

Climate Change Action Group

The group is continuing to engage with the Diocesan Curia to support and develop strategy and action on the decarbonisation of the diocese, in response to the Bishops' conference call for urgent action in this time of climate crisis.

Members of the group had productive meetings with Bishop Marcus & key members of the Curia, mainly concerning the appointment of a Sustainability Lead for the diocese and ways of supporting the Diocese in reaching its targets.

- The diocese has now divested from **fossil fuels** which is encouraging.
- We continue to work with Cafod supporting and assessing parishes and schools in achieving the **Live Simply** award and taking action on campaigns.
- Within our own parishes, group members are involved in activities to live out the message of **Laudato Si** e.g. in developing the spirituality of care of Creation, providing liturgies and bidding prayers, giving talks and presentations at retreats.
- Developing relationships with our MPs is hugely important: to talk truth to power, as well as tending allotments and gardens in church grounds, giving advice on solar panels, sharing tips on being more ecologically friendly and supporting the vulnerable.



SPARK aims to connect those with a passion for social justice; supporting them to define a social justice agenda driven by **Catholic Social Teaching**.

- Since our last annual report, we have established the core project framework and expanded our social media profile. People in our target age group are directly involved, as editor of the J&P newsletter, valued members of our project steering group and provider of our social media presence and leaflet design.
- SPARK sponsorship includes 4 young adults attending the **National Justice and Peace Network Conference**, and travel costs to attend the youth stream of the **2022 Vienna Conference** on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.
- We are working with key partners with similar values and ambitions to build the SPARK project, this includes positive contact and support from parishes, **Leeds Trinity University, Leeds Church Institute, Leeds Citizens and Catholic Care**. Plans continue to widen our reach and geographical area.
- Our current focus is to establish small, localised groups to establish a SPARK community.

Spirituality of Justice

- During the year we were blessed by many parishes undertaking reflection and activities inspired by **Laudato Si**.
- In October we held a Day of Reflection entitled *'Has the Church become a Not for Prophets Organisation?'*. This was led by **David Mcloughlin** and was held at **St. Robert's parish rooms in Harrogate**. The talks that David gave have subsequently been published on the J&P website and recordings of the talks are also available (it was our first dip into the world of podcasting).
- **Dr Anne Marie Mealey** gave a Zoom reflection on leadership, service and ministry which was very well attended and much appreciated.
- We chose our second **Day of Reflection** to be about Climate Change and how we care for God's creation. By the end of March detailed planning was well underway, with support from both CAFOD and through working in partnership with **Our Lady of Kirkstall** parish in Leeds.

Racial Justice

- With the support of **Leeds Citizens**, the Racial Justice Group has made links with the **Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ)** and plans to connect with school students for listening conversations about racial justice.
- The group wants to nurture racial justice ambassadors to ensure that parishes have access to appropriate resources, and that good diocesan policies become good practice.
- We are exploring, with CARJ, the possibilities of building a racial justice network across Northern dioceses, to encourage mutual support and share good practice.



Peace and nonviolence Action Group

Apr 22 - Mar 23

In the last twelve months we have continued to work in partnership both with **Pax Christi** members in the Leeds Diocese and with the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival, as well as the Spirituality of Justice group. Working in this way has enabled us to do more than would otherwise have been possible. This included:

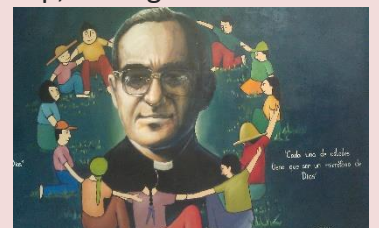
- In April, an hour of prayer and reflection about the conflict in Ukraine
- In June we hosted a joint event at Wheeler Hall which addressed the practical question of **'What can we do about Palestine?'**
- In December we sponsored, once again, a film showing as part of the **Palestinian Film festival** in Leeds. This time we were privileged to show the final film of the festival and the event included a fascinating after-film discussion with the chair of national **Palestine Solidarity Committee**.



Bishop John Arnold & Comms. Chair John Battle in Conversation in January 2023 on Zoom

UK Poverty Action Group

- Commission members and supporters have continued to be heavily involved in **St Monica's housing**, working with destitute women asylum seekers.
- Members and supporters also continued to work closely with the **SVP** and other agencies working at both a national and a local level.
- In Feb 23, with support from the Spirituality of Justice group, we organised a presentation of the 2023 **Romero Lecture** in partnership with **Leeds Trinity University**. **Peggy Healy**, who worked in Central America during the time of Romero, spoke eloquently and passionately about **'Responding to the Cry of the Poor Today'**.
- Since the pandemic, the members of this group have been depleted. If you are interested in exploring and taking action about the root causes of poverty in our own country then **please get in touch**.



ANNUAL REVIEW: Apr 2022 - MAR 2023

INCOME	2021/2022	Money in 2022/2023	C/F to 2023/24
Donations			
Regular Giving	£ 3,080.00	£ 2,045.00	
Donations from Events	£ 250.00	£ 511.50	
One off Donations	£ 30.00	£ -	
Grants			
Unrestricted Grants			
Diocese of Leeds	£ 5,000.00	£ 5,000.00	
Religious Orders	£ 610.00	£ 610.00	
Restricted Grants			
Society of the Holy Child Jesus		£ 7,377.00	
Other SPARK Donations	£ 2,000.00		
Benevolentia-SPARK		£ 10,000.00	£ 19,989.00
Sales of Resources & books		£ -	
Other Income		£ 12.60	
TOTAL MONEY IN	£ 10,970.00	£ 25,556.10	£ 19,989.00
EXPENDITURE		During 2022-23	
Communications	£ 1,440.61	£ 2,448.25	
Office costs	£ 892.32	£ 330.85	
Subscriptions	£ 460.00	£ 460.00	
Bank Charges		£ 12.60	
Governance	£ 265.00	£ 1,990.00	
Publications & Resources		£ -	
Projects	£ 5,176.69	£ 16,793.07	
Peace and Nonviolence	£ 312.00	£ 754.00	
Climate Change Action Group	£ 334.05	£ 40.00	
UK Poverty Action Group	£ 80.00	£ -	
Spirituality of Justice	£ 280.00	£ 400.00	
Racial Justice Action Group	£ 860.00	£ 750.00	
2019 SPARK	£ 3,310.64		
P2022-SPARK	£ -	£ 14,849.07	
	£ -	£ -	
	£ -	£ -	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 8,234.62	£ 22,034.77	

Introduction

The key points to make about the finances of the Commission in the last financial year are:

1. We receive a steady, if modest income through a small number of people who generously give money to the Commission on a regular basis. We are extremely grateful for these regular contributions as they allow us some certainty in planning activities over the year. I would encourage anyone who is able to think about setting up such a payment so that we can expand our work. Equally important, from the point of view of trying to generate funds by applying for grant-funding for specific projects, we receive £5,000 from the Diocese to support our work. The combination of grassroots financial support and

support from the core institution of which we are a part are crucial in the success we have had in obtaining grants.

2. The main cause of the increase in expenditure is our SPARK project, aimed at younger Catholics in the Leeds Diocese. In addition to our 4-year funding from Porticus we also received funding from the SHCJ order to provide additional creative arts and other professional inputs to encourage engagement with the project.

3. Volunteer activity over the course of the year has remained steady. Using paid services replacement costs as per the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) suggestion, the time spent by volunteers represents an expenditure in the region of an additional £8,000.

Joe Burns, Treasurer April 2023

Causes to Come

Pope Francis said that the Church is becoming a 'field hospital', on the battlefield, not as participant but as a mobile presence addressing and 'healing the wounds'. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, leading to a desperate war, conflict breaking out in Sudan, and more recently Kosovo; the continued arrival (and drowning) of refugees and asylum seekers and at home the 'cost of living crisis', especially hitting the poorest hardest has all led to a feverish headline driven crisis response at best squeezing out any analyses of causes and reflection.

As our Leeds J&P Commission emerged from Covid lockdown our sustained regular online webinar sessions covering "Laudato Si" with Bishop Arnold, on Racial Justice, on Young Leadership, as well as an annual in person retreat away day have proved to be popular Leeds J&P highlights. The deep 'spirituality of justice and peace' (holding together prayer and action) is now regarded as our Leeds Commission hallmark.

But the headline perma crises cannot undermine our need as a Justice and Peace Commission to address, challenge and tackle the causes of injustice and conflict. In the words of Archbishop Tutu, 'There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.'

Again, we hosted a hugely successful public Palestine awareness event featuring a young Jewish conscientious objector and Rev Dr Clive Barrett of the Peace Museum. Following through "Laudato Si" we have worked with the Diocesan authorities on plans to move our Diocesan institutions and parishes towards a cleaner greener sustainable future. We have set up a group on racial justice working with CARJ to address systemic racism in our Church and society. We have extended our Spark Justice programme aimed at engaging young adults in the Church's mission of Justice and Peace.

Nor do we work alone, not only joining with other Catholic Charities such as CAFOD, Pax Christi and CARJ and developing closer links with the SVP at local and national levels to tackle poverty at home and abroad.

With others, the Commission set up the St Monica's Trust, currently two houses of hospitality for desperate refuge women in Leeds; crucial support at a time when as the national Bishop's Conference recent letter "Love the Stranger" spells out, refugees and asylum seekers need to be given back their names and faces and their stories listened to and not dismissed as numbers.

This coming election year provides a real opportunity to challenge and change proposals for organising our own society for the future by presenting and spelling out in detail the Church's central messages of working for justice and peace in practice together for the common good both locally and internationally. It is of course a task for the whole Church.

John Battle, Chair of the Commission April 2023

The work of Justice & Peace is the work of everybody in the Church.
What will you be doing in the next year?

Sign up on our website for regular monthly updates and follow us on Facebook for ideas and to take inspiration from others

