

# Vocation for Justice



Winter 2022 Volume 36 No 3

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## The Duty of Hope



**COLUMBAN MISSION**

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

# Editorial

The film *Local Hero* remains a cult classic after 40 years. While rooted in Scottish culture, it has a globally relevant environmental agenda. When I first saw it I was working for CAFOD, developing an educational campaign on development and environment, and this unique film raised a pertinent question: Can humankind develop and simultaneously cultivate and conserve the natural world, and even if we can, are we willing to?

A high-flying acquisitions executive at a Houston-based oil and gas multinational is dispatched to a remote coastal village in Scotland that is a site of unspoiled natural beauty and rare marine biodiversity. His mission is to buy the entire village and its environs for his company to transform them into a huge petrochemical refinery. The locals are keen to sell and to become millionaires. The key challenge is from an elderly man who lives off the local beach and will not move. He articulates the natural world's true worth, and the sustainable relationship humans should adopt towards it. Well, are the plans shelved? Perhaps you can guess the outcome from the film's popularity!

Today, *Local Hero* seems both profound and prophetic, but it suggests that humanity's destructive relationship with the natural world can be turned around. And it needs to as we've recently seen multiple impacts caused by human-induced climate change and biodiversity collapse worldwide. These include European rivers drying up, drought and food shortages in East Africa, China experiencing its worst ever heatwave and wildfires. Our Columban colleagues in Pakistan's Sindh province reported 90% of it being underwater in late August after exceptional Monsoon deluges.

The bad news goes on and on and this is no time for denial. We must stand up to be counted about things we can do and also to embrace gratitude for the blessing of our amazing Planet Earth.

It is vital to engage the new UK government, which shows little sign of meeting the big environmental challenges. In fact, there are indications that it will promote fracking, open new coalmines and the extraction of more North Sea oil and gas! The Catholic Church has a

favoured topic of 'safeguarding'. Well, what about stepping up action for safeguarding life on Earth.

The theme of this issue of 'Vocation for Justice' is 'The Duty of Hope'. It was a term used by the peace activist Dorothy Day, a co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. For her, hope was different to optimism. It suggested action to give a glimpse of the different reality and was based on prayer, love and gratitude.

What glimpses of hope are there? On 9 August around 50 people gathered at Westminster Cathedral to commemorate WWII conscientious objector Blessed Franz Jägerstätter. "The crucial lesson to be learned," according to his biographer Gordon Zahn, "is that, however hopeless the situation or seemingly futile the effort, Christians need not despair, but instead "can and should be prepared to accept and assert moral responsibility for their actions."

This September, Christian climate activists have been on the streets highlighting that compassion for the victims of climate change is insufficient; radical action is needed: we need to phase out fossil fuels.

Some want to leave the problems for young people to tackle - problems earlier generations have caused, particularly environmental breakdown. However, a recent Twitter comment on climate action from Greta Thunberg struck me: "You all come to us young people for hope. How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words."

This year's annual conference of the National Justice and Peace

Network of England and Wales took the theme, 'Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up.' On the final day participants were invited in groups to do artwork on hopeful pathways for the future. Ideas included education to recognise the interconnectedness of issues, good public transport and green buildings. We cannot leave these problems to our young people to solve. That is irresponsible.

Some feel more hopeful by turning away from news channels. But that is not the path of Columban missionaries, who believe that moral behaviour is not confined to our relationship with God and other human beings but must include all of creation as well. We must work to ensure that God's good creation will not be destroyed, but will be treasured and renewed. We must be willing to make sacrifices so that future generations will have a planet that can sustain them.

We hear from a Columban collaborator in South Korea who campaigns to retain a clean and unpolluted environment in the city of Samcheok and from a Columban Faith in Action Volunteer in Britain who reports her involvement in citizenship education. And we are delighted to launch our 2023 Schools Competition on the theme of, 'Building Peaceful Futures'.

Our front page photo is 'Gaia in Nidaros Cathedral', taken during a summer festival focusing on Hope in Trondheim, Norway. It was multi-faith and multi-ethnic. The particular emphasis on 'hope' centred on refugees and migrants - with a strong message of reducing push factors in home countries by advocacy and action on peacemaking and care of creation. Faith communities were urged to welcome those seeking a safe, secure and better life. See 'A Preferential Option for the Migrant,' on p 8.

Our centrespread provides advocacy suggestions for COP27 on Climate Change and COP15 on Biodiversity. A Columban delegation will attend the latter.

We have a duty to hope, just as we continue to put faith into action for social and environmental justice. We can create that hope together. ■

**Ellen Teague**



*Bringers of Hope, Fr Aodh O'Halpin and Bruce Kent, who both died earlier this year. Aodh is remembered for his support of domestic workers and Bruce for his mission to end nuclear weapons.*

## There is always Light Marie Dennis

***Edited acceptance speech of Washington-based Marie Dennis on 7 August 2022, as she received the 'Teacher of Peace' award at Pax Christi USA's national conference.***

What is the role of a white, middle-class Catholic woman from the belly of the beast in response to cries for justice and liberation. I knew 50 years ago and still believe that I had to address root causes because I am responsible for so many of them; and that my lifestyle and location/where I spent my time had to be informed by the wisdom and experience of the people on whose backs I was standing every day. These are people at the peripheries, survivors of oppression, racism, and economic violence.

Fifty years later, the struggle seems the same, yet it is radically different. And that difference fills me with hope – not thin hope, but rich vibrant, thick hope. I believe that we are on the threshold of a new way of being, a new paradigm, a new logic for life. What we are birthing will be closer to the beloved community. It will be anti-racist and socially just. It will be built on right relationships with each other and with the natural world. It will be richly, beautifully diverse and decidedly nonviolent. It will not depend on weapons of war but on right relationships, a commitment to inclusive human dignity and respect for the integrity of creation.

This new paradigm will be based on a completely different understanding of our place as humans in the whole Earth community; and a recognition that we are latecomers at that to a spectacular cosmic reality that we are just now (thanks to the Hubble and Webb telescopes) beginning to see. It will recognise that diversity and relationality are imbedded in the cosmos and essential to survival on this planet. And it will clearly identify and reject violence in all its forms: armed violence, physical violence, structural and systemic violence, gender and racial violence, cultural, ecological, economic, spiritual and psychological violence.

Michael Nagler, founder of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, talks

about “the new story” that is replacing the “old story” told by the dominant white culture about scarcity, competition and violence. He insists that violence is not the nature of humans – that love, faith, trust and the desire for community, peace and well-being are central to our identity and that nonviolence is a creative power, a pervasive energy, a fundamental principle that we can develop and deploy in human interactions. He says: “Violence is a tendency that pulls us back, away from the recognition of unity; nonviolence pulls us forward, toward that recognition that we human beings can play an active role in our own evolution. The discovery of our capacity for nonviolence, connected as it is with higher consciousness or love, is a key to this development. Nonviolence is not only at home in the new story, it is the new story.”

That is the nonviolence that Pax Christi embraces. It is more than pacifism; it is a spirituality, a way of life. I see this shift happening everywhere. I see it in brilliant work to root out systemic racism, voter suppression and structural injustice; to end the death penalty and mass incarceration; to redress centuries of oppression against indigenous communities; to break habits of exploitation that are destroying the Earth; to learn and promote restorative justice practices; to welcome migrants and refugees; to rid the world of nuclear weapons; to fundamentally rework US budget priorities; to celebrate diversity and promote unwavering inclusion and respect for the rights of all people, believing that radical inclusion is the foundational message of the Sermon on the Mount.

I see a paradigm shift led by Pope Francis' vision, creativity and commitment to the cry of the Earth and the cry of those forced to live on the margins of our world. I see a leaning toward nonviolence in Catholic social thought that is being enhanced by the synodal process; and I see a complex and troubled institutional Church that here and



Marie Dennis

there, including in the Vatican, has been amazingly open to engaging with our Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Five years ago in his 2017 World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis said, “I pledge the assistance of the

Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.” We are doing all that we can to take Pope Francis up on his offer, urging the Church to promote the necessary shift from an ethic of violence and war to an ethic of nonviolence — through Catholic universities, religious communities, diocesan and parish programs, Catholic communications and diplomatic efforts. To reclaim the centrality of Gospel nonviolence would require a radical transformation of the internal life of the Catholic Church, as well as the public face, voice and engagement of the institution.

For as long as we humans fail to absorb the significance of the new person emerging from evolution who is wired for cooperation and inclusion or to focus on making the shift to nonviolence that I have been describing, military action will always appear to be the only option, creating a platform for self-serving, powerful forces to fuel a new arms race; to recenter the insane and morally bankrupt strategy of nuclear deterrence; to dismiss the horrific loss of human life, damage to essential infrastructure and wounding of the precious Earth community in wars.

Once again, what we are birthing will be closer to the beloved community. It will be anti-racist, diverse and socially just. It will be built on right relationships with each other and with the natural world. It will not depend on weapons of war but on a commitment to inclusive human dignity and respect for the integrity of creation. It will be diverse, nonviolent, a new way of being viewed through the prism of justice.

With Amanda Gorman let us, “raise this wounded world into a wondrous one...There is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it; if only we're brave enough to be it.” ■

## We are all connected

**Lee Ockboon (Gertrude)**

***A member of the St Columban Missions Society supporters club in South Korea writes her story of Hope. Translated by Noel Mackey, who also took the photo below of Gertrude and her husband.***



Hello, I am Gertrude and I live at a small beach in the city of Samcheok where I begin each day listening to the sound of the songs of praise of the seagulls and the waves. I was baptised in a Seoul parish in 1980 by the late Columban Fr Denis McGonagle.

I first became involved in the environment movement when in 2010 I heard that a nuclear power station was to be built in our beautiful pristine clean city.

I started to participate in Masses and candlelight assemblies that were objecting to the building of the power station. The more I became familiar with the issues around nuclear power I realised that the proposed nuclear power station was not only a problem for our area but was in fact a problem for the whole world. I became afraid when I realised that our ecosystem had reached a critical point and the planet was gradually dying. Knowing that somehow we needed to bring a halt to this dangerous situation, every Wednesday night for eight years, with a heavy heart, I offered Mass and carried my candle. On Facebook I made a page - 'Samcheok Peace' and tried to alert the world about the situation in Samcheok shouting "let us make a nuclear free world".

One year after the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident I participated in the Korean and

Japanese Catholics combined efforts fighting for nuclear disarmament. We had a meaningful time when members of the Japanese Catholic Church together with clerics, members of religious orders who were anti-nuclear activists visited us in Samcheok. Thanks to the courage we gained from this unique act of solidarity, together with all those that opposed the building of a nuclear power station, the efforts of the citizens of Samcheok, the government's plan to build nuclear power station was abandoned after a 10-year struggle.

However, we were not allowed to rest after this achievement as we were further disheartened when we got the news that a coal-fired power station was to be built in our city of Samcheok. But we already had an operating coal fired station within a three kilometer radius in the nearby city of Donghae. The Posco Steel Company was commissioned to build a mammoth coal powered station [2,100mw] that would actually produce twice the volume of a nuclear power station. It would be a danger to the health and lives of the people in our city. Many Samcheok citizens make their living from producing marine and agricultural products that they supply for people throughout the whole of Korea. Even though the ash from the coal would fly in air causing more of our citizens to be inflicted with cancer, and the fine

industrial dust from the plant would cause the agricultural products to be contaminated which, when consumed, would cause us to become ill was an established fact, insisting on building this mammoth coal-fired power station seemed to us to be the equivalent of committing suicide. Furthermore, our beautiful Maengbang beach would disappear with the construction of a port built for the sole purpose of importing coal for the power station. Catholic climate activists gather on the beach each month to celebrate Mass but we find that the Maengbang beach is gradually eroding.

While the planet was undergoing severe pains I too got ill. While I was living in Seoul after my operation I heard that the Catholic Climate Movement members picketed every Friday at one of the main thoroughfares in Seoul. Being unable to sit idly by I made my way to the Square. It was there that I met Fr Pat Cunningham, a member of the Columban Mission Society. I had met him some five years previous to that in Jeju, at the Kangchang peace conference. Seeing his courage in participating in such activities I wanted to become like him. When I explained our situation in Samcheok he joined us in picketing against the coal-fired power station.

Columban lay missionary Hyein Noh and Columban priest missionaries Frs Jude Genovia, Peter Dong, Pat Cunningham and Abe Sumalinog all came to Samcheok and picketed. They celebrated Mass on Maengbang Beach, joining our beach erosion pilgrimage and they continue to be in solidarity with us.

I live here, where with my own eyes I can confirm the changes and the damage that's due to global warming. I live beside the beach and witness masks, plastic bottles and all kinds of rubbish brought in on the waves. Picking up worn out half plastic bottles I fear as I think of the other half having entered a fish's stomach and now as we eat fish we are in fact consuming plastic. Before I used to get angry when I thought of some ignorant person throwing things in the sea but now I think that perhaps this rubbish was carelessly disposed of by me or members of my family >

> and its traces rolled around and is now appearing before my eyes.

I believe the radioactive material from Fukushima nuclear station will appear in the sea here. I imagine that starting with the plankton and extending to the whales and all the creatures in our sea will not be able to resist it, nor will they be able to escape from it but will eventually die of it. Observing the way large waves spit out rubbish I think I can express it as nature getting angry. We live in nature but we are disturbing the ecosystem and I realise that I am part of the problem. Feeling guilty when morning arrives I go to the beach and pick up all the rubbish.

I am certain that global warming has disturbed and caused havoc to our ecosystem. Even though we do not sow seeds in the sea it generously supplies food and many other resources but, due to our mistakes, that food is now being exhausted. From ages past we were able to catch loads of squid so that in autumn we used to be busy from daybreak to sunset hanging up the squid to dry, but nowadays we hardly catch any squid. I can see that the sea around us has got so warm that we can now swim in it even in the month of October. We have upset the ecological order. I believe that anywhere there is life is a sacred place. Because of our greed we are destroying this holy ground.

Some years ago, after the nuclear accident in Fukushima in Japan, we invited the children that were suffering psychologically and physically to Korea. The children took part in a recuperation project with some of them staying in our house. I was sick at heart realising that these children were suffering because of the mistakes of us adults. When they arrived at our house their bodies looked healthy but they never laughed; however after a few days staying with us, eating and playing, I could see their faces gradually brightening. I prayed daily that neither these children nor other children would ever have to suffer like this again while appealing to the world.

I will end by sharing the sentence I recently wrote on a worn-out tyre that was washed ashore. "We are all interconnected. We humans and all of nature are interconnected". ■

## New Columban Podcasts

**Wesley Cocozello**

For the Season of Creation 2022, the Missionary Society of St. Columban launched the second season of its podcasts, titled '*Jubilee for the Earth: Biodiversity and Our Sacred Story*'. This season followed six episodes released last year.

*Jubilee for the Earth* is about the beauty of God's biodiversity and the threats it faces. Over the course of six episodes for Series 2, that were released weekly throughout the Season of Creation, the series explored biodiversity loss and related issues like climate change, indigenous peoples, and youth.

### The episodes are:

#### **Episode 7: Everything is Holy: biodiversity loss & spirituality**

Our age of ecological crisis is challenging us to act differently: to live more sustainably and to build social systems that prioritise the common good. But this crisis is also challenging us to *think* differently. We have an opportunity to expand our spiritual and moral imaginations, and to see the world with fresh eyes, eyes that see how everything that God creates is holy.

#### **Episode 8: Our Sacred Community: biodiversity loss + indigenous peoples**

If the global community wants to better care for creation, we have to first listen to the wisdom of Indigenous traditions, and centre their experience and expertise in the conversation about solutions.

#### **Episode 9: Earth's Twin Crises: biodiversity loss + climate change**

Every day, scientists are learning more and more about how climate change accelerates biodiversity loss, and about how biodiversity loss worsens climate change. We need to solve both crises together.

#### **Episode 10: Saqueando Nuestra Tierra: La pérdida de biodiversidad + sobreexplotación (Episode in Spanish)**

The overexploitation of the planet's biodiversity disrupts the livelihoods of poor communities, and sometimes it even forces them to migrate because they lack the natural resources they need to thrive. The impacts of this irresponsible extraction of natural resources also does irreparable damage to the web of life.

#### **Episode 11: Prophets of the Future: biodiversity loss + young people**

If we want to solve the world's ecological crisis, we have to listen to young people. Decisions must be made with their input, because it will be their generations who will be facing the worst consequences of this crisis.

#### **Episode 12: Creating Healthy Politics: biodiversity loss + advocacy for the common good**

It's our responsibility, as much as it's our right, to use our moral voices to advocate alongside the Earth and its more marginalised children for a more just, sustainable world. To solve the ecological crisis, we need every person to be a part of the solution, starting with their local community and moving all the way up to the highest levels of society and government.

To see the podcasts, visit the Columbans UK youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC5w6L2-bOVRrSTIuvbkg7EhAOt4vasIA>



# Countdown to the COP27 UN Climate Conference in Egypt 7-18 November 2022

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COP27 will take place in Sharm al-Sheikh, on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, from 7–18 November 2022. It is very important that Churches speak up and hold the UK government to account for delivering and building on COP26 commitments at COP27.

Climate change is a global environmental problem, and we have learnt that the UK Government is failing to do what is needed to comply with its obligations. The G20 nations, that produce 85% of emissions, must reduce their emissions drastically and make enough finance available to the poor countries for adaptation and for reparations for 'loss and damage'. All nations should be concentrating on a rapid and massive reduction of carbon emissions to allow us to keep to the 1.5C recommended in the 2015 Paris Agreement and underlined at Glasgow's COP26 meeting.

With Egypt hosting COP27 it will give a more powerful voice to African countries, which are among those most affected by climate change. However, the way in which the wider world responds to the climate emergency is crucial to all our futures.

## Campaigning points in the countdown to COP27

- One outcome of COP26 was the request for governments to 'revisit and strengthen' their 2030 national emission reduction targets (NDCs) before the end of 2022, rather than in 2025, as laid out in the Paris Agreement. Most of the world's biggest economies and biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, including the UK, have yet to fulfil the pledges they made in Glasgow last November to strengthen their targets.
- They must also accelerate energy transitions, phasing out fossil fuels. The UK must end fossil fuel production and create jobs in renewable energy rather than developing nuclear power further. The Churches are urging divestment from fossil fuels.
- Richer countries have failed to deliver on their promise of \$100 billion in annual climate finance, and this is actually insufficient to meet the adaptation and other needs of developing countries. Compensating countries in the Global South for the loss and damage caused to them by climate change is vital. Rich countries also need to find ways to compensate poor countries for not extracting more oil and gas.
- International institutions must find a way to reduce the huge burden of mounting debt that inhibits many poor countries from tackling the climate crisis.
- Protect forests, oceans and nature from pollution and large-scale extractive industries.
- Military emissions to be included in carbon tallies. The world's militaries combined, and the industries that provide their equipment, are estimated to create 6% of all global emissions, according to Scientists for Global Responsibility.

**Speaking in June 2022, COP26 President, Alok Sharma MP said:**

***"Unless we honour the promises made, to turn the commitments in the Glasgow Climate Pact into action, they will wither on the vine."***

**Alok Sharma MP at [alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk) and contact your own MP**

## See:

Climate Change Committee <https://www.theccc.org.uk/>

Climate Change Risk Assessment, September 2021:

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/climate-change-risk-assessment-2021>

## Campaigns:

Details of a virtual walk from Glasgow to Sharm El-Sheikh, starting on 22 September 2022

<https://www.walk2cop27.com/>

CAFOD's Campaign on the Climate Crisis and the Livesimply Parish Award

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Climate-crisis> and <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/LiveSimply-award>

Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign: Next global divestment announcement around COP27 in November 2022

<https://brightnow.org.uk/>

Christian Climate Action <https://christianclimateaction.org/>

Global Justice campaigns on 'Ending trade rules that block climate action' and 'Stopping funding fossil fuels' <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/our-campaigns/climate/>

Campaigning with Friends of the Earth <https://takeclimateaction.uk/>



# Countdown to the COP15 UN Biodiversity Conference in Canada

## 7-19 December 2022

In 1992, the United Nations hosted one of the largest gatherings of heads of state ever in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The event, known as the Earth Summit, marked a turning point for global cooperation on the challenges facing our natural world. As a direct result, more than 170 nations agreed to two treaties: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The December 2022 conference on Biodiversity aims to reverse the loss of the world's biodiversity, the enormous variety of all life on Earth which is diminishing at a faster rate than at any other time in history. Biologists estimate that we're driving species to extinction at a rate of 100 to 1,000 times their usual rate. "We have no such right" says Pope Francis (*Laudato Si'* #33). The catastrophic loss of nature hasn't been hitting the headlines in the same way as climate change, but resolving it is equally critical. In fact, climate change and the loss of biodiversity are so heavily linked that it is impossible to effectively tackle one without the other.

COP15 will take place in Montreal, Canada, from 7-19 December 2022. It is an opportunity to deliver a deal for nature similar in ambition and significance to the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 on climate. This would be a new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), starting to reverse the loss of biodiversity before 2030, with the overall aim of the world living in harmony with nature by 2050.

By signing up to the targets, the UK Government will commit to protecting nature on a national, regional and local level - changing how we farm to make more space for farmland birds, working with nature to create better flood defences and improving water quality.

### Moment of opportunity

Last year, more than 120,000 Catholics and 420 organisations signed the **'Healthy Planet, Healthy People' Petition**. Signatures were delivered to world leaders at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, asking that they take urgent action for God's creation. This year at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15), another wave of the petition will be delivered. **Sign the 'Healthy Planet, Healthy People' Petition to push world leaders and to encourage and support lobbying by the faith community at the UN biodiversity meeting.** <https://healthyplanetandpeople.org/>

### Campaigning points in the countdown to COP15

- Tackle the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis together.
- Effectively protect and conserve at least 30% of land, inland waters, seas and coasts by 2030. Agree targets to prevent extinctions, help wildlife populations to recover, and retain and restore habitats for our wildlife.
- A commitment from governments to tackle the key pressures and drivers of biodiversity loss such as pollution, deforestation, industrial farming and invasive species.
- Ensure that resources and finances are promised to implement the targets and holding countries accountable for their progress towards them.
- Protect and respect human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate and biodiversity action. They are on the frontlines of biodiversity loss and have proven to be among the best custodians of nature.

### See:

News from the UN Environment Programme <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories>

Convention on Biological Diversity <https://www.cbd.int/>

Columban *Laudato Si'* Message on Biodiversity

<https://columbans.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Final-Columban-LS-Week-Message-on-Biodiversity.pdf>

*The Stations of the Forests* is a Columban Education Programme which uses the 'Stations of the Cross' format to lament the death of rainforests. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ancWU2YInHE> and <https://columbans.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/stationsoftheforestBookletinners5.pdf>

### Campaigns:

Campaigning emerging from Earth Day 1970 <https://www.earthday.org/campaign/conservation-and-biodiversity/>

Friends of the Earth 'Protect Nature and Wildlife everywhere' and 'Save our Bees'  
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature> and <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bees>

Campaigns of Greenpeace UK <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/challenges/>

CAFOD campaign 'Fix the Food System' <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Fix-the-food-system>

Green Christian's Rainforest Fund for Churches <https://greenchristian.org.uk/gc-campaigns/100churches/>

## A Preferential Option for the Migrant

**Mauricio Silva**

**The Columban Interreligious Dialogue Coordinator in Britain manages Fatima House and ministers in projects supporting asylum seekers and refugees across the West Midlands. His family came to the UK from Chile as missionaries in 2001.**

Migration has become a central issue in current political and economic narratives in the UK and elsewhere. Correspondingly, the Church's work among migrants has become more intense and intentional. This work has been carried out by countless lay and religious, and most recently by Church leaders making it an institutional pastoral priority. The way that Pope Francis has addressed the rights of migrants in official pronouncements and actions reveals that he sees migration as an urgent *locus for mission*.

I would like to see here a parallel with the historic attention the Church started to pay to the so called '*social question*' at the end of the nineteenth century. This awareness prompted the development of Catholic social thinking and action on issues related to the complex relationship between capital and labour: the dominating concern in socioeconomic discourses at the time. The engagement with that *social question* eventually led to the emergence of *liberation theologies* in diverse contexts and corners of the world. They have sustained and nurtured the Church's action and reflection among the vulnerable and that have translated into intentional action its '*preferential option for the poor*.'

Now I see the Church confronted with a new emerging '*social question*' which could be called the '*migrant question*.' On the one hand, it is inextricably linked to ecological, economic, and political issues; on the other, it requires urgent attention because its deep existential dimension: millions of people on the move today are being denied their basic human rights. Following Pope Francis' invitation to see Migration as a *locus for mission* today, it could also be said that for current liberation theologies, there is a need to uphold a '*preferential option for the migrant*.' But what does this mean?

Columbans - always working in partnership with *like-minded* people and organisations - have engaged for decades in seeking and offering a meaningful response to the issues of migration in Britain and elsewhere. They have met the complexities of a ministry among migrants. In Birmingham, for instance, Columban volunteers, missionaries, and co-workers both lead and support projects which help asylum seekers and refugees. With the intention to empathise with this reality, my family and I have moved into '*multicultural areas*,' where waves of refugees and other migrant groups are constantly arriving. In those areas we have gained first-hand experience of those complexities.

In addition to the political hostility experienced by most refugees while processing their asylum claims, those who eventually gain protection find themselves living amongst communities stricken by underfunded services, poor accommodation, lack of green spaces, elevated levels of crime, unprotected employment, and so on. These are the communities that are *handed down* the challenging task of welcoming refugees.

From a missionary's perspective, refugees usually arrive at areas in which Christian communities are '*in retreat*': shrinking congregations, with a focus on maintenance, struggling financially and crucially,

with little or no ability - and/or willingness - to syntonise and engage with the demands of living interculturally. But there is always hope and although it may sound paradoxical, in a *preferential option for the migrant* may lie an opportunity of enrichment for these ailing communities.

Through the years I have learnt of numerous examples of parishes across the country, which, confronted with the arrival of large numbers of migrants, have made this *option*. Some have adjusted their liturgies/celebrations to make them less monocultural; others have reached out to refugees with concrete help and assistance; while others have made Church property available to offer accommodation to destitute migrants. This is all positive, but we must not forget that an *option for the migrant* can be much more than a '*pastoral strategy*.' The mere **experience** of a migrant can help communities glimpse core qualities of Jesus' Kingdom: the seeking of sanctuary; the meaning of being pilgrims; the ability to become vulnerable and being a guest of the unknown; the perspective from the margins; the unconditional trust in God and so much more. Listening to the experience and journeying with migrants can lead our churches to real faith enrichment.

In my ministry among migrants and refugees I am reminded of Jon Sobrino's remarks that the '*God of Jesus is the God of preference towards victims*.' Today, *people on the move* are the main victims of a faltering socio-economic system colluded with hostile political policies and practices. God speaks through migrants. Let us listen. ■



Mauricio Silva and Columban lay missionaries lobby for refugees to be welcomed.

## Need for Citizenship Education

**Juliette Bone**

**Juliette has been a Columban Faith in Action volunteer.**

Our world is changing and so are the demands on our young people. Where there may have been apathy towards climate change before, there is now a growing sense of restlessness, climate anxiety and frustration emerging from students. Now, more than ever, our lessons, experiences and schools need to respond to the threat posed by the climate crisis and create a generation of global citizens who are equipped and ready to face the world they are confronted with.

Our Shared World - a coalition of more than 150 members including NGOs, Businesses, Universities, Teachers, Headteachers and Student Unions, Subject Associations, Youth Groups, and individuals - recognises this challenge and is ready to respond to the call for change. Advocating for UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 in England by 2030, Our Shared World aims to: *'ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.'*

In the wake of COP26, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, Our Shared World has run webinars aimed at engaging educators involved in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); offering spaces of learning, discussion, inspiration and affirmation. These sessions have covered topics, from responding to COP26 education pledges, to a focus on the DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change paper, and 'green' skills bill. From these conversations emerged a need to support students in becoming active citizens who are aware of the world and able to partake in a just and sustainable future.

Through ESD students recognise the intimate relationship between climate and human rights, and their

personal role and value in the world. As educators we recognise this will require a new understanding of citizen rights and responsibilities that encompasses the Earth and all life within it. Also, a willingness to accept new obligations and responsibilities, not only to other citizens within a nation state, but to distant others and non-human nature.

In our recent webinar on 'green skills' our speakers grappled with what this might mean. One speaker, Livia Filotico (Shimak Education), challenged the term saying: "These skills are not something we produce, or something we create and then pass on, rather it's something we listen to. These skills are really embedded in what we call the natural world, they are embedded in the forest which is us." Underlined here is the idea that the concept of skills and sustainability are inseparable, one flows from the other; our world and the environment and our skills to interrelate are one and the same.

Our students are actively taking to the streets across the country, participating in current issues. Citizenship teachers are well placed to equip students with an understanding about different types of public engagement, protest, action and campaigning. This is called 'environmental empowerment.' It's all about providing a safe environment for students to feel they can participate, enriching both their skills learning, but also their confidence and understanding of Citizenship. Leading workshops with primary school students post COP26 on the role of frontline voices in climate talks myself, it is clear students, at an early age, are able to grasp how their choices impact the environment and those most vulnerable around the world, yet are unaware of how best to act.

We know young people have a desire for change and yet feel unheard, frustrated or disillusioned by the system. Education for sustainable development challenges us to rethink our personal relationship with the

planet and its people and, as a result, to address structural imbalances such as over consumption, and the exploitation of humans and nature.

In her 2022 Our Shared World blog, Mia Venus McClafferty wrote, "I wish I could say the education I received was already enough to inspire a new sustainable way of thinking but it was taught as an afterthought." Mia indicates a shift, as educators adapt our own image of citizenship and ESD to help our students shape the future. As a high carbon-polluting country with a history of colonisation we need to be aware of our socio-political context in order to best prepare our students, as global citizens, to be ready to respond to the major issues of the day and recognise the role that they play globally. This is not only because the issue could directly affect them - their democratic participation can influence the outcome.

But we don't need to do this alone. The 1998 Crick report mentioned creating 'Community Forums' including all those with an interest in Citizenship education. It is within the global Our Shared World family that educators may find like-minds, resources and motivation to take back to their students and colleagues. In Julie Ward's 2021 Letter to Earth she writes: *'For in Our Shared World there will be no losers, no hunger, no war. We will learn real maths, sharing resources fairly. Arts and science will be of equal value. History will teach us not to make the same mistakes again. Geography will join up the dots between people and places, animal, vegetable and mineral. Technology will bring us closer together – not tear us apart through hate and division. Citizenship will teach us global stewardship. We will learn the language of compassion.'*

The skills already present in Citizenship classes are ones that transcend nationality and embrace a greener, more sustainable and more global future. Now these skills need to be placed in an ESD context, acknowledging youthful vigour, passion and activism and effectively equipping young people to be the change they want to see. ■

<https://oursharedworld.net/osw-evidence-report/>

## Sacramental commitments

Christians being confirmed or baptised in the Anglican Diocese of Oxford will now be asked to commit to protecting the environment as part of the diocese's formal liturgy. Candidates will be asked to 'strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth'. Oxford Diocese has also announced plans to spend £10 million improving the energy efficiency of its vicarages.

## Vatican calls for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Vatican has called for an international treaty to protect people and planet from the climate crisis. Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, has said, "the planet already is 1.2°C hotter, yet new fossil fuel projects every day accelerate our race towards the precipice." He called for all new exploration and production of coal, oil, and gas to end immediately, and for existing production of fossil fuels to be urgently phased out, with a just transition for impacted workers into environmentally sound alternatives. "The proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty holds great promise to complement and enhance the Paris Agreement," he suggested. The proposed Treaty is supported by 101 Nobel laureates, a growing interfaith group of religious leaders, more than 1,500 civil society organisations and over 60 cities including London.

## A future without nuclear weapons

On 5 August the *Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons*, a group of faith-based organisations and individuals committed to a nuclear-weapon-free world, issued a joint interfaith statement to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) taking place in New York. Amongst 104 signatories were Pax Christi, Justice and Peace Scotland, Catholic Religious Australia, Missionary Society of St Columban (International), Sisters of Charity and Dominican Sisters. They pledged, "to do our part as faith communities to keep working towards a future without nuclear weapons."

## SWITZERLAND: Religious seek new partnerships at Davos

The executive secretary of the Women's International Union of Superiors General was in Davos in late May for the World Economic Forum. Loreto Sister Patricia Murray participated in an event for business leaders and representatives of nongovernmental organisations. One discussion was around financial support for religious orders working with migrants and refugees to start small businesses and run training programmes.

## ISRAEL: Festival of Hope

As the academic year ended in July at the Neve Shalom School for Peace in Israel, the school inaugurated a new tradition - the Festival of Hope. Jewish and Arab children marked their experience over the year of learning and playing together. The Festival of Hope aims to add a new narrative that celebrates the promise of peace and a better future.

## UK's Cost of Living Crisis action

In August former Prime Minister Gordon Brown joined with more than 50 faith groups, charities and politicians to call on the UK government to take urgent action to bridge the cost of living gap faced by low income families. He said, "this crisis goes far beyond politics; this is a moral issue - our responsibilities to our neighbours and in particular to those who have the least and whose needs are the greatest." This followed a report which warned that some low-income families will be up to £1,600 a year worse off as a result of the cost of living crisis. Caritas members called for increasing benefits and reintroducing the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and implementing longer-term policies like reintroducing the Green Homes Grant Scheme.

## Fatima House

Over the past year nearly 3,000 bed-nights were offered by Fatima House, a partnership ministry managed by the Columbans to destitute women in Birmingham seeking asylum in the UK. In addition, £8,500 of vital cash support was provided to the residents.

## Marking Hiroshima and Nagasaki



Members of Pax Christi England and Wales, London Catholic Worker, and Justice and Peace Southwark and Westminster gathered outside Westminster Cathedral on Hiroshima Day - 6 August - and Nagasaki Day - 9 August - for vigils to pray for an end to nuclear weapons. In Scotland, Archbishop William Nolan of Glasgow deplored the money, resources and personnel spent on nuclear weapons and said, "they could be better used building up peace than on weapons of war."

## CAFOD celebrates women founders on 60th anniversary

The National Board of Catholic Women, Catholic Women's League and Union of Catholic Mothers were all represented at CAFOD's 60th anniversary Mass on 10 June at St George's Cathedral, Southwark. The original founders of CAFOD were Catholic women.



L-R: Joan Hodge (UCM), Christine Allen (CAFOD), Margaret Clark (NBCW), Siobhan Clarke (CWL).

**Campaigning is about educating ourselves about the root causes of injustices and putting our faith into action. Each month the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team - now headed by James Trewby - puts out a Campaigning Sheet. For September, it took the theme, 'Celebrating the Season of Creation'.**

**See Campaigning sheets at:**  
<https://columbans.co.uk/how-you-can-help/campaign/>



**SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION**

Columban Missionaries are looking for students (aged 13-18 inclusive) to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme:

- ✓ Is conflict inevitable?
- ✓ Where and how is peacebuilding taking place?
- ✓ What role can faith play in peacemaking?

**"Our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus challenges us to build communities of peace."**  
From the Columban Statement on Peace

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES:**  
**FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

For more information see:  
[www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)

**COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES BRITAIN**

**PRINT PRIZES**  
1<sup>ST</sup> £300  
2<sup>ND</sup> £150 • 3<sup>RD</sup> £100

**IMAGE PRIZES**  
1<sup>ST</sup> £300  
2<sup>ND</sup> £150 • 3<sup>RD</sup> £100

## ‘Building Peaceful Futures’

‘Building Peaceful Futures’ is the title of the next Columban Schools Media Competition. It was launched on 21 September, World Peace Day, and calls for students aged 13-18 to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme.

We are looking for articles and images that demonstrate an awareness and understanding of conflict in the world today and shine a light on people, communities and/or organisations trying to make the world a better place for everyone by building peaceful futures.

### Consider:

*Is conflict inevitable?  
Where and how is peacebuilding taking place?  
What role can faith play in peacemaking?*

If students are inspired by Pope Francis, for example, they might create an image showing how he is promoting peace. Or you might like to create an article/image about building peaceful futures in your own community, country and/or internationally.

Full details and ideas at the dedicated website:

<https://www.columbancompetition.com/>

Material here is suitable for students, teachers and parents.

The deadline for submission is 10 February 2023.  
Winners will be announced in Columban media  
on 13 March 2023.

## ‘Building a Caring Community’ - A tool for community mission through the lens of the *Laudato Si’* Goals.

An activity poster pack resource specifically designed to be a starting point for a school, parish or community in addressing our ecological and social crises.

The materials help to explore integral ecology using the *Laudato Si’* goals.

Includes concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace, in an integrated community response.

Helps groups prioritise areas for action.

<https://journeyto2030.org/poster-activity/>

# Resources

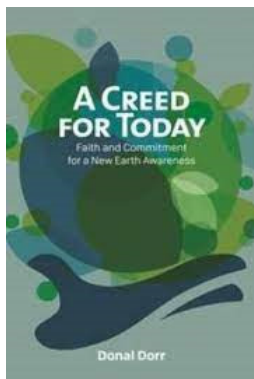
## **A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for our New Earth Awareness**

**Donal Dorr**

Rather than seeing ecological theology as an adjunct to Christian doctrine, theologian and missionary Donal Dorr views it as central to our understanding of Catholicism today and integral to understanding our relationship with the natural world. Espousing what he calls a 'new Earth

awareness', the author lays out a compelling vision for how we should live at both a spiritual and practical level in terms of our Christian faith and the attendant responsibility to care for our planet.

ISBN: 9781847309389



## **Hot Metals for a Cooler Climate? Power Shift**

This downloadable publication looks at the consequences that mining and raw materials production of metals has on the climate, environment, and society. Metals form the basis for so-called "green technologies". Without them, there would be no wind power or solar plants, no electric cars, and no digital transformation. Almost all studies by the International Energy Agency, the World Bank, the EU Commission, and many national governments, forecast a significant increase in metal requirements. <https://power-shift.de/hot-metals-for-a-cooler-climate/>

## **Riders on the Storm Alastair McIntosh**

An ecologist and Quaker, McIntosh sees climate change as a threat which can be met. It presents us with risk and also with opportunity.

Subtitled, 'The Climate Crisis and the Survival of Beings' he offers a profusion of ideas, written with insight, honesty and wit. Sir Jonathan Porritt has described it as "imbued with the deepest hope for a better world."

ISBN-13:978-1780276397

## **The Wailing of God's Creatures A Report of the Laudato Si' Research Institute**

This report - commissioned by CIDSE, CAFOD and the Global Catholic Climate Movement - calls for more attention from politicians and decision makers to address the "collapse" of Biodiversity. Against this backdrop, the next UN biodiversity conference (COP15) will provide a unique opportunity to enhance efforts to address the crisis. This should also include the voices of indigenous communities, who are the principal guardians of nature.

*THE-WAILING-OF-GODS-CREATURES- Nov 2021.pdf*

## **Wreckers of the Earth: 300 London-based Companies destroying the planet Corporate Watch**

London is home to fossil fuel giants and to many of the worst mining polluters. It is the world's second-largest financial centre and a key financial marketplace for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and for trading oil, metals, minerals and other 'commodities'. The legacy of the British Empire still continues in the infrastructure and services London offers: insurance markets, law firms, arms dealers, PR agencies, and investment property. <https://corporatewatch.org/wreckers-of-the-earth/>

## **Green New Deal New Economics Foundation**

The UK needs a more just economy and more ambitious plans for climate action. The *Green New Deal* - first produced a decade ago - would address economic, social and environmental crises together. <https://neweconomics.org/2019/04/a-green-new-deal>

## **Every Bush Aflame**

**John Feehan, Veritas Publications**

Explores the origins of biodiversity in Christian theology and its roots in our growing understanding of the nature and scale of life's complexity and diversity. Also explores the kind of Christian response called for in *Laudato Si'*. Emphasis is laid on the importance of personal encounter with the natural world.

ISBN: 9781847309488



## **The Peace Protestors: A history of modern-day war resistance Symon Hill**

Wherever there is war, there will be people who resist it. Sometimes, they can draw on public sympathy. and at other times, they stand alone. This book tells their stories. ISBN: 9781399007863

## **Christian Social Action: Making a difference where you are John Evans**

Informs and inspires Christians who believe that they are called to serve the poor and to advance the cause of justice as part of their mission. It combines research-based descriptions of today's growing need in terms of household debt, food, child and housing poverty, with examples of Christian action. ISBN: 9781471723513 <https://www.christiansocialaction.net>

## **Challenge Poverty Week 17-23 October.**

Downloadable resources at: <https://challengepoverty.co.uk/resources/>

To mark the 40th anniversary of Church Action on Poverty a new anthology has been published in collaboration with Wild Goose Publications of the Iona Community. [www.ionabooks.com/product/dignity-agency-power/](http://www.ionabooks.com/product/dignity-agency-power/)

## **VOCATION FOR JUSTICE**

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