

EVER THOUGHT OF BECOMING A CAFOD SCHOOLS' VOLUNTEER?

Who are you?

I'm Julie Bowyer and I live in **Saint John Mary Vianney Parish (SJMV)**. I am a retired sales manager, hold a volunteer position as school governor at my local Catholic primary and am an active parish member at SJMV.

What attracted you to becoming a CAFOD schools volunteer?

I have always been interested in the work of CAFOD, and in May 2019 I attended a training session, with Catherine Gorman from CAFOD's Theology team, in my role as a Children's liturgist for the parish I attend. There I met with CAFOD's local worker, Bronagh, who said there was a vacancy for a school volunteer in the Leeds Diocese. Initially I wasn't sure if I had the right skills to be a school volunteer but decided to attend the induction training to find out more. I have recently completed the 2 days of training and am now excited to meet the local schools who have requested a visit from CAFOD.

Why are you interested in CAFOD's work?

I help with the weekly tea and coffee after Mass, which raises money for CAFOD, helping the poor and doing our own little bit to make a difference. On my recent training, with the other school volunteers, I have learned a great deal more about the unjust world in which we live. I will be delivering assemblies to primary and secondary schools on the people defending the forests of the Amazon. I could not have imagined this time last year that this is what I would be doing!

What has this got to do with being a Catholic?

I never think about it in that way. I would not usually discuss my faith, but I suppose it is a way of putting my faith into practice.

What made you interested in going into schools?

I am a school governor and I also volunteer in a local primary school, so I suppose the interest in schools was already there, although this is a new challenge which I am looking forward to pursuing. There is a good level of support, both locally and nationally, which helps give you more





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confidence to do it and I have met lovely people through the training so far.

What do you like about doing schools Volunteering?

It is great to get to meet the children and engage with them, educating them about the good work that CAFOD does. Already I have been able to share updates on CAFOD's work in Uganda with nearly 200 children.

What would you say to anyone who was thinking about doing it themselves?

I would say 'Give it a go', CAFOD is a wonderful organisation and an opportunity to learn more about their work that otherwise you would never get to hear about. I think you need to have some IT skills, like how to find and download presentations from the CAFOD website and also

be interested in public speaking and working with children.

Has volunteering for CAFOD changed the way you live at all?

I think the current Lent campaign on the Amazon has really opened my eyes, on the help the indigenous people of the Amazon need to protect the rain forest. I look forward to seeing the reaction from the schools I will be meeting, when I invite them to hold football fundraisers this Lent, to help support the people defending the rainforest.

Bronagh is currently looking for a CAFOD schools' volunteer in the Wakefield area. Contact her for more information: bdaly@cafod.org.uk

ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE, PEACE OR UK POVERTY?

COULD YOU HELP US WORK OUT WHAT WE DO NEXT?

What new projects should the Commission set up? How do we fund them? How do we galvanise others in our parishes to become involved?

Issue Groups

To involve more people in this we are setting up 3 issue groups covering our 3 priority areas:

What would I be committing myself to?

Probably, about 4 meetings per year (some might be via Skype) plus some work in-between

Peace & nonviolence

This is more important than ever in these days of raised tension and nationalist politics. Given the 'signs of the times' this group will focus on the Israel/Palestine conflict for the next 12 months at least

Climate Change

We are working with the Diocese on an Environment Policy – but where do we go from there? What are the next pieces of work we should be doing?

UK Poverty

You only have to walk the streets of any of our cities to know this is an increasing problem. What work should we do to focus the minds of policymakers on what would reduce levels of poverty?



Simply email the office if you have an interest in joining any of these groups



LIVING WITH HOPE AND COURAGE IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

By Sr Maria Crowley of the Holy Family Sisters, Bradford reflects on their work with asylum seekers

This is a real challenge to us, in these dark times, where we are confronted daily with the great harm, we are capable of doing to each other. As we listen to the news and read the newspapers we hear and see the frequent genocide, ethnic hatred and the horrendous acts of violence committed daily in our world. We see terrorism and hatred and we know that so many countries of our world are at war. This reality calls us now more than ever to show humanity in our caring, our hospitality and generosity and be experts in compassion.

The most vulnerable of our society are the victims of this hostile environment and most of these are refugees and asylum seekers. The aim is to make life so difficult for those who don't have the correct documents that they would be forced to leave Britain. This became law in the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016. This policy creates a culture of fear and distrust and prevents migrants from accessing vital services.

There is a real contradiction between UK's legal obligation to offer refuge and asylum, and the current environment aimed at forcing people to leave. The current mistrust engendered makes it hard for people to prove their genuine need. Massive delays in the asylum process have led to cases remaining unresolved for years, especially the more complex cases. Some delays are from 10-20 years. Our experience shows that the more complex cases are left in a state of limbo. The current backlog in the immigration system is 20,000. As the celebrations for Christmas were on the way, for those caught up in our consumer society, most of whom were forced to spend money they didn't have, it was this Hostile Environment that was the backdrop for many of the asylum seekers that we are in contact with. One person said "How can we celebrate when we are living in fear and without hope in this



hostile place?" This is the reality for most asylum seekers.

Despite the heavy hearts and the number of refusals, all found the strength and joy to take part in the various parties organised by different organisations. The good news for them is receiving that brown envelope from the Home Office with the leave to remain. In this hostile environment most correspondence from the Home Office is a letter of refusal with no appeal!

This is the story of our guest who submitted her fresh claim application to the Home Office last September. In October she moved back into Section 4 Government accommodation which we felt was good news for her and she was back in the system. But she was given accommodation in Stockton on Tees in the north of England living in a shared room with 2 strangers and in an area where she knew nobody or the support services available to her. Sadly, in December, she got the long-awaited letter with a refusal and no right to appeal! She could however apply for a Judicial Review.

Our Guest has been applying for her refugee status for 9 years. When she came to us, she was homeless and destitute and now she returns to that same situation. We have been in regular

contact with her and she is living on the happy memories of her time with us last Christmas. Despite all the setbacks and refusals, she still smiles and is hopeful. Her faith as a Muslim is a great support to her; she is always positive and remains hopeful. Please keep praying for our guest that she will be safe and will continue to get the support she deserves, to get her through this tough stage. People who come to the UK are capable and want to contribute to society, but with no definite future it becomes a question of survival rather than living, without being able to dream of a better future.

The asylum process is a tough one. After a horrendous journey to where they thought would be their promised land, they experience nothing but one rejection after another. They are expected to live on the minimum and are not allowed to work and have no access to education - not even basic English classes. A requirement of the asylum process is to be able to speak English and have some understanding of life in UK but they are not allowed to have any formal help. Thank God there are many voluntary organisations that support these people without any funding or resources. As asylum seekers are not allowed to work or make any contribution to life in the UK, they cope with this situation by spending all the day in bed. What else is there for them to do? The feeling of uselessness leads to severe depression, despair and in some cases suicide.



*Sisters of the
Holy Family*

There are many destitute Asylum seekers all around us. While we may not be able to do

anything about their legal situation, we can offer them friendship and support. We can befriend them and listen to them. We can support them and somehow this offers them some form of dignity and respect in this harsh and hostile environment. We know that asylum seekers have great faith and commitment to that faith. Despite the hardships of the journey so far, they believe that their God is with them and will not let them down. We are blessed to be able to accompany so many destitute asylum seekers. We are enriched by their deep faith, culture and their positive attitude and their desire to share the little of what they have with others.

The hostile environment is spread beyond migrants to include those applying for benefits and facing homelessness, with people being measured according to their profitability and commercial value! Let us not be afraid to open our hearts and our homes, as we remember and pray for these destitute people; we are all one family. We can be surprised and enriched by their culture, as well as their great faith, hope and courage. Let us be the ones to build bridges and not walls.

FIND OUT MORE/DO MORE

Abigail Housing provides support and homes to refugees and asylum seekers who find themselves destitute on our streets.

<https://www.abigailhousing.org.uk/>

Inn Churches is an ecumenical projects with volunteers from 70 churches in the Bradford area working to provide practical support to those who need it most.

<https://innchurches.co.uk/>

Beacon works with destitute asylum seekers in the Bradford area – working in partnership with other organisations

<https://beaconbradford.org/>



DO YOU HAVE A LITTLE VOICE? – THEN YOU COULD MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

LITTLE VOICES: BIG DIFFERENCE -

JESUS, JUSTICE & JOY

Saturday 04 April 10:15 – 4:30pm

Leeds Trinity University Brownberrie Lane Horsforth LS18 5HD

BOOK A PLACE NOW!

Our Spring 2020 Day of Reflection this year is a bit different to what we have been doing for the last couple of years.



We wanted to have an event to help us reflect on the Gospel messages of social justice, in a way that would attract a wider, and larger, group of people.

So... we have invited John Bell of the Iona community to come and spend a day with us at Leeds Trinity University.

If you haven't seen or heard of John Bell before, what you need to know is that he is a superb storyteller who can engage people across all age groups and is passionate about making worship touch our lives. He does this in a way that brings the Gospels alive and challenges us to reflect on what those Gospels mean for the way we should be living out our lives.

One thing that we can guarantee is that you won't be bored if

you come along to this day (He often starts his reflection days by getting everyone to sing something they have never heard before in 3 part harmony! – and, as impressively, people do it).

John travels across the world giving days like this and we are delighted to have secured him for our day.

We very much want to make this an inter-generational event and we are promoting it through our High Schools – so please help us to publicise it as widely as possible. We have flyers that we can send you, if you are having an event where they could be handed out. Simply email the office and we will mail some out to you.

If there isn't a notice about it in your church, then you can download a flyer from our website – on the page for the event in our website events Calendar – or, again, email us and we will post one (or several!) out to you

*As with all J&P events there is no standard charge to come along – but there will be a collection on the day. **BUT we do need people to book a place by using our Eventbrite page** for the event (or if you don't like websites then please email the J&P office to make a booking).*

How to book a place via Eventbrite? - either search for it on Eventbrite or type in
<https://tinyurl.com/johnbellinleeds>

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN 2020?



The compassion of people in the parishes of the Leeds Diocese is very striking – whether it be raising money for CAFOD, being involved with foodbanks or a myriad of other ways.

Let 2020 be the year when more of us work together on the **root causes** of the problems that evoke our compassionate response.

Encouraging people to respond compassionately to situations – social action – has always been a part of the work of the Commission. Equally, though, we walk alongside people in the Diocese of Leeds seeking to understand the root causes of problems so that a **just** solution can be promoted to those in a position to deliver it.

As a Commission we want to do more – but we are limited by our financial resources. If 20 more people were to regularly give us £5 per month that would provide half the money we need to keep on producing this newsletter. More people supporting us financially also means we can demonstrate to charitable trusts and foundations that we have a strong supporter base and this makes it more likely that we can obtain grant funding for some of our projects.

Please, think about giving a regular amount to help the work of the Commission. Simply email the office and we will send you the details – or download them from the Donate page on our website



We welcome one-off donations as well!



WOMEN IN BLACK

We recently featured the start up of the Women in Black group in Leeds. Now a group has started up in Bradford and they would welcome any women who are able to come along to their regular vigils (dressed in black, of course).

They are holding their vigils on **1st Thursday of every month**. They gather at the junction of Bank Street and Hustlergate (BD1 1PR) @ 5pm. See their Facebook page for more details. On the Third Tuesday of every month they are intending to hold a vigil outside the gates of the Menwith Hill Listening station.

If **Leeds** is better for you then they hold their vigils in **Dortmund Square** at 12:30-1:30 on the **first** and **third Tuesday** of the month.

REFLECTION: TO CHANGE THE WORLD ENOUGH

To change the world enough
you must cease to be afraid
of the poor.

We experience your fear as the least pardonable of
humiliations; in the past
it has sent us scurrying off
daunted and ashamed
into the shadows.

Now,
the world ending
the only one all of us have known
we seek the same
fresh light

you do:

the same high place
and ample table.

The poor always believe
there is room enough
for all of us;

the very rich never seem to have heard
of this.

In us there is wisdom of how to share
loaves and fishes
however few;

we do this everyday.

Learn from us,
we ask you.



We enter now
the dreaded location
of Earth's reckoning;
no longer far
off
or hidden in books
that claim to disclose
revelations;
it is here.
We must walk together without fear.
There is no path without us
ALICE WALKER

COULD YOU HELP ST MONICA'S HOUSING LTD?








St Monica's Housing Ltd. is a small charity providing accommodation for failed women asylum seekers. It is based in Leeds and is working to extend to other parts of the Diocese. Members of the Commission were instrumental in helping to set this charity up and continue to be involved.

They now need someone to take over as Treasurer. It is a small charity (they currently have two houses). So, the amount of book-keeping is light. Whilst they would welcome someone with experience of applying for grant funding, they do have enough reserves to keep them going for another 18 months or so.

Please email the Secretary to find out more: jmclj2@hotmail.com



EVENTS

 Fri 24 Jan	<p>PRAYER & ACTION IN A TIME OF CLIMATE CRISIS <i>St George's Church, Great George St Leeds LS1 3BR 19:30 – 21:00</i> An opportunity, over a number of evenings, to join with other Christians concerned about the climate crisis in a context of worship and teaching to develop Leeds based initiatives to raise awareness and promote change through non violent direct action</p>
 Sat 15 Feb – Sun 16 Feb	<p>PROPHETIC IMAGINATION: CATHOLIC PEOPLE'S WEEK WINTER WEEKEND <i>Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX Sat 12:00 through to Sun 15:00</i> The keynote speaker on Saturday is David McLoughlin, Emeritus Fellow of Christian Theology at Newman University, Birmingham. It's an expensive weekend – but worth investigating More info at www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org/</p>
 Wed 19 Feb	<p>INVESTING FOR PEACE – MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT <i>Mill Hill Chapel, City Square, Leeds 18:00 – 20:00</i> This is a Sabeel Yorkshire meeting. Refreshments will be served at 6.00 p.m. with the presentation due to start at 6.30 p.m. The speaker will be a member of War on Want from London.</p>
 Sun 23 Feb	<p>CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY SUNDAY <i>National</i> This Church Action on Poverty Sunday, through your gifts and prayers, CAP can give people living in poverty the opportunity to speak truth to power. Hold a soup lunch, take a collection, use their worship resources to reflect and pray for change. See https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/</p>
 Wed 26 Feb	<p>ASH WEDNESDAY CLIMATE CRISIS PRAYER WALK AND PROTEST <i>Gather at Millennium Square Outside the Museum, Leeds 10 am until 12</i> An ecumenical event organised by Christian Climate Action. They comment <i>As part of this climate pilgrimage we will stop and reflect at a number of symbolic locations (Peace Gardens, Civic Hall, War Memorial) to pray, repent and lament together before engaging in a nonviolent creative protest.</i></p>
 Sat 04 Apr 2020	<p>LITTLE VOICES: BIG DIFFERENCE – JESUS JUSTICE AND JOY <i>Leeds Trinity University, Brownberrie Lane, Horsforth 10:15 – 16:30</i> A day with the well-known broadcaster and liturgist John Bell, of the Iona Community. A real inter-generational day to explore issues of social justice through stories and singing. Free to attend but please book a ticket through our Eventbrite page for this event – you can find the link on our website.</p>
 Fri 17 Jul – Sun 20 Jul	<p>2020 VISION – ACTION FOR LIFE ON EARTH-NJPN ANNUAL CONFERENCE <i>The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> The National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN) weekend conference in 2020 is about our care of God's creation. Booking opens in February.</p>

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.

See our website for full details of these and other events that may be of interest