



J&P FRIENDS SAY FAREWELL TO THE CARMELITES AT WOOD HALL

By Joe Burns, Commission member

The Carmelite monastery at Wood Hall, near Wetherby, has been there since the late 1960s. During the 1970s and 1980s the nuns were a regular source of inspiration to members of the J&P Commission and their supporters.

Also, in those pre-internet days, the Commission made good use of the printing services that they offered in order to make some money to support themselves. During the 1980s, especially, they printed a number of booklets produced by working parties of the Commission about topics such as the 'World of Work' and about the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Although old, many of these booklets are sadly just as relevant today as when they were written.



They also received many visitors from guest speakers that the Commission organised events around – such as Dom Helder Camara (archbishop of Recife in Brazil) and the newscaster Jon Snow, who had come to speak after a showing of the film 'Roses in

December' about the assassination of lay missionary Jean Donovan and 3 Maryknoll nuns by the military authorities in El Salvador

Contact has been more with individuals in recent years, though we did hold a Day of Reflection there a few years ago to better understand how Carmelite spirituality related to working for Justice and Peace. You always knew that a visit to them would be an occasion of many laughs as well as challenging questions.

In the last few years, as the sisters became older, the community made the decision to close the monastery. Now the last 4 nuns left are ready to move. Due to differing needs, the members of the community are being dispersed to different Carmelite locations across the country. The monastery and grounds will be sold, although no final decisions have been taken to date.

So many members and supporters of the Commission became good friends with the sisters that it was fitting that they got together to have a farewell mass and wish them well for the future.

We celebrated mass in their chapel, with Mgr Peter Rosser (who was a Commission member for many years and, also, chaplain to the sisters for a period) presiding.

Afterwards, we joined them in their refectory for lunch. After lunch we even had a film show from the early 70's – filmed by the parents of one of the nuns – showing them at their work using the printing press. It was a hoot! – which was very fitting as much laughter is one of my abiding memories of visiting them. ***Cont'd over the page***



Mass and lunch at the Carmel Monastery at Wood Hall – an occasion both sad and joyful.

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NDEG VISIT TO THE LAUDATO SI CENTRE IN SALFORD

by Mark Wiggin, chair of NDEG

Members of the Northern Dioceses Environment Group (NDEG) gathered for the annual in-person meeting held on Friday 19th June at the Laudato Si' centre, Wardley Hall, Salford.

The meeting reflected the purpose of the centre, **'A statement of hope – rooted in the belief we can make a difference'** and opened with prayers and quiet reflection led by Emily Cahill, the Environment and Learning Officer who led us for much of the day.

The vision and operating model is rooted in the belief that we can all make a difference through the actions we take in response to

the cry of the earth and cry of the people, so powerfully expressed by Pope Francis in his

letter ['Laudato Si' – Care for Our Common Home'](#).

In response to the call of Pope Francis, the Centre began life in 2019 and has welcomed over 9,000 visitors to this impressive place of education offering a model for parishes, schools and the wider community to follow and emulate.

Emily took us on a tour of the Laudato Si' Centre – its poly-tunnels, flower and vegetable beds, fruit trees, woodlands and outdoor classroom - explaining the centre's **ambitious mission to put into practice our Faith** and look after the environment and the poor of our world.



In the afternoon, we spent time sharing our 'hopes' and 'fears' and looking towards the need for collective action if we are to be agents for change. We looked at a set of resources on Salvation and Creation Care for a short parish course developed by Dr Finlay Malcolm, a theologian at Manchester University, as part of his work with Salford Diocese the last 3 years. He has developed 3 sessions each 90mins long on themes of Communion, Reconciliation, and Redemption. Full materials – leaders' notes, participant notes, short videos, etc can be downloaded and freely used from [Formation and Training Resources - Salvation and Creation Care - Research Explorer The University of Manchester](#)

There are also some excellent resources for parishes from the Laudati Si Centre's own website:

<https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/parish/parish-resources/>

We concluded this part of the day with an input on engaging school children on the issues of plastic waste and the forthcoming Cop 31.

Before Mass we were invited to take our time in quiet reflection through a Woodland Walk moving slowly, noticing the woodland, using

our senses and hearing the sound of the forest. We were invited to look and feel the beauty of God's creation in the design of what God has created.



We ended the visit with Mgr. Paul Smith who celebrated Mass with the group in the woodland area under the canopy of a donated parachute strung between the trees in case it rained. A perfect way to conclude a wonderful day appreciating nature!

One member summed up the day, *'It was great we could meet together in Salford on Friday. Thank you for coming. I found it a brilliant day, informative and reflective; and came away with lots of ideas to share more widely. And very many thanks to Emily and Mgr Paul for all their time, and enthusiasm'.*

A couple of future meetings for the diary:

Monday 14th September 6:30pm a reflective evening for the Season of Creation – joint meeting with the Southern Dioceses Environment Network.

Tuesday 10th November 6:30pm NDEG meeting – Environmental Developments at Ladyewell Shrine (near Preston) with Dr Stephen Garsed



LORD MAYOR'S CERTIFICATE FOR SPARK SOCIAL JUSTICE!

by Kathy Shaw, SPARK Manager

SPARK Social Justice was invited to a civic reception at Leeds Civic Hall; recognising small groups and charities who support communities across Leeds.

The focus was on strengthening local communities and finding ways to make Leeds more inclusive and connected. This event highlighted the contribution volunteers and charities make in the city – the current Lord Mayor Stephen Holroyd presented a framed certificate to everyone – now proudly hanging on the wall of the Justice and Peace Office at Hinsley!



Tom (pictured) is the Chair of SPARK and helps keep our work youth focussed and represents the views of young adults in all our plans and delivery.

Our members may be interested in events and activities for Leeds-400 over summer, this celebrates 400 years since the Charter of Leeds.

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/campaign/leeds-400>

Lots of new connections were made and hopefully some volunteer opportunities for SPARK members in the future.

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NEW SPARK GROUP AT ST AUGUSTINES LEEDS

By Kathy Shaw, SPARK Project Manager



Earlier this year, SPARK was fortunate to gain additional funds through the Assumption Legacy Fund, focussed on Catholic Social Teaching. This fits with our current priorities of social justice; climate change, local poverty, refugees and people seeking asylum and the rights of people to live in peace and free from racism.

Our work with young people is centred on enabling their voices to be heard. At SPARK, we want to listen and enable our members to actively participate in their local communities. We raise awareness of the local and national issues that matter to them and offer support in finding local solutions. Our offer focuses on the personal development of each individual and on activities which are devised and directed by the young people. SPARK aims to create events that offer opportunities of enrichment, leadership and personal growth encouraging everyone to learn more about



social justice and leading on action for change.

This new fund has allowed us to expand our existing work, earlier this month we had our first parish session at St. Augustine of Canterbury. This is a lovely, welcoming parish in Harehills, home to a vibrant group of young people, who demonstrate strong leadership and enthusiasm.

In 2025, the parish made a conscious commitment to ensure that the voices of young people are heard as active contributors in their church and to nurture their personal growth.



Cassandra James

Thanks to Fr Ghebreyesus and Cassandra James who leads the youth work in the parish, along with the team who helped on the day we all had a memorable afternoon full of fun and pizza! More sessions are planned and we are looking forward to working with the parish of St. Augustine.

RACIAL JUSTICE AND REFUGEES IN CST: A CALL TO SOLIDARITY

by Rev. Dr. Joseph D Cortis

The Catholic Church's commitment to racial justice and the dignity of refugees flows from its core belief that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). This truth underpins Catholic social teaching and has been consistently affirmed across generations—from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Leo XIV. Together, their **teachings call the faithful to confront racism, defend the vulnerable, and respond to migration with compassion, justice, and solidarity.**

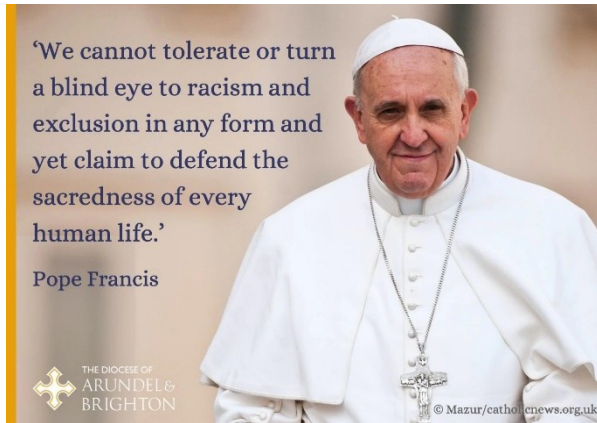
Leo XIII, often regarded as the father of Catholic social teaching, laid the foundation in his 1891 encyclical [Rerum Novarum](#). Although written in response to the challenges of the industrial revolution, it emphasized a universal principle: every person possesses inherent dignity that must be upheld in social structures. This teaching implicitly rejects racism and exploitation by insisting that no one can be reduced to a tool of profit or power. **His vision of the common good continues to shape Catholic responses to inequality, discrimination, and displacement.**

Later popes made this teaching more explicit. St. John Paul II repeatedly condemned **racism as a grave sin that contradicts the Gospel** and fractures the unity of the human family. He urged both personal conversion and systemic reform to overcome discrimination. For him, the **Church must reflect the universality of Christ's love**, becoming a place where all peoples are welcomed and valued equally. Benedict XVI developed this vision further in his reflections on migration. He stressed that migrants and refugees are not merely social or political issues, but persons endowed with rights and dignity. He called on nations to balance border control with moral responsibility. **Migration, he argued, can be**





an opportunity for encounter and mutual enrichment when approached with respect and solidarity.



Pope Francis placed renewed urgency on these concerns. In [Fratelli Tutti \(2020\)](#), he famously described racism as a “virus” that persists in hidden forms and continues to wound society. He has also made the plight of refugees central to his papacy, urging the global community to **“welcome, protect, promote, and integrate” migrants**. His visit to Lampedusa in 2013 highlighted what he called the “globalization of indifference,” challenging the world to recognize and respond to the suffering of displaced people.

Leo XIV, has continued and deepened this trajectory, particularly emphasizing the dignity of migrants and the moral duty to respond. He has repeatedly stressed that **refugees are not threats but brothers and sisters in need**, insisting that “there is no justice without compassion”. He has appealed to world leaders to ensure that those fleeing persecution are given a “humane and dignified welcome” and reminded the faithful that “no one can turn a blind eye to those who are seeking protection and safety”. In his broader teaching, Leo XIV connects migration with the Church’s mission and identity. He has described migrants and refugees as **“missionaries of hope,” witnesses who reveal the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of trust in God**. He also

emphasizes that indifference is one of the greatest obstacles to justice, warning against a “globalization of powerlessness” in which people resign themselves to suffering instead of acting to alleviate it.

This echoes and develops Pope Francis’ earlier call to overcome indifference with a “culture of encounter.”

Racial justice and the defence of refugees are deeply interconnected in Catholic teaching. Refugees often face discrimination based on ‘race’, ethnicity, or religion, compounding their vulnerability. The Church insists that such **exclusion is incompatible with the Gospel**. Solidarity, a key principle of Catholic social thought, calls all people to recognize their shared humanity. As St. John Paul II explained, it is a firm commitment to the common good and the well-being of all, especially the most vulnerable.

Catholic teaching also insists that **justice must address not only personal attitudes but also structural causes**. War, poverty, environmental degradation, and inequalities, all contribute to forced migration. Pope Francis, in [Laudato Si’](#), and Leo XIV in [Magnifica Humanitas](#), both highlight the need to safeguard human dignity in the face of modern challenges, calling for systems that **prioritize people over profit or power**. These teachings reinforce the idea that lasting solutions require both moral transformation and institutional change.

The Church emphasizes the responsibility of every Christian. Supporting refugees, opposing racism, and advocating for just policies are not optional acts but essential expressions of faith. As Leo XIV teaches, the credibility of the Gospel depends on concrete acts of welcome and compassion toward those who are excluded.



In conclusion, from Leo XIII to Leo XIV, Catholic social teaching presents a consistent and evolving vision rooted in human dignity, solidarity, and love. The call to racial justice and the protection of refugees is central to this vision. In a world marked by division and displacement, the Church calls all people to recognize one another as brothers and sisters and to build a society grounded in compassion, justice, and the common good.

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THE MISSIONARY PARISH

by David Jackson, *Laudato Si* Animator for the Leeds Diocese

The subtitle of Pope Leo's latest encyclical: 'Magnifica Humanitas' reads: '**On Safeguarding the Human Person in the time of Artificial Intelligence.**' Pope Leo bases his critique and 'disarming' of AI on the solid foundation of the Church's Social Teaching. It is some 50 years since the Synod of Bishops declared: 'the work of justice and peace is a constitutive element in the preaching of the Gospel.' A group of us set up a parish J&P Group soon after – inspired by those who pioneered the present Diocesan J&P Commission. The remnant of our parish group

still exists – as does the need for parishes of mission and service in the name of justice.

The Church has come a long way! From the time when an anonymous parishioner scrawled the word 'Communists' on a notice in our Church porch advertising an early meeting of the new J&P Group to Pope Leo using the Church's social teaching as the basis for judging Artificial Intelligence. **But how have times changed?**

For over 30 years I have received the daily meditation from the [Centre for Action and Contemplation](#) – headed until recently by Fr Richard Rohr OFM. A recent meditation was entitled: '[Re-Enlivening Ministries](#)'. He turns to St Paul's advice to the early Christians to re-envision renewal today. **For Paul faith is a 'loving, communal' way of life. Can a parish be the same?**

'We must begin to validate Paul's original teaching on "many gifts and many ministries" (1 Corinthians 12:4–11) that together "make a unity in the work of service" (Ephesians 4:12–13). We need Christian people who are trained in, validated for, and encouraged to make home and hospital visits; do hospice work and jail ministry; support immigrants and refugees; help with soup kitchens; counsel couples before, during, and after marriage; teach classes in parenting; offer ministries of emotional, sexual, and relational healing; help with financial counselling; build low-cost housing; take care of the elderly; run thrift centres—all of which put Christian people in immediate touch with other people.'

A question? – **How far does my parish mandate parishioners to these ministries of service?**

Answers will vary. We 'do liturgy' and 'build loving communities' fairly or even very well! But mission? Many parishioners may well be involved in such work – in schools, hospitals,



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care homes and social services, but do they feel they have been 'mandated' by parish leadership or the community so as to regard these roles as 'ministries'? Much depends on the sort of leadership we experience in our parish. Is it in any way synodal – shared, or

SOURCES for action – in J&P and in contemplative prayer

Pope Leo's Encyclical: Magnifica Humanitas
www.vatican.va/leo-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html

Centre for Action and Contemplation -
www.cac.org

The World Community for Christian Meditation – Fr Lawrence Freeman OSB -
www.wccm.org

does it remain more 'command and control'? Richard ends his meditation with a short description of the kind required:

'Authentic leadership, I think, implies people who can spot, affirm, train, support, finance, and validate gifts and leadership wherever they see them in actual practice (think multipliers instead of monarchs). Then we are not all striving toward the top but striving toward supporting the supreme work of love flowing into the world.'

The conviction grows that as one day there was a danger that the work of justice and peace – we can add now care of creation – heeding the voices of the poor and of the earth our common home – could be safely left to a small group – now that work is beginning to be seen to take the form of ministries open to all the baptised – **not the charism of a few but something that defines and is the DNA of a parish community**. Thus it was in St Paul's day. The work of 'authentic leadership' in any parish is to identify, nurture, support and

celebrate the ministries of service and of mission.

Richard Rohr was once asked why the title of his Centre was 'Centre for Action and Contemplation'. And which word was the most important. **He said 'And' was the important word!** Either lead to and define the other. Faith defined with St Paul as a 'communal, loving way of life' – a parish working for justice and peace – has to be embedded in experiences of union with the Divine – achieved by the steady conscious practice of some form of silent, contemplative prayer!

Surprised?

Contemplation always leads to action – both to build communities engaged in the Church's mission of justice, peace and care for our common home.

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DEALING WITH A TROUBLED WORLD THROUGH CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

by Sean Morris, Commission Member

One of the things I do at my local Catholic church in Mytholmroyd on a regular basis is be a bidding prayers leader. We have a resilient rota and the people that do it put lots of effort into it, always including prayers from our prayer tree, and allowing all to speak out with a personal prayer for us as a church community to join in.

I too, think a lot about this, reading beforehand the Sunday readings so that I can link my prayers to the thoughts of Jesus or Paul or an Old Testament prophet of the day. I must admit though the world I see out there makes it ever more difficult to think of **prayers that can adequately explain the concerns I, and I am sure many of you, have of the state of the world.**



The Good Shepherd, Mytholmroyd

As I write this, the Middle East remains in turmoil. It's not clear Iran's and the United States conflict will move into a full peace process. Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon are **seething with hatred of each other**. Gaza remains one of the greatest miseries of any conflict there has ever been. The West Bank sees settler domination of the Palestinian population.

Then there is the Ukraine and Russia conflict. A battle line that has hardly moved at the expense of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of men, while innocent Ukrainian and Russian civilians fear the next drone attack on their house or flat. And conflicts abound elsewhere, whether it's Sudan, Myanmar, and, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross **over 130-armed conflicts of some kind**, most of which rarely get onto our TV screens, or smartphones or our newspapers. That's not without thinking of the **impact of climate change** as we start another punishing heatwave with record temperatures everywhere.

Here in the UK, I am an electoral administrator, and I am on my third election this year. I see in them lots of rancour, a highly divided country, and many people disillusioned with their position in life and the

cost of living of that life. I am 54 in July, and I must admit to feeling a sense of great unease about the state of the world, and of my country, despite me living through the dread of nuclear conflict during the last decades of the Cold War.

So how do we deal with all of this pain and human suffering? As a Catholic, I do something all members of the Commission must do, which is to go back to our Catholic Social Teaching, that life-affirming body of moral and ethical doctrine developed by the church, rooted in scripture, of the sacrifice of the saints and the writings of the church, turning to our God for guidance in life.

Whether that is holding that every human life is sacred and made in the image of God, or our belief that we are inherently social and we have a right or duty to seek the well-being of all, we know that **we have rights and responsibilities that we must stand up for, truly believe in and advocate to all**. We have a moral call to stand up for the poor and vulnerable, to ensure the dignity of workers and to know we are all one human family, regardless of all the differences which often lay at the heart of the conflicts noted above. By caring for God's creation, we also stand up for our children and future generations.

I delight in the wonderful work of Pope Francis, and now Pope Leo, to remind us that, as Catholics, we must care for all of us, whether by supporting a food bank, advocating for fair change and calling for peace. **Unlike many of our politicians, Pope Leo does stand up for those who the world so often ignores**. We all need to be brave and follow that example in our own communities. So, using scripture and the love of God, my bidding prayers seek solidarity and a call for change, and they always will.

Let us as a Commission keep doing the same.

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MUST WE STILL HOPE ABOUT GAZA?

By Carol Burns, Pax Christi in the Leeds Diocese

I was very pleased to be alerted by a friend to a webinar hosted by the [Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre](#) led by Father David Newhaus SJ.

Born into a German Jewish family in South Africa, who had fled the Holocaust, he was sent to Jerusalem aged 15 by his parents so he could avoid military service in South Africa. His parents opposed the apartheid regime and thought he was safer in Israel. He became an Israeli citizen at the age of 17 and has lived most of his life in Israel. After obtaining his Ph. D. in political science from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he decided to become a Catholic and entered the Society of Jesus in 1992.



Fr David Neuhaus

He now teaches Scripture in several institutions including in Israel and Palestine. It was a thoughtful and very engaging session from someone with a unique perspective. The title of Father David's talk was:
Must we still hope? Is it right to continue hoping despite Gaza?
Perhaps there comes a time for despair.

Father David put the Palestine situation in the context of his own heritage and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

He referenced those who had resisted the Nazis such as Irena Sendler and the Ulma family, a Polish Catholic family living in Markowa, who hid Polish Jewish families in their own home. The whole family including 6 children were executed by the Nazis for this bravery. A reminder of those who resisted in South Africa, Archbishop Dennis Hurley, Desmond Tutu, Steve Biko and of course Nelson Mandela.

Resistance is vital but can we continue hoping after the devastating events of October 7th and all that followed with the genocide in Gaza.

Father David invites us to go through a number of stages that might bring us to the possibility of Hope.

- Awakening to pain
- A sober look around
- A cry (lament)

It is ok to lament for all the suffering around us

- Stepping into the breach, in other words speaking out, being prophetic
- A prophetic imagination (citing Walter Breugmann) this is our chance to look for our vision for fulfilling God's Plan
- Remembering, how God has worked in history
- Hoping because we have the hope of the resurrection

He shared that in April 2025 an ecumenical group including himself, members of Sabeel and Michael Sabah Latin Patriarch emeritus issued a statement, offering specific support to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

We refuse to simply pass you by. We not only do not forget you, but commit ourselves to solidarity with you. We



carry you in our prayers. We cry with you. We seek to make your cries heard

Father David shared a whole range of resources, encouraging us to listen to Jewish writers who support justice for Palestine.

See the online version of this article for links to some of these resources:

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/views/must-we-still-hope-about-gaza/>

in a world which needs to be shaken out of its complacency.

Finally, to those Jews and Christians who have been led to believe that God wants Israel to annex our homeland:

We want to state clearly that you have been misguided. All, Palestinians and Israelis, are created in the image and likeness of God. They are all equal in dignity and rights. Furthermore, our God is a God of love who abhors violence and loves all God's children. The Palestinians are your "neighbor". The inviolable commandment in the word of God we share is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Roman 13:9). To expel the Palestinians from their homeland is not only an act of violence; it is sacrilege.

The full statement is here

<https://www.sjesjesuits.global/2025/04/02/a-jerusalem-voice-for-justice-an-ecumenical-witness-for-equality-and-a-just-peace-in-palestine-israel/>

Father David ended his talk with this: **we can be hopeful even in the most difficult times because of the Resurrection.**

"The experience of Easter obliges us to proclaim: The Risen Lord has triumphed over

death and evil and we are witnesses to this. (...) The resurrection is not our response to violence; it is our very identity as Christians, called to preach hope when hope seems impossible, to witness to life when our day-to-day reality seems to promise only death. This hope, in our smallness, in mustard seeds, leaven in bread, translates into our stubborn insistence on continuing to imagine a better common future and then setting out the work of living it now."

Justice and Peace Commission, Message for Easter 2024.

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A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE DEFENCE INVESTMENT PLAN

By Carol Burns, Pax Christi in the Leeds Diocese

The government has just announced its Defence Investment Plan in advance of the Nato summit in Ankara. How should we respond as Christians faithful to the non-violent Jesus.

Perhaps what we need to do is find a different starting point?

Yes, the government needs to ensure that its population is secure, but why does that have to be military security with ever increasing spending on high status hardware? Why do we need to keep investing in nuclear weapons?

UK military spending stands at £90 billion, and the government have pledged an increase of 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and 3% in the next parliament.

Yet we rarely hear a challenge to this model of security, the wastage and inefficiency in defence procurement and the impact on the climate.



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In a BBC radio interview on 15 June, the World Health Organisation's Director Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said *"There is more spending in defence and less spending in global health or in public health or health security, which makes us vulnerable...Because the invisible enemy could be more impactful. Imagine, have you ever seen a war in recent memory that killed 20 million people? Why can't we come to our senses?"* He accused world leaders of approaching geo-political problems with might rather than investment in preventing poverty and disease.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct8klb>

By contrast, the UK government has been cutting UK aid spending since 2021. In February further planned cuts were announced from 0.5% to 0.3% of GDP by 2027. There are also cuts in the 'soft power' approaches to security: diplomacy, advocacy, education and information sharing, dialogue, and the involvement of civil society networks in conflict prevention. The British Council and the BBC World Service have had their budgets

cut despite the valuable social and cultural relations they have created between the UK and the global community

The real threats we face as a nation and as a global community are climate change, climate migration and destruction of natural ecosystems; an increase in poverty both within and between countries and a lack of investment in national and global health and disease prevention.

These arguments are the substance of a letter sent by 50 Aid NGOs, climate change organisations and peace organisations. However, it's not easy to convince doubters that we should change our approach. The threat from Russia is visible and real! Yet it is possible to argue a case for less spending on defence that some military strategists would agree with.

This was very effectively argued in a talk John Heathershaw, (Professor of International Relations at the University of Exeter, and also research associate at the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence at Bristol Baptist College) gave to the Network of Christian Peace Organisations in April 2026, the

His is not a pacifist standpoint but makes a case for defence rather than offence

Some key ideas

- the UK is not a global power anymore, it's a regional power and can't play a global military role .
- There is no indication of how to pay for the increased spending and what social expenditure will be sacrificed. It is well known that defence spending is one of the most inefficient modes of economic stimulus.



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- Much of the proposed spend is on expensive high tech weapons including nuclear weapons. Are they defensive weapons?

Professor Heathershaw goes on to detail what a realistic, hopeful and 'Christian' Strategic Defence Review would look like.

He gives a realistic and pragmatic outline of an alternative defence strategy- whilst not being naive about the threat of despots like Putin. Balancing political realism with eschatological hope, he outlines three areas

1. Step back from a global role, and abandon a role in the Indo- Pacific and handover contested territories to international administration
2. Focus on civil defence such as cyber, antisabotage and policing territorial waters. Counter espionage, addressing state linked organized crime and countering the threat of kleptocracy to the rule of law are also non military approaches
3. Focus our security on being more Europeanised, this means cost can be shared.

He concludes, 'our call is not to turn swords into ploughshares but one where nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore' (Micah 2;4)

The full text of the NGO letter is here
<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/open-letter-to-pm-on-military-spending/>

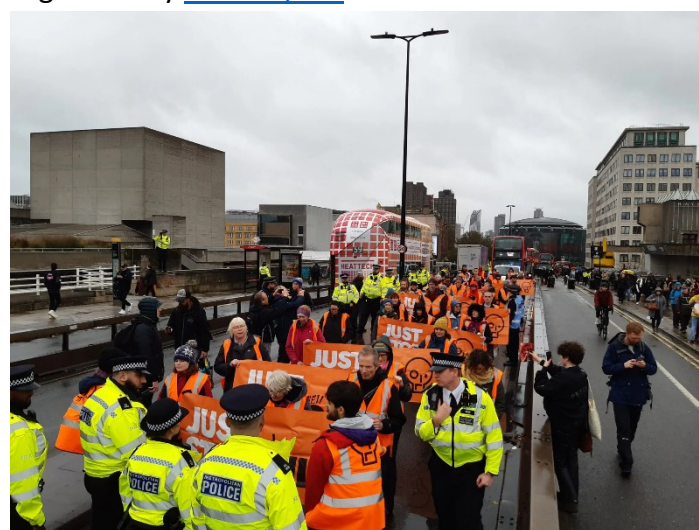
The full talk by John Heathershaw is here
<https://ncpo.org.uk/exploring-and-critiquing-the-moral-argument-for-increased-defence-spending-in-the-uk-and-europe>

(My thanks to Pat Gaffney and Women in Black, London for sharing their latest leaflet, elements of which is included in this text.)

NOT GUILTY

By Mollie Somerville, Bradford

In November 2023, just over 50 people were arrested for walking slowly over Waterloo Bridge in London as part of a series of protests organised by [Just Stop Oil](#).



The aim was to draw attention to the climate crisis, calling on the government not to issue new licences for the exploration of fossil fuels in the North Sea.

Arrested and charged under section 7 of the Public Order act 2023, seven of us were tried at Southwark Crown Court on the 22nd June 2026. **The trial lasted until Friday 3rd July when the jury gave a majority verdict of "Not Guilty" to us all.**

The prosecution had to prove that we significantly delayed the traffic crossing the bridge. Their evidence consisted of one and a half hours of CCTV footage from 4 cameras sited on or near the bridge. The prosecutor showed this without any commentary or explanation. The footage had no dates or times on.



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In my statement following his presentation, I had the opportunity to tell the jury of my motivation for taking nonviolent direct action. I'd been a volunteer with the [Catholic Institute of International Relations](#) 1969 to 1971 and seen how reliant people were on the seasons. **No rain in the rainy season meant no crops and no food.**



Mollie, third from right

Once home in the UK, I actively campaigned with J and P and other organisations to improve conditions for people and the environment in the Global South, writing to MPs, signing petitions, going on rallies and marches in London, Birmingham, Edinburgh and at COPs in Paris and Glasgow. **Climate change over the years became climate crisis and climate breakdown** but still governments weren't listening to the science. I was at my wits end knowing how people in the Global South were already suffering the effects. I talked about Laudato Si influencing me and

my decision to take non violent direct action with Just Stop Oil on that cold, wet November day.

I also told the jury that I had no intention of significantly delaying the traffic and that **our walk over the bridge would have been less than 20 minutes in a London rush hour had the police escorted us** rather than walking backwards in front of us and then arresting us all in the middle of the bridge, closing the opposite carriageway with their vans full of more than 50 officers, before loading us up and taking us to various police stations where we spent the night.

The other defendants all told their own varied histories of involvement. **We were from different parts of the UK of different ages and beliefs but all committed to the same cause.**

In his summing up, **the judge no longer talked of climate change but of climate catastrophe.** The jury took more than 7 hours to come to a decision. The prosecutor was helpful throughout and said his job was not to win but to make sure justice was done. He will be advising the crown prosecution service to drop the 10 or more similar cases still pending.

The whole experience was scary and wearing and it was the hottest week of the year with 37 degrees in London. **I'm relieved to be home and thankful for all the prayers and support I've had.**

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THE DEBT CRISIS

by Sara Forrest, Commission Member

In day 2 of this heat wave, I have been listening to fears that our electricity grid needs investment to help us to cope with the



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increasing incidence of heat waves in the UK. The extra electricity load for significant numbers air conditioning increases the risk of blackouts (and electric car charging) as happened in France recently.

The CAFOD / Live Simply group in our parish promoted the [new CAFOD petition](#) lobbying the Prime Minister to use our hosting of the G20 next year to cancel some third world debt to enable poor countries to support their populations better and to pass a new UK law supporting Debt Justice.



We are privileged in that we have been a major world economy for hundreds of years and have built up more wealth than many of the nations who are suffering greater environmental changes due to climate change. Yet our Government is borrowing more money to 'keep us in the manner we expect'. Smaller country economies must raise the capital to help their people from displacement and natural disasters. In addition to the humanitarian aid from organisations such as CAFOD, Medicines Sans Frontiers and DEC, plus many others. But with their credit rating are worse than ours so **their costs of debt are higher than ours.**

It has recently been reported that a certain President has increased his personal wealth in the last 12 months by \$1 Billion. Looking at

the alleged multi-million payments made to various politicians do we really believe that they are seeking to do anything other than protect their current source of wealth and wealth?

The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer across the world. It is not right or just.

So, please visit CAFOD, sign the petition and maybe write to your MP to ask for their support in achieving debt justice across the world. And if you can, then please donate to their Venezuela appeal as well.

TAKE ACTION!

Follow this link to sign the petition

<https://action.cafod.org.uk/page/189582/petition/1>

Why not organise a petition signing in your parish?? – Use this link to get everything you need

<https://cafod.org.uk/campaign/campaign-with-us/debt-campaign-parish-resources>

Donate to CAFOD's Venezuela appeal

<https://cafod.org.uk/campaign?form=VenezuelaEarthquake>



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EVENTS

 Fri 24 – Sun 26 Jul	'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/ APPLICATIONS CLOSING AROUND NOW
 Sat 11 Jul	Community Climate Conference <i>Friargate Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York, YO1 9RL</i> The event will explore how communities can take practical climate action that supports a more sustainable future. Keynote speakers & Workshops. Follow the link for more info: https://book.plinth.org.uk/e/jYlqnIO6Y9ghJ89Iqwyi
 Aug	Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemoration events <i>Various Locations across Yorkshire</i> 6 th Aug Bradford – details to be confirmed 6 th Aug Sheffield – 1-m-2pm gather in Tudor Square 8 th Aug Huddersfield -Hiroshima & Nagasaki vigil details tbc 8 th Aug Hebden Bridge Hiroshima & Nagasaki vigil 2:30-3:30pm 11-13 Old Gate 9 th Aug Leeds 10:30-12:00 Park Square See Yorkshire CND for more details https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/upcoming-events/
 Tue 29 Sep	The Cross and the Olive Tree Book Tour event <i>Leeds Minster, 2-6 Kirkgate, Leeds LS2 7DJ. 7pm – 9pm</i> This is a SPARK partnership event with Leeds Minster & Sabeel Kairos. Join John S Munayer, a Palestinian theologian from Jerusalem and Professor Esther Mackintosh, Professor of Feminist Theology at York St John University to hear more about this book (reviewed in our newsletter earlier in the year). Save the date and look out for this event on Eventbrite.
 Thu 29 Oct	Skipton Peace Group 2026 Annual Lecture <i>Skipton Girls High School, Gargrave Rd, Skipton, BD23 1QL at 7:30pm</i> This year's speaker is Rachel Julian, Professor of Peace Studies at Leeds Beckett University and since 2024 Chair of the Trustees of the Bradford Peace Museum in Saltaire. She is also a Trustee of the Commonweal Library at Bradford University

*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!*