



SVP responds to the Chancellor's Budget, March 3, 2021

By Elizabeth Palmer, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)



Today's Budget delivered by Chancellor Rishi Sunak represents one of the most important political statements of recent times and comes at a critical time for the nation. Last year, the UK economy shrank by 10%, the worst decline in 300 years. Predictions show that around a third of the population will be living below the minimum income standard this year. This Budget has the power to shape the strength and nature of the recovery from the COVID crisis and capitalise on the positivity created by the Prime Minister's roadmap out of national lockdown.

The Government has to date introduced welcome measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the uplift to Universal Credit. These temporary measures have ensured millions of households remain afloat at a time of deep crisis. The SVP applauds these initiatives, which demonstrated vision and ambition.

While we welcome the extension to the CJRS, today's Budget is a missed opportunity to set out a progressive plan which would have given millions of households and businesses a

support package capable of guiding the country out of the crisis with confidence.

The vaccine rollout has so far given us hope. This is the time for bold action to lift millions out of poverty and we are disappointed the Chancellor did not take this opportunity to deliver a compelling vision for a more levelled up and equal nation.



Summary of our response

- The limited extension of temporary measures to support households should be expanded and made permanent. A six-month extension to the temporary £20 Universal Credit uplift is not enough to support households as they struggle to get back on their feet. A permanent uplift should also be rolled out to people on legacy benefits.
- While we welcome the six-month extension to the CJRS, we urge the Government to ensure adequate investment in re-training and skills is provided as the CJRS is wound down.
- We welcome the Government's commitment to levelling up the country. However, we are disappointed no details were shared on the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). We urge the Government to share more details of the fund as soon as possible. The focus must now be on growth, not austerity. Overall, this is the time to increase spending rather than cutting back.



On our social security system



Our social security system needs to be strengthened so that it can truly unlock the potential of millions of people.

As a member of the Keep the Lifeline coalition, we are disappointed the Chancellor opted for a limited, six-month extension of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit. This is a missed opportunity to extend support to struggling families on Universal Credit by making the uplift permanent. We are equally disappointed there has been no announcement about extending the uplift to people on legacy benefits.

The temporary extension to the £20 Universal Credit uplift for only six months will undermine the road to recovery and will leave millions in limbo and at risk of falling into poverty. Cutting this lifeline in the autumn will push households into debt and will leave millions vulnerable at a time when the economic scenario is expected to be dire and unemployment is projected to be widespread. A six-month extension of the uplift also fails to meet the original objectives of the policy, which were to strengthen the safety net and protect incomes.

On employment support

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme kept nine million people in work at its peak last May. We welcome the announcement that this scheme will be extended until the end of

September 2021, however support and investment in retraining and job creation must be the main priority for the Government.

We welcome the announcement of the new Levelling Up Fund. With unemployment levels estimated to be at 6.5% later in the year, it will be essential to introduce measures aimed at creating jobs as well as introducing new training and apprenticeship schemes. A generation of young people will need sustained support if their life chances are not to be blighted by the economic fallout from the pandemic. We urge the Government to share details of its UK Shared Prosperity Fund as soon as possible. While the Government's levelling up agenda is an ambitious programme, to be successful it needs to ensure that:

- There is an end to austerity measures for local government, and instead increased spending is implemented to improve the quality of public service provision and standards of living.
- The new UK Shared Prosperity Fund is ring-fenced and not used to plug funding gaps in local government budgets which have been decimated over the last decade.

We need the Government to match the commitment of the millions of people who have bravely endured the restrictions and deprivations over the past year. It is only by empowering people financially, socially and spiritually that the nation can start to fully recover from the effects of the pandemic.

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[SVP responds to the Chancellor's Budget, March 3, 2021 | St Vincent de Paul Society](#)



PEACE SUNDAY

By Sr Sheila Griffiths, The Holy Family Sisters in Bradford

Members of Pax Christi and J&P in the Diocese organised a prayer Service for Peace Sunday, January 17th, 2021. This was live streamed on Zoom that very same day. Since COVID restrictions on Church Services are at present in force, I tuned in to this service. Actually, since last March I have attended online meetings with the Pax Christi group in the diocese.

In his message for the Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, Pope Francis appeals to the international community and every individual to foster a "culture of care" by advancing on the "path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations."



The service highlighted a culture of care for earth and humanity. In her opening introduction one of the members of Pax Christi brought out that Creation and Incarnation are an integral entity and that Christmas does not end when the decorations come down. Christ is incarnated in every event and especially in our service to

one another and caring for our Common Home.

The following poem by Michael Doherty spells this out.

*When the carols have been stilled,
When the star-topped tree is taken down,
When family and friends are gone home,
When we are back to our schedules
The work of Christmas begins:
To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To feed the hungry,
To build bridges of trust, not walls of fear,
To share our gifts,
To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ's light to the world.*

Another highlight of the programme was a rendering of part of a speech by Oscar Romero expressing his close involvement with people. Diarmuid O' Murchu's Prayer to the Holy Spirit, calling the Spirit to breathe down on this troubled world, followed by a moment of quiet to allow the participants to reflect on what touched them at this moment, gave time for personal involvement. A rousing chorus of the song, 'These are the hands...' sung by a group of school children, brought home to all the tenderness and love expressed by the many frontline workers since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, a great symbol of peace.

What impressed me a great deal was to note how the organisers were lay people, as were most of those who zoomed in. If only the clergy of our diocese could take such an interest and be creative in liturgical services.



Stations of the Cross.

by John Battle

The wayside pulpit in our neighbourhood says during Covid19 "God still does home visits"! In other words, a shut Church and limited services does not mean the end of our prayer life. The traditional Lenten practice, the Stations of the Cross, could always be a private meditation on Jesus's final journey to his Crucifixion as well as a public Church-based or outdoor mini procession round the sculptured or pictured stations. The word "stations" originally came from English priest and pilgrim Fr William Wey who in 1472 walked round the "halting places" of Jesus 's passion in Jerusalem. These were later fixed at fourteen by Pope Clement XII in 1731. There are many good practical guidebooks; two I find helpful are "Stations of the Cross: Then and Now" by Fr Denis McBride (Redemptorist publications) and "Stations of the Cross" by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP(Bloomsbury) - both still available and accessible on line. There are also St Oscar Romero's brief reflections on the Stations. As well as a personal examination of conscience structured around a line of Scripture, an image of each station and a brief reflection and prayer, the Stations are also a meditation on how we respond to a suffering and crucified world. Fr Mc Bride includes contemporary images to "*recognise that the way of the cross winds through every village town and city in our world. The ancient road located in Jerusalem two thousand years ago; it is a crowded highway populated by millions of people who endure violence and suffering today*" St Oscar Romero comments at the First Station, "*Your unfair trial goes on duplicated in all the unfair*

sentences through which innocent people are condemned. You are still the victim of these injustices perpetrated against the weak the defenceless and the voiceless in whom you continue to live and to suffer". At the same Station Fr Timothy Radcliffe asks "Is it good to be tough on crime when wrong people suffer?" Are we too quick to judge and write off especially the poor? St Oscar Romero prays "Grant us the grace not to burden others with our moral failings but to carry the cross with you... send us people who have the courage to shoulder the crosses of others in solidarity and patience, for our society is crowded with poor Christs crushed by all crosses and weight".

The El Salvador martyr Fr Ignacio Ellacuria issued a stark challenge: "*I want you to set your eyes and hearts on these people who are suffering so much, some from poverty and hunger, others from oppression and repression then, standing before these people thus crucified, ask yourselves what have I done to crucify them ? What do I do to 'uncrucify' them what must I do for these people to rise again?"*

A Justice Themed Stations of the Cross

Join us for a special hour of prayer using the traditional Stations of the Cross as we walk alongside those who are being crucified today and reflect on the damage that we continue to do to our Common Home - the Earth

See website and Events for details.....





WE NEED YOUR MONEY!

*A financial opinion piece by Joe Burns,
Treasurer for the Commission*

The J&P Finances are in relatively good shape, considering the considerable re-orientation of our activities in the last 12 months. The key factors that have led to this situation are:-

- We have had grant money for some work and a steady amount of regular income through Standing Orders. Our income will have decreased but not by a large amount.
- Our activities will end up costing us far less this financial year (which ends on 31 March) because they were mostly online. This is what has made a big difference.
- A third factor is that there has been much more voluntary activity in this financial year – reducing the amounts that we have had to pay to people to do stuff for us (mainly Helen – servicing the Commission, arranging our events and managing most of the newsletter production).

So why am I asking for your money?

It is quite simple: we need to do more.

The last 12 months have served to highlight the inequalities in our country and in the following year it is only going to get worse. In the next 12 months we are going to see much higher levels of unemployment and rising poverty (by whatever measure you care to use) in our own country. Funding for Developing countries is becoming much more difficult (e.g. the way in which UK Aid money is being increasingly tied to trade) and in comparison to the likes of the UK, very few vaccine deliveries have been made to

countries in the global South. The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has served to spotlight the continuing discrimination experienced by people of colour in this country. and I haven't even mentioned Climate Change yet!

Systemic injustice lies at the root of all these problems – the way we have organised ourselves as a country and within the world only serves to compound these problems. We need systemic change – and that is not achieved easily. Our role as a Commission is to reflect on the key issues of the day in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. It must start with us – with the change of heart that comes when we reflect on the injustice around us in the light of the Gospels. Just as with confession, it is no good just being sorry for the sins that we have committed – we must resolve not to sin again. So, when we reflect on systemic injustice it is no good just wringing our hands and saying that we cannot do something about it.

We cannot solve these issues individually – but that is not the same thing as doing nothing. As Pope Francis puts it in 'Laudato Si' we need to have a 'community conversion'. That is why the Commission needs to do more and why we need more financial support from the Catholic community in the Leeds Diocese.

Over the last 5 years we have reorganised how we do our work so that it is split between the 'ongoing' work – such as the communications work via the regular newsletter, social media posts and our up-to-date website – and project work. Some projects we just do with our core funds – such as our Days of Reflection. Others are more complex and require us to apply for

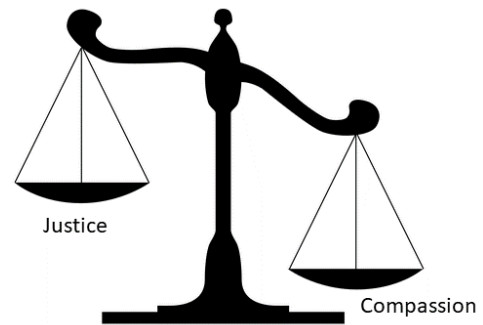


grant funding – such as the SPARK social justice project with young adults or the Family Poverty workshops we were doing prior to lockdowns. Both of these were supported externally, and we would have been unable to do anything effective without the funding received from the Porticus Trust and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

Yes, we must support those who provide immediate relief for those in greatest need – such as the work of the SVP or the emergency appeals issued by CAFOD. However, we must also support the longer-term work of changing unjust systems and policies. This is where supporting the work of the Commission comes in. In the words of

Emeritus Pope Benedict “Love needs to be organised” – and that takes money.

Are you or your parish community really taking that seriously?



WHERE DOES OUR MONEY COME FROM?

Our financial year ends on 31 March – so I will report in May on the actual amounts involved in our income and expenditure over the previous 12 months.

However, to give perspective, here are a few key facts, which, when you think about them, I am hoping will lead to some action on your part!

- Out of the more than 30,000 or so mass goers (in ‘normal’ times!) in the Leeds Diocese there are less than 20 who regularly contribute to the work of the Commission through a Standing Order. Yet, with gift aid, this brings in close to £3000 per annum. What if that were more like 200?
- Out of 80 or so parishes in the diocese, one contributes an annual amount towards our communication costs. We do receive a central grant of £5,000 from the Diocese itself – but it would be so much more encouraging if individual parishes were to show their commitment to our work as well.
- During this financial year we have had about £17,000 in external grant funding – the biggest single element of our income. The two most important points to make about this are:
 - Whatever money we receive from individuals and the Diocese we can multiply through successfully applying for external funding.
 - I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the contributions made by individuals or parishes. It demonstrates to trusts and foundations that there is a level of underlying support for our work within the Diocese and this makes it more likely that they will support our applications for grant funding.



A Justice Themed Stations of the Cross



A Justice Themed Stations of the Cross

This Holy Week, join us for a special hour of prayer using the traditional Stations of the Cross as we walk alongside those who are being crucified today and reflect on the damage that we continue to do to our Common Home - the Earth.

Tuesday 30th March 2021 &.30pm - 8.30pm

Please click here to book for free on EventBrite
<https://tinyurl.com/nzxdpy6dj>









Prayer of the struggling farmer

Lord,
Show me the pain of those who are most troubled
So that I can learn about the suffering of my people
Grant me the courage to serve others
Because in surrender there is eternal life
Illuminate us with song and celebration
And raise the Spirit amongst us
May the Spirit flower and grow
And give us strength to continue our struggle
May we remember those who have died from injustice
Because for us they have given their lives
Amen



EVENTS

 <p>Tues 23rd March 7.30pm- 8.30pm</p>	<p>Lorna Gold: Francis on Ecology</p>  <p>EDINBURGH JESUIT CENTRE</p> <p>This is one of a series of Zoom events organised by the Edinburgh Jesuit centre. You can join via Zoom and the event is also being livestreamed on Facebook. Use the button below to get the details</p> <p>Details of how to login</p>
 <p>Tues 30th March 7.30pm – 8.30pm</p>	<p>A Justice Themed Stations of the Cross</p> <p>Join us for a special Holy Week hour of prayer using the traditional Stations of the Cross as we walk alongside those who are being crucified today and as we reflect on the damage that we continue to do to our Common Home – the Earth</p> <p>The liturgy will last no longer than an hour and all are welcome. Simply use the button below to register to receive the Zoom link.</p> <p>Register to attend</p>
 <p>28th April 7.30pm-9pm</p>	<p>The Hook Lecture Spring 2021 - Leeds Church Institute</p> <p>The title of the lecture is <i>A New Moral Ecology for a World where Climate Catastrophe is Real</i> and will be given by Rev Dr Frances Ward. Book a place for this free lecture here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hook-lecture-spring-2021-tickets-139433680893?aff=erelexpmlt</p>
 <p>23rd July-25th July</p>	 <p>NJPN ANNUAL CONFERENCE: LIFE ON EARTH – MOMENT OF TRUTH</p> <p>There will be opportunities to take part in workshops and activities throughout the weekend as well a JUST FAIR consisting of more than 20 stalls from different agencies displaying goods and resources.</p> <p>https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NJPN-Conference-2021-Booking-Form.pdf</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.