



COMMISSION RESPONSE TO THE DIOCESAN LISTENING PROCESS

Diocese of Leeds: Justice & Peace Commission, 14 January 2022

Introduction:

The Commission wished to respond to the Diocesan Listening Process. However, the question format used for parish meetings and individual online responses did not align with the key points that we wanted to make. We offered the following instead and trust that the synodal listening team can incorporate these points into the overall results of the process.



Key Points:

The role of a Diocesan Justice & Peace Commission is to challenge the Church on its

reflection and action over causes of injustice, whether this relates to why so many people are reliant on foodbanks or on the lack of urgency relating to the care of our Common Home. Why are the 'field hospitals', as Pope Francis puts it, so much in demand and, as Church, what are we called to do about these situations? How will we seek to address the causes of such inequity?

A key part of our mission is to discern the Holy Spirit in the 'signs of the times' – to take a prophetic role - through a consideration of the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

One of the core elements of Catholic theology, expressed in the writings on Catholic Social Teaching, is the Dignity of the human person. This Dignity is central to Catholic theology, and it follows that the work of Justice & Peace is central to the mission of the Church, and not an optional

extra. It is a constitutive element of being a Catholic Christians (VC2) which means the whole Church is commissioned to work for justice for our neighbours and for Creation of which we are a part.

Laudato Si underlines this obligation to hear the cry of the Poor and the cry of the Earth, stating again the fundamental nature of this demand. Degradation and destruction of our common home, our natural world, has a direct negative impact on the poor who rely on primary resources, water and land, for their lives.

So, everyone in the Diocese has a mission to promote social justice and the role of the J&P Commission is to stand alongside, encourage and support people in our Diocese as they struggle to discern, through reflection and prayer, what action for social justice they should be taking. This is an ongoing process of dialogue.

The Church should not fear the participatory democracy that is presented in Evangelium Gaudium. The current listening process should lead to a similar ongoing process of dialogue at all levels and between all Church members in the Diocese.

We look forward to receiving a copy of the preliminary responses from the current exercise so that we can engage more deeply with the ongoing process of listening that needs to be established.

At this time, as a Diocese, we need to recognise that young people are the new poor and that theirs is an authentic voice and they need new prophets.



WAR AND CLIMATE CHANGE

By Joe Burns

This was the title of our January webinar led by Tim Devereux, Chair of the [Movement for the Abolition of War](#).



Tim spoke for about half an hour and the rest of the time was used in questions.

After a brief scene setting about Climate Change itself, Tim went on to explore the greenhouse gas emissions of the military across the world and the impact of Climate Change on conflict.

"More conflict in itself will damage the planet (those involved in conflict will not be able to focus on the climate, and instead will be creating more emissions whilst in conflict), therefore making it far less likely that we will reach any of the climate change Paris goals."

Tim posed this quote as a question - and not many people knew that it was from the Ministry of Defence 'Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach', published in March 2021. So, even the ministry of defence acknowledges its impact on the environment.



'Carbon Footprints' by Harry Davis

Tim pointed out that the U.S. military emits more greenhouse gases than Sweden and Denmark. A new study [June 2019] shows how the United States' Military is the largest institutional emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. These emissions come from both combat and non-combat operations.

The use of some of the fossil fuels the military burns to protect the supply of oil creates an interesting paradox.

To explore the impact of Climate Change on conflict Tim looked, first of all, at the physical consequences of it. These are summarised in the table below.

Physical consequences of climate change:

- Melting glaciers
- Sea-level rise
- Loss of island coastline
- Less usable land
- Droughts
- Floods
- Desertification
- Spread of disease and pestilence
- Changes to crop seasons and output

These physical consequences then lead to consequences for the people living in the areas most affected. Their usual crops will not grow, or droughts destroy them, causing food insecurity. Herders have to roam new lands for their cattle to graze-creating tensions with the people who are already inhabiting those lands. The physical consequences lead to a set of socio-political



consequences and many of these raise tensions and are the trigger for conflicts.

Knock-on socio-political consequences of climate change:

- Livelihood insecurity
- Food insecurity
- Increased social tension
- Less access to useable water
- Decreased trade
- Decline in human health
- Increased poverty
- Decreased physical security
- Increased migration

One example Tim gave was the conflict in Syria. Mainstream media often present this as a response to a brutal regime and the events surrounding the Arab Spring. However, also playing a part were

- Droughts
- Crop failures
- Displaced people.

From 2006-2011, up to 60% of Syria's land experienced, in the terms of one expert: *"the worst long-term drought and most severe set of crop failures since agricultural civilizations began in the Fertile Crescent many millennia ago."*

In the same timeframe, nearly 75% of the most vulnerable Syrians, dependent on agriculture, suffered total crop failure. Herders in the north-east lost around 85% of their Livestock. In total it affected 1.3 million people.

In 2009, the UN and IFRC reported that over 800,000 Syrians had lost their entire livelihood as a result of the droughts. This led to a massive exodus of farmers, herders and

agriculturally dependent rural families from the countryside to the cities.

In January 2012, it was reported that crop failures just in the farming villages around the city of Aleppo, had led "200,000 rural villagers to leave for the cities."

He made a convincing case for the connections – which makes action to minimise Climate Change all the more important.

FIND OUT MORE / DO MORE

J&P have action groups about both **Climate Change** and **Peace & Nonviolence**. If you want to find out more or do more then why not think about joining one of these groups?

Simply email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and we will let you know when they are next meeting (probably via Zoom).

MOVEMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF WAR

Conferences, publications and a regular newsletter are among some of the activities undertaken by members of the Movement for the Abolition of War. Its roots lie in the first Hague Conference called by Czar Nicholas II in 1899!

The MAW approach is to popularise positive pathways to peace

www.abolishwar.org.uk/



CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY SUNDAY

By Matthew Maslen

Each year, on the final Sunday before lent, Church Action on Poverty (CAP) invite Churches across the UK to take part in Poverty Sunday. This year, on the 27th of February, Parishes will join together to *"Give, Act and Pray as part of the movement to unlock UK Poverty"*.

Liam Purcell, Communications Manager for CAP said Poverty Sunday is a great opportunity for Parishes to raise awareness about *"the injustice of UK poverty"*. Through taking collections, Churches can *"play a part in the movement to tackle the root causes of poverty in the UK."* Each year over 100 Churches across the country take part.

Perhaps the most visceral sign of poverty in the UK is food insecurity.

According to The Trussell Trust:

the use of their network's foodbanks has increased **128%** in just the past **5 years**

In 2019/20 a shocking **2.5%** of all UK households were supported by foodbanks

CAP Local Pantries

A key way in which CAP have worked to tackle poverty has been through helping communities start up 'Your Local Pantry' over the past 3 years. Liam Purcell highlighted that since the beginning of the pandemic, *"even more people [have been] left facing hunger and food insecurity."* The pantries that CAP run help to provide people with vital *"access to good food with dignity, choice and hope."*

So far, the pantries have been set up in over 65 neighbourhoods across the UK from Stockport to Cardiff, Manchester to Edinburgh. Each Pantry is run on a membership-scheme, where people pay a small weekly subscription allowing them to save over £500 a year.



The use of subscriptions, rather than a free service like foodbanks, allows users more agency and dignity. The service is intended to prevent people from reaching rock bottom, a safety net between poverty and disaster.

Not only have the Pantries benefitted their members financially, CAP has found that the food clubs also have positive impacts socially and on their members' mental health. In particular, the Local Pantries are a fantastic way to tackle isolation and to develop new skills.

As the CAP website shows, the pantries often act as *"a springboard to other community initiatives"*. With the help of thousands of volunteers, the Pantry service helps to bring communities together.

The 2018 report on the social impact of the Your Local Pantry network in Stockport ('More than just a full tummy'), shows the diverse range of people at risk of food insecurity in the UK. From single parents to retirees, individuals to families, the Pantry initiative is a service that anyone may need turn to.



Health for All Pantries

Another more local group who run Local Food Pantries is 'Health for All', based in South Leeds. The Pantries are built on the group's 3 core principles:

- redressing health inequality,
- promoting community participation,
- and promoting collaboration.



Pat McGeever, CEO of Health for All, has worked for the charity for 30 years. Pat told us that still now she feels *"privileged to put my skills and experience at the service of making a positive difference to people's lives. It's quite simply part of my apostolate which I discovered through the Young Christian Workers movement many years ago! In fact, I'm still using the methods learned through that fantastic experience in my everyday work now – See, Judge and Act!"*

Pat was kind enough to tell us about the impact the pantries have had on the local community:

When and why did the Pantry service begin?

"We opened our Pantries during the pandemic, serving members from local communities of all ages who are struggling to put food on their tables. All are on low-incomes, and many are experiencing in work poverty. Members say that the low-cost food enables people to then afford other essentials e.g., clothing, toiletries, utilities, rent.

Health for All runs six community and family centres in south Leeds. They are all located in

areas of high deprivation and provide spaces for community groups and services designed to reduce social isolation and improve health. The Covid 19 pandemic has had a significantly negative impact on the people we serve, who have experienced bereavement, loss of jobs and income, isolation and loneliness. We used our centres as hubs from which to deliver food and other essentials' parcels and activity packs to local families. Many now experience poverty, food insecurity, fuel poverty, digital exclusion and people's mental health has been severely impacted. To address these issues, we took advantage of the funding schemes available to install facilities which access to low-cost food and free access to IT in our centres.

The idea of the Food Pantries came from the Church Action on Poverty model, its Impact Report having been sent to us by the wonderful Joe Burns! We adapted the model to fit them into the varying spaces available within our centres. Our first Pantry opened during the first lockdown in our Cranmore and Raylands centre in Belle Isle, using a booked appointment system to comply with health and safety and ensure social distancing. The Pantries significantly enhance our community offer in each of our centres – we now run five weekly Pantries, with between 20 and 30 members using each."

Why did 'health for all' decide to open membership-run Pantries rather than foodbanks?

"Our vision is health and wellbeing for all, we help the poorest and most vulnerable communities overcome the challenges of poverty, health and social inequality. We work in empowering ways, equipping people with the skills and confidence to run their own groups and projects and the Pantry model reflects that approach very well. There are some very well used, well run Food Banks



in south Leeds providing a crucial service, their use increasing dramatically these past few months to meet increasing need. We at HFA avoid duplicating existing services. The Pantry model complements food banks, providing a progression route, a facility offering people a shopping experience, the chance to choose their goods and give something back by volunteering within them. The money they pay each week is used to enhance the Pantry, replacing equipment, covering costs of additional foodstuffs, paying volunteer expenses. Each has been supported to independence with their won Committee, bank account and ability to secure small grants to ensure their sustainability, using our empowering Community Development approach."

How do the Pantries work?

"The Pantries run on a membership model with each member paying £3.50 for a food shop worth around £15 to £20. Members visit at their allotted time and can shop for the foodstuffs they need, including fresh fruit and vegetables frozen foods, bread. We have food diverted from landfill delivered from Fareshare, in addition to bread and pastries donated from local shops e.g., Greggs. The Pantries are a super way of engaging local people in other groups and activities in the Centres, for example, community cafes, community groups, advice and signposting to for example, employment, skills, family support opportunities.

A substantial grant from the National Lottery enabled us to employ a Coordinator with retail skills, funds to refurbish the designated spaces and install high quality industrial fridges and freezers in each, purchase aprons, badged bags, publicity materials."

Summary

The rise in services such as foodbanks and Pantries, shows the stark increase of food insecurity in the UK in recent years. As Catholics we are called to care for those in need; to feed the hungry.



Taking part in Church Action on Poverty Sunday by giving, acting or praying is a way that everyone can play a role in the movement against UK poverty.

The Commission has an Action Group about UK Poverty. Email us if you are interested in doing more.

IDEAS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is on 02 March this year. IF you want to do more than go to an ashes service then there are various things happening – or you could always organise your own event!

LEEDS Join Christian Climate Action @11am in Millenium Square for a mini-pilgrimage and action around Leeds City Centre

LIVERPOOL Fancy a day out further afield? Join Pax Christi Members and friends who will meet at 11.45 for 12.00 service at St Luke's Bombed Out Church, Leece Street (about a ten-minute walk from Lime St Station).

ONLINE Christian CND & Pax Christi are jointly organising an online service between 7pm and 8pm. Follow this link to register to attend:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUqceyhpxwtHtWY9Vn1yD9bJ8CqeTCTZ_mH



CAFOD'S LENTEN WALK AGAINST HUNGER

By Matthew Maslen

This year, CAFOD's Lenten campaign is the Walk Against Hunger; inviting people to walk 200km during Lent to raise awareness and funds for CAFOD's nutrition projects. The campaign is particularly focusing on Sierra Leone.

WHAT IS THE WALK AGAINST HUNGER?

Walk against Hunger is a challenge that takes place over Lent. It's a chance for you to transform your life while changing someone else's.

Cover 200k your way - 5k every day for 40 days, or in one go with a group - on your own, or as part of a team.

However, you take part, let's give hunger its marching orders!

Around the world there are 200 million children living at risk of malnutrition. When so many cannot access nutritious food, CAFOD is asking us to walk 5km every day to stand against hunger and in solidarity with all those suffering from it around the globe.

So far in the Diocese of Leeds, 15 schools in the Bishop Konstant Multi Academy Trust have signed up to take part with lots more schools still expected to sign up in the run-up to Lent.

Taking part alongside them will be Bronagh Daly, Community Participation Coordinator for CAFOD Leeds.

Bronagh will be walking from school to school and delivering live assemblies with CAFOD school volunteers in the playground as she passes through. Some of the staff and children from the schools will be accompanying her to their neighbouring schools.



"This year, I'm really excited that families in my own parish will again be strapping on their walking boots! There is a real buzz about this year's challenge – everyone is doing it their own way – a real sense of solidarity with people joining in across the diocese, and across the country. My family in London have even said that they'll join in with me virtually. How cool is that?!"

So, join us in our Walk Against Hunger. Let's put our faith into action and help stamp out hunger together!"

TAKE PART

Start your journey!

Sign up at: <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/>

Set up a JustGiving Page







Spread the word so people can donate to your page

Track your steps on your phone

Start marching for food security!



Events

 Sun 20 Feb	Working for Peace in the Middle East – CND online conference <i>Online, 1pm – 4:30pm</i> Join CND and guest speakers to discuss the current situation in the Middle East and how we can best campaign for peace in the region. Will the Middle East ever be nuclear-free? And what is the UK's role in the region? Register Here: Webinar Registration - Zoom
 Mon 21 Feb	FairTrade Fortnight 2022: Choose the World you Want Festival To find out more follow the link: https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight/
 Sat 26 Feb	NJPN Open Networking Day – J&P Response to Synodal Process <i>Online, 11am – 3:30pm</i> This is a National Justice & Peace Network Open Networking Day. As the Leeds J&P Commission is a member, this event is open to all J&P supporters in the Leeds Diocese. Register Here: https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckcumrpzwrHdNOZBadT25ZQPeDnifN_nNS
 Sun 27 Feb	Church Action on Poverty Sunday 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/
 Wed 2 Mar	Ash Wednesday Climate Crisis Prayer Vigil and Protest – Christian Climate Action <i>Millenium Square, Leeds</i> Christian Climate Action (Leeds) are inviting Christians from every background to use this solemn day to engage in a peaceful public prayer vigil around the Centre of Leeds. Or join Pax Christi & friends in Liverpool are holding a service at 12:00 and there is an online service of repentance organised by Christian CND & Pax Christi – see page 6
 Wed 16 Mar	Criminal Justice Workshop – Call to Action <i>Online or in-person at All Saints Catholic College Huddersfield, 6pm – 8pm</i> How you can take positive action in your community, parish or school. https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/

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.