the injustice and following their complaints, it was later acknowledged that Christopher had not been involved in any criminal activity.

Despite his name being cleared, the men responsible, all of whom had a history of racially aggravated violence, were released without charge and granted anonymity following a botched investigation. The police had received numerous tip-offs about the gang, but one whole week had elapsed before witnesses were interviewed. Forensic evidence from their homes also hadn't been secured, and the identification parade took place more than a month after Christopher's murder, which gave the suspects time to alter their appearances. Another enquiry was launched after Christopher's friends and family once again raised the issue and it was concluded that the procedural errors were the result of institutional racism.

Racism is not a subject that *Line of Duty* had tackled until the most recent episode. Whether creator Jed Mercurio had always planned to weave it into the narrative or was spurred on by the global outrage following the death of George Floyd, as so many others have been, it's not clear. It's most likely the latter given that we've just watched episode number 34. What is also significant is Mercurio's decision to address both overt racism – the physical harm and verbal abuse that Christopher suffered – and implicit racial bias, namely the assumption of criminality predicated on the colour of his skin. And while a number of individuals involved in the investigation ensured that it was compromised to protect various OCG [Organised Crime Groups] movers and shakers, several failings also pointed to racist discrimination, both blatant and covert.

You can seek out content on every available platform that confronts the disease of racism, or not. But in that same breath it should also be noted that the real-life Lawrence Christophers do not share that luxury, because they're forced to endure it, not just once but throughout the course of their lives. Christopher's story was an unexpected inclusion, which is where mainstream series like *Line of Duty*, with its millions of viewers, can play such a vital role, acting as a Trojan horse to underscore hard truths about the world. That character is a very clear reference to the murder of Stephen Lawrence and Christopher Alder's death in police custody.

Just last year, two Black men were stopped and searched after a fist bump was interpreted as a drug exchange, and there are numerous damning statistics such as data released by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICFRS) in 2017 which revealed that if you're Black, you're at least eight times more likely to be stopped and searched than a white person, even though it's statistically less likely drugs will be recovered (via *The Independent*). In 2020, Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick acknowledged (via *The Independent*) that the force "is not free of discrimination, racism or bias".

Entertainment has the power to sweep us up and whisk us away from the fires raging outside our front doors. But equally, it can be a confronting, powerful tool, capable of forcing us to reckon with injustice and even enact positive change.

<https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a36142362/line-of-duty-lawrence-christopher-racism/#>

DOCUMENTARY FILM: THE TRUTH ABOUT POLICE STOP AND SEARCH

31 March 2021: Channel 4 has commissioned Flicker Productions to make a 1x60 film exploring the contentious issues of Stop and Search, fronted by football pundit and retired footballer Jermaine Jenas.

This film puts this controversial aspect of modern policing under the microscope. The Truth About Police Stop and Search, features the experiences of approximately 40 Black men and teenagers who used cameras to record their experiences of Stop and Search across England, and to see how their interactions with the police play out.

In England and Wales, Black men are 9 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white men. This documentary hopes to help the British public understand the full scale of the issue, and its wide reaching social, psychological and personal consequences.

Flicker Productions Executive Producer Colleen Flynn says, "We wanted to go beyond the news headlines and document how stop and search is affecting so many men, women and families across the country, and with Jermaine at the helm ask the audience to reflect on and understand the everyday scrutiny black men find themselves under"

Jermaine Jenas says, "This film is really important to me, I wanted the viewer at home to gain some understanding of what life is like for a young Black man dealing with the police. I hope these stories will help paint that picture and highlight the day to day struggle and mental health difficulties that are being put on one community because of Stop & Search. I'm hoping for change." <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/truth-about-police-stop-and-search>

BISHOP WELCOMES JRS REPORT CALLING FOR 'HUMAN-CENTRED' APPROACH TO ASYLUM

18 April 2021: Bishop Paul McAleenan, the Church's Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, has welcomed the publication of a new report by Catholic organisation Jesuit Refugee Service UK arguing for a radically new 'human-centred' approach to asylum. Titled *Being Human in the Asylum System*, the report draws on principles of Catholic Social Teaching and concludes that new government proposals to reform the asylum system will "deepen hostility to refugees" and "threaten the fabric of society".

"*Being Human in the Asylum System* is a timely reminder that refugees are not a political problem to be solved, but people with dignity who deserve our respect and protection," says Bishop McAleenan. "This report is not only rooted in Catholic Social Teaching but was informed by truly listening to the voices of refugees about their unique experiences, something that we all need to do much more.

"Engaged in daily encounters with refugees the Jesuit Refugee Service speaks from a position of knowledge and authority. Driven by the principle that 'we are not being called to share magnanimously what is ours, but to share what belongs in justice, for our common dignity' the report is uncompromising. Justice cannot be compromised, people's welfare must be prioritised. Therefore, I hope that this report will be seriously considered by policy makers and will contribute towards building an asylum system that puts people at the centre."

Download the report *Being Human in the Asylum System* here: www.jrsuk.net/detentionreport/
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/42014>

VATICAN SENDS GREETINGS TO MUSLIMS FOR RAMADAN 2021

16 April 2021 **Vatican News:** The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has released a message addressed to "all Muslim brothers and sisters" to show solidarity and friendship as they start their month of Ramadan and look ahead to 'Id al-Fitr.

The Message begins by expressing "fraternal good wishes for a month rich in divine blessings and spiritual advancement." It says that "fasting, along with prayer, almsgiving and other pious practices, brings us closer to God our Creator and to all those with whom we live and work, and helps us to continue walking together on the path of fraternity".

Noting that over the last few months "of suffering, anguish and sorrow", especially during the lockdown periods, "we sensed our need for divine assistance, but also for expressions and gestures of fraternal solidarity". There are so many small gestures, continues the Message: a telephone call, a message of support and comfort, a prayer, help in buying medicines or food, advice to simply "show the security of knowing that someone is always there for us in times of necessity".

This need for divine assistance that we need and seek "is manifold", continues the Message: God's mercy, pardon, providence and other spiritual and material gifts. "Yet, what we need most in these times, is hope".

The Message then turns its attention to the importance of "hope." "As we are aware while certainly including optimism", hope goes beyond it. The Message explains that "while optimism is a human attitude, hope has its basis in something religious: God loves us, and therefore cares for us through his providence. Hope arises from our belief that all our problems and trials have a meaning, a value and a purpose, however difficult or impossible it may be for us to understand the reason for them or to find a way out of them. Hope also carries with it belief in the goodness present in the heart of every person. Many times, in situations of difficulty and despair, help, and the hope it brings, can come from those whom we least expect".

The Message then notes that "human fraternity, in its numerous manifestations, thus becomes a source of hope for all, especially for those in any kind of need.

It continues with a word of gratitude. "Thank you to all those who so promptly reacted by showing the utmost signs of solidarity in times of crises. All these persons and their goodness remind us believers that the spirit of fraternity is universal, and that it transcends all boundaries: ethnic, religious, social and economic", reads the Message. "In adopting this spirit, we imitate God, who looks benevolently upon the humanity he created, upon all other creatures and upon the entire universe. This is why the growing care and concern for the planet, our 'common home', is, according to Pope Francis, yet another sign of hope.

"We are also aware that hope has its enemies," warns the Message. "Lack of faith in God's love and care; loss of trust in our brothers and sisters; pessimism; despair and its opposite, unfounded presumption; unfair generalizations based on one's own negative experiences, and so forth", are all enemies to faith it says. "These harmful thoughts, attitudes and reactions must be effectively countered, so as to strengthen hope in God and trust in all our brothers and sisters".

The Message concludes: "Pope Francis speaks frequently of hope". In his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* he says: "I invite everyone to renewed hope, 'for hope speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfilment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile'. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope. We, Christians and Muslims, are called to be bearers of hope, for the present life and for the life to come, and to be witnesses, restorers and builders of this hope, especially for those experiencing difficulties and despair". And in a sign of spiritual solidarity, it says, "we assure you of our prayer, and we send best wishes for a peaceful and fruitful Ramadan, and for a joyful 'Id al-Fitr." <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/42000>

LOW-KEY RAMADAN TO PROCESS THE PAST YEAR PEACEFULLY

Basit Mahmood 14 April 2021: As Muslims across the world mark the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan this week, fasting from sunrise to sunset, families across the UK will continue to observe the month under Covid-19 restrictions. This will be the second Ramadan that Muslims in the UK will be spending under Covid-19 restrictions, unable to hold iftars (breaking the fast) with relatives and friends. We spoke to some of them to find out how they feel, what they're doing differently this year and what Ramadan means to them.

For Shana Iqbal, who found Islam in later life, the time in isolation is something to be cherished so she can form a closer relationship with God. She said: "Ramadan is a month to withdraw from all primitive desires and focus on all that there really is — Allah. As someone who found Islam in adulthood, Ramadan has been ever-changing. Having no Muslim family meant that lots of my iftars were spent in total isolation. Now as a married woman, I crave that isolation, that time with Allah SWT [Subhana hu wa ta'ala — Glory to Him, the Exalted]. After marriage, my days became filled with working, cooking, cleaning and running around after my children."

Shana also described last Ramadan under lockdown as a "breath of fresh air", with days filled with worship and periods of isolation with Allah. As for Ramadan this year, Shana says she exists in limbo. "Having to return to work and school, but still cut off from the social events that make Ramadan a communal affair. We seem to have been dealt all the not-so-great bits of a 'normal' Ramadan, and still 'starved' of the best parts. So, for now we make the best of things, we pray for those souls who have left this temporary world, and pray to be reunited with those still with us, who in better times would be sitting around our dining tables. "I look forward to a Ramadan spent breaking bread with family and friends."

For Khudael Ashraf, it is welcome news that mosques are open again this year for worship under social distancing guidelines, unlike last year when they were shut. But he admits that not being able to visit family and friends removes a sense of community that so often plays a crucial part in Ramadan. "There are still Covid restrictions in place, this means that going to visit friends and family to open your fast is still not allowed. This was a huge thing and brought a sense of togetherness. Whether it was gathering inside a house or going out to eat, the sense of closeness at iftar time is something else. InshaAllah [God willing] Ramadan in 2022 will see a return to the old days of no restrictions," Khudael says.

He believes what defines Ramadan is the charity work and fundraising that takes place. But Ramadan is also a time for Muslims to better themselves. "For me, one of the more remarkable things in Ramadan is that it encourages Muslims to better themselves from a religious aspect. During this month, you may see many people who don't attend mosque for prayers or only attend on Fridays turn up every single day. They will be dressed in traditional clothing; they may even be sporting a beard. For some, it turns out to be just for Ramadan, for others, they use Ramadan as a stepping-stone to get better at following the rules of the Islamic faith. Whichever one it tends to be, I find it beautiful how Ramadan can change people."

Shaista Aziz feels immensely privileged to be marking another Ramadan amid the tragedies caused by the pandemic. She said: "I lost a cousin to Covid last year and a very dear uncle to the virus less than a month ago. It's been a heart-breaking and devastating time. I always look forward to Ramadan, this year will be low key. A peaceful time to process the past year in prayer and reflection. I will spend the month with my mum and I know I'm very lucky to be able to do so. In an ordinary Ramadan, I would be involved in organising family and community iftars in my home city of Oxford. I would be attending the prayers at the mosque and I would also be organising iftars for Muslim friends and all my friends. It's a much quieter year but I do feel excited about the month. It's a time for healing and so many of us need healing." <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/ramadan-to-peacefully-process/>

APOLOGY

Anne O'Connor writes: Following an article in the April E-Bulletin I received four complaints accusing me of promoting Islamophobia (and also "Palestinophobia" by a Catholic man). I apologised immediately for any hurt caused which I assured them had not been my intention. I do not believe the article in question was Islamophobic; it was in fact exploring the current "hot potato" of cancel culture and free speech. It did not purport to be from me or issued on behalf of the Catholic Church. As a journalist I see my role as reporting news and events and covering topical issues. Readers are free to make their own judgements. I emphatically deny the charge of Islamophobia. On the contrary, I welcome the opportunity to engage with people of different races and faiths to broaden my world view. Along with other parishioners I have been to talks at two local mosques. On these occasions two things struck us: the warmth and friendliness of the welcome and the many similarities we share. As in every situation, sharing stories and walking in another's shoes is an essential first step towards building relationships and fostering mutual understanding.

That said, the harsh personal criticism by the Catholic men prompted me to revisit past bulletins in order to refute the accusations. I spent two days trawling through bulletins from 2015 to the present. I found 48 articles with positive stories of Muslim involvement in local communities and supportive reports on the plight of the Palestinian people. This figure would no doubt have been higher but there were no bulletins between July 2020 and March 2021 as I took time off for personal reasons.

I was touched by the measured and gracious responses of both Muslim women on receipt of my reply and feel confident that a fruitful dialogue has been established with goodwill and tolerance on both sides. We all agreed dialogue was the way forward, with a focus on what we have in common as women, mothers and advocates for peace and justice. We parted 'in friendship.' One of the women, Nahida, has given permission to print our correspondence which is given in full for complete transparency:

Email sent on 13 April 2021 at 11:35:07 BST

Dear Ms. O'Connor, I am writing to you to express the deep hurt caused by an Islamophobic article, published by North West Justice and Peace E-Bulletin, on April 2021, page 4.

I write to you as a mother and a grandmother who is extremely concerned about the way our faith has been falsely and ignorantly portrayed, not in the way taught and lived by Jesus peace be upon him, (which aspires to seek the truth, and to live by truth "for truth shall set you free"), but rather contrary to Jesus's message, by becoming a "false witness", repeating misinformation and promoting insults which achieves nothing but unwarranted harm and the spread of falsehood.

I write to you as a former math teacher who cherishes education and believes that the only way one could ever solve a problem, whether mathematical or otherwise, is to gather, look at, and examine ALL the facts given in any certain problem, then use this information through the lens of logic and common sense to solve it.

I write to you as a Palestinian who knows first-hand the role of propaganda in shifting paradigms and twisting realities; turning victims into a "villain terrorists" and the aggressors into "eternal victims".

I have often time been told to go home, (a home I can never go to because my country has been given by Britain to Jews from all over the world, while we, the indigenous, were ethnically cleansed and prevented from the very basic human right of going home). I have seen people walk meters away from me when I said I am from Palestine, as if I was a walking bomb or a contagious disease.

I write to you as Muslim who lived in UK for most of her life, who have experienced first-hand the utterly painful, terrifying and distressing consequences of careless and callous media propaganda against Islam and Muslim, thinly veiled racism, presented as "news", "comedy" or "freedom of speech". I have experienced stones thrown at me and my small children, I have had eggs thrown at my car while driving, I have had my car scratched with racist abusive graffiti, I have been called by the names of every person whom the news room chose to focus on at any particular time, Qaddafi, Khumainy, Saddam Husain, Nasrallah, you name it.

I write to you as a person of faith, who has God, and the love of God central to her life, a person who believes in a Most Loving, Most Merciful Creator of us all, who had a childhood dream, a vision of a beautiful, just, peaceful world, a person who dearly wishes to see ALL of God's children united, working together to create a better future for all of us, on this beautiful, yet deeply wounded planet.

I write to you as a daughter, granddaughter, cousin and a close relative of Jesus peace be upon him, Jesus the Palestinian, who, once upon a time, walked and prayed on the very same hill and valleys where I used to study and play.

I write to you to reconsider the publishing of this extremely hurtful, seriously damaging article, and to invite you for a sisterly meeting where we can discuss these issues further, and explore avenues more pleasing to our Creator, avenues of cooperation rather than conflict and antagonism.

Sincerely, Your sister in Humanity, Nahida

Email reply 13 Apr 2021 at 18:38

Dear Nahida

Your email went into my spam folder and I have just found it. First of all, please accept my sincere apologies for having caused offence. Please believe me, this was not my intent. I have clearly misjudged the strength of feeling on this issue and would point out that articles submitted do not necessarily reflect my personal views. It seems to me that this is a very emotive issue that requires dialogue, understanding and tolerance of other people's culture and faith.

I think there are three issues involved here: first, the question of free speech; second, the abhorrent treatment suffered by people of different faiths and races in many parts of the world and third, the many problems caused by the Palestinian's loss of land at the hands of others.

I believe that freedom of speech is a basic human right and it is significant, I think, that many people, Muslims included, have said that the teacher involved in this recent episode should not have been suspended. Regardless of others' views on the issue, it is deeply worrying that he and his family have felt unsafe and have gone into hiding. If some reports are to be believed it seems that his intention was to stimulate a class discussion and highlight not only differences but also to show how some images can cause offence – with hindsight he may feel that this was an error of judgement.

As a parent and grandparent I would want my family to know the various sides to every story in order to be able to make a well-informed view. It's important for young people to be able to discuss these issues in the hopes that this might lead to a more tolerant society as they take their place as the next generation of adults.

As a wife, mother and grandmother, I am distressed to learn of your appalling treatment in the UK and that of your family. Clearly this is inexcusable and, as a British person, I apologise that you have endured such cruel and unfeeling treatment.

You are right in indicating that the British government must shoulder some responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinian people. Whenever a homeland is divided and partitioned to be given to another people it can only result in resentment, violence and oppression. I understand that, following the horrors of the Holocaust urgent solutions were deemed necessary but I agree with you that taking the land which rightfully belonged to the Palestinian people was not the answer. To be honest, it's difficult to know what the answer would have been. I agree with you that the UK, and also, I think, the US, has been far too one-sided in its support of the Jewish people. It's sad to note how much abuse Jeremy Corbin has suffered for his championing of the Palestinian cause although he could have been stronger on rooting out anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. In my view, there is no place in society for intolerance towards any groups or individuals within the community, no matter who they are.

I have been producing newsletters for the past 35 years and in all that time yours is only the second such letter - the first was from a Jewish woman who was offended by an article that she felt was overly biased towards the Palestinian. (correction - since composing my response I have just received a second email similar to yours and also found a third in my spam box [later a fourth]). In the interest of fairness and to promote open dialogue, I invited her [the Jewish woman] to write an article from her point of view, which she did.

I'm very grateful to you for taking the time to share your concerns and do hope we can address this together by frank and open communication. I would like your permission to print your email with an apology for the offence caused, as I feel it's important for readers to see your point of view in the interest of free speech and balance. I will leave out your name if you wish and just say 'a woman' with whatever wording prefixing that which you prefer. Alternatively, I'm happy to invite you to write an article to go alongside my apology.

Might I ask you please to pray for my family as we approach the first anniversary of our elder daughter's death from natural causes. She worked tirelessly for the church and was involved in many ecumenical and interfaith projects. I have only this past month returned to work after a nine-month absence following her death as it has been a very difficult time as you can imagine.

For now, please be assured of my prayers for your family and for a greater acceptance for all people everywhere regardless of their race, faith or circumstance.

Yours in friendship, Anne

Email received 14/04/2021:

Dear Anne

Thank you for your prompt response, and for acknowledging the hurt caused, apology warm-heartedly accepted.

I am so sorry to hear the news about your daughter. I am deeply saddened for the suffering you have endured, I cannot imagine a more painful pain than losing of a child. My thoughts, heart and prayers are with you and your family. May your pain

be eased, may your heart be healed and may your soul be consoled by the Most Loving, Most Merciful God, and may the soul of your daughter dwell in everlasting peace.

Going back to our topic, like you, I too do believe that freedom of speech is a basic human right. We, as people of faith should champion, cherish and protect that right for each other and of all the human family, because the Creator of all has granted that right to all, by bestowing upon us the gift of freewill. We should be able to discuss any issue without fear of prosecution or persecution, for without that basic right, much of knowledge and truth would be totally lost.

However, every freedom comes with responsibility, and with moral backbone, especially when it comes to us, people of faith. The responsibility and moral backbone include:

- **Accountability:** We, particularly people of faith, must be able to stand accountable for our words and deeds, and use them kindly and wisely, with the sincere intention to SEEK TRUTH, and NOT to insult, ridicule, belittle, hurt or cause harm. Noble intentions, noble goals, noble methods should be our paradigm, otherwise our societies would turn into a jungle, where the rich, influential and powerful would rule, as they silence, crush and trample upon the weak and meek.
- **To cause no harm:** Our freedom of speech shouldn't encroach on the safety of others, which is pretty evident.
- **To force no one:** Our freedom of speech shouldn't be used as means to force others to follow our own views or belief systems.
- **Equality before the law:** When dealing with free speech, we must apply ONE standard for all, which puts EVERYONE under the same responsible freedom, without preferential treatment to one group above all other, and without targeting one group and scapegoating it beyond any other.

The above of course is often not applied. I am sure you are aware of the severe smothering of any discussing of the Palestinian cause. One cannot bring that topic up without been falsely accused of "antisemitism". In this very country, people have lost a decent human being as a leader, Jeremy Corbyn, he was viciously attacked and wrongly accused of "antisemitism", only for speaking about Palestinians as human beings.

Even though the Catholic church is trying to break away from that kind of censorship, by creating "Peace and Justice" groups within the church, which is highly admirable, and although it is not totally in line with the smothering of freedom of speech on that issue, however, it was my experience that certain related issues are considered a taboo. I was a witness in several occasions where certain issues were not allowed to be discussed or even mentioned for fear of such accusations.

It is most unfortunate that today people actually go to prison and face huge penalties for trying to examine WW2 in a wider context, or even for asking questions, there are many examples I can think of. It cannot be denied that the freedom of speech on this topic is nil. Many of us who are involved with the work for Palestine have personal experiences with that.

I am sure that you are also aware of the targeting of Islam and Muslims by the media, wherever and whenever a crime is committed by a Muslim, it would be first page headline, in every media outlet, the words Muslim and Islam would be highlighted, the entire Muslim population would be put on trial, and their very faith is blamed for inciting the crime. Have you ever seen Jews or Judaism blamed when a Jew commits a crime, or even when the crime is committed by the "Jewish state" itself?

No other faith is judged the same as the media does with Islam and Muslims, which causes Muslims unimaginable hurt, has put the lives of many Muslims in serious danger, and caused many to suffer the consequences of such so called "freedom of speech". This glaring double standard, in fact, might have contributed to much of the frustration amongst some Muslim youth, (not that I condone or defend any bad actions by anyone, Muslim or otherwise).

In the spirit of love of God, love of truth, love of justice, love of peace, and love of humanity, and love of the Palestinian prince of peace, Jesus, peace be upon him, I welcome any questions related to Islam or Palestine, and I hope that we would continue this important dialogue, some day in person.

Here, I would like to share with you an article I have written some time ago, which touches of some of those issues, which I hope you find useful: *Islam, Media, Terror; a Muslim Perspective*, <https://nahidaexiledpalestinian.com/2019/06/02/islam-media-terror-a-muslim-perspective/> followed by an appendix with quotes from Qur'an, Major Qur'anic Principles.

Dear Anne, you asked my permission to publish my previous letter, which I have no objection to, using my real name which Nahida Izzat. I also give you permission to add this letter, and/ or the article and appendix above, if you thought it would be useful.

Kindest regards, Nahida

2021 LAMBETH AWARDS

The recipients of the 2021 Lambeth Awards were announced on Wednesday. The awards, which recognise outstanding contributions to the Church and wider society, have been given to over 30 individuals. They include scientists, musicians, academics, activists, peacemakers, doctors and clergy. The recipients span the globe and the breadth of Church life, and beyond. They include Isaac Borquaye, the MOBO Award-winning rapper and author, better known as Guvna B; Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko, former Director of the Council of Christians and Jews, and the Most Revd Danial Deng Bul, former Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.

Archbishop Justin Welby said: "During the pandemic, we have seen just how vital the contribution of churches is to the fabric of our society. As well as finding creative ways to worship together safely, churches have been feeding the hungry, reaching out to the lonely and offering hope to those struggling in the midst of the crisis. This year's Lambeth Awards recipients, not all of whom are Christians, embody this spirit of service - not just during the pandemic but, for many of them, through decades of faithful work. I commend them and their efforts, and look forward to the time when we meet to celebrate their contributions to society."

Archbishops of Canterbury have long recognised outstanding individuals for their efforts, and the current form of the Lambeth Awards was developed in 2016.

Read the full list of recipients and citations here:

www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sites/abc/files/2021-04/2021%20Lambeth%20Awards%20Citations%20web.pdf
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41953>

BRUCE KENT AND DR VALERIE FLESSATI AWARDED LAMBETH CROSS

9 April 2021: Bruce Kent and Dr Valerie Flessati have been awarded the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism, "for exceptional, tireless and lifelong dedication to the Christian ecumenical search for peace, both individually and together."

Their full citation reads: Peace is one of three pillars of the ecumenical pilgrimage towards a healed world. Valerie Flessati and Bruce Kent chose spiritual warfare on all violence and war. Their passionate campaigning did not sit easily with ecclesiastical status, so Monsignor Kent felt that to rejoin the laos, the people of God, was his appropriate level of engagement. Was not their baptism into the Body of Christ the highest accolade? Marriage added the mutual support and inner strength which the struggle demands - and which love provides.

Bruce Kent's leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) has inspired more than one generation. The fear of nuclear war has - mistakenly - waned. The threat remains. He affirms that Trident continues to shame us. Valerie provides organisational skill and intellectual challenge. After thirteen years leading Pax Christi, her doctoral thesis traced the history of the Catholic peace movement in Britain. Her *Waking the Sleeping Giant* is the story of Christian CND. She was an inspired university teacher. In the shade of her husband? By no means. Together, they are a power-house.

Bruce was spared the honour of prison. But not the bitter jibes of detractors: 'Go back to Moscow where you belong.' Those of his ilk would not have lasted long in Moscow then - or now. The wind in Rome has changed. Pope Francis has simply said that even the possession of nuclear weapons is a sin. Going beyond CND, this intrepid couple have launched MAW, the Movement to Abolish War. Crazy? Bruce calls it 'utopian realism.'

DR HILARY RUSSELL – THE LANGTON AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

For her exceptional work initiating and supporting the social justice ministry of the Church and the churches – particularly relating to sustainable and affordable food policy in Liverpool – over many decades.

Professor Hilary Russell, formerly Professor of Urban Policy at Liverpool John Moores University, is an advocate for social justice and activist as well as a gifted scholar and theological thinker. She is an example of a strong, grounded, ethical Liverpool civic leader whose faith in Christ marks her out as a person who seeks Kingdom justice here on earth as it is in heaven. Hilary is a generous and courageous leader who has mentored many and liberally shared her expertise with all.

Her commitment to Liverpool Cathedral, her regular place of worship, extends beyond her tenure as a lay canon – most recently committing time to hosting significant ecumenical dialogue in a series of talks focused around the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis 'On Care for Our Common Home.' Her local commitment to the social justice work of the Diocese and Archdiocese of Liverpool was recognised with the first ecumenical Sheppard-Worlock award for outstanding lifelong work in the Merseyside region. The present nomination indicates the value of honouring Hilary on a wider canvas.

Hilary is a humble woman who challenges injustice in ways that serve the common good. This is most evident in her work with Feeding Liverpool - where she leads the conversations around affordable and sustainable food policy; and as a trustee of Together Liverpool – which she served as Chair for many years and where she now represents the charity in local and national conversations concerning local issues, where she has made an outstanding contribution.

ESMÉ PAGE – THE LANGTON AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

For answering the call to provide holidays of hope to residents and firefighters who experienced the trauma and loss of the terrible fire in Grenfell Tower.

Esmé Page began with a single Facebook post less than a week after the Grenfell fire: “Imagine if we could put a Cornish holiday on the horizon of every Grenfell resident and firefighter family: a time to rest, a time to let our beautiful county bless these people and work its gentle magic.’ This harnessed a community: since then more than 450 people - Grenfell Tower survivors, bereaved, close neighbours or firefighters - have been on holiday to Cornwall, including a third of all survivors. The movement has garnered the support of more than 250 accommodation providers and 200+ other businesses have also pledged their help and support.

Esmé founded “Cornwall Hugs Grenfell” herself and running the movement became a full-time job. She said: “Every step of the way, this project has been practically supported by immense human kindness and teamwork, and it feels to me also divinely supported in every way.” What Esmé fails to mention is the herculean effort she has personally put into creating an endeavour of great humanity and compassion, which has touched the lives of hundreds of people and helped in some small way to heal the scars of a terrible tragedy. It has also been an immense blessing to the people of Cornwall. And when Covid-19 meant the organisation had to put its holidays on hold, the network was repurposed in sourcing accommodation for care workers needing to live away from home in order to protect vulnerable family members. Esmé has performed outstanding community service.

COP26 – GLASGOW 2021 RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Green Christian: COP26 takes place in Glasgow from 1-12 November. World leaders are coming together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. Because of the lack of action since 2015 we now need a miracle to stay below 1.5 degrees. In this talk at our online Festival last Autumn our Patron Bishop James Jones described our actions as ‘earthing hell’.

Watch the talk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwZ1gCWkpQQ>

“The world’s leaders now recognize that to protect future prosperity and well-being we must limit global warming to an average of 1.5 degrees Celsius. This requires not incremental change, but radical change—roughly a halving of carbon emissions each decade through 2050.” The World Resources Institute

Green Christian is going to present a number of articles by notable people over the next few months about COP26. Here is the first by Bishop James Jones: “LET THE EARTH FLOURISH”

Glasgow’s Patron Saint and founder St Mungo is remembered by a verse that recalls four of his miracles:

“Here is the bird that never flew
Here is the tree that never grew
Here is the bell that never rang
Here is the fish that never swam”

These words are both historic and possibly prophetic. It’s not an exaggeration to say that the future of the birds, the trees, the fish and all humanity will be determined by the decisions taken in Glasgow this year. St Mungo prayed, “Lord, let Glasgow flourish” which became the City’s motto. Glasgow and every other community can flourish only if the whole earth flourishes. So, our plea for this global conference should be “Let the earth flourish”. We are all part of the future’s history. It’s worth asking what will be needed by COP26 if it is to go down in history as earth-saving. Taking MUNGO as a mnemonic:

M is for MAGNANIMITY. We can progress only by putting ourselves in the shoes of others especially those already feeling the disastrous effects of climate change.

U is for UNIVERSAL. Although delegates rightly represent their own national interest everyone needs to see themselves as universal ambassadors and champions of the Earth.

N is for NATURE. We are part of nature, not apart from it. There is no future for anyone if the result of COP26 is bad for nature.

G is for GREEN. All our decisions – personal, purchasing and political – have to be greener for a healthier world.

O is for ONLY. We have only the one planet to inhabit and to nurture us. In this Anthropocene era it is up to each and everyone of us to live within nature’s means, for the earth is not a limitless larder.

Let the birds fly, let the trees grow, let the fish swim and let not the bell toll, for the Earth is our only home.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE, Bishop of Liverpool (1998-2013). Author of *Jesus and the Earth* (SPCK, 2003), and *Justice for Christ’s Sake* (SPCK, Sept 2021).

One of the most effective things we can do about COP26 is to encourage our government to demonstrate genuine climate leadership in its own laws and policies. And the best way to do that is to support the CEE Bill:

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/invite-your-church-to-back-the-bill/>
<https://greenchristian.org.uk/cop-26-glasgow-2021/>

NORTH WEST NET ZERO STRATEGY: WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES LIE AHEAD?

1 April 2021: Last month, a group of North West political leaders and industry representatives laid out plans to reach net zero carbon emissions in the North West by the ambitious target of 2040. The group, including Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region's metropolitan mayors Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham as well as Cheshire West and Chester Council's leader Louise Gittens, spoke about the core mechanisms for reaching Net Zero North West, and the challenges they are likely to face along the way.

Despite its namesake, the project extends beyond the North West, and is focused around the Manchester, Liverpool and Cheshire regions, as well as including speakers from other areas such as North Wales, Lancashire and Cumbria. The business and industry leaders included representatives from the industry group Net Zero North West and the North West Business Leadership Team. This has the potential to become an agenda-setting moment for policy makers and environmentalists both in the North West and across the country, so let's take a moment to look at it in more detail.

Three themes that were raised again and again in the course of the meeting, which may give us a good indication of what will be featured in the North West Net Zero roadmap (to be published later this year). These are home energy efficiency, green jobs and the decarbonisation of the energy network. The North West intends to have the first low carbon industrial cluster in the UK by 2030, which will include a number of emerging technologies such as renewables, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage. Some of the projects involved are more controversial, including Hynet and the Mersey Tidal Project, so we can expect this to generate renewed discussion. For the Mersey Tidal Project, concerns have been raised about its impact on the wildlife of the Mersey Estuary, and Hynet has been criticised for its use of natural gas to create hydrogen. If you'd like to learn more about hydrogen, our policy resource might be a good place to start.

The North West has a particularly challenging retrofit and new build housing efficiency challenge ahead, with around 62% of homes having an EPC rating of D or lower. The lack of consistent government support for retrofit through the Green Homes Grant may hold back the North West's ambition. Another challenge to overcome, also dependent on central government support, is the development of a skilled workforce for green jobs. That includes the retraining of workers in high-carbon industries and the green skills pipeline for young people. We have seen on a national scale that the Green Homes Grant has been held back by a lack of accredited workers, hoping to overcome this, Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham spoke about working locally to provide accreditation courses.

Since the launch of this North West Net Zero strategy, the government has released an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy. There is some confusion about whether this is the 'comprehensive strategy' to reach net zero emissions the government promised last year to release ahead of COP26, or something else altogether. However, it is likely the announcement of a North West target may have put pressure on the timing of its publication. Either way, it has direct influence on the North West's net zero ambitions. Amongst the measures announced in the new strategy is £78million for Greater Manchester Combined Authority to decarbonise the public sector, and £33million for projects in the Net Zero North West cluster.

As a fan of Elinor Ostrom, this is a great example of how overlapping centres of governance can create ambitious localised solutions to national issues, influencing national policy in the process. Ostrom is an American political economist who was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economics for her work disputing the inevitability of the tragedy of the commons, which she did by highlighting examples across the world of communities sharing natural resources without depleting them. Alongside this, she developed theories on the power of polycentric systems - systems with overlapping centres of governance that can operate independently but exert influence on each other. Although she died in 2012, her work remains valued to this day, with the IPPR recently publishing a report on the climate commons inspired by her ideas.

Polycentric systems can give citizens greater power as they influence different levels of governance and develop resilient systems capable of tackling the complexity of climate change. In particular, MPs bridge local and national issues, and this local target that will need policy support and stability is a wonderful opportunity to connect with your MP to create action on a national scale.

Having a North West office allows us to keep our ears on the ground for local knowledge that we can use to provide support for constituents. If you're interested in working with your MP and would like support, whether it be research, planning, or emotional support, you can contact me at hannah.jewell@hftf.org.uk

Hope for the Future is a climate charity which works to equip communities, groups and individuals across the country to communicate the urgency of climate change with their local politicians. Our vision is to see communities and their elected representatives across the UK come together to take decisive action on climate change.

SCHEME TO RECYCLE BLISTER PACKS

From the newsletter of Holy Apostles, Pimlico 11 April 2021: **SuperDrug** is the first to recycle blister packs from our prescriptions that would otherwise end up in landfills. The blister packs will be converted into raw materials using a unique recycling process. For more info use the link below. Superdrug will have drop off boxes in their stores and we will provide a drop off container in the porch as a convenience for parishioners. <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/uks-first-medicine-blister-packet-recycling-programme-launches-in-superdrug-and-independent-pharmacies/>

13-YEAR OLD BOY SHOT DEAD BY POLICE IN CHICAGO

Ed. Condon, Editor *The Pillar* 16 April 2021: I am watching the reports on the death of Adam Toledo, the thirteen-year old shot by police in Chicago. The video is hard to watch. I've seen a lot of hard-to-watch videos of police in different parts of the country recently, as have many of us.

I lived overseas for some twenty years, and I got used to defending America, American policing, and American society. But having moved back to this country as an adult, I never feel more foreign than when watching these horrible events play out.

I find it baffling that a policeman can appear so physically hyper aggressive to a uniformed army officer clearly posing no threat. I find it baffling that a person can be deemed fit to carry a gun and yet be so panicked by an unarmed man that she can't tell what the gun is when it's in her hand. I find it baffling that a kid can be shot with his hands apparently in the air.

I know more than a few cops. They are my neighbours, and in my extended family. They are, to a man, decent, serious, generous people whom I would willingly trust with my safety. But I find it baffling that anyone doesn't find this all insane. Maybe I was just away too long. <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/the-vatican-financial-draft-rankings> (scroll to the penultimate article)

DOCUMENTARY FILM: THE TRUTH ABOUT POLICE STOP AND SEARCH

31 March 2021: Channel 4 has commissioned Flicker Productions to make a 1x60 film exploring the contentious issues of Stop and Search, fronted by football pundit and retired footballer Jermaine Jenas.

This film puts this controversial aspect of modern policing under the microscope. The Truth About Police Stop and Search, features the experiences of approximately 40 Black men and teenagers who used cameras to record their experiences of Stop and Search across England, and to see how their interactions with the police play out.

In England and Wales, Black men are 9 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white men. This documentary hopes to help the British public understand the full scale of the issue, and its wide reaching social, psychological and personal consequences.

Flicker Productions Executive Producer Colleen Flynn says, "We wanted to go beyond the news headlines and document how stop and search is affecting so many men, women and families across the country, and with Jermaine at the helm ask the audience to reflect on and understand the everyday scrutiny black men find themselves under"

Jermaine Jenas says, "This film is really important to me, I wanted the viewer at home to gain some understanding of what life is like for a young Black man dealing with the police. I hope these stories will help paint that picture and highlight the day to day struggle and mental health difficulties that are being put on one community because of Stop & Search. I'm hoping for change." <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/truth-about-police-stop-and-search>

DIARY DATES

APRIL

19-25 Fashion Revolution Week is the time when we come together as a global community to create a better fashion industry. It centres around the anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, which killed 1,138 people and injured many more on 24 April 2013. This year, as we mark 8 years since the tragedy, Fashion Revolution Week will focus on the interconnectedness of human rights and the rights of nature. Our campaign will amplify unheard voices across the fashion supply chain and harness the creativity of our community to explore innovative and interconnected solutions. <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/>

24-30 World Immunization Week. This year's theme "Vaccines Bring us Closer," is a part of UNICEF's broader strategic priority on immunization between 2021 and 2025 to ensure children across the world receive appropriate routine vaccines, and also educating people specifically about COVID-19 vaccines. Before COVID-19, nearly 14 million babies were not receiving any vaccines, and many health professionals fear that number has grown even more since the pandemic broke out, as people have become afraid to seek regular medical care. Through social media messages, educational resource materials, and feature stories, the WCC (World Council of Churches) will join UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and other groups across the world to promote the importance of life-saving routine immunizations, help people access accurate information, and combat myths and misinformation. Since 2015, the WCC has been engaged in a partnership with UNICEF, focusing on child rights issues. <https://www.oikoumene.org/news>

MAY

4 Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/new-date-for-the-day-of-prayer-for-the-victims-and-survivors-of-abuse/>

8 NJPN AGM and Open Networking Day 11am to 3 pm – Zoom. Morning session NJPN AGM and noticeboard, break-out rooms and small groups. Afternoon session *Closing the gap? Post-lockdown ramifications for pupils in schools*. Seminar starting at 1.15 pm with Professor Anthony Towey and Matthew Dell (both of St Mary's University) to consider the early indicators of the post-lockdown pupil experience as well as considering the implications for educational attainment. Please register in advance for this meeting at: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJurf-ugrD4sEtP4HY0-nzoO4-tcKXru5j38> After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information to enable you to join the meeting. <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-meetings/>

12 MAY Stories, poetry and music for Christian Aid Week: Trevor Dennis and Friends. St Mary's Handbridge, 7.30pm-9.00pm
'Mary taught her son a lesson that day' – Women's voices in the Bible

So much of the work of Christian Aid is about the empowerment of women. Their publicity for this year's Christian Aid Week, for example, focusses on the likes of Rose, Florence and Rosalia in Kenya. Being empowered involves, among other things, having a voice and having it heard and heeded. Too few women are heard in the Bible - it's a tale told by men, and their voices are too loud - but yet there are some wonderful stories about women to be found in its pages, and in our storytelling and poetry we will shine a light on a few of them.

We will start with two pieces which focus on some women of extraordinary courage and ingenuity who appear in the opening chapters of Exodus. The first of the Exodus passages has bright humour at the heart of it, and in our retelling we will do our best to make it positively hilarious. (Yes, occasionally the Bible makes us laugh!) For the other five pieces we will draw on the Gospels: on John's story of Jesus' mother at a village wedding; on Mark's story of a Gentile woman whose child is desperately ill; on Matthew's telling us about Pilate's wife; on Luke's tale of the women disciples returning from Jesus' tomb with astounding news and not being believed. Our evening of this kind in Passiointide was inevitably fairly dark, sometimes pitch black. This occasion will be full of light.

Trevor will draw upon his young people's Bible, *The Book of Books*, on four of his published collections of stories and poems, and on a story preached in Lichfield on Easter Day in 2013 and which came too late to be submitted for his last collection.

Michael Reynolds, the organist and choirmaster at St Mary's and another local musician will provide some inspiring and uplifting music, so that we are not drowned in words!

As before we will not be selling tickets, but for those who come to the church there will be a chance to put donations to Christian Aid in envelopes, while those who watch the evening on Zoom or Face Book will be able to give online. If you wish to reserve seats in St Mary's, please email Trevor on trevordennis11@gmail.com or ring him on 01244 638441. He will need your email address and your telephone number, and if you are coming with others, please tell him whether you can sit together, or will need to be socially distanced.

13-23 Thy Kingdom Come ecumenical prayer movement for evangelisation, uniting Christians in nearly 90% of countries worldwide from the Ascension to Pentecost.

https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/604813/Home/News/Latest_news/Thy_Kingdom_Come.aspx

15 International Conscientious Objectors Day. Every year on May 15 we remember those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill, both in the past and today. Hundreds of people across the world are imprisoned or forced to flee their home countries for refusing to join the armed forces. On May 15 we stand in solidarity with them, as well as celebrating the memory of all those throughout history who have resisted conscription.

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/international-conscientious-objectors-day>

15-21 PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE – PAX CHRISTI FUNDRAISER. Make your own Pilgrimage for Peace. Walk, cycle, run, dance, pray... whether as an individual, a group, a school, or a family. Set yourself a challenge, get sponsored for it, and raise funds to support Pax Christi's vital work for peace. Or donate to support one of the planned events listed on the Go Fund Me page. See some exciting ideas here, find out more and register: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/register-you-interest/>

23 Pentecost Sunday

JUNE

14-20 Refugee Week <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/theme-of-refugee-week-2021-we-cannot-walk-alone/>

24-25 'Life on the Breadline' End of Project Conference.

Conference Programme: <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/events/end-of-project-conference/>

Register here: <https://coventry.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/life-on-the-breadline-end-of-project-conference-reg>

NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe*, and some of these are uploaded onto our website at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

• Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

• Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN including a **new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org or admin@justice-and-peace.org 020 7901 4864

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