



J&P ENDORSES LEEDS CHRISTIANS' STATEMENT ABOUT RACISM

There was a planned demonstration in Leeds by UKIP and, so-called, Yorkshire Patriots on 25 April. In advance, concerns were raised in Christian circles that there would be attempts to use Christianity to justify their racist views (as per the London demonstration before Christmas featuring Tommy Robinson).

On behalf of the Commission, John Battle endorsed the following statement signed by about 30 church leaders in Leeds:

*As Christians we believe in God's love for everyone, shown to us in Jesus Christ. Because of this we reject the use of Christian language and imagery in any racist context. We note the march on 25th April in Leeds, and we wish to make it clear that **UKIP do not speak for us or for the Christian faith of which we are a part.***

*Please join us resisting UKIP's divisive exclusive politics. Please join us in **praying for unity and peace** for our Leeds communities, recognising the evils of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all racism, and calling out racism in your everyday life whenever you can.*

Jesus said:

'Love your neighbour as you love yourself' (Matthew 22.39; Mark 12.31; Luke 10.27) and

'Do to others what you would like them to do to you' (Matthew 7.12; Luke 6. 31).

When asked who our neighbour is, Jesus makes it clear that he does not mean the person who is closest to us in ethnicity – in fact, the person he chooses as an example of a neighbour in the parable of the Good

Samaritan is a Samaritan – that is, someone who was distrusted and regarded as inferior and impure by most of the society of Jesus' time. (Luke 10.29 – 37)

*Our calling as Christians is **to love and to learn from all God's people**: celebrating the beauty and dignity of every human being, with a special bias for anyone whose beauty and dignity is contested through ignorance, pride, prejudice, racism, hatred. We believe that **God is on the side of people who are marginalised and oppressed**, and that if we turn away from or persecute those people we turn away from God.*



*In our context, we believe this means that **we have a God-given duty to stand up for people of all faiths and none who are victims of racism.** This is particularly the case when victimisation is being justified using Christian language.*

Loving God, make us channels of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us bring love. Where there is suspicion, let us bring faith. Where there is fear, let us bring hope. Where there is division, let us bring unity. Amen.

It is difficult to judge the impact of this statement. However, on the day, there were very few demonstrators from UKIP and Yorkshire Patriots (less than 100) and they were far-outnumbered by various anti-racist groups, including Christians. A few arrests



were made but the police commented that this was completely in line with their expectations for demonstrations of this nature with opposing groups in the city centre – and no doubt aided by the relatively small numbers involved.

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ST AUGUSTINE'S YOUTH EVENT

by Kathy Shaw, SPARK Manager

I had a lovely visit to the parish of St Augustine of Canterbury in Harehills on a recent Sunday.



The **Youth Mass was a joy**; young people led the readings and responsorial psalm and sang solo with skill and confidence. Some spoke of their own experiences of faith in moving testimonies, including a young man who had not been raised in a faith background but had recently found his place in the community of St Augustine. The church offers specific masses for Zimbabwean, Ukrainian, Portuguese and Nigerian parishioners as well as the whole community.

After Mass, team building activities for all ages were led by the irrepressible energy of Cassandra James, a recent and welcome addition to the J&P Commission. I spoke to a number of parishioners who all spoke of the diversity and family sense of this parish, the young people were repeatedly assured that as the light of the world they were the future

of the church, and they would be the leaders to come.



My happy place is never behind a microphone at the front of a crowded hall, but in response to a request from Cassandra I spoke briefly about our work. There were several young adults from Notre Dame and at university and our leaflets may lead to further conversations.

It was a joy filled occasion which truly celebrated the place of young people at the centre of this parish. An example to those across the Diocese who say it is hard to involve young people and teenagers ... **come to St Augustine's or talk to Cassandra!**

Find out more about SPARK by emailing Kathy:

Spark.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk





ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING ON 1st APRIL 2026

FINANCE REPORT

By Joe Burns, Commission Treasurer

Introduction

The table on the next page shows our incoming and outgoing cash.

It is, essentially, a cashflow statement, with the first instalment of our grant from the Diocese for 2026-27 (a total of £2,500, paid on 01 April) carried forward into the new financial year.

Comparing this financial year with the previous financial year shows a reduction in our bank balance by the end of the year. We were holding cash reserves at the start of the financial year greater than one year's spend and some smaller, further reduction, should be sought in the next financial year.

Income

Our Income during this financial year is up by about £5k from the previous year. The key reason for this that we received a grant of £5k from the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace to finance the costs of the work on our 'Trees of Hope' project. We also continue to receive a regular annual donation from the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy in Yeadon.

The financial year also saw the last, tapered, instalment of our support for SPARK from Benevolentia. The lower amount of the grant in this final year of funding has been offset by a couple of small grants and the start of £5k of annual funding towards the costs of the SPARK programme from the Diocese.

Since preparing the Annual Financial Statement, we have been awarded a grant of £21,000 (£7000 per year over 3 years) from the Assumption Legacy Fund. This funding is specifically to go towards our SPARK programme with younger adults. It gives us more confidence that we can move ahead with the work of the SPARK programme (although more is needed to keep the activities at their current level).

Expenditure

Our expenditure during the financial year was very similar to the previous financial year. A cost increase has come about through recruiting a service provider (Gina) to seek and update content on our websites and using the online content to determine the contents for the monthly PDF newsletter (when, previously, it was the other way around).

How can I help?

A key way to help the work of the Commission is by pledging to give a regular amount (and, if you are a taxpayer, increase the value of any annual contribution by 25% through the HMRC planned giving scheme). Over recent years the amount we obtain has declined. Not only does it help directly fund our activities, it also demonstrates to possible charitable trusts and foundations that we have a supporter base within the Diocese, and this is an important consideration for many trusts when assessing any grant applications.

If you go to the donate page of our website then you can download our banking details and set up a Standing Order. Here is the link

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/donate/>



NEWSLETTER May 2026

What does not get recorded formally is the effort given by volunteers. Charity good practice is to estimate the value of volunteer activity at the same rate as paid service providers. A conservative estimate is that work undertaken by volunteers added at least another £8,000 worth of value.

DIOCESE OF LEEDS JUSTICE & PEACE COMMISSION: ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 02 APRIL 2025 TO 01 APRIL 2026			
	Previous Year 2024/25	This Year 2025/26	Next Year C/F to 2026/27
INCOME			
Donations			
Regular Giving	£ 2,182.88	£ 1,982.00	
Donations from Events	£ 305.01	£ 932.70	
One off Donations		£ -	
Grants			
Unrestricted Grants			
Diocese of Leeds	£ 5,000.00	£ 5,000.00	£ 1,250.00
Religious Orders	£ 520.00	£ 500.00	
Restricted Grants			
Society of the Holy Child Jesus		£ -	
SPARK (2022) Benevolentia	£ 19,989.00	£ 9,989.00	
SPARK (2022) Other Grants		£ 5,480.00	£ 1,250.00
Trees of Hope		£ 5,000.00	
Sales of Resources & books	£ 5.00	£ 13.88	
Other Income		£ -	
TOTAL MONEY IN	£ 28,001.89	£23,897.58	£ 2,500.00
EXPENDITURE			
Communications			
Online: website, Newsletters	£ 2,231.06	£ 3,495.45	
Facebook & Mailchimp	£ 995.00	£ 860.00	
Outreach	£ 259.14	£ 327.88	
Office costs	£ 6.99	£ -	
Subscriptions	£ 210.00	£ 210.00	
Bank Charges		£ -	
Governance	£ 2,266.00	£ 2,289.00	
Publications & Resources			
Projects			
Peace & nonviolence	£ 120.00	£ 260.00	
Climate Change	£ 30.00	£ 422.35	
UK Poverty			
Racial Justice	£ 34.80	£ -	
Spirituality of Justice	£ 42.00	£ -	
SPARK(2022)	£ 21,059.85	£ 20,908.62	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 27,254.84	£28,773.30	
Opening Bank Balance			
	£ 41,213.17	£32,544.32	
Money in during the year	£ 19,251.89	£ 20,318.58	
Money Spent during the year	£ 27,920.74	£ 28,988.30	
Closing Bank Balance	£ 32,544.32	£23,874.60	



REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN 2025-26

SPARK

About 75% of our spending goes on the SPARK programme – so it makes sense to start with that. During the course of the year a group (mainly from Leeds University) have continued to meet as a ‘faith and friendship’ group.

Responding to requests from a couple of people, Kathy started a men’s group and this has gone from strength to strength meeting very regularly.

In the second half of 2025, Kathy started to support a nascent Social Justice group meeting at Notre Dame 6th Form college in Leeds. This has continued to meet regularly with support both from Kathy and the lay chaplain, Ann Merry.

In March 2025, working with the Spirituality of Justice Group, SPARK hosted the Romero Lecture given by Fr Luis, A Jesuit priest from Mexico, studying in the UK. , His talk linked the life of St Oscar Romero to his own special interest in the families of the ‘Disappeared’ in Mexico. It was a very moving presentation -so much so that, again with the help of the Spirituality of Justice Group, we invited him back again to lead two events for SPARK. The first was an evening meeting with food at a community venue in Headingley which was attended by members of the SPARK community. On the following day he led a Day of Reflection for us at Hinsley Hall. This event was open to all and it was a very inter-generational affair. Again, people were moved by what Fr Luis had to say and it was a powerful day that gave people a lot to think about afterwards. We are grateful to the Jesuit Social Justice Fund, whose financial support enabled these two events to take place.

Working in partnership with the Peace & Nonviolence group, SPARK again supported the presentation of a film at the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival (thanks in no small part to some funding provided by the Sisters of Sion).

The programme has continued to support individual members of the SPARK community in their efforts. A number of people are no longer part of a group but continue to be engaged and a number have contributed articles for the website and newsletter.

Climate Action Group (CAG)

This is the most active of our working groups. Some members of this group are now part of the formal diocesan sustainability group, which is called the Laudato Si Sustainability Group. CAG have met regularly in the last year and contributed a leaflet for parishes about what is involved in installing solar panels on church buildings. They also took a stall at the Advent eco-fair that was held at Hinsley Hall.

Along with a number of people from LiveSimply parishes in the Diocese, group members helped to organise a ‘LiveSimply Day’ at Hinsley Hall. The event attracted about 60 people and we were delighted to welcome CAFOD Director, Christine Allen, to take an active part in the event. We were also delighted to welcome Caroline Kelly, head of the SVP Centre on York Road in Leeds. The LiveSimply scheme provides an excellent opportunity to link global poverty and local poverty – and understand the connections for both with our current Climate Crisis.

Spirituality of Justice Group

The group worked in partnership with SPARK to present the Romero Lecture and the subsequent events also led by Fr Luis.



In March 2026 we, again, hosted a presentation of the Romero Lecture in partnership with SPARK at the City Campus of Leeds Trinity University. The lecturer, Todd Walatka, from Notre Dame University in Illinois was an excellent speaker – as well as clearly being an expert on the writings of St Oscar Romero. This is growing to be a regular partnership with the Archbishop Romero Trust.

During Lent 2026 we once again organised an online Stations of the Cross for Holy Week.

UK Poverty Working Group

This group has not met formally and, whilst there are Commission people who are interested in the issue, there has not been the capacity to do much. We would very much welcome anyone who is passionate about this and could help shape some appropriate actions for the Commission to take.

Peace and Nonviolence.

This group helps organise the annual Palestine Film Festival – with the Leeds Pax Christi group selecting the film. This is now well-established as an annual event but we have moved to brand it as a SPARK-sponsored event as the audience is much younger than at a typical J&P event!

Additionally, in June 2025 we received a grant from the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace towards the costs of our project to provide 'Trees of Hope' for both parish and educational settings. These are ginkgo trees from seeds of a tree in the blast zone of the Hiroshima bomb. The work on this project is proceeding – but it may not be until 2027 that the saplings are strong enough to be planted out. Liz Firth and Sean Morris are managing this project for the Commission.

We also heavily promoted an event about nonviolence organised by the Leeds Pax Christi group and local quakers. This was a sold-out workshop led by the Director of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, Nicolas Paz.

Racial Justice Action Group

As with the UK poverty, we would be interested in talking to and supporting anyone who would like to work on the issue of racial justice. Please get in touch if this is of interest to you.

Core Communications

We see communication as a core part of what we should be doing as a Commission. As well as the J&P website we also have a separate website for SPARK Social Justice. These, together with the monthly newsletter email (which goes to about 400 individuals as well as all the clergy in the diocese) are the main ways in which we communicate.

A major change within the last 12 months has been using the services of Gina Cavanagh and she has helped achieve more regular posting of stories on our websites.

Could you become a Commission member?

We are always open and interested in talking to people who might consider joining the Commission. Simply email us and we will arrange a chat with a Commission member. The more people who are part of the Commission then the greater our capacity to put the work of Justice & Peace in front of people across the Diocese of Leeds.



REVIEW OF CALL FOR DEBT JUSTICE WITH CAFOD

By Angela Powell, CAFOD Leeds & Hallam

Last year, our Catholic community supported a global church campaign to tackle the debt crisis, but we need continued support, to change the devastating impacts of debt on low-income countries. During the Jubilee Year, 35,000 people signed CAFOD's petition including 18 parishes across the diocese of Leeds, including a group of parishioners who joined others in London to speak to their MP's face to face about this issue, let us now build on this hope. Please see cafod.org.uk/cancelthedebt



All countries borrow money. But low-income countries need to borrow more and are pushed into deepening debt crisis, paying high interest rates to wealthy lenders. Often, they have paid their original debt back, but spiralling interest means they cannot break the cycle. Money that should be spent on food, healthcare, and education is flowing out of countries that can least afford it. Governments across the global south must choose between serving their people or paying creditors.

Wesley Chibamba, Caritas Africa's Policy and Advocacy Officer, explained people are dying because they can't access healthcare. Children cannot go to school. People are going hungry because the governments have

debt obligations. Governments don't have the capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis, like floods or drought – they don't have the funds.

Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, says "The current debt crisis represents a profound failure of our global economic system...If a mother cannot access prenatal care because the government has cut healthcare spending to service debt... if communities cannot rebuild after disasters because the resources are diverted to foreign creditors, we must acknowledge that there has not just been a serious economic failure but a moral one."

Next year, our government is hosting the [G20 in 2027](#) - a crucial gathering of the world's 20 most powerful economies. These leaders have power to fix the global debt system; we need to call for debt justice now.

Please sign [CAFOD's new petition](#) this spring and build on the momentum of 2025.

As Wesley Chibamba says,

"It is not an issue of compassion, it is an issue of justice."

If you care for humanity and development, we urge you to support the debt justice campaign.



Use to link to watch this two minute CAFOD video to better understand why there is a debt crisis in the first place.

<https://youtu.be/5iP8oMZQuIE>



EVENTS

 Thur 04 Jun	<p>Magnifica Humanitas Webinare <i>Online – 17:00 – 18:15</i> Pope Leo XVI’s first encyclical, <i>Magnfica humanitas</i>, exploring how we preserve the human person in an age of artificial intelligence, will be released on Monday 25 May.</p> <p>The Centre for Catholic Social Thought and Practice are bringing together an expert panel to reflect on the themes of the encyclical, with an initial response to the challenges and the hope it offers. This zoom event will be chaired by Anna Rowlands. Use the link below to register to be able to join this meeting https://zoom.us/meeting/register/8TkEFoTHQsCRiFLJ8lc4rg#/registration</p>
 Mon 15 Jun	<p>Northern Race Equality Conference <i>The University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9JT 9:30 – 16:45</i> This bring together activists, advocates, grassroots and national organisations, lawyers, researchers, and academics committed to building a better society, one where racial justice is the norm. Follow the link for more info and to book a ticket https://actionnetwork.org/ticketed_events/northern-race-equality-conference-2026?</p>
 Tue 16 Jun	<p>Bradford Peace Forum <i>Bradford Mechanics Institute, Kirkgate, Bradford, BD1 1SZ 17:00 – 19:00</i> This new forum aims to strengthen the local peace movement through discussion, networking and sharing information about events. It comes from different traditions and backgrounds but they are united by a common aim of peace and justice for all. Use this link for more information and registration (which is essential): https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/event/bradford-peace-forum/</p>
 Tue 16 – Wed 17	<p>From Leeds to Gaza – uncovering the Truth <i>Quaker Meeting House 188 Woodhouse Lane Leeds LS2 9DX</i> <i>Tuesday 16 June 11:00 – 19:00, Wednesday 17 June 10:00 – 16:00</i> The Yorkshire Gaza Families Fund (YGFF) is a grassroots, community-led mutual aid initiative in the Yorkshire region that raises money to send directly to four large families (totalling 400 to 600 individuals) trapped in Gaza who have relatives living in and around Leeds. Displays, reels, History, Talks, Tartreez, food and a showing of the acclaimed film ‘Aisha’s Story’. For more details email yorkshiregazafamilyfund2026@gmail.com</p>
 Fri 24 – Sun 26 Jul	<p>‘Just Talk’ the 2026 National Justice & Peace Network Conference <i>Swanwick Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> The annual conference bringing together J&P supporters from across England and Wales. Keep an eye on their website for details of speakers and workshops https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/</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!