

IS AUSTERITY OVER? By John Battle

“When the Church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises”

Bl Oscar Romero

In “Reimagining Britain” Archbishop Justin Welby writes austerity is “a word that almost invariably conceals the crushing of the weak”. Since 2010 when the austerity programme was introduced by Chancellor George Osborne, it has been the ‘welfare budget’ that has borne the brunt of the reductions. It is the unemployed, those on disability and the working poor in low paid temporary and part time or zero hours work or who have registered themselves as ‘self-employed’ who are paying the price, not least as any wage increases are still wiped out by inflation and rising prices. Over a million now turn up at food banks as working families struggle to make ends meet.



What’s more, the Chancellor’s talk of a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ for thousands of families is ‘the light of the on coming train’ of more reductions in income to come. In April this year the second largest annual cut to the benefits budget kicks in. According to the independent

Resolution Foundation over 11 million people will pay the price for £2.5 billion being taken out of the welfare budget. The welcomed increase in the national living wage (the traditional statutory minimum wage) will be wiped out by these cuts leaving people worse off. **From April only the first two children will qualify for child benefit support.** In 2012 child benefit was removed from higher earners. This year the limiting of child benefit to the first two children will mean that 150,00 families lose £2,870 a year for having a third child. It was a strange cut introduced by Iain Duncan Smith that reeked of the Chinese ‘family reduction policies’ as the only non-means tested benefit given directly to the mother as society’s contribution to bringing up the next generation. It is in reality an anti-family policy which he insisted was to make parents be financially responsible for having children. Limiting free school meals for children in year three under the new universal credit rules only compounds the impact.

Yet the Catholic Church approach has always resisted basing family policy on personal economic situations. Refusing to pay for the third born (especially if they are a twin) undermines that family centred approach and makes families subject to economics. The poor pay a high price for having children. Meanwhile working age ‘top up’ benefits will be frozen for a third year, affecting some 11 million working families in lower paid work. Many will be moved onto the new universal credit and thousands will lose the family element of support from new tax credits. 400, 000 families will lose out and be expected to **PTO**



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search for higher paid work to make up for their losses. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies Britain is 'nowhere near out of austerity'. For thousands of families in low paid work the worst is still to come with real reductions in their incomes. Meanwhile the highest earners are benefiting from real tax cuts. Pope Francis's invocation to become a Church of the poor has yet to be realized here.

"The Church is persecuted because it wants to be the Church of Christ. If the church preaches eternal salvation without getting involved in the real problems of the world it may be respected and appreciated and even rewarded with privileges; but if its mission is to denounce sins that force people into poverty and if it proclaims the hope of a more just and humane world then it will suffer persecution and calumny and be called subversive and communist" Bl Oscar Romero

You can read a little more detail about the effect of benefit changes by reading a recent Resolution Foundation blogpost about it: <https://tinyurl.com/yaxymh8t>

Also, there is a **Yorkshire Campaign Briefing on Tuesday 17 April for the End Hunger UK campaign** – a great opportunity to find out more about what other people are doing and how you can get involved. See the event listing on the last page.

FAMILY POVERTY: A DIOCESE ACTS – but only if you help!



We are in the early stages of a new project that will be a set of parish-based meetings about Family Poverty and how this relates to Catholic Social Teaching. We have received funding from the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus to go ahead with this project. These meetings will explore different aspects of poverty and ask people to reflect on their local situation in the light of the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching. As importantly, they will help people to explore what more they can do in their parish or community setting.

First of all we need to find someone to develop the programme of meetings. ***This is a paid piece of work.*** If you are interested in doing this (or perhaps know someone else who might be interested) then please email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and we can send you further details of how to apply to do this work.

We also need **volunteer** help with two aspects of this:

1. We need some people to help plan the programme and oversee it. The commitment would be something like 4 meetings a year over two years with a little work in between meetings. If you are interested, then please email chair.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and we will get in touch.
2. This is only going to work if there are parishes or Churches Together groups who are prepared to take these meetings on. If you think your parish or group might be willing to take part, then please email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk to express an interest.

FAITH IN ACTION AWARDS -NEW PROGRAMME IN THE LEEDS DIOCESE

by Jessica Wilkinson



It will be probably not surprise you to hear that many young people are passionate about justice and fantastic at social action! Social Action is just part of what they have to do to gain their Faith in Action Award from Bishop Marcus. Established by CYMFed (The Catholic Youth Ministry Federation), Faith in Action National Catholic Award Scheme recognises the achievements of young people as they live their faith, serve their communities and grow in understanding of God's love.

Bishop Ralph Heskett, Liaison bishop for young people, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, says in the foreword to the Leader's guide *"It allows youth ministers in the Church to celebrate, recognise and reward all that active young people of faith already give to the Church. It also challenges young people to do more to form themselves, deepen their relationship with God and change the world in which they live."*

In the Diocese of Leeds, we have developed an adapted version of the award to best serve our young people and it forms an important part of our youth service provision. This scheme provides opportunities for our young people to be involved in on-going formation and catechesis as they move through their secondary education. The introduction of the first level to coincide with Confirmation preparation at the end of primary school will, we hope, become a stepping stone for their continuing involvement in the Christian life.

Earning credits for participating, engaging and leading Prayer, Parish Practice, Pilgrimage and Procession and Social Action, young people reflect on their actions by using Scripture, YouCat and the lives of the saints. It's currently being piloted in 8 settings around the Diocese of Leeds and the feedback is really positive so far. After a review and revisions, the scheme will be launched ready for September 2018. Watch out for new opportunities to engage young people in Justice and Peace, they will be eager to put their faith into action!

**Meet the Diocesan Youth Service Team!**

Jade Broadley (Right) lived and worked in the USA for three years with NET Ministries (National Evangelisation Team). Jade joined the team as Youth Officer in July 2017. In her free time Jade serves on the leadership team of Youth 2000.

Jessica Wilkinson (Left) has experience in teaching and Lay Chaplaincy. She took up the role of Youth Co-ordinator in January 2017. Jessica comes from a Salesian background and is a member St John Bosco's lay association, the Salesian Co-operators.



The Chapel at Wood Hall Carmelite Monastery

Originally scheduled for March 10, we had to re-arrange the date. So... if you are interested in coming then please send us an email.

The Carmelite sisters at Wood Hall near Wetherby have invited us to spend a day with them. It will start with Mass at 10:30. There will be some input from the sisters themselves about how their spirituality helps them relate to issues of Social Justice. There will also be time available for discussion, quiet reflection and, weather permitting, time to walk around the area

A CARMELITE PERSPECTIVE ON JUSTICE & PEACE

Saturday 14 April 2018

Starts with Mass at 10:30 am

Finishes with Vespers about 4:30pm

This event is free to attend (Voluntary Collection)

of the convent in the beautiful grounds of Wood Hall. *This is a repeat of the day that was held last September - which was over-subscribed.*

Numbers are very limited for this event. If you would like to attend this day, then please email the office

jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and tell us:

- who wants to come
- if you need a lift to the monastery or if you can offer a lift to anyone else

MAKING A VISIBLE AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO PEACE by Carol Burns, Leed Pax Christi

(This article first appeared in Pax Christi's newsletter – JustPeace – in February/March 2018 in a special edition exploring what it means to be a Pax Christi member)

I am 62 this year and Pax Christi has been part of my life for almost 40 years.

Being committed to peacemaking has meant speaking out and making visible my commitment to peace. It's meant being involved in so many different types of action including: demonstrations, awareness-raising days, days of reflection, acts of witness, lobbying (for example about Diocesan investments in the arms trade), stalls in the city centre, a conference with business on arms manufacturing. So many different ways to work for peace.

Highlights have included:

- The monthly prayer service at Menwith Hill, the American spy base, which we organised throughout much of the 1980s.

- Being ejected from the British Aerospace AGM in 1996 for protesting against the sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia, which at the time was occupying East Timor.
- Commitment to understanding the Palestine/Israel conflict through speakers from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI) and links with Yesh Guval, resisters of conscription into the Israeli army.
- The chance to hear international speakers from other parts of the world, including, recently, Bishop Kevin Dowling, our international Co-President.

But you can't do all these things on your own and my local Pax Christi group (and friends from other

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denominations in the Inter-Church Peace group) has been the place of friendship and solidarity often when peace issues have felt marginalised in the Church.



Carol speaking at the Pax Christi AGM in Leeds in 2016

It's been somewhere to discuss in a safe place the doubts, uncertainties and difficulties of working for peace. It's been a place for prayer and reflection and ensured my peacemaking was

solidly rooted in the gospel.

Nationally the resources of Pax Christi both spiritual and factual have been invaluable. The sharing of Franz Jägerstätter's life and the commissioning of the Pax Christi Peace Icon to the Diocese are just two examples. Pat Gaffney's willingness to come and speak to support our work and to be at the end of a phone for wise advice has made such a difference. As important has been the witness for peace that others in Pax Christi have shown; Inspirational and feeding hope at the same time.

Being part of a national and international movement has been vital to my commitment. I continue to be proud to say I am part of an international Catholic peace movement, especially when others have lost trust in the Catholic Church.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION ON REFUGEES**ACCOMMODATION – GRACE HOSTING & BEACON HOSTING**

Last month we featured the WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Seeker Network) Winter night shelter . Another Leeds-based project working with Asylum seekers that has been in the news a few times in the last couple of months is **Grace Hosting**.

The idea behind this project is quite simple: It links up refugees and asylum seekers with nowhere to stay with volunteers who have a spare room to offer. People who volunteer with Grace Hosting provide a hot meal and somewhere safe to stay. It might be for one night or it might be for several nights-depending on the other commitments of the volunteer. People are only accepted onto this scheme by referral through The British Red Cross or through **PAFRAS** (Positive Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers). As the Facebook comment from one of their hosts shows (see below), a lot of support is given to hosts.

In recent months the organisation has struggled to find sufficient hosts to cater for the demand. Recent news stories Have helped but they still need more hosts. They especially need volunteers who can offer accommodation at the weekend and people who are prepared to put someone up for a week.

If this is something you might consider then you can contact Jo Carter at LASSN:

gracehosting@lassn.org.uk

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see their website for more details: <https://lassn.org.uk/grace/>



Hosts do not have to live in Leeds – but if it takes more than a 30 minute bus journey to the centre of Leeds then this makes the situation more difficult for the asylum seekers.

If you live in the Bradford area then you need to be aware of the similar scheme being run there by **BEACON (Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern)**. They also need hosts and can be contacted by emailing host.beacon@yahoo.com

Lucy Irven, the Leeds Diocesan Refugee Action Coordinator commented that “helping to recruit hosts for these accommodation schemes is probably one of the most useful things that parishes can promote at the present time”.

CLOTHING – ST VINCENTS SUPPORT CENTRE

Many of the organisations working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers are now working together to complement the work that they do. One of the referring agencies mentioned above (PAFRAS) now

What we need



works in partnership with the St Vincent’s Support Centre off York Road in Leeds 9 to provide clothing for asylum seekers and refugees living in destitution and extreme hardship. PAFRAS refers people to St Vincent’s who provide clothing free of charge. People can try on items before taking them away with

them. If you have clothes that you would like to donate they can be taken directly to the St Vincent’s Support Centre Monday to Friday between 10:00am and 4pm. The address is 4 Berking Avenue, LS9 9LF – it is one street down from the Leeds Irish Centre.

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Earlier this month it was International Women's Day. Here are a few quotes from a recent article in *Christians Aware* by local author **David Rhodes** about the topic of gender injustice.

Jesus, it seems, said that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Sounds OK when you say it in church. Not so good when you say it in an unstable neurotic Roman empire. Who was first? Caesar. Followed closely by the political elite. The rich. The powerful. The temple hierarchy. The men. Who were the last? The women.

Was Jesus serious?

Thinking back to the story of the woman with the Haemorrhage in Mark's Gospel, we suspect he might just have been. The lowly, penniless, outcast woman was put first and the top man, the president of the synagogue, was put last.



Jesus famously taught about divorce but what really rang the alarm bells among the men was what he said about gender. Jesus said that women were not chattels, the possessions of

men to be discarded at will. They are equal to their husbands. One flesh.

Jesus says to the crowd: if a child goes to its father and asks for bread, will he give it a stone? Or if it asks its father for a fish, will he give it a snake? Again, that sounds OK in church. The trouble is that when a child is hungry it doesn't go to its father, it goes to its mother – in the kitchen making the bread, cooking the fish. But Jesus is talking about God. Picturing God in the role of a woman.

So too, in the story of the lost coin. The woman sweeps the whole house until she finds the precious coin. Again Jesus is talking about God and, again, the image he gives us of God is of a determined, resolute, loving woman, actively seeking out that which is precious to her: those who are lost.

In the fourth gospel, at the Last Supper, Jesus kneels and washes the feet of the disciples. But who washed men's feet in an ordinary first century Palestinian household? The women. A woman's traditional role was to wash the feet of men.










According to John, Jesus is taking the role of a girl or a woman and saying that this is what the Kingdom of God is about.

See www.turbulentbooks.co.uk for more details about David's writing. You can contact him directly at rhodes@freeuk.com



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EVENTS

 Thur 22 Mar	<p>CELEBRATION, INSPIRATION, INFORMATION <i>Thornbury Centre, Leeds Old Road BD3 6JX 10:00 – 12:30</i> The social action work of faith communities in Bradford and exploring ways to serve local people in Bradford and Keighley. Short presentations, displays, stalls discussion and networking opportunities. For more information phone Gordon Dey on 01274 674565</p>
 Sat 14 Apr	<p>DAY OF REFLECTION: A CARMELITE APPROACH TO JUSTICE – <i>Places Are Available</i> <i>Carmelite Monastery, Wood Hall, Linton near Wetherby 10:30 – 16:30</i> Originally scheduled for March, this is the re-arranged date for a day with the Carmelites at their Wood Hall Monastery. An opportunity to take time out and reflect more deeply about working for social justice in the lovely surroundings. This day is free to attend but booking is essential as places are limited – just email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk</p>
 Sun 15 Apr	<p>WE RISE – Global Justice Now day conference for young people <i>Hyde Park Book Club, 27-29 Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 1BL 12:30 – 18:00</i> An opportunity for people to get together and hear about some of the alternative solutions to some of today’s major problems. See their Eventbrite page for full details https://tinyurl.com/y9ww6y25</p>
 Tue Apr 17	<p>END HUNGER UK YORKSHIRE CAMPAIGN BRIEFING <i>St George’s Church, Great George St, Leeds LS1 3BR 15:00 – 17:00</i> Come to find out more about the ‘End Hunger UK’ campaign and how you can get involved. Register on their Eventbrite page https://tinyurl.com/yb5egukn</p>
 Thur 19 Apr	<p>LEEDS CITIZENS ACCOUNTABILITY ASSEMBLY <i>City Varieties Theatre, Swan Street, Leeds 19:00-21:00</i> Anyone in the Leeds area is invited to join the J&P delegation to this special assembly of Leeds Citizens. The work of Leeds Citizens in respect of youth unemployment, access to mental health services and the provision of a real living wage is heartily endorsed by the Commission . If you would like to come along then please email the office and we will arrange tickets (ticket only event) – jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk</p>
 Sun 22 Apr	<p>EARTH DAY 2018 The Global Catholic Climate Movement invites Catholics across the world to especially remember creation on this Sunday and their special website for this day includes liturgical resources to help communities do this in an appropriate way.http://catholicclimatemovement.global/earth-day-2018/</p>
 Wed 25 Apr Tur 26 Apr	<p>SCREENING OF SHADOW WORLD organised by Yorkshire CAAT <i>WED 25: The Rose Bowl, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds LS1 3HB 19:00-21:00</i> <i>THUR 26: University of Huddersfield, Oastler Building OA7/31, 19:00 – 21:00</i> This is a film that explores the shocking realities of the Arms Trade. Following the screening there will be a discussion with Andrew Feinstein, author of the book of the same name.</p>
 Sat 28 Apr	<p>HOW ARE WE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET? <i>The Mirfield Centre, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield WF14 0BW 10:30-15:30</i> A day conference led by freelance Catholic journalist Ellen Teague exploring the key themes of Care of Creation of Love for the Poor. Cost is £21 including lunch. email bharper@mirfield.org.uk to book a place.</p>
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Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.