

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly within the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send articles and diary dates to: anneoc980@hotmail.com

CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

Rev. Dr. Munter Isaac January 17, 2025

We have been praying and pleading for a ceasefire for months. Now that it seems a ceasefire is about to take place, I am overwhelmed with mixed and contradictory emotions. To begin with, I am still cautious: I will believe it when I see it. But, hoping that the ceasefire materializes, we can't but feel relieved and grateful. Gaza has endured immense suffering, with far too many lives lost. At this moment, we just want the killing to stop. I am also grateful for all who will be set free, Palestinians and Israelis alike. I hope and pray that we reach a point in which all captives are set free.

While a ceasefire is certainly something to celebrate, it cannot be our goal. This is not a moment to rest. Too many questions are still unanswered. Too many wounds are not healed. Will the rebuilding begin, and especially that of hospitals? Will sufficient food and medical aid enter Gaza? Will doctors and nurses be allowed to enter Gaza and nurse the thousands who need immediate support? Will those who suffered and lost their loved ones find comfort? What about the thousands with imputed body parts? What about the two million refugees? Is the ceasefire temporary, or will the fighting and shelling resume?

We are left with so many uncertainties and questions about the immediate future, both in Gaza and the West Bank. Moreover: will those who committed war crimes ever be held accountable? At the same time, we can't help but feel angry and frustrated that it took this long. Gazans have suffered a lot. They deserve to simply live in their homeland. Palestinians deserve to live in dignity and peace in their homeland.

A ceasefire will not end apartheid. Annexation in the West Bank is already taking place. Our land, ruled by racists, is fragmented and torn apart by checkpoint, settlements, and segregation policies. A ceasefire is certainly something to celebrate and thank God for. Every life saved and every soul set free is something to celebrate. Every life matters. So, we feel grateful today, remembering that a ceasefire is not the goal. Will there ever be an end to this 76-year-old nightmare? Let it be our commitment.

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24)

• **Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac** is a Palestinian Christian pastor, theologian, and writer, known for his role as the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and as the academic dean at Bethlehem Bible College. He is also the director of the Christ at the Checkpoint conferences and has been a vocal advocate for peace and reconciliation in the region, promoting Christian-Muslim unity, and addressing the challenges faced by Palestinians under occupation.

GAZA: CEASEFIRE MUST LEAD TO LASTING TRUCE AND MASSIVE AID EXPANSION

January 16, 2025: **Statement from Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) following the announcement of a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas:** "At long last we have a deal that must end the 15 months of relentless death, destruction, displacement, detention, and the holding of hostages. This ceasefire must be the foundation for an enduring truce that can pave the way for peace and human rights for long-suffering civilian populations. Israel must immediately lift all restrictions on aid and humanitarian agencies to avert famine-like conditions and ensure access to shelter, food, and medical care for all in need. Hamas and other armed groups must meet their commitments and release the hostages without delay.

"The vast majority of homes in Gaza are destroyed or damaged. These must be repaired and rebuilt along with schools, hospitals and other destroyed civilian infrastructure. The unprecedented devastation requires massive and immediate international relief and rehabilitation, beginning with this ceasefire. We call on the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and other nations to make sure Israel does keep all crossings open, enabling a sustained flow of aid that can alleviate further suffering.

"These hostilities have destabilised the Middle East and exposed millions of civilians to unrelenting violence. The Gaza ceasefire must not only introduce a lasting cessation of hostilities, but a firm commitment to international law, including accountability for war crimes. To end the cycle of violence, the international community must address the root causes of this decades-long conflict and pursue a just resolution in alignment with international law. NRC's courageous teams on the ground in Gaza are prepared to scale up our efforts, helping families begin the long process of rebuilding their lives."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51523>

THE BALFOUR PROJECT REACTION TO THE GAZA CEASEFIRE PLAN

Sir Vincent Fean Trustee, The Balfour Project (Former British Consul General to Jerusalem) writes:
Here is the link to a brief interview with the BBC Jan16, 2025: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c6A4Z-k-7o>

A retired Israeli General was interviewed just before me, and I responded.

I had planned to say more:

- Negotiation and international pressure can take us to a better place than war and war crimes;
- UNRWA must be given free access to deliver humanitarian aid in Gaza, and not banned as the Knesset wishes;
- The 1967 Occupation must end, as the 19 July Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice makes clear
- Palestinians have the same right to self-determination as Israelis
- The British Govt should now recognise both states, having recognised one (Israel) in 1950
- Mutual security between neighbours is ultimately the way forward, with international guarantees for both peoples
- There is a big role for Britain, using its convening capabilities and upholding accountability under international law in deed, not just in word, partnering France, Norway, Ireland, Spain, Australia and others.

There is more in the Balfour Project submission to the current inquiry by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, which we will share with you as soon as the Committee grants permission.

If you can, please sign up for our 8 May conference: “The Rule of Law – the route to a better future for Israelis and Palestinians” <https://balfourproject.org/conference2025/>

A PRAYER FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY

Our Father in heaven, Creator of all humanity,
Whose mercies are upon all His creatures and whose love is withheld from none.
Who has sanctified the Holy Land and placed here both Palestinians and Israelis,
Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Let our unique and particular covenants with You
never blind us to Your love of all Your creatures.
May our love of You, of our nation and of the land
never prevent us from loving the other peoples of this land of Yours,
and may it never prevent us from honouring their love of this land.

Help us to heal our suspicions, fears, and hatreds
and to aspire towards harmony and brotherhood.
Help us to fully see the humanity of all
and to expand our concern, our identities,
and the circles of our love to embrace all the peoples of this land.

Help us to remember that our fates are intertwined and that our destiny is to live together;
that one people’s pain, suffering, loss, or restriction will only bring the same for the other;
and that the welfare and the happiness of one depends on the welfare and the happiness of the other.

Elevate our wills to desire for the other what we desire for our own people.
Grant us the courage and the strength and gladness to Your city,
to join forces to search together and to dedicate ourselves
to the implementation of the common good of all the peoples of this land of Yours.
In this way may we bring joy to Your land and may You look favourably upon us
and bless us all with peace.

Amen.

Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger

- Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger, along with Ali Abu Awwad and Shaul Judelman, cofounded Roots - Judur - Shorashim, a joint Palestinian-Israeli grassroots peace-making initiative which nurtures understanding, nonviolence and - transformation.

See Rabbis, Palestinian peace activists unite in show of solidarity against violence:
<https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Rabbis-Palestinian-peace-activists-unite-in-show-of-solidarity-against-violence-410925>

JOURNALS FROM JERUSALEM – JUSTICE & PEACE SCOTLAND

JOURNALS FROM JERUSALEM – January 18 DAY ONE

Today was spent visiting some of the holy sites in and around the Old City of Jerusalem associated with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These places are often bustling with Christian pilgrims but they have not been visiting over the past fifteen months because of the war, although small numbers have started to return more recently.

A memorable part of Day One was joining the Franciscans on the Via Dolorosa. Every Friday at 3pm they process and pray the Way of the Cross, walking the path Jesus took on Good Friday through the city from the Church of the Condemnation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We offered our prayers while following in the footsteps of Christ's Passion for peace and inside the basilica, in view of the empty tomb, lit candles praying that the light of hope may shine through the darkness.

JOURNALS FROM JERUSALEM – January 18 DAY 2: "WE REFUSE TO BE ENEMIES."

On Saturday we left our base in Jerusalem and travelled to the Bethlehem area. Firstly, to visit Tent of Nations, a farm southwest of Bethlehem owned by the Nassar family, and then onto Beit Jala to visit the Latin Patriarchal Seminary. The people we encountered gave first-hand accounts of the difficulties of daily life endured by Palestinians in the West Bank. Please continue reading to learn their stories which they have asked us to share.

Tent of Nations is a project ran on beautiful farmlands belonging to Daoud Nassar and his family who are natives of Bethlehem and Palestinian Christians. The Nassar family have owned, farmed and nurtured the land for more than a century and despite having documented proof that the land was purchased in 1916 by Daoud's grandfather, they are continuously resisting attempts by Israeli authorities to designate their farm as "state land". They have been engaged in back and forth legal battles in various courts for over 30 years.

At Tent of Nations they grow and harvest a variety of crops like olives, grapes, apricots and nuts. The farm is surrounded on all sides by Israeli settlements. The family face constant threats and intimidation from settlers who have destroyed their crops many times by cutting them down or setting them on fire, with the goal of forcing the Nassars to abandon their land.

Inspired by their Christian faith, Daoud and the Nassars are an inspirational example of non-violent resistance through their motto: "We refuse to be enemies." They continue to plant and harvest their crops, especially olive trees which are especially significant to Palestinian culture. They have hosted thousands of volunteers from many nations over the years who come in solidarity to provide an international presence (which helps lessen the incidents of settler violence), to give their time to help run the farm, and to witness, hear, and tell Daoud's story.

The Latin Patriarchal Seminary is home to around fifteen Arab Christian students who are studying to be diocesan priests. Their rector, Fr Bernard, provided a tour around the seminary telling us how they form men for the priesthood in the land where Jesus established the Church. On the roof terrace looking out over the surrounding villages, and with a view of the Separation Wall that surrounds the West Bank, he told us about how they have to ration their water supply every day.

Like all Palestinian properties in the West Bank, the seminary is forced to deal with restricted access to clean and safe water. The students have running water once a week. Restrictions on water provision by the Israeli authorities is a common occurrence for buildings on Palestinian land yet Israeli settlements in the West Bank have continuous access to clean, safe running water. When the water does come, it is not of a standard fit for human use. Fr Bernard further explained that recent tests on the tap water at the seminary identified harmful bacteria and some of the students have developed skin conditions on their scalps. One young man was treated earlier this year for a parasite in his liver which they believe was caused by the water.

These are the real stories from the real people who we met on Saturday. Their accounts mirror the accounts of many who are in much need for the realisation of justice and peace for all in The Holy Land.

https://www.facebook.com/justiceandpeacescotland/posts/pfbid035pkEMeIUtXfsN93so8MRAmW2pxBHRM6WXXELcWfQ9oPMc44QpgNfz3mY352n8khNI?comment_id=924342579460906

LINK:

Justice and Peace Scotland: <https://www.facebook.com/justiceandpeacescotland/>

Tent Of Nations: <https://tentofnations.com/>

BANK CLOSES ACCOUNT ON LOCAL CHARITY THE HANDS UP PROJECT

January 16, 2025 **Peter Shearn *The Totnes Pulse* independent newspaper** writes:

As news of a [Palestinian] ceasefire fills the media, Nick Bilbrough has been running the education project The Hands Up Project since 2015 and as an official Charity since 2016 – see:

<https://www.totnespulse.co.uk/nick-bilbrough-hands-up-project-storytelling-around-the-globe/>

When choosing a bank to work with it seemed logical to go with The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). On their website it declares: “..working at the centre of the giving world. We help donors to give more impactfully and charities to build their resilience so they can do more of their life-changing work.” <https://www.cafonline.org/> Unfortunately for The Hands Up Project, who work a good deal (but not exclusively) with Palestine, it appears CAF doesn't want to be associated with the life-changing work of the Totnes Charity.

Obviously, The Hands Up Project's work has been profoundly affected by the War on Gaza. Nick Bilbrough cannot hide his deeply felt emotions during our conversation: “We've lost a lot – A LOT of people who work with the Hands Up Project – children, educators, and their families and there are many we have not heard from.” Nick can only hope they are not dead.

As a bank, The Charities Aid Foundation have given 3 months' notice to close the account. Nick explains “It's not a big issue in itself, there are other banks. It's just another sign that we're on our own. I've lost faith in virtually all corporations.” It might not be a big issue to the bank but it's a major setback for the project. All the fundraising, payments, taxation and day to day procedures now have to be modified and updated. A big issue if you're alone struggling to keep up with the emotion and hard-work of continuing the education work under seemingly impossible circumstances. It seems ludicrous to think that such a tiny outfit like Hands-Up might be funding terrorism or whatever it is that make CAF so reticent. Nick explains “This is going to entail a lot of work and take up time that I don't have. I'm an educator, not an accountant.”

It seems reasonable that an organisation like CAF would want to satisfy itself that charities it works with, are acting responsibly and throughout the life of the project, Nick has been required to answer ongoing questions explaining transactions through the account to satisfy CAF that monies raised and used are legitimately used within the Hands Up Project. Hands-Up is now in Cairo, where using a 3 bedroomed flat, they have opened a temporary school to continue their work educating 20 children aged between 8 and 16 in English and Arabic.

It maybe the elimination of normalcy behind the bank closing on them. “it's impossible to pay through normal channels, and we're having to pay in cash.” Whilst Egyptian locals have been welcoming and helpful, it seems authority and banks are less amenable to a migrants' situation. In the meantime, Donna Campbell has set up a crowdfunder to help with the Temporary Cairo School. <https://www.justgiving.com/page/donna-campbell-1729961659486>

There is also an even more urgent crowdfunder for Shaima, to help her to also escape Palestine. A nurse who worked in North Gaza's last remaining hospital, The Kamal Adwan, right up to when it was entirely destroyed by Israeli Forces last month – read about this here: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1158596>

You can see the details for Shaima's appeal here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-nurse-shaima-escape-gaza-your-support-will-save-her>

The Gaza Ceasefire

So what are Nick's feelings about the announced ceasefire? “Mixed, I'm afraid. Will Israel comply with all the agreements? They will almost certainly find excuses to break the deal.” Less the 20 minutes after our conversation, Netanyahu does exactly this. He refuses, at time of writing, to ratify the agreement because he alleges Hamas are reneging already – see: <https://www.politico.eu/article/benjamin-netanyahu-delays-vote-gaza-ceasefire-deal-accusing-hamas-last-minute-crisis/>

Regardless of any agreements – last night there were further Israeli bombing attacks on Gaza – see: <https://skwawkbox.org/2025/01/15/israel-already-breaking-ceasefire-deal-pounding-gaza-city-with-heavy-bombs/> ... “The ceasefire doesn't apply for days, they always do this and carry on with the killing in the meantime.” Having spoken with Gazan's today, Nick says they are optimistic and delighted about the latest news but worry for those who will die before the ceasefire is implemented. Nick is also cautious but hopeful that the Rafah Border will re-open allowing Palestinians to leave and help to come in.

It seems Nick cannot wait to return to Gaza to resume the teaching support work on a deeply wounded country.

AN INVITATION FOR SCHOOLS TO LINK UP WITH THE HANDS UP PROJECT

Heather Kiernan writes: For readers with connections to primary schools, do you think that you might be able to help me open a few doors into primary schools in order to exhibit *Moon Tell Me Truth*. As you know, I had a great success with Royal Mile Primary in Edinburgh, but apart from a couple of others and of course in Eire, schools have been somewhat reticent about the mention of Palestine. But of course, that may well be because we have had little contact with many schools. If you feel able to approach some schools on my behalf, I would be very grateful.

RESOURCES FROM THE HANDS UP PROJECT ONLINE SHOP

We All Need Peace is a powerful collection of poems and illustrations by Year 6 pupils in Edinburgh, inspired by the poetry of the young people of Gaza.

Moon Tell Me Truth featuring art and poems from the children of Gaza age 9-15.

Hands up for Peace infinite classroom activities for hands!

Scottish poets respond to the children of Gaza

Several books of plays created and performed by Palestinian children

Doing Remote Theatre by Nick Bilbrough with comprehensive notes for teachers about how to bring this exciting new genre of theatre into our language classes, plus 28 plays written especially for remote performance by leading names in the fields of literature, theatre and English Language Teaching.

ALL THE ITEMS ABOVE ARE AVAILABLE VIA THIS LINK: <https://www.handsupproject.org/shop>

BEAUTIFUL RESISTANCE (below) is an account of a talk by Nick Bilbrough from the Hands Up Project which accompanied a touring exhibition of Gaza supported by the Scottish Palestinian Forum and Peace & Justice (Scotland) as part of a series of events across Edinburgh curated by Heather Kiernan and Iliyana Nedkova.

Hands Up Project: <https://www.handsupproject.org/>

Scottish Palestinian Forum: <http://scottishpalestinianforum.org.uk/>

Peace & Justice (Scotland): <https://peaceandjustice.org.uk/>

*ARTICLE: BEAUTIFUL RESISTANCE: THEATRE FROM GAZA NOW – WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2024

An evening of powerful storytelling and moving theatre performances from Gaza, showcasing the resilience of the human spirit with an illustrated talk by Nick Bilbrough, the founder of the educational charity Hands Up Project. Through its network of volunteers HUP connects children around the world with young people in Palestine. By means of online interaction, drama and storytelling activities, it fosters creativity and self-expression to promote mutual understanding, personal growth, and the development of English language skills.

The first play: **It will be over soon** is performed by children in a newly formed drama club in Jabalia camp, northern Gaza. The second play: **I can 2024** is a remake of a winning play from the 2018 remote theatre competition, performed from their tents in Rafah.

Anne O'Connor writes: I joined Nick's moving presentation on Zoom. The children clearly enjoyed putting together their short plays which they performed in English. This was partly to improve their language skills but also, as we learnt in the Q and A, to give a degree of distance from the situation they are in – by using a language other than their own they can develop a new persona that takes them out of the horrors of war.

Basim, one of the winners of the drama competition of 2018, reprised his play 'I Can' for 2024, performing with the same two friends, standing together among the rubble. During the play he says: "we suffer but we are born again amidst the suffering. I can achieve anything."



The image (right) shows him with the words "I am a human" written across his arms. In the final frame of the film we see Nick and then other adults and children holding up their hands, palms facing, with the words "we can" written clearly.

The film then pans out to give smaller and smaller images of all the hands in one great montage, accompanied by rousing music. This scene had echoes of the closing credits of Richard Curtis' hit movie *Love Actually* which gives a similar focus on the power of love and solidarity. Basim concludes by saying: "Yes, I can. I am a human. I always knew you were with us, holding our dreams, listening, sharing our pain, wanting to help. It's not 'I am' anymore. It's 'We can.'"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: May 20, 2024 Heather Kiernan writes: Children in a besieged enclave write poems inspired by two paintings. They enter them for a competition and the competition poems are made into a book, complete with the two paintings and illustrations by the poets for their poems.

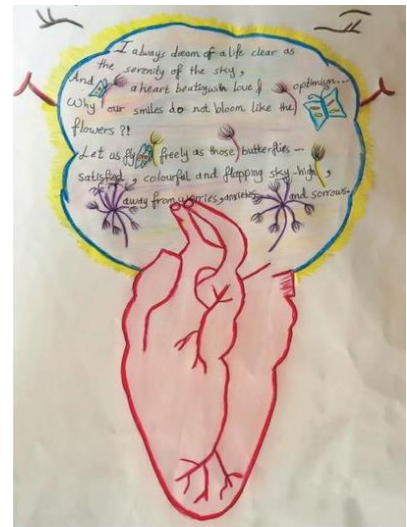
At least two of the children whose poems are in the book were killed while the others have been displaced. Meanwhile the poems, and the pictures, were made into an exhibition that is travelling to Edinburgh this week. At rallies and events supporting Palestine, and at openings of the exhibition, the poems are read out.

Fatema Saidam, killed last October aged nine, with her whole family, lies as dead as Homer and Sappho, and her words (now translated into many languages) are working in the world just like theirs:

*Legs are for walking slowly
And also run
Hands are for shaking with friends
Not for shooting gun*

May 21, 2024 Heather writes: Yesterday I posted the poem of young Fatema who, along with her family was killed last October by an Israeli airstrike.

Today's poem is by 14-year-old Obada who also wrote his poem for the Hands Up poetry competition. He was killed last October in an Israeli airstrike. I was struck by the illustration that accompanies the poem. The words seem to emanate from a heart, almost medical in design. This is Obada's poem:



Obada Mohammad Abu Oda | 14 years old | Palestine

*I always dream of a life
Clear as the serenity of the sky,
And a heart beating with love and optimism.
Why our smiles don't bloom like the flowers?*

*Let us fly as freely as those butterflies ...
Satisfied, colourful and flapping sky-high,
Away from worries, anxieties and sorrow.*

May 23, 2024 Heather writes: Today's poem is by Roa'a Al-Masri, aged 13.

*My darling's face is sad.
The moon's face in our homeland is sad.
Sad you are my city
... you the spring of tears and a long sad history
... you are the painting of pain and expressions of pain.
Your eyes have the green colour of olives and the blue colour of sea
... while the night falls over the face of life.
Darling: wipe out that sadness and weave the dress of impossible from the tears.*

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD: Moon tell me truth (with a foreword by Alice Oswald, Professor of Poetry, Oxford University) (EPub) £4.95. All the poems in this collection were entries for the 2023 Hands Up Project international poetry competition, written and illustrated by children aged 9 to 15 from Palestine, Argentina, India and Spain. <https://www.handsupproject.org/shop/moon-tell-me-truth>

June 2023, Alice Oswald writes:

'Wipe out that sadness and weave the dress of impossible from the tears.'

"Those lines by a 13-year-old have stayed in my head since I read them and now I will always think of poetry as the dress of impossibility. How wonderful to make clothes out of tears and alter the world by wearing it. Even more wonderful to know that this poem, like the others in this book, was written by a student under fifteen, for whom English was a second language.

***This article is taken from the North West National Justice and Peace Network monthly E-Bulletin June 2024**

LOOKING FOR YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR THE HANDS UP PROJECT



Em, from Plymouth High School for Girls, is the very first Hands up Project youth ambassador. She's got the HUP book of poems '*Moon tell me truth*' into the school library – read more here: <https://www.phsg.org/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1081> and she's given several talks about HUP's work in her own school, and is planning to do more in other local schools too. She's also set up, and is now running a remote theatre club for younger children in the school, and linking it to the Hands up school for children from Gaza in Cairo.

Read how Plymouth High School for Girls are linking up with the National Education Union (Plymouth Branch), to bring a partnership with 'Hands Up Project' to other schools across the city:

https://www.phsg.org/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1128&fbclid=IwY2xjawHyhd5leHRuA2FibQIxMQABHZKPIIfvZ2rkjwLwaiTpunR9RNIvTNXG4gsHBkXjFsPLxHpJk8zCcoizw_aem_FRvz7Ry1yrfacACtoiCTvA

More Youth Ambassadors are needed to expand the partnership with HUP – there are currently only six. If you know of a school or youth group that might like to become Ambassadors for HUP or simply build a link, please contact: info@handsupproject.org

Zoom meeting 5.30 pm Friday, January 24. Are you (or do you know) someone who would like to do something similar to Em. If so please come to our orientation session about becoming a youth ambassador for the Hands up Project. We're looking for young people of school age who want to share the great work that we're doing.

Em will be there and she'll be sharing her experiences. We'll also be sharing some materials that you can use in your school to promote the creative voices of Palestinian children. We also hope that there'll be other young people from UK and around the world who want to get involved.

Register for the ZOOM session here:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/2_hBig6yT467HICt37rXMw#/registration

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 18 -25 January

Heather Kiernan writes: Yehuda Amichai is considered by many to be Israel's greatest modern poet. Amichai expressed a profound connection between his love of living and day to day life with his yearning for peace. This yearning for peace accompanied him from the very beginning and was most significantly reflected in his life and poetry: "Men wear their first love and not battle decorations."

Amichai was not a political poet in the conventional sense but he continuously tried to understand the complicated world that we live in and reconcile between conflicting sides. In today's poem he writes: "May I have peace in the rest of my life... I don't want to fulfil my parents' prophecy that life is war."

I, MAY I REST IN PEACE ~Yehuda Amichai

(translated from the Hebrew by Chana Bloch & Chana Kronfeld)

I, may I rest in peace – I, who am still living, say,
May I have peace in the rest of my life.
I want peace right now while I'm still alive.
I don't want to wait like that pious man who wished for one leg
of the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged chair
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my peace now.
I have lived out my life in wars of every kind: battles without
and within, close combat, face-to-face, the faces always
my own, my lover-face, my enemy-face.
Wars with the old weapons – sticks and stones, blunt axe, words,
dull ripping knife, love and hate,
and wars with newfangled weapons – machine gun, missile,
words, land mines exploding, love and hate.
I don't want to fulfil my parents' prophecy that life is war.
I want peace with all my body and all my soul.
Rest me in peace.

IAN LINDEN: RUSSIA'S & CHINA'S SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

7/1/2025: New Year's Eve was a slow news night. You could tell because a story about Africa was the BBC lead item. It sounded a bit like Schadenfreude: The Ivory Coast and Senegal had told their longstanding French garrisons, in the nicest possible way, to pack up and go home. Both countries have important economic links with France. French troops had previously been told to leave Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali where they had been fighting jihadists. An opportunity not to be missed.

During Prime Minister John Major's entente cordiale with President Chirac in 1995, I attended a joint meeting on Africa, not much publicized, held in Paris. Apart from the fabulous, ever more sumptuous connecting rooms, ornate Louis XV furniture, and some threatening chandeliers – the venue was the Elyseé Palace – the most notable feature was a difference between the delegations. We Brits were a motley crew of anthropologists, NGO-bodies involved in international development, civil servants from FCO and DfID (now absorbed by the Foreign Office), plus the odd intelligence officer. The French partially matched these, but, pursuing their own priorities, fielded an impressive array of military figures. The colonial Tirailleurs Sénégalais formed in 1857 who fought on the Western Front during the First World War reflect a long and deep relationship. The expulsion of the French armed forces from West Africa is an historic blow to President Macron who cherishes his role in international affairs.

The expulsion of the French was also a significant sign of the times. The Russians' arms-length mercenaries, the Wagner group, moved into the Central African Republic in 2017 where they brokered a peace agreement between the warring factions – which later fell apart. In North Africa after the fall of Gaddafi, they began operating with 'Marshal' Khalifa Haftar's militia in Benghazi, Libya, in 2018. Support of West African military juntas came next beginning in 2021 with Mali in where in 2022 they contributed to the execution in the Mopti region of some 500 people by the Malian armed forces. Then in 2024 Wagner was invited into Burkina Faso and Niger. Wagner, recently renamed the Africa Corps, is now under the Russian Ministry of Defence. Africa is becoming a Syria-substitute playground for Russia and Putin.

The Mali story is extraordinary. The towns of Timbuktu and Gao are on the desert-edge in the Bilad-al-Sudan (from the medieval 'land of the blacks') that extends east as far as Darfur in Sudan. They are major targets for jihadist Al-Qaeda and ISIS linked groups and so in turn targets for the Wagner group. In Mali's North-East Tinzaouten province abutting the Algerian border, a separatist coalition of nomadic Tuareg has on occasion been aligned with jihadists against the junta forces. The Tuareg are known as horsemen and cattle herders whose men famously wear a face-covering. They suffer particularly from the climate induced encroachment of the Sahara. Le Monde has been reporting on Ukraine's support for the Tuareg coalition against the Russian mercenaries. In July 2024, 84 Russians and 47 Malians were reported killed in a Tuareg attack involving light quadcopter drones supplied allegedly – Kyiv denies this – by Ukraine. Well, my enemy's enemy is my friend.

A further chapter in the Scramble for Africa has opened. This time it's Russia and China. There is something almost fitting that the two vast militarized authoritarian giants wish to engage with more or less militarized, authoritarian regimes in Africa. From Grozny to Gao jihadism is a menace, and from Beijing to Bamako railways and infrastructure are basic to economic progress. Russia and China seek Africa's rare minerals and metals, gold and diamonds, cashew nuts and cocoa. Gold remains a lure. It is estimated that Russia has been taking out £1 billion worth of gold each year from African countries. The Wagner mercenaries took over a gold mine in Mali only last year.

Everything in the West African garden wasn't lovely before the new arrivals (the Chinese not so new). The northern borders of these West African states are highly permeable to people, weapons and smuggled goods. Travel north west from Maroua in Cameroon, you aren't far from Maiduguri in Nigeria, birthplace in 2009 of militant Boko Haram which forged links with ISIS and, in 2015, sought to form a Caliphate. Travel north east to the capital of Chad, N'Djamena, and you go through territory infested with militia of the Islamic State in West Africa, and the remains of Boko Haram. Go south you have miles of border with Nigeria, a smugglers paradise for vehicles and arms. And since 2018 there has been a debilitating civil war in Cameroon.

Failure both to alleviate poverty and command the confidence of citizens are contributory causes of jihadism. The high-flown titles of such armed groups can give a false impression. The foot soldiers of such militias have little knowledge of Shari'a and the Qur'an. They are in the employ of better educated jihadists, given a Kalashnikov, earn a living and eventually can pay the bride-price for a wife. The corruption in African States, the siphoning off of national wealth, the absence of reward for competence and merit, is not news to their citizens. I was being driven south from Makeni to Freetown in Sierra Leone and noticed a new railway running parallel with the road "Where does that go," I asked the driver. "Beijing" he replied. I could see him grinning in the rear-view mirror.

Neither Russia nor China are particularly bothered by the high level of corruption in sub-Saharan Africa. Russia's kleptocrats would find it amateurish. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index is a standard measure of public sector corrupt practice. The lower the score the higher the corruption. Denmark does best with 90. But 44 out of 49 sub-Saharan African countries score below 50. Nigeria gets 24, Cote d'Ivoire with 40. Botswana, something of a worthy exception at 60. To Russia and China diplomatic support, for example at the UN, and valuable, often scarce, commodities, are what matters from client states.

In the face of the deteriorating situation in West Africa, and economic pressures in Europe, not a great deal is currently to be expected from either the UK and the EU. It is true that since 2015, there have been British troops training the Nigerian army, and personnel advising on counter-terrorism in North-East Nigeria, the Chad Basin and Cameroon in response to the ISIS threat in the region. There has also been some police training. But both the EU and UK, by cutting spending on Aid, are simultaneously undermining their own soft power and weakening the challenge to poverty. A great deal of the UK Aid budget is now diverted from poverty reduction abroad to covering the cost of asylum seekers in UK, including hotel accommodation, or on stimulating and facilitating trade. This as climate change brings ever severer immiseration to millions.

The current, declining, birth rate in Africa is 31 per 1,000 people. Though, the UN estimates, there will be 2.5 billion Africans by 2050, making up a quarter of the world's population. There is need to focus a little creative attention and action on this great continent beyond Schadenfreude at France's reverses. 'Waging Peace, Fighting Disease and Building Hope' - the Motto of the Carter Center in Atlanta, founded by the late President, would be a good start. <https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/russias-chinas-scramble-for-africa>

• *Professor Ian Linden is Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Strawberry Hill, London. A past director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, he was awarded a CMG for his work for human rights in 2000. He has also been an adviser on Europe and Justice and Peace issues to the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Ian chairs a new charity for After-school schooling in Beirut for Syrian refugees and Lebanese kids in danger of dropping out partnering with CARITAS Lebanon and work on board of Las Casas Institute in Oxford with Richard Finn OP. His latest book was Global Catholicism published by Hurst in 2009.*

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PREPARE TO CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH OF JUBILEE 2025 AS PILGRIMS OF HOPE

January 17, 2025: On Friday 24 January Catholic schools across England and Wales will join together to celebrate Jubilee Launch Day for Schools, as children and young people embark on a journey as "pilgrims of hope". Cardinal Vincent Nichols has prepared an inspiring video message to be shared as part of the event. The Catholic Education Service, CAFOD and Catholic Social Action Network are working in partnership, together with the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation, to provide this framework of events and resources to all Catholic schools. The Chair of the Catholic Education Service, Rt. Rev. Marcus Stock, has written to all Catholic schools inviting them to participate in Jubilee for Schools. He says, "The theme of Jubilee 2025 is 'Hope', the hope that comes from knowing we are loved by God, the hope we can bring to those in most need, and the hope we can bring to our common home, the earth."

During the Jubilee 2025 – Year of Hope, the whole Catholic school community is invited to stand in solidarity with people around the world suffering the effects of poverty, injustice and conflict; sharing a hope rooted in love; deepening faith and taking action to build a better world for everyone. Thousands of prayer cards and resources have been sent out, and Jubilee witness banners for the school gates are appearing across the country.

St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School in Hartford, Cheshire is one of those taking part in the Jubilee celebrations. They already have their banner on the school gate. Headteacher, Justine McEniff, said: "We, the children and staff at St Wilfrid's are excited to begin our Jubilee journey as agents of change. We are looking forward to joining the launch assembly and celebrating through prayers and actions throughout the year."

A special film produced for Launch Day will be available online, including the message from Cardinal Vincent Nichols, voices of hope from children and young people, and ways to put faith into action. A key resource for schools is the interactive Jubilee Journey Map, helping the whole school community to explore the theme of hope, and to work towards the Jubilee Pledge Day in the summer.

Monica Conmee, Head of Education at CAFOD, said "Pope Francis asks us to be signs of hope for others, by putting Catholic Social Teaching into action. Children and young people have a vital role in this, joining together to make change happen, bringing signs of hope to an unfair world. We're delighted to walk alongside schools and support them as they journey through the year." <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/catholic-schools-prepare-to-celebrate-the-launch-of-jubilee-2025-as-pilgrims-of-hope/>

VOCATION FOR JUSTICE: RESPONDING WITH HOPE

Ellen Teague Jan18, 2025: An introduction to the Spring 2025 newsletter of the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team as 'Vocation for Justice' enters its 39th year! The 2025 Jubilee is the third that I have prepared for.

My first was in 1986 when I worked for CAFOD, and it was celebrating its 25th anniversary. How many remember CAFOD taking over the Royal Festival Hall for a day and the diminutive Dom Heider Camara from Brazil being a keynote speaker. Dressed in a simple beige cassock, he seemed to have stepped out of his famous CAFOD poster, "When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist". Barely five feet tall, he was a giant in terms of implementing the Church's Social Teaching, particularly the 'Option for the Poor'. As Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Camera abandoned the archbishop's palace for a modest house, warning, "be careful of the way you live, it is the only gospel most people will ever read!" He gave away Church land to landless people and set up a Justice and Peace Commission.

His talk received a standing ovation from the thousands present, deeply touched by his holiness, warmth and joy. He smiled the whole day and greeted everyone near him. In fact, his is the only hug I have ever received from an archbishop!

CAFOD also ran a three-year development education campaign on the Jubilee themes of Land, Debt, and Slavery. And these featured in my second Jubilee celebration: the Great Jubilee of 2000. CAFOD's 1999 preparatory Conference at Ushaw College looked at the social justice elements of Jubilee and Bernadette Farrell's popular Jubilee Song was written for that conference.

From 1997 the National Justice and Peace Network ran a three-year conference programme based on the papal letter The Coming of the Third Millennium and its call for the cancellation of debt. Columban Ed O'Connell helped to provide a popular version of the document. Then, Columbans were among Jubilee 2000 supporters who formed human chains to lobby world leaders meeting in Birmingham and Cologne in 1998 and 1999. The Churches wanted the Millennium celebration to have a strong ethical dimension.

And here we go again. The 2025 Holy Year offers another opportunity to renew our commitment to Christ and to renew society. Laudate Deum, released last October, reminded of the urgency of the Laudato Si' message - marking 10 years in May - and the need for both personal and cultural transformation to address ecological and climate crises.

Debt cancellation is a key theme of Jubilee 2025. Yet, we know that debt remission will not on its own end poverty, that structural injustice inherent in the world's financial architecture must also be addressed. We are also more alert to intergenerational injustice because of the challenges of worsening human-caused climate change, diminishing biodiversity and our polluted water systems.

This newsletter picks up on these issues for the year ahead and linking into the Columban mission priorities of Migrants and Biodiversity, chosen at last year's Columban General Assembly. But our overarching theme is Hope, following the lead of Pope Francis, and following on the Autumn 2024 'Vocation for Justice' which looked at 'Jubilee: Pilgrims of Hope'. Pope Francis has said that Hope, "is the most beautiful gift that the Church can give to all of humanity." And he added, "Christians cannot be satisfied with having hope" but must also "radiate hope."

The newsletter centrespread. 'Hope: A Gift and a Duty' was written by Anna Blackman, a Lecturer in Catholic Religious Education at the University of Glasgow and a member of the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team. She says: "The social dimension of hope is inherent throughout Catholic social thought and practice. The social encyclicals are filled with the language of hope, speaking of where signs of hope can be seen, and where the Church hopes transformation and change will occur. It is also hope that underpins and motivates Catholic social action, by refusing to accept that things must remain the way that they are."

Do encourage 13-18 year olds to enter our current Columban competition, 'JUBILEE: PILGRIMS OF HOPE,' which encourages them to identify Jubilee initiatives. Entry closes in three weeks' time, on 7 February.

LINKS

Columban 'Vocation for Justice' newsletter: <https://columbans.co.uk/how-you-can-help/subscribe/vocation-for-justice/> (Scroll down to Recent Editions. Invitation to sign up for regular e-mailing)

Jubilee Schools Media Competition 2024/25: <https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/15031/schools-media-competition-jubilee-pilgrims-of-hope/>

Columban Competition: www.columbancompetition.com
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51534>

PODCAST: ALL KINDS OF CATHOLIC

All Kinds of Catholic with Theresa Alessandro

A new episode, a different conversation, every Wednesday!

Email me: theresa@KindsofCatholic.co.uk

Facebook and X/Twitter Give me a follow [@KindsofCatholic](#)

Listen here: <https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/>

Episode 27: Gerry shares that, for him, prayer is action. 'If I can help someone I will.' He explains how his significant stammer led him to becoming an engineer who was privileged to help people all over the world, as well as closer to home. While working in the film industry, he describes how his faith 'helped me to stay focussed.'

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16183572-27-practical-catholic-service>

Episode 28: Pat talks about growing up in Ireland, getting married on the shores of the Atlantic, and coming to England for work. Since the earliest days, when he wasn't allowed to be an altar server, he shares where his faith has fitted into his 93 years and how he feels age has strengthened it.

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16189898-28-blessed-that-i-was-brought-up-a-catholic>

Episode 29: Fr Gerry shares how his views of the priesthood have changed over the years. He describes something of how being close to terrible violence has affected him. In exploring Fr Gerry's work supporting people in prison, their struggles are held up to the light too.

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16285522-29-prayer-gives-a-very-strong-cutting-edge>

Episode 30: In this special Christmas episode, Jonathan shares how his faith journey has led him to church music. He explains how sacred music offers praise upwards and outwards and, he hopes, helps us all to pray.

This episode includes some of the beautiful Christmas music which Jonathan has produced.

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16245190-30-to-wait-for-that-start-of-midnight-mass>

Episode 31: In this New Year episode, Sean explains how he feels there is a better world out there when he sees so many people striving for it. Much of his working life has been focussed on helping to make a more peaceful world because, 'If you're not standing up for justice and peace and righteousness then what's the point of being a Christian?'

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16267956-31-blessed-are-the-peacemakers>

COUNTING THE COST OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Source: Christian Aid January 20, 2025

2024 was a year of climate extremes. From deadly floods in China and Brazil to devastating droughts in Zambia and record-breaking hurricanes in the Americas, the impacts of climate change have been impossible.

The ten most financially costly events all had an impact of more than \$4 billion. Most of these estimates are based only on insured losses, meaning the true financial costs are likely to be even higher, while the human costs are often uncounted.

Christian Aid's latest report: 'Counting the cost 2024: a year of climate breakdown' reveals the shocking cost of the world's worst claimed disasters.

No part of the world was spared from crippling climate disasters in 2024. Europe accounted for three of the top 10 costliest disasters with Storm Boris in central Europe and floods in Spain and Germany costing a combined \$13.87 billion and killing 258 people.

These extreme events highlight the need for more urgent action to reduce carbon emissions and accelerate the transition to renewable energy and underlines the importance of providing funding for vulnerable people.

Read the report here: www.christianaid.org.uk/news/policy/costliest-climate-disasters-2024

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51549>

URGENT ACTION

CLIMATE AND NATURE BILL: AN 'HISTORIC' OPPORTUNITY, SAYS A ROCHA UK

Source: A Rocha UK January 19, 2025

A Rocha UK is supporting the Climate and Nature (CAN) Bill as it progresses through Parliament and nears a crucial stage, its second reading, on Friday 24 January 2025. The ecumenical Christian environmental charity says this will be "a huge day in Parliament, where the CAN Bill will be debated and voted on for the very first time."

"As Christians, God calls us to care for creation, and sometimes that means using our voices to call others to use their power to protect it as well," says A Rocha. "As the only proposed legislation before the UK Parliament that ensures a comprehensive and joined-up approach to the climate emergency and nature crisis, we want to pray and act so that it has the best opportunity to pass," it adds.

The cross-party CAN Bill - a private member's bill backed by 190+ MPs - is set to be debated in Parliament on Friday. It is now crucial to ensure that 102 MPs attend, and vote to progress the Bill. This will ensure that the Bill can continue its journey into law, but, if MPs fail to turn up, and fail to vote in favour, the Bill will fall.

A Rocha UK is also a lead organiser for a 45 minute prayer session on the day before - 23 January - to join with others to pray for the Bill to pass. "We will also pray more broadly for the care and preservation of God's creation and for those most affected by the devastating impacts of Climate Change," it says. The prayer will be held online 17.15pm - 18.00pm.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51544>

LINKS

Pray for the Nature Bill: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pray-for-the-climate-nature-bill-to-pass-second-reading-in-uk-parliament-tickets-1206656434879?aff=oddtcreator

MPs can be contacted about the Bill through the Zero Hour website: <https://action.zerohour.uk/>

NJPN: OPENING THE DOORS TO FREEDOM FROM HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The first NJPN event of this Jubilee Year will take place on Thursday February 6 from 7pm – 8.30pm

The evening will be facilitated by Brian O' Toole, who is a member of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) Executive, (APT Ireland) and the Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking in Europe (RENATE) and Talitha Kum.

At this event you will learn a little more about the insidious issue of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in the UK and importantly what we can do as "Pilgrims of Hope" during this Jubilee Year to help victims of Human Trafficking as we shine a light on this important issue.

Sign up here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd16FG37Hvq93rw1yQBHYUJZ6JFvGb5HBeAOy-hE043wkel9Q/viewform>

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

- **See current NJPN news here:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/news/>

- **Sign up** for regular news and information from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org 020 7901 4864

- **Read the WINTER issue of MOUTHPEACE the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses:** <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/11/Mouthpeace-Winter-24.pdf>

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN

Diary on the next page

DIARY

JANUARY

18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2025/>

24 International Day of Education <https://www.un.org/en/observances/education-day>

27 Holocaust Memorial Day <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/holocaust-memorial-day/> This Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, and the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. **Theme: For a Better Future** – There are many things we can all do to create a better future. We can speak up against Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion; we can challenge prejudice; we can encourage others to learn about the Holocaust and more recent genocides. Resources: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/01/HMD-2025-Theme-Vision.pdf>

FEBRUARY

6 NJPN: OPENING THE DOORS TO FREEDOM FROM HUMAN TRAFFICKING - the first NJPN event of the Jubilee Year - on Zoom 7pm – 8.30pm (see page 12 for details). **Register for the event here:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd16FG37Hvq93rw1yQBHYUJZ6JFvGb5HBeAOy-hE043wkeI9Q/viewform>

6 Green Christian No faith in fossil fuels Zoom event 7-8pm. The UK government is consulting with the public on whether to end new drilling for oil and gas. Operation Noah, Christian Climate Action, Christian Aid, the Laudato Si Movement and Green Christian are joining together with Uplift, the group behind Stop Rosebank, to use this moment to persuade our politicians to take action to end further exploration for fossil fuels in the UK. Register here for the Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/-d8_NIo4R7iDoO7ojcp46Q#/registration

7 Closing date for entries for 13-18 year olds for the current Columban competition, 'JUBILEE: PILGRIMS OF HOPE.' **Jubilee Schools Media Competition 2024/25:** <https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/15031/schools-media-competition-jubilee-pilgrims-of-hope/>

9 Racial Justice Sunday. Theme for 2025: Coat of Many Colours. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) has resources. English: <https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Racial-Justice-Sunday-2025-English.pdf> Welsh: <https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Racial-Justice-Sunday-2025-CYMRAEG.pdf>

13 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 1.45 for 2.00pm start. Venue, usually St.Michael's Parish Room, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH. Contact sheilacogley@yahoo.co.uk to confirm arrangements.

19 Staying Human: Reimagining the Spirit of the Commons online lecture and Q & A held by Together for the Common Good. with Professor Luke Bretherton 18.30 – 20.00. The event will be held before a live invited audience and broadcast on Riverside, a livestreaming platform. Following Luke's lecture there will be a Q & A where you will have the opportunity to put questions. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/staying-human-reimagining-the-spirit-of-the-commons-tickets-1141630691129?aff=oddtcreator>

MARCH 2025

2 Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Sign up for a resource pack for your church here: <https://give.church-poverty.org.uk/page/156569/subscribe/1?ea.url.id=7788974&forwarded=true>

3-9 Race Equality Week <https://www.raceequalitymatters.com/race-equality-week-2025/>

5 Ash Wednesday Merseyside Pax Christi Walk of Witness through Liverpool City Centre. Start at 1.30pm at St Luke's bombed out church at the top of Bold St.

5 Green Christian No faith in fossil fuels Ash Wednesday service St John's Waterloo London SE1 8TY

5-6 Green Christian 24 hour vigil outside the Department of Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), starting at 12 noon on Ash Wednesday and overnight to 12 noon 6 March <https://greenchristian.org.uk/>

12 Hope into Action's annual conference 'Restorers of Hope' The UK faces a homelessness crisis, made up of many different problems: Resources: the lack of affordable housing and the basic cost of living. Relationships: family breakdown, loneliness, isolation. Identity: low self-esteem, mental health problems and addictions. We need a hope able to respond to all three of these problems. The Hope into Action conference is for church leaders, community activists, investors, volunteers, housing and social care professionals and anyone who is interested in how the Christian faith changes lives. <https://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk/hope-into-actions-annual-conference-2025-restorers-of-hope>

Early bird tickets available here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/hopeintoactionuk/1436689>

15 FLAME 2025 is the largest Catholic youth event in England and Wales. Filled with inspiring speakers, incredible live music, prayer, adoration and young people from across England and Wales it's an event like no other! Booking for Flame 2025 is almost full! Don't miss out. <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/flame-2025/>