



AN INTRODUCTION TO SPARK

By Kathy Shaw. SPARK Project Manager

Hopefully, most of you will by now have heard of SPARK Social Justice, but for those of you who haven't, here's a little introduction to us and the work we do!



SPARK is a social justice project for young adults aged 18 to 30 years living in the Leeds Diocese. We are a project of the Justice and Peace Commission, with funding support from the Porticus Trust. The project is about exploring how we can best support younger generations in their search for a more just world, and the role that faith can have.

The events we have had so far are creating a SPARK community which will influence both the issues that the Commission works on and how the Commission goes about its work.

This issue of the newsletter is a SPARK special - to celebrate the work we've done so far, and to bring your attention to the events we have coming up. You'll get to hear reflections from young people who've attended our events, as well as those who've helped us to lead them.

Over the Summer and through this Autumn we've held a number of events where we have been growing awareness and interest in SPARK and building a network of people interested in working towards a just and peaceful world.

One of these events was our presence at the Freshers Fair at Leeds Trinity University where over forty students signed up to hear more about SPARK and to follow us on social media.

Another SPARK-driven initiative was a set of events held to mark this year's Season of Creation. These were held in the Parish of Mary, Mother of God in Bradford and they were led by Lucy, a university student from that parish.

Most recently we held an Inter-generational Leadership event: 'Empower, Lead, Change' which we organised in partnership with Leeds Trinity University.

The Commission is only too-well aware that the way Commission members do things is not necessarily how younger people might approach them. With this project our aim is to empower our SPARK network and encourage them to hold their own events as a SPARK leader. A SPARK leader can take creative control of any kind of event to suit them, from a discussion group to tea and biscuits - connecting those with a passion for social justice. With the funding that we have from the Porticus Trust we are able to pay leaders for their time and offer relevant training and support.

We'd love to see new and returning faces to our events. So, if you've been before and fancy more, or want to get involved then here's an idea of what our future plans include:

- A community event over Advent
- A session of 3 short workshops about poverty, developed for us by a former consultant to Church Action on Poverty.*

**** We are looking for someone who could trial these materials for us. If you would be interested in doing this, please contact me at spark.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk***



We hope you enjoy this SPARK edition of the newsletter and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming in-person events!

To get in touch with Kathy email sparks.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk or phone 07756 717032.

SPARK LEADERSHIP EVENT – EMPOWER, LEAD, CHANGE

This was an inter-generational conversation about where faith might fit into how we view leadership. It was set up as an informal event where students could have conversations with a number of invited guests with different leadership experiences who acted as discussion facilitators.

We almost cancelled the event as not only was there a train strike that day but also a lecturer's strike! In the end we decided to carry on and it turned out to be an inspiring event for students and invited guests alike.



AN INSPIRING OPPORTUNITY

By Ilesha Heads, student at Leeds Trinity University

The inter-generational leadership training event was an inspiring opportunity for us as students, to learn from the past and pave the way for future generations. The event occurred at Leeds Trinity University, in partnership with

the social justice group SPARK and focused on social justice issues such as racial injustice, climate change, education from a wise couple and a former member of parliament who read a lovely story to us. The speakers helped us as students gain a better understanding of how values, faith, wisdom, and leadership can help to positively shape our engagement in the workplace and in the future.

The inter-generational conversations empowered us, by discussing change and the speakers talked to us about their own experiences within leadership, which helped us to develop so that we can become leaders of the future. The event provided us with hope for a better future for everyone, as the stories told by the leadership guest speakers inspired us to set a vision for the future.

By learning what leadership was like from older generations, we gained a better understanding of the changes we can make today. It was great to have the opportunity to listen to like-minded people, also to connect with them was really empowering and valuable. There was a lot of hard work that went into putting the event together, which we are thankful for.



The leadership event helped me to critically think about what changes I would like to see in the world, by providing all of us with key messages about the core values of a leader,



how leaders can learn and grow from other leaders and how people lead in different ways.

As I embark on a new leadership journey, one of my main goals is to contribute towards finding solutions to destitution and poverty. I believe that by actively listening to the local community, this can be a crucial key to achieving this, which is why I plan to create an event alongside SPARK, to gain the views of residents on destitution and what we can do as individuals to put an end to poverty, through social action projects. My aim is to help make changes that leave a lasting impact in the community, working towards one of the UN's main Global Goals, the "No Poverty" approach that can be sustainable for generations to come.



Kathy Shaw, the SPARK Project manager, commented:

"We had some challenges to overcome in the planning of the event that were outside our control, but the feedback from everyone attending was outstanding.

The success of the event was down to the skills and experience of all the guest facilitators (who were a mixture of ages). They were very generous with their time and expertise. This format came from an idea formulated by Ann Marie Mealey (Director of Catholic Mission at the university) and Teresa Jackson (from St. Walburga's church community in Shipley), who came up with the idea for an Inter-generational Lunch. Without exception the students and attendees found the event inspiring and motivational. We were grateful that Tom Allan managed to make it

despite the train strikes and directed us through the afternoon. Tom is currently studying at Sheffield University and advises us on the Steering Group, representing our target age range."

A PARTICULAR COLOUR

By Ifat Saghir

At the event, Ifat read out a poem she had written (with a little encouragement) and we are delighted to be able to publish it here.

Red.

The boldest colour to exist.

A shade so bright and strong,

Full of potential and power.

Its strength flowing through the human heart,

Pumping potent shades of blood to keep you whole and alive.

Constant.

But to what extent?

The very same crimson,

Snatched away from you.

Blood pouring out endlessly.

Constant.

So much control,

Yet no sense of control.

A colour to keep you alive,

But also a colour to take your life.

LEADERSHIP EVENT REFLECTION

By Tom Allen, Member of the SPARK Steering Group & student at Sheffield University

I was lucky enough to attend the 'Empower, Lead, Change' event at Leeds Trinity last month as a facilitator. As a member of the steering group for the project since it began, I have been overjoyed by the response that came from the event.

It was great to meet so many new and some familiar faces and be able to discuss some of the key issues that young people are facing.

The afternoon, led by Ann-Marie provoked thoughtful and deep conversations between young people and facilitators. I was particularly empowered by the results of the artwork produced by Bronagh Daly which depicted the conversations which were had amongst the group.



Figure 1 One of the 'art evaluation' sheets produced by Bronagh Daly of LCI

I'm excited for the future of SPARK social justice, especially with Kathy at the helm and being joined by so many inspired young people

as a result of this event. I'm eager to see what comes next as a result of this event."

SEASON OF CREATION EVENTS AT MARY MOTHER OF GOD PARISH, BRADFORD

"Let Justice and Peace Flow" was the chosen theme for the Season of Creation 2023; from the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1st to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. This year's theme was drawn from the cry of the prophet Amos: *"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"* (Amos 5: 24)



Lucy in front of a collage produced at one of her events

Lucy is a student, just starting her second year of Primary school teacher training in Liverpool. She led a series of events during September in her local parish when she was home for the summer. Her focus was on climate action, inspired by the Season of Creation. Lucy picked out the image of a mighty river as the creative focus for her display and led a series of events at the youth group, primary school and the local parish hall. The hands you can see on the photo below were completed by members of the youth group who created a Tree of Life alongside the river with their hopes about climate change.



The sessions were all planned and delivered by Lucy and she enjoyed the opportunities to lead and develop her skills. She created the flyer to advertise the event in the parish hall of St Winefride's and arranged a number of promotional events to invite people on the day.

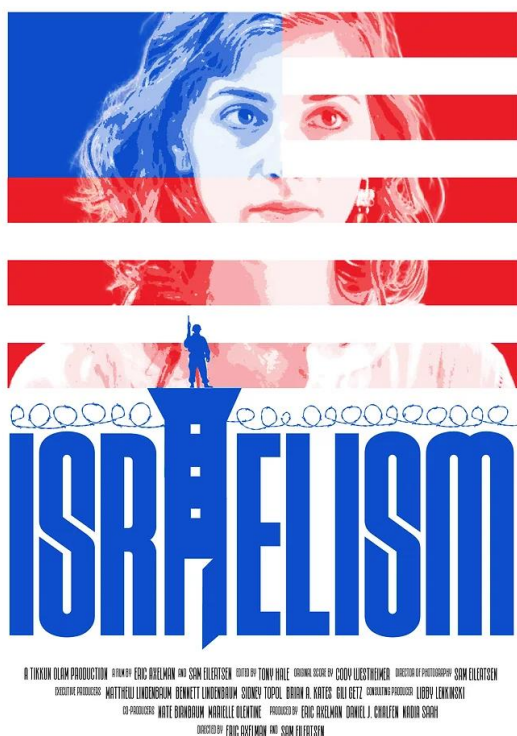
Her message to others who are thinking about getting involved with a SPARK event, was to try something new like this. She enjoyed it, and she had learnt "to know her views are important, and that she is listened to". This was great to hear as this is exactly what the SPARK project is all about.

LEEDS PALESTINIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2023 & SPARK SOCIAL JUSTICE

This year SPARK Social Justice is sponsoring one of the films in the Palestinian Film festival. It will be the last film to be shown. The presentation will take place on **Saturday December 9th** at 2pm.

As well as showing the film itself, the director will be available for a post-film discussion via Zoom. Additionally, there will be various stalls selling goods made by Palestinians.

The film we are showing is called Israelism.



It tells the story of two young American Jews - Simone Zimmerman and Eitan - who are raised to defend the state of Israel at all costs. Eitan joins the Israeli military. Simone supports Israel on 'the other battlefield:' America's college campuses. When they witness Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinian people with their own eyes, they are horrified and heartbroken - the Jewish institutions that

raised them not only lied, but built their Jewish identity around that lie.

They join the movement of young American Jews battling the old guard over Israel's centrality in American Judaism, and demanding freedom for the Palestinian people. Their stories reveal a generational divide in the American Jewish community as more young Jews question the narratives their synagogues and Hebrew school teachers fed them as children.

As in previous years (excluding lockdowns!) the film and discussion will take place at **Wheeler Hall, attached to Leeds Cathedral.**

Follow this link for more information and to book tickets (tickets cost £5 each)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/film-presentation-israelism-part-of-the-leeds-palestinian-film-festival-tickets-744229198567>

The Commission has been associated with this film festival for most of its life. Each year the film has played to a capacity crowd and most of the people attending are in younger age groups. So it seemed appropriate that SPARK social justice should be front and centre for this event.





FAITH AND CREATIVITY. A TOOL FOR LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Bronagh Daly, Faith and Creativity Lead LCI

Faith and creativity are interconnected in helping us to discuss and convey hard to explain messages. Whether it is the banner on the protest march, or the font type we choose to promote a retreat, we would be hard pushed to find a faith or justice movement where creativity isn't utilised to lead people towards change. Before we were literate, we communicated the gospels through illustrations of the saintly and heavenly in stained glass windows, crosses and icons. Bringing the 'Good News' to a wider audience can take courage. Creativity takes courage.

Young people who attended the SPARK Social Justice and Leadership event at Leeds Trinity University explored the values and traits needed to lead through conversations with activists, theologians and justice practitioners, set to the backdrop of a pop-up art exhibition curated by myself as the Faith and Creativity Lead at Leeds Church Institute.

Artwork included 'Journey to the Manger', an illustration by graphic artist, Luke Walwyn, depicting the many obstacles Mary had to overcome on her 90 mile journey to Bethlehem most likely by foot set in a modern context here in the busy Kirkgate Market. The artwork was created as a reflection on the reality of young women who arrive in Leeds, with no accommodation and are confused and isolated. The artwork helps us to explore themes of asylum, migration and maternity streams of sanctuary here in Leeds.

Also featured in the exhibition, young people interacted with a movable felt installation by

textile artist Pippa Woodhams. Her work, featuring felt making in three dimensional and geometric shape, uses natural fibres of wool, colour and layers. The felting process takes time, it is contemplative. It encourages metaphor and is deeply connected to our understanding of spirituality with the circle and sphere. Pippa's work is tactile and beautiful, and encourages the onlooker to play around with perspective and allows us to pick things up, and view them from a different perspective, spatial skills crucial to strategic planning, management and leadership.



Freda Shafi's two pieces included a sketch of her mother's allotment where she grew coriander, scarce when she arrived in Yorkshire from Pakistan in the 1960s, when migrants were encouraged to assimilate. Her mother grew a bounty of coriander, enough to share with her Sikh, Christian and Jewish neighbours, inspiring Freda's work on 'Food, Faith and



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Unity'. Accompanying the sketch of the allotment where the coriander grew, a photograph of her mother's elderly hands are seen holding a plate of coriander dahl, a dish which was shared with friends and family over the decades. Freda's work helped the young people at the leadership and justice session to explore the myth of scarcity and offer an opportunity to reflect on the concept of a liturgy of abundance. The art exhibition allowed conversation on poverty, food banks and racial justice. Difficult social justice issues, discussed with art as the conduit.

Human beings are visual learners, and in listening to the young people at the session, I was able to sketch in graphic note taking form, three A2 posters during the event, acting as a



legacy image for the session, which can easily be re-used at further listening sessions as a dynamic record of what was spoken by the young people present.

Faith and creativity in action helped us to learn as a faithful city and allowed the young people at the event to see how powerful photography,



drawing, graphic design, textiles and illustration can be as a leadership tool to challenge the status quo.

Leeds Church Institute is a faith based charity with a mission of resourcing Christians, churches and faith organisations to learn as a faithful city for the benefit of all.

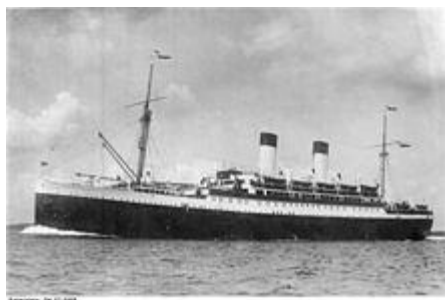
Grants are available for Christians, churches and faith organisations to host art exhibitions, contact me at creativity@leedschurchinstitute.org for more information about bursaries and support available.



THE WINDRUSH GENERATION

By John Duffy, Commission Member

I was lucky enough to go to a National Justice & Peace networking day in Birmingham, to listen to the Reverend Eve Pitts, – the first Black woman to be ordained priest in the Church of England – talk about being brought up by the Windrush Generation.



Rather than a history or sociology lecture, this was her personal story about observing, respecting and conflicting with her mother and that generation who came to England in the 40s and 50s, with their suitcases full of dreams. Their struggle was the realisation that in having to face the ugliness of hatred there was another journey to be made.

They sang the lament of leaving the familiar, hoped against the realities, and though they achieved so much for themselves and their children, Eve observed that they had become the type of Christian who doesn't ask questions, who were unwilling to question God, terrified of God. Eve rebelled, declaring that faith and justice are inseparable, and that not facing up to racism meant collusion with the oppressor.

She faced up to racism in her Church, and addressed the issue in 1997 from the pulpit. This led to controversy and the Bishop of Birmingham asked her to resign. The Association of Black Clergy supported her. She began ministry in a community hall and was then offered (by the next bishop of Birmingham) a new parish at Immanuel church in Highter's Heath, where she worked until her retirement.

God is much bigger than our definition of him, she says, and this determination has formed and sustained her faith, and she continues to minister, and to rock the boat when it is needed.

This summary does not do her justice, as she is a dramatic, dynamic and hilarious speaker. So please take a look at this five minute YouTube clip to inspire and encourage.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNvmLYN1JzA>



THE NONVIOLENCE OF JESUS IN A VIOLENT WORLD

By Carol Burns, Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group

We made a decision for our Autumn Day of Shared Reflection (organised jointly between the Commission's spirituality group and the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group) that we would



focus on personal reflection.

One of the beautiful stained glass windows in Good Shepherd Church

As Thomas Merton, the American Trappist monk and peace activist has put it:

"There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily



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succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life era form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes the work fruitful”.

The day was led by Sister Bernie Roche, from the Sisters of Mercy and the venue at the Good Shepherd parish in Mytholmroyd was a wonderful setting for our day.

A short introduction about what we mean by nonviolence was followed by personal reflection and sharing in groups.

Our sharing focused on Ephesians 3v 16-19:

“Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.”

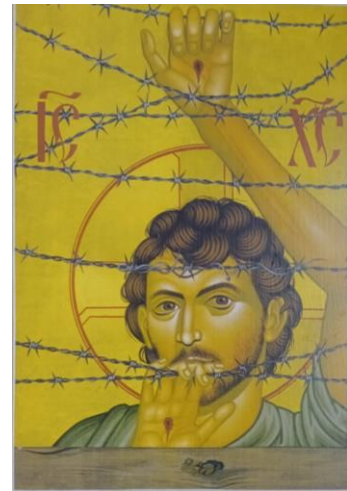
For such a short reading, it evoked a surprising number of different reactions.

A whole range of resources supported our reflections, including poetry, scripture readings

and images. Two of these images are shown below

The image of Christ with barbed wire is deliberately ambiguous

Is Jesus imprisoned behind the barbed wire - or is he looking at us through barbed wire?



The second picture is of a crucifix made by a craftsman in the north of Peru.



If you look closely at it you will see that this ‘campesino Christ’ has a cross made up of a shovel and the crosspiece is a machete.

Our day ended with prayers based on our experiences and this Franciscan prayer which sums up our hopes for the Day:-

*May God bless you with discomfort,
at easy answers, half-truths,*



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*and superficial relationships
so that you may live
deep within your heart.*

*May God bless you with anger
at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people and animals,
so that you may work for
justice, freedom and peace.*

And may God bless you

*with enough foolishness
to believe that you can
make a difference in the world,*

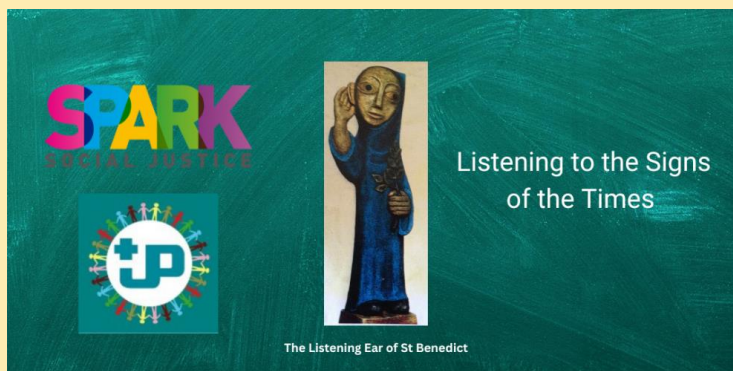
*so that you can do
what others claim cannot be done
to bring justice and kindness
to all our children, God's creatures and the
poor.*

Use this link to download Carol's introductory talk about Nonviolence

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-10-DoR-Introductory-talk-nonviolence.pdf>

LISTENING TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Sat 16 Dec 2023 11am – 1pm Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral



The Israel Palestine conflict, war in Ukraine, the Climate Crisis, the cost of living crisis...Where do we get Hope from in today's world? What does looking at the world through the lens of the Gospels tell us?

Come and join us in conversation for a couple of hours to help us to discern together what each of us can do .





Lunch will be provided at the end – so please use the following link to register so that we know how many mince pies to order!

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/listening-to-the-signs-of-the-times-tickets-757938894637>



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EVENTS

 Sat 25 Nov	Yorkshire CND Peace and Craft Fair <i>Victoria Hall, Saltaire BD18 3JS, 10:00 – 16:00</i> As well as lots of things to buy there will be live music, children's activities and a café – Make it a day out and go to Salt's Mill as well!
Weekly	Gaza & the West Bank Candle-Lit Vigil <i>Organised by Halifax Friends of Palestine</i> Every Saturday until a ceasefire is declared, St George's Square, Hebden Bridge HX7 8ET
Weekly	Women in Black Leeds <i>Every Tuesday 12:30 – 13:30 Dortmund Square</i> (Currently) Weekly peaceful vigils in Leeds city centre to protest Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine.
 Mon 04 Dec	Women in Black, Bradford <i>Junction of Bank St. & Hustlergate 16:00 – 17:00</i> A monthly vigil on the first Monday of the month to silently call for peace and justice across the world. – with a different focus each month.
 Sat 09 Dec	Film Presentation: Israelism – part of the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival <i>Wheeler Hall, St Annes Street Leeds LS2 8EE, 14:00-17:00</i> Film & post-film discussion with the director (via Zoom), stalls and refreshments. This is the final film of the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival. This film is sponsored by SPARK Social Justice Book Now (Tickets £5 each) – two thirds of the seats have already been sold: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/film-presentation-israelism-part-of-the-leeds-palestinian-film-festival-tickets-744229198567
 Sat 16 Dec	Listening to the Signs of the Times <i>Wheeler Hall, St Annes Street Leeds LS2 8EE 11:00-13:00 then lunch (provided)</i> Join us for a couple of hours so we can all better discern, in the light of the Gospels, what we should be doing about the signs of the times. Then you can do your last-minute Christmas shopping! Please use the link to register so we know how much food to order https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/listening-to-the-signs-of-the-times-tickets-757938894637

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.