

ST MARY AND ST MICHAEL PARISH, SETTLE, OBTAIN CAFOD LIVESIMPLY AWARD

By Paul Kelly

Two years ago, it took just a couple of parishioners to introduce LiveSimply at a parish meeting and then speak about it at Mass to get the parish started. From the talks at Mass a group of 12 people volunteered interest and started by reflecting on all the things the parish were already doing. And with great support from Fr Frank Smith developed a future plan under the headings of Living Simply, Living Sustainably, and Living in Solidarity with the poor.

Repairs and renovations to the church hall were already underway and the unexpected receipt of a bequest meant we could plan to add in many environmentally friendly measures such as superb insulation, better heating controls, automated low-energy lighting, and solar panels. A new porch was built to conserve heat and the church was completely insulated too, also with modern lighting and controls. The other large project was to start Community Sponsorship to resettle a Syrian refugee family in Settle. The parish is too small for such a substantial undertaking alone, but it has been a wonderful opportunity to involve the rest of the town and form a diverse group of volunteers.

The group asked Catholic Care Leeds to be our lead sponsor and are delighted we have now been delivering practical day to day support to a family for the last 6 months. The benefits of working together with so many new friends of different faiths and none has been at least as great as the undoubted benefits for the family themselves.

The parish LiveSimply plan was launched eighteen months ago at a special week-end near the Feast of St Francis during the Season of Creation with special prayers, a leaflet encouraging personal pledges to change, refreshments to encourage chatting and displays to browse about past and future ideas. Since then parishioners have come forward creating ecumenical liturgies for Lent and Advent focussing on Laudato Si, Refugees, and peace. Others have built nest and bug boxes given away after Masses. Yet others have arranged for dementia friendly signage, supported the Diocesan Gianna project, Tools for Africa, or provided talks on Laudato Si. And a rota has formed preparing a LiveSimply tip or thought every week for the parish bulletin. Fr Frank has instituted an annual day of Blessing of Animals.





Michael Emly presents the Live Simply Award plaque to some of the organisers of the work

One of the assessors for their award was Michael Emly from our Lady of Kirkstall parish (who received their Live Simply award last year). He commented *"We were particularly impressed by the way such a small parish has initiated and embraced the Community Sponsorship project, with a massive impact on the whole local community. The refurbishment of hall and church has also been a major achievement with ongoing benefits for the environment. Congratulations! But we also want to highlight the small changes to daily living that have been promoted each week through the bulletin. This is so much in line with the approach of Pope Francis – the little things matter (Gaudete et Exsultate #169)! Or as Fr. Frank put it, "keep plugging away until it's*

natural". Add up all the small changes made by each member of the congregation and you really make a difference.

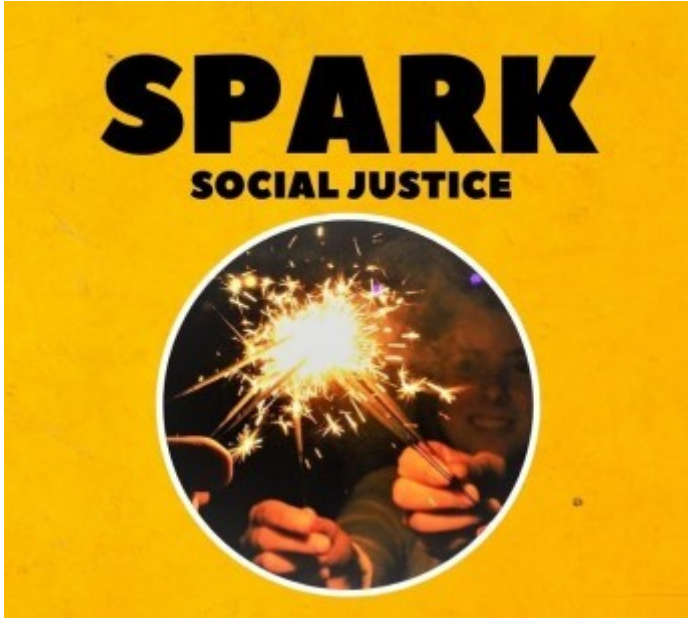
So, what of future plans now the parish has gained the award? Paul Kelly was one of the parishioners who raised the possibility of LiveSimply two years ago. He said "Everyone is delighted we have been given the award but we are all so aware this is really a beginning, not the end. The Gospel call to eco-conversion, the care of all life and the environment that sustains it, is central to my faith but it is a massive change, almost too overwhelming. For me it is essential to have the support of other people with the same challenges and that is what has been special about doing LiveSimply. We all agreed getting the award is not what's important but it has been a real help to focus us."

The parish now have plans to plant a wildflower area around the church to attract wildlife and to develop a resource centre about Christian care of the environment. Paul added: "Most of the things newly started will continue with services and bulletin items regularly refreshing ideas for Living Simply. We are not going to change the world, but we can make a difference to our bit of it in our own lives. Pope Francis did say it's not optional. Wouldn't it be amazing if everyone was doing something for their own bit of the world?"

FR KELVIN FELIX MADE CARDINAL

At one time, this West Indian priest was based in Bradford. David Jackson of Shipley writes, "I think he was based at St Patrick's. He worked closely with a priest of the diocese who was asked to visit the West Indies - Fr Anthony O'Donnell, the better to work with the West Indian immigrant community in Bradford. My cousin Sheila Manogue also worked with the West Indian Catholic community - using her expertise in banking. Archbishop Felix attended her funeral in Shipley in 1997. She had fallen ill with a stroke on St Lucia where she spent some time as a guest of a convent over some years at the invitation of Kelvin. The climate ameliorated a severe lung condition she had.

Fr Felix clearly made a lasting impression on the West Indian community in Bradford. The Credit Union he set up bears his name to this day - The Felix Credit Union.

SPARK SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT UPDATE by Aoibheann Kelly, Project Director

Last time I wrote, we were just about to begin our SPARK social justice journey – since then, we have delivered workshops to almost 300 young people within the Diocese and are coming to the end of our first phase. We have explored a number of pertinent issues with young people through the medium of drama, storytelling and theatre. We have realised that this is such a powerful tool to enable young people to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of quite complex issues and also a profound and impactful appreciation of the challenges and unexpected struggles many people face in the UK on a daily basis. Creativity and, in particular, drama has a sense of urgency about it – it makes the unreal feel real and it enables profound connection to take place when there was detachment before and an aspect of common ground.

All of the activities and games of the workshops we have done have been rooted in truth, inspired by true testimonials and stories of people who have experienced poverty of any kind in their lives and through this, explore a number of feelings and emotions. In relation to this project, drama and games enabled us to discuss status and identify with feelings of powerlessness,



disempowerment and lack of control. However, on the flip side, we also looked at examples of empowerment, resilience and strength – even in the deepest midst of despair or chaos – we discussed how people who have found themselves in great difficulty but found the tenacity and strength to stand up and keep moving.

Forum theatre was particularly effective at allowing the young people to watch scenarios played out where they see an injustice occur. The participants are encouraged and empowered to take positive action there and then to try to resolve or find a positive solution to a difficult situation.

We considered what in our lives makes us feel secure, safe and truly valued as a human being and then what happens when those things that are truly valuable are taken away from us - what are we left with? How can we be someone's safety net when they need us most? One Year 12 student said:

Many organisations simply ask for aid and charity for those less fortunate. But the session on poverty gave us a real comprehension of those who live in need and really taught us to consider the saddening situations of others. They also provided much needed education into the specifics of poverty and the ways to access help if you ever fall into such an unfortunate situation. Lou-Anna Barber (year 12 student)



SPARK has also provided an incredible opportunity to collaborate with some excellent organisations and people including with Pax Christi, The Columbans, Young Christian Workers, Leeds Citizens and experienced local freelance actors.

Mia McHugh, LTU Coordinating Lay Chaplain, commented about the workshops held at LTU. *“The workshops were unique in that the students had to be active and engage in drama inspired activities, which was a real change of pace after a day of lectures. Aoibheann led the students and got them to reflect on difficult issues, issues that some of them had actually experienced and were happy to share in a safe, loving environment. The Spark evenings made up part of our Chaplaincy social calendar and allowed for something different and*

unlike what we usually do. All of the students who attended were from different backgrounds and religions, but it was powerful to see them all gaining an understanding of what it really means when Catholics talk about ‘Faith in Action’. The students now have plans to set up their own social justice group and are thinking of ways that they can make a positive change to issues faced.”

Now we have sparked awareness, we will turn our focus on phase two where we will help to support young people in each setting to begin to develop their own unique social justice action groups. We are very much looking forward to supporting the young social justice advocates of the here and now!

For more information about SPARK please get in touch with Aoibheann by emailing her at Aoibheann.kelly@dioceseofleeds.org.uk

INVESTING FOR PEACE – REPORT FROM THE SABELL YORKSHIRE FEB MEETING

At their last meeting, on 19 February, the Yorkshire Friends of Sabeel-Kairos group had a speaker, Chi-Chi Shi, Campaigns Officer at War on Want. Her topic was the campaign for morally responsible investment and how local groups could become involved, especially as it related to the Israel Palestine situation (as that is the focus of Sabeel-Kairos).



War on Want focuses on the root causes of global poverty, the climate crisis, inequality and injustice. Poverty is political: the choices that

Governments and organisations make in democratic countries that give rise to (or do nothing about) poverty mean that we were all complicit if we do nothing about it. Such issues of poverty and injustice are often a direct consequence of conflict and war, in which UK companies are often involved. While the poorest in our society have been suffering from austerity policies, the Government has been supporting companies to make money from arms deals with countries that do not respect human rights.

Chi Chi then explained why War on Want supported the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Palestine. The Palestinians were not people to be pitied. They had been working against the occupation since it happened in the 1940’s.

The key difference in the Palestinian situation was the global solidarity movement for peace and justice. The call for BDS came in 2005, when all of Palestinian society came together and produced a set of conditions which needed to be met. It was the legacy of decades of resistance for Palestinian rights.

With Trump's 'land grab'; a steep increase in house demolitions and a forcible transfer of prisoners there has been a significant deterioration in the situation in Palestine. All of these are war crimes in which UK companies are complicit. "Palestinians", Chi Chi said, "are facing an existential threat, with the huge diaspora population of refugees facing an attempt by Trump and Netanyahu to de-classify second and subsequent generation refugees, taking away their right of return to the land."



The principles of BDS were not exclusive to Palestinians; comparisons with the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, showed that these succeeded and were made possible by support around the world.

Further examples quoted included War on Want's campaign in the 1970's against Nestlé products when the company was pushing its Baby Formula, and the boycott of Barclay's Bank due to its involvement in South Africa. More recently, pressure on G4S to sell its operation in Israel had been successful. Closer to home, Leeds University has divested from three companies involved in Israel and Saudi Arabia, following student pressure, while demonstrations at UK factories of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems had in some cases caused the shut-down of operations for the day.

It was natural for individuals to feel powerless, wondering 'what can I do?', but Church members had a responsibility to ensure that their investments were not facilitating human rights abuses. Obviously, this needs to be a consideration for individuals who have investments in stocks and shares. However, it is also a responsibility for Dioceses across the country to ensure that their ethical investment policies reflect these concerns.



Chi Chi Shi of War on Want

LOCAL POVERTY – A J&P PRIORITY By John Battle (Commission Chair)

Encouragingly, at Catholic meetings in the last couple of months - whether with the SVP, parish meetings or gatherings of Catholic teachers - invariably I have found the need to keep our focus on the marginalised and poor

has been raised. Tackling poverty in the UK is one of our Justice and Peace Commission's top Action and Prayer priorities. But can the same be said of public policy and media representation which moves on from a flooding crisis to Coronavirus infection?

The recent Government budget was inevitably centred on defence against the Coronavirus but, though there were announcements committing to future action and infrastructure projects, tackling poverty -like social care - hardly got a look in.

The proclaimed rise in public spending now analysed by the respected independent Institute of Fiscal Studies is not as generous as it seems, and the impact of austerity cuts is far from over particularly when it comes to both Welfare and Local Government budgets. The Resolution thinktank spells out that the economic hit from weaker growth over the next five years despite extra government spending would be £300 per household this year rising to £575 a year by the middle of this Parliament. In other words, this budget does "almost nothing to offset the considerable welfare cuts put in place stretching into the future by George Osborne in 2015".

Moreover, even welcome measures such as faster benefit payments for self-employed people who become ill, to help with the Coronavirus pandemic, still leaves 2 million low paid workers ineligible for any statutory sick pay. There is some commitment to increasing the minimum wage (the Governments "living wage" threshold) but it is a target for "*when economic circumstances allow*"! There is a 1.7% increase in universal credit working age benefits in April this year after a four-year freeze but this goes no way to tackling rising child poverty and dependence on food banks.



Before the budget the Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Union urged the new Chancellor

specifically to abolish the Government's insistence on the "two child" limit on Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit benefits to lift half a million children out of poverty as this stricture alone is putting desperate pressure on food, rent, clothing and utility bills. Already an estimated 160,000 families have been hit by this restriction pushing some 300,000 children into poverty and one million children already in poverty will be pushed even deeper in by 2023/24 because of this budget's lack of action. While this controversial policy hits larger families hard, the new proposed banking restrictions on credit card debts will kick in after April driving people again to illegal unregulated money lenders. Meanwhile foodbanks are being overwhelmed.

In other words, this is far from a budget for the poor.

Pope Francis is keen to insist that "poverty is not inevitable". We need to examine and challenge structural causes including negligent budgets and policies.

As a start our Justice and Peace Commission has developed Poverty Workshop Resource pack for parish and church group use, currently backed up by the Commission providing a facilitator. Some parishes have already worked it though and have moved on to both more engaged poverty action and thought through targeted advocacy.

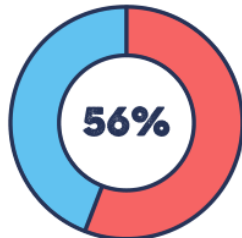


Our aim, rooted in the Gospel and a clear practical understanding of Catholic social teaching, is to confidently work

together to tackle poverty and even in these circumstances make food

banks and child poverty a part of the past in our society.

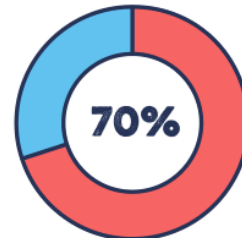
UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND FOODBANK USE



56% had experienced issues with housing



8% of respondents said their full Universal Credit payment covered their cost of living



70% had experienced debt during the wait

Source: The Trussell Trust 2019 Report – see <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/research-advocacy/universal-credit-and-foodbank-use/>

Contact the J&P office for more information about our Family Poverty Workshop Programme

jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk

REFLECTION: ALICE WALKER “To Change the World Enough”

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

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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



Alice Walker (Wikimedia Commons)






or hidden in books
that claim to disclose
revelations;
it is here.
We must walk together without fear.
There is no path without us

*Part of a poem from the Collection
“World Will Follow Joy: Turning Madness into
Flowers (New Poems)” 22 May 2014*



EVENTS

In this strange time of the Covid 19 crisis we have only included events from May onwards – is that being a bit optimistic?

 Fri 15 May	<p>International Conscientious Objectors Day</p> <p>This day is marked around the world each year on the 15 May, to raise awareness of those who stood up to protect their rights to refuse to kill and refused to participate in armed conflict. The day was first established by the International Conscientious Objectors’ Meeting (ICOM) in 1985. The ICOM was an annual meeting of COs and their supporters throughout the world, created to exchange ideas and offer solidarity.</p>
 Wed 20 May	<p>In the Eye of the Storm: An evening with Garth Hewitt</p> <p><i>St Michael & All Angels' Church, Church Street, Haworth BD22 8DR 7pm (£9/£6)</i></p> <p>Songs for these difficult and restless times with a much-needed spirituality of hope. This evening has been organised by the Amos Trust. For more details email demullins23@msn.com</p>
 Fri 17 Jul – Sun 19 Jul	<p>2020 Vision – Action for Life on Earth – NJPN Annual Conference</p> <p><i>The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i></p> <p>A weekend devoted to how we can better reflect on how to care for our Common Home. Workshops, Just Fair and keynote speakers in the lovely surroundings of the Hayes Conference Centre. See their website for booking details – you can go for the whole weekend or just go for the day on the Saturday https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/</p>
 Fri 24 Jul – Sun 26 Jul	<p>Nothing can separate us from the love of God</p> <p><i>The Bi-Annual Conference of the National Network of Pastoral Musicians – also at the Hayes Conference centre in Derbyshire</i></p> <p>This conference is directed at all those with an interest in church music – but there theme this year is tagged “Facing the challenges of a divided country and Climate Change” – themes that will have more than a little appeal for supporters of the J&P Commission. Their keynote speakers and workshop leaders include Marty Haugen (who we have hosted). Chris Walker and Bob Hurd. More information is available on their website http://nnpm.org/NNPM/National_Events.html</p>
 01 Sep – 01 Oct	<p>The Season of Creation 2020</p> <p><i>Worldwide</i></p> <p>This season was created in 1989 in the Orthodox church and endorsed in 2015 after Pope Francis published <i>Laudato Si</i>. We are all encouraged to ensure that our liturgies reflect the need to care for our Common Home during this season. Needs some ideas? – Then take a look at https://catholicclimatemovement.global/</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