



Commission gains new funding for SPARK Social Justice



SPARK Social Justice, our project engaging with younger Catholics about issues of Social Justice, has just been awarded additional funding by Benevolentia (also known as the Porticus Trust). We are delighted to announce that they have agreed to fund a set of activities over the next 4 years that amount to a total grant of £60,000.

Prior to the pandemic, the initial project focussed on using drama workshops in educational settings to start discussions about social justice issues. In this new project we are going to focus more on the 18 -30 age group. Our intention is to recruit some people in this age group to act as 'animators' for a specific area in the diocese, provide them with leadership training and get them to form groups within their area.

During the various lockdowns the project went online and produced a set of videos that are available on a YouTube channel. Like so many people, we were struck by the potential for using online channels and our intention is to make this project a hybrid of

in-person meetings with a significant online content and workshop element.

The funding for the initial project came to an end earlier in 2021. Originally, we were going to have a larger in-person event towards the end of the project. As this was not possible, we used some of the money saved to sponsor 5 people to attend the National Justice & Peace Network conference in July. The remaining money we have used to keep the Facebook and Twitter accounts for SPARK ticking over. Work is also now underway to develop more video resources for the YouTube channel – using the talents of two of the people who have previously been involved or who have benefitted from the project.

We are particularly delighted to have received funding over a 4-year period as this enables us to plan over a longer timeframe and build a solid foundation for continuing the work of Justice & Peace within the Leeds Diocese through a younger generation.

CONFLICT & CLIMATE CHANGE

18 Jan 22 @ 7:30 pm

Join us for this online event during the week of Peace Sunday. Tim Devereux, Chair of the Movement for the Abolition of War and member of the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group will lead us in an exploration of how these are linked.

Reserve a place now by following the link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-change-and-war-tickets-211809436727>



Palestinian Film Festival Screening

By Carol Burns, Leeds Diocese Pax Christi

Imagine being 19 years old and having to decide whether to agree to be conscripted into the armed forces for your national service. Imagine then if you decided you couldn't in all conscience agree to be part of an army that supports indeed maintains the occupation of another people and risked being put in prison

This was the story of Atalya ben Abi a young Israeli woman, in the documentary, 'Objector,' which was shown at the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival (November 2021) in partnership with Leeds Pax Christi and the J&P Commission.

This documentary film followed Atalya's journey as she made the decision to refuse her military service and apply to be a conscientious objector.

Interspersed with conversations with Palestinians who she had met during a year of volunteering were conversations with her family as she explained to them why she was going to refuse to do her military service. It was noticeable how attentively she listened to others. We heard her sister talk about feeling under siege from attacks from Gaza, yet not able to tell her small son that they don't have a shelter and her grandfather explaining why he thinks she is wrong. It was a privilege to see how her family tried to understand her decision even though her mother had been a fulltime member of the army and her father was a reservist, seeing their journey towards realising that they did not want to be associated with an Israeli Army that was policing the occupation. They were able to fully support Atalya in her decision.

Atalya found support in her decision through other conscientious objectors, a small but dynamic group, but it was still a very hard decision as she knew she was likely to be imprisoned until there was a chance for her to make her case to the Israeli authorities.

This film is an important watch for many reasons

- The chance to hear a range of Israeli voices and opinions not all Jewish people in Israel speak with the same voice.
- To hear from Atalya's perspective the injustices that Palestinians experience. She argued that her refusal to do her military service was about equality for all groups of people and that the Palestinians should have equality.
- To see Atalya's bravery in being willing to go to prison for her beliefs, she was imprisoned for a total of 110 days before she was able to attend her hearing to see if she would be considered a conscientious objector
- The reluctance of the Israeli authorities to accept her as a CO, but dismissed her from the army for 'severely bad behaviour'
- To see her carry on campaigning against the Occupation despite abuse being hurled at her and fellow CO's from other Israelis.

I was also interested to discover afterwards that the director Molly Stuart came to film making through community organising and a wish to improve the way social movements for change are portrayed.

The film was informative, moving and inspiring in equal parts and if you would like



to watch it you can stream it online for a small fee by going to the film's website <https://objectorfilm.com/>

The evening also included a chance to ask questions of Atalya as she joined the meeting via zoom from Amsterdam where she is now studying.

An added bonus before the main feature was a short five minute animation, Checkpoint, directed by Jana Kattan while she was a student at the Bournemouth Arts University. This short film tells the story of a young Palestinian girl's experience of going through

a checkpoint to get to school. Jana was also able to join us in person for the evening. It was great to have these two young women available to give their views about the situation in Israel Palestine during the post-screening discussion.

The event was fully booked and organisers from all sides were pleased to see many new people at the film festival. It seems likely that next year, funds permitting, we will be partnering with Leeds Diocese Pax Christi and the Festival committee again.

The J&P Commission has a number of films on DVD that cover aspects of the Israel Palestine conflict in different ways. These are all available for loan from the J&P centre at Hinsley. Just email us for more information or to borrow a specific DVD.

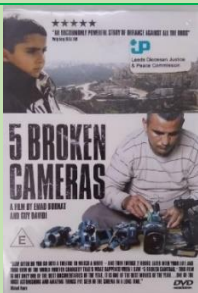
Borrow them for your individual use or to show in your parish. If you want to show one of these films in your parish then the Commission could provide a speaker to answer any questions as well as providing an HD projector and sound system to make for a more cinematic experience!



VOICES ACROSS THE DIVIDE

© 2013 Running time 57 mins

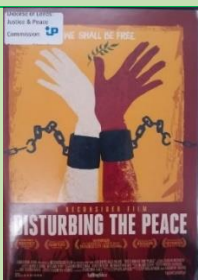
Interviews with Palestinians who have immigrated to the US and Canada enabling them to tell their story and for this to be fitted into the wider story of the region since the 1940's.



5 BROKEN CAMERAS

©2011 Running time 90 mins

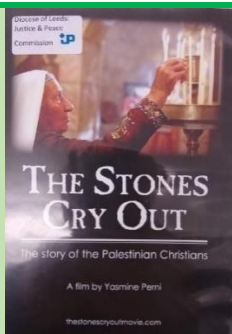
Emad Burnat is a Palestinian video journalist who lives in the West Bank Palestinian village of Bil'in. Over the course of several years his cameras are damaged or shot but Emad and Israeli film-maker Guy Davidi have shaped hundreds of hours of film into a compelling documentary



DISTURBING THE PEACE

©2016 Running Time 86 mins

This film follows the stories of former enemy combatants – Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters. It reveals their transformational journey from soldiers committed to armed battle to nonviolent peace activists leading to the creation of Combatants for Peace.



THE STONES CRY OUT

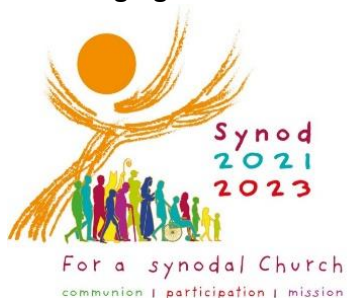
©2013

For more than 60 years the Palestinians, Christians and Muslims have suffered displacement and expulsion, wars occupation and oppression. The voices of Palestinian Christians have often been drowned out – this is their story.

Synodal Listening Process

By Joe Burns, Commission member

This is an ongoing process and meetings have already taken place in many churches. I heard several people praise the training that was given to facilitators, which was very encouraging.



The reports from people attending listening sessions have been much more mixed. From the

people that I have spoken to, a number have found the process rather frustrating as it seemed very constrained by the time available.

I think that the questions themselves do not help very much because of the way that they have been framed. My own view is that unpicking what each question is getting at takes some time – and there probably isn't enough in a single listening session. In such situations people end up making statements with massive assumptions built into them.

I'm useless at expressing my thoughts 'on the hoof'. My recommendation is that, even if you have been to a listening session at your local church take the time to do the online

survey. That way you are not operating against the clock and can take the time to order your thoughts and put them against the most appropriate question.

There is no perfect way of doing an exercise like this. However, we have been asked to give our views and if we have opinions about the role of Justice & Peace issues and how these are approached through formal church

Take the Survey!

Follow this link to take a look at the online version of the survey. You can print it out or just look at each section and think about it before filling it in.

<https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/p-arish-to-mission/online-survey/>

channels then we should use this opportunity to make those views known.

Another thought that I had about the process is that it could be a springboard for parish renewal and for parishes to extend the listening process and take action based on these extended discussions. Whether something like this will happen is very much down to the individuals in a parish – both in terms of lay and clerical leadership and how open they are to the Holy Spirit. The imperative for renewal is certainly there!



Comboni Survivors

By John Duffy,

Justice & Peace Commission Member

Earlier this year, Bishop Marcus made a public and much applauded apology (on behalf of the Church) to the survivors of sexual abuse at St Peter Claver College over 50 years ago. This group of men has tried over the years to persuade the Comboni Order to meet them, hear their stories and recognise the traumas which have affected their lives.

This is the first (and only) apology they have received. The Order still refused to meet the men, so in September, with the support of our bishop, and after consultation with the survivors group, the J&P group wrote to the order as follows:



The Leeds Diocese Justice and Peace commission wishes to support our bishop, Marcus Stock, in his apology to the survivors of clerical sexual abuse in St Peter Claver College, Mirfield, in the 1960s and 1970s – the unhappy history of such abuse and its aftermath affects the whole body of the church.

We also want to stand in solidarity with the survivors group, who want their experience to be acknowledged, and we urge the Comboni Order to meet the group soon and unconditionally, to hear their stories and offer apologies to each survivor, so that the men's pastoral needs are met.

We understand that there are strong feelings about the Order's unwillingness to meet the group unconditionally. We would be grateful if you were able to explain this reluctance to us.

To date we have received no reply or acknowledgment.

The members of the group persevere in their search for peace through healing: not only for themselves, but for their families. Some have died without experiencing any peace of mind, and one of them has written: *It seems to us as a group that the wheels of justice move more slowly in the Catholic Church than in any other institution we know. Whilst some of you have shown us real compassion the Church as an institution seems completely lacking in any at all. It says many fine things about victims of abuse but does not support them with decisive action. So often the institutional response is silence.*

For Pope Francis, people are always more important than laws or institutions, and we should follow his lead and example: we all, as Church, need to speak out on behalf of these victims and support their prolonged struggle for justice. We cannot allow that silence to prevail.



In Work Poverty and the SVP (part 2)

by John Battle

Chair: Leeds Justice and Peace Commission.

In part two of 'In Work Poverty' and, as we face further restrictions due to the new variant of Covid 19, John Battle discusses what we can do to truly help the working poor.



Even before the pandemic one in four families receiving Universal Credit had cut food intake or had meal patterns disrupted because of the low level of the basic safety net for families. The freeze on working age benefits in the recent

years of austerity has contributed to this income reduction.

The Government's emergency pandemic measures certainly helped, introducing the furlough scheme and a £20 a week increase in Universal Credit. But both the furlough scheme and that £20 a week increase were discontinued in October this year. It is estimated that up to 6 million families stand to lose £1,040 a year in financial support as a result.

In addition, in August the energy regulator announced that fuel bills were set to soar from October. The 11 million households that pay by direct debit will see an average dual fuel bill rise by £139. But for the 4 million on prepayment meters (typically the economically vulnerable) their average bill will rise by £153.

WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

As Mike Brewer the chief economist at the Resolution Foundation puts it; "Simply returning to the old system is not good enough after what the country has gone through".

So what are the positive suggestions?



UNIVERSAL CREDIT £20; Already pressure has been building from charities including Caritas and our own SVP, churches, the TUC, and poverty analysts to maintain the £20 Universal Credit uplift. The Resolution Foundation goes beyond simply asking to maintain the £20 a week boost and calls for levelling up support for the under 25's and raising the child element of Universal credit by £5 a week to directly help families.

FURLOUGH: The TUC has made a case for workers to continue to receive 80% of their wage for any time on the scheme, with a guarantee that no-one falls below the statutory minimum wage for their normal working hours. Any worker working less than 90% of their normal working hours to be offered funded training options. Companies must demonstrate a reduction in demand (including restructuring) and not pay dividends while using the scheme. There should be time limits but with limited exceptions. For many years such a scheme



has operated in Germany, Japan and other OECD countries to shield workers during tough economic periods.

It is worth adding that since the 1979 peak of 13.2 million workers there has been a dramatic fall in Trade Union membership. Most of the unionised jobs are in the public sector and members in the private sector are in companies that have long had collective bargaining agreements. In the new companies of the service sectors unions are virtually unknown. Yet there is a strong current of support in Catholic Social Teaching from Rerum Novarum through the encyclicals of Pope St John Paul II, Emeritus Pope Benedict and now Pope Francis for their vital contribution as a means of tackling working poverty.



A REAL LIVING WAGE? Despite the government renaming the statutory legal minimum wage as the 'living wage', the Living Wage Foundation does serious research work campaigning for a REAL LIVING WAGE. It an hourly rate assessed in accordance with basic income needs and economic capacity to increase wages. Encouragingly more and more employers are signing up to it as a matter of social justice.

But it is an hourly rate and does not resolve the problem of insufficient hours of work. Now there are economic and political debates around introducing a BASIC INCOME for all as already trialled in some countries.

FROM LISTENING INTO ACTION





The SVP moves from listening (and direct support - often working with low income families), to the lived experiences of people to objective analysis of the realities. St Vincent gave us a lead; "To serve those who are poor is to go to God and you should see God in them". Pope Francis is challengingly direct; "Christians are called to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it". Saint Oscar Romero the Archbishop of El Salvador, murdered for defending the poor, said; "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". This is part of the SVP mission here today

A last word; Pope Francis sent a message to the recent meeting of the World Bank; *"despite our deeply held conviction that all men and women are created equal many of our brothers and sisters in the human family are effectively excluded from the financial world. If we are to come out of this situation as a better, more humane and solidary world, new creative forms of political and economic participation must be devised, sensitive to the voice of the poor and committed to including them in building our common future"*.

In the face of the working poor in our own society, that challenge applies not just to those in the SVP but all of us who call ourselves Christian.



Events

 Tue 18 Jan	<p>J&P Webinar for Peace Sunday: Conflict and Climate Change <i>Online Zoom webinar 7:30pm – 8:30pm</i></p> <p>This webinar will be led by Tim Devereux, Chair of the Movement for the Abolition of War. After an initial talk there will be time for small group discussion and questions to Tim. Sign up via Eventbrite to receive the link: Climate Change and War Tickets, Tue 18 Jan 2022 at 19:30 Eventbrite</p>
 Thu 20 Jan	<p>Criminal Justice Workshop – Exploitation <i>Online or in-person at All Saints Catholic College Huddersfield, 6pm – 8pm</i></p> <p>How young people and vulnerable adults can be manipulated and coerced into committing crimes drawn into criminal activity and modern slavery and the severe exploitation of vulnerable people for personal or commercial gain. See Eventbrite: Criminal Justice Workshop - Exploitation Tickets, Thu 20 Jan 2022 at 18:00 Eventbrite</p>
 Ongoing	<p>HOUR LEEDS</p> <p>Want to help those in need but don't know how to? Don't have much time to offer?</p> <p>During this challenging time, you can still get creative with a fundraiser for St Vincent's Centre, Leeds. Their "Hour Leeds" campaign is an incentive for people to do something for one hour for the centre.</p> <p>This could be doing something on your lunch break at work or going for an hour long sponsored walk. Don't think you have the time for that? You could also donate an hour's wage to the St Vincent's Support Centre - even a little bit makes a huge difference. The St Vincents' Centre in Leeds is advertising this – but you could just as easily do it for the SVP Centre in Bradford.</p>
 Sun 27 Feb	<p>Church Action on Poverty Sunday</p> <p>Join with other churches across the UK in giving, action and prayer. Celebrate the transformational possibilities of people coming together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power. See the CAP website for more details https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/</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 details of these and other events which may be of interest.