

# Vocation for Justice



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## Cost of Living Crisis

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**COLUMBAN MISSION**

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



## Cost of Living or Denial of Life crisis?

Church Action on Poverty



White City Parish in Westminster Diocese – pictured on our cover – is the latest to achieve a LiveSimply Award for its multiple initiatives for social justice and care of creation. As an assessor, being shown around by parish priest Fr Richard Nesbitt and parishioner Hilda McCafferty, just two of the projects that impressed were support of the local community by providing a weekly vegetarian meal and a 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' centre.

Attention to meeting local needs in the UK, as well as charitable and advocacy work for the global south is an increasing feature of justice and peace outreach.

In recent months, Caritas Salford has reported that it is seeing significantly increased demand for its services across Greater Manchester and Lancashire. "People with families that are often working many, many hours a week to try and make ends meet are still in a situation where they're unable to put on the heating or make rent or mortgage payments" says Patrick O'Dowd, Caritas Salford's Director; "it is simply unacceptable that people are forced to live in such poverty in 2022."

In Birmingham, Mauricio Silva, a Columban lay worker who coordinates Fatima House, which supports female asylum seekers, reported in January that, "we have increased the amount of the weekly allowance we distribute from our destitution fund and are redoubling efforts to appeal for donations of toiletries and basic food, which can help them save a little from their allowance." He said that, "among refugee friends, we have noticed that many are struggling to make ends meet and having to make difficult decisions between feeding their families and paying bills."

Many Church foodbanks are linked to the Trussell Trust network and one in South London has reported, "seeing a level of fear in people that we haven't seen before, in that, literally, they don't know what they're going to do to try and pay the bills and feed their families." The Trussell Trust delivered a letter to Downing Street just before Christmas, calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that everyone can afford food and all the essentials needed in life.

"The Catholic tradition has always insisted on justice as well as charity," says Raymond Friel, Director of the Catholic Social Action Network (CSAN), who writes on p.3. CSAN's campaign, 'Cost of Living Crisis,' calls on the government to make urgent changes to the welfare and tax system for the benefit of the most vulnerable. The campaign also urges them to work with the Catholic community and all other faith groups on a vision for a poverty-free country, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of 'No Poverty'. Our centrespread takes the title, 'Charity is crucial, but so is Justice.'

And we must think globally too. The poorest half of the global population hardly owns any wealth, just 2% of the total. The richest 10% own 76%. Yet, it is shocking that recently released UK aid statistics show that UK aid to Fragile and Conflict-Affected States fell by 40% in 2021 from 2020. Solidarity with the poor is lacking.

The government's plan to go ahead with a new coal mine in Cumbria is just one example of a political failure to truly tackle the international climate crisis. Fixing the climate problem is fundamental to solving other problems. The Columbans in Pakistan can tell you

that after severe weather and floods last year put a third of the country underwater. They are still distributing health kits and food to communities displaced as well as campaigning on the climate crisis.

Indian environmentalist Dr Vandana Shiva, who was so inspirational when she spoke at the annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network 12 years ago, said in January that she disliked the phrase 'Cost of Living Crisis'. In her view there is a "denial of life crisis". Speaking on diminishing biodiversity at the Oxford Real Farming Conference she lamented injustices against small farmers and "corporate capture of governments". She felt faith communities have an important role to build a sustainable and just future. On p.5 you will see Columban feedback from December's COP15 UN Conference on Biodiversity.

In the UK, 2022 was the hottest year since records began. We are now in the 'Anthropocene' era, one where the world is largely shaped by humans, and the negative impact on the planet caused by human behaviour has now reached crisis proportions. We must turn this, and growing inequality and poverty, around in every way possible. For example, the cost of living and climate crises could be seriously tackled by investing in renewable energy, properly insulating homes and providing people with the skills and training needed to deliver a green energy revolution. We - as individuals and as a faith community - potentially have more power than we realise. Expressions of specific discontent could expand into demands for more comprehensive change.

Pope Francis talked about a "fear of life" in his speech on 9 January to the diplomatic corps in Rome. And his World Peace Day message of 1 January urged that we must, "heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world." When we do this we are building hope. At home, let us celebrate the snowdrops appearing everywhere as the first flowers of Spring. They symbolise new beginnings, hope, rebirth and the ability to overcome challenges. ■

**Ellen Teague**

## Justice and Mercy: Raising a Prophetic Voice

**Raymond Friel**

***The Chief Executive of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) explores the cost of living crisis.***

Since the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on 31 December 2022, there has been much comment on his legacy. To the fore has been an appreciation of his intellectual ability as a theologian, his skills as a writer, his deep personal holiness. Not enough has been said, I would argue, about his legacy in speaking out against poverty and advocating for justice.

When he addressed the XXXV General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 2008, he stated: "For us, the option for the poor is not ideological but is born from the Gospel. Situations of injustice and poverty in today's world are numerous and tragic, and...it is necessary to seek to understand them and fight their structural causes."

For Benedict XVI, social injustice was rooted in the fallen heart of the human condition, a consequence of the grip of sin on human beings, manifest as distance from God's will for human flourishing, which needed to be tackled as much as what his predecessor Pope St John Paul II called, the "structures of sin" (*On Social Concern*, 36).

The theme of mercy **and** justice has been growing steadily in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching in the modern era since Pope Leo XIII's breakthrough encyclical in 1891, *Rerum Novarum*, challenged the dire conditions of workers in the industrial age. It's not new, of course, in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Old Testament prophets spoke out against the exploitation of the impoverished majority by a wealthy minority. In Luke's gospel, we see Jesus as being very much in this prophetic tradition, with a mission to "let the oppressed go free" (4:18).

However, from the Reformation on, as the Church turned inwards and focused more on those aspects of the Church which the reformers attacked – the sacraments, the priesthood, authority – there was a distinct shift to personal piety and devotions and less focus on

changing society to reduce poverty. The Catholic culture I was brought up with in the west coast of Scotland in the 1960s was still characterised by that approach, although change was working its way through, inspired by the Second Vatican Council.

Pope Francis, with his South American experience of liberation theology and the continuity between faith and social justice, has made this a major theme of his pontificate. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he reminds us that, "each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society" (187).

Echoing his predecessors, he goes on to say that solidarity is more than "a few sporadic acts of generosity" (188), it is "working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor" (188). It means thinking in terms of community and "the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few" (188).

In our country at the moment, more and more people are being dragged into poverty by the cost of living crisis. This is demeaning of human dignity, and where there is such an acute need the Catholic community is called to a Gospel response of truth, justice and compassion. While in the past we may have focused more on compassion, we are now called to witness to justice as well, to raise a voice against the systemic political choices which trap people in poverty.

At Caritas Social Action Network, we are inviting the Catholic community in England and Wales to raise their prophetic voice in the face of this urgent humanitarian need. We know how generous the Catholic community is in responding to need at the grassroots. Our CSAN members, much like the National Justice and Peace Network, are involved in thousands of projects all

over the country to help relieve the damaging effects of poverty. But we are called to do more than just relieve poverty.

In line with the Bishops' Conference and its Department for Social Justice's briefing paper <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/briefing-cost-of-living-crisis/> we are calling on the government to make urgent changes to the welfare and tax system for the benefit of the most vulnerable in our society. We are also calling on them to work with the Catholic community and all faith groups on a vision for a poverty-free country, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal No. 1: **No Poverty**. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Please join this mobilisation of the Catholic community in the stand against poverty by writing to your MP. You will find a template letter in the link below, revised following the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022, which you can adapt in your own words, although we would urge you not to change the four 'asks' of the government. The letter says: "We urge you to work with all the political parties on a vision for a poverty-free country, with effective safety nets so that the most vulnerable can build decent and dignified lives. We urge you to commit to a vision for the common good, so that all people in our country can flourish, participate in society and live a fully human life." <https://www.csan.org.uk/guidance/template-letter-to-your-mp/>

It would be helpful if you could add an example from your parish or school community of the impact of the cost of living crisis and what the Catholic community is doing in response. You might also ask to meet with your MP, perhaps with some others from your parish, to engage in constructive dialogue about the 'asks' of the government.

We'd also be grateful to know if you have written to your MP and do share any stories or case studies from your community. You can contact us at [admin@csan.org.uk](mailto:admin@csan.org.uk), please put '**Cost of Living Crisis**' in the subject header. ■

[www.csan.org.uk](https://www.csan.org.uk)



## How can we afford the cost of defence?

**Colin Archer**

***The former secretary general of the International Peace Bureau, who now serves on the steering group of GCOMS-UK, writes on military spending in a time of inflation, poverty, climate change and war.***

Imagine a huge tree that dominates your garden, blocks out the light, undermines the foundations of your house, and crowds out all the other plants. It's been there for generations but really your home would be more secure without it.

Forgive the negative image of a tree here, but it is metaphor for militarism and its place in our economy. The easy things to do are to clip off some twigs and smaller branches (a military base here, a specific strike there) and just keep going. A more radical step is to take an axe to the trunk, whose sap supplies all the other parts. In my imagery this is the military budget. Then of course there are the roots, which spread their way throughout our culture (post-colonial legacies, deeply-ingrained nationalism, sense of ideological superiority, macho posturing, and more).

Peace groups work on many of these levels, and all are important. The **Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS)** has chosen as its focus the trunk of the tree. This is not quite the same as the arms trade, since the latter is in the hands of the private sector and the defence budget is funded by public money. The armed forces use the defence budget to purchase weaponry and

equipment from the private arms companies, who then make huge profits. They justify these, and their overseas sales, as necessary in order to develop new and more efficient tools of destruction. However it is worth remembering that in most countries the bulk of the budget is spent on staff salaries and general running costs.

The main arguments advanced by GCOMS are:

■ The principal threats to our security nowadays are more about climate change and biodiversity loss than invasion by enemies. They are more about equality and social justice (both within our own country and worldwide) than about migrants turning up on the Kent beaches.

■ We already spend more than most countries of our size, and, with others in NATO, outspend Russia by around 18:1 in the military field. World governments now devote over \$2 trillion a year to their armed forces. Can this really be the right priority?

The issue of the cost of living has risen to the very top of the political agenda, and the question of the nation's spending priorities has become a burning issue. One of the problems is that few people have any idea of how big the UK's government budget is, and what proportion each department spends. Even more obscure is the debate among economists over how much the authorities can safely borrow without destabilising the economy. However, clearly it isn't a bottomless barrel and hard choices do have to be made.

The last 12 months have thrown the defence debate into unusual turmoil due to Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the consequent increases in defence allocations by many western governments including our own. (In fact the big increases in the UK were already made in 2021). Many peace groups feel torn between their support for the right of Ukraine to self-defence

in the face of invasion, and their belief that simply pouring in more weaponry is not the answer to the problem. For one thing, the risk of nuclear destruction means the geopolitical situation is not the same as the one faced in 1939, even though many make facile comparisons. Another point is that to push for outright victory over Russia could lead to more national humiliation and possibly a new leader in the Kremlin with even more extreme views than Putin.

In this context there is a strong case to say that Britain should not be increasing its defence budget yet further but rather should invest more heavily in diplomacy and international cooperation (not just with NATO partners). It should be helping devise a new common security order that would accommodate the needs of both small nations (some already disappearing under the ocean) as well as the big beasts like US, China, Russia etc who are either harking back to past imperial glories or forward to future ones. Such a project is extremely challenging, but is there a better plan? Military investments tend to operate as a spiral, with each side provoking the other to commit larger and larger shares of their wealth to defence. And, is 'defence' even the right term?

GCOMS was founded by the International Peace Bureau. We have a season of action in April-May, coinciding with the release of the annual military spending statistics by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). In the UK, there are now some 30 supporting organisations (many of them faith groups) and a Steering Group which keeps the programme moving throughout the year.

We are keen to hear from new organisations who may wish to join our efforts, and to reach out beyond the peace movement to other sectors who would benefit from new national priorities. ■

### Useful links:

UK: <https://demilitarize.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/UKCampaignOnMilitarySpending>

[https://twitter.com/GCOMS\\_UK](https://twitter.com/GCOMS_UK)



Columban lay missionary Nathalie Marytsch and Ellen Teague.

## Faiths and Biodiversity Protection

**Amy Echeverria and Wesley Cocozello**

***The Columban Society's Central JPIC Coordinator and the US Columbans' Communications and Programs Manager report from December's UN Conference COP15 on Biodiversity in Montreal. >***

In December, the nations of the world adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a global agreement to protect and restore at least 30% of Earth's land and water by 2030. This agreement has the potential to create transformative action and build a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all life!

The scale of its ambition was made possible in part by the advocacy of conservation groups, indigenous peoples, women, young people, and people of faith. COP15 was the first time faith communities participated as part of an interfaith coalition in UN negotiations like these.

Columbans are members of the 'Faiths at COP15' coalition. We do this advocacy as an act of solidarity with the communities that Columbans accompany, like the Indigenous peoples in the Philippines losing their forests due to extractive industries or the coastal communities in Fiji losing their natural resources and livelihoods due to ocean depletion. Other Catholic groups represented in Montreal included the Laudato Si Movement, the CIDSE network of Catholic social justice organisations, and the Jesuit Forum in Toronto.

And now that we have the Global Biodiversity Framework, the work to implement it begins. We have to ensure that governments are held accountable to the goals they agreed to in Montreal. Given the immense potential of faith communities to mobilise people at local levels, we are uniquely positioned to play a leading role in creating a more nature-positive world where all life flourishes.

In the new year, Faiths at COP15 will be hosting opportunities to dig deeper into the content of the Framework as well as how we can begin to implement its goals.

**Keep an eye on their website and the hashtag #FAITHSATCOP15 ■**



<https://www.biodiversity.faith/policy>

Columban session at COP15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MTsEt2oAWc>

Columban message to COPs27&15 <https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/11471/columbans-lift-up-moral-voice-at-cop27-and-cop15/>

Nations adopt 23 targets for 2030 <https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022>

### Faiths at COP15 put forward:

#### Our vision: The Web of Life

- As people of faith, who believe in the sacredness of all life, we believe the text needs to reflect the worldviews which are grounded in interconnectedness, interdependence and relationship and speak to the sacred wisdom and experiences of many people including indigenous peoples, spiritual communities and faith groups.

#### Ambition

- The Framework needs to reflect the current and impending biodiversity crisis and increase ambition by addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss, in a fair and equitable way for the benefit of present and future generations and all life on Earth.
- In particular, we urge that the framework's mission, goals and targets be coherent with climate change, pollution policies and others, as agreed by parties through other international instruments.
- Subsidies that are harmful to the environment (such as fossil fuels, industrial animal agriculture, and mining) must be repurposed or eliminated on as ambitious a timescale as possible recognising the importance of a just transition.

#### Rights-Based Approach

- We believe that the framework will not and cannot succeed without the knowledge, expertise, and active participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and other historically marginalised groups. The Framework must centre the goals of sustainable use and equitable rights-based governance and management of ecosystems.

#### Production & Extraction

- Targets should be strengthened to incentivise the just transition of industries which rely on the production and extraction of natural resources towards living in harmony with nature and systems imbued with the sacred rights of people and planet.
- The Framework needs to better reflect and address the overwhelming impact that industrial agriculture, food systems and fossil fuel industries have in driving the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem destruction. It is important to include **agro-ecology in the agriculture and forestry section** for instance.
- The benefits of the **ethical utilisation of genetic resources** must be shared fairly and equitably, to ensure that the development of such technology does not cause harm to populations it intends to serve.
- An **ethical and holistic response to living in harmony with nature cannot occur without addressing the existing economic systems** in place that must prioritise the wellbeing of people and the planet over short term financial profit.

# CHARITY IS CRUCIAL

## Trussell Trust:

People need support from food banks because of a fundamental lack of income. Most people referred to food banks do not receive enough income to afford the essentials.

- Compared to this time five years ago, the need for food banks in our network has increased by 128%
- 95% of people referred to food banks were destitute, meaning they were unable to afford to eat or stay warm
- 62% of working age people referred to foodbanks were disabled – three times the rate in the general working age population
- 18% of households referred to food banks during the pandemic were single parents – more than twice the rate of the general population
- 51% of households referred to food banks in early 2020 had someone with poor mental health.

*“We need government at all levels to commit to ending the need for food banks once and for all and to develop a plan to do so. It’s time for government to make this a priority – to recognise that it must be an essential part of their levelling up agenda to work towards a hunger-free future where we can all afford the basics.”*

**Emma Revie, Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust**



## St Vincent de Paul Society:

The SVP, which has 876 member groups, is urging the UK government to show a commitment to the Levelling Up agenda, to improve cooperation between government and frontline faith groups and to provide an adequate and functioning social security system. *“All around the country our support centres and conferences have collectively seen a spike in the number of people turning to our services in order to make ends meet. Requests to SVP food banks, kitchens and debt advice have all seen a marked rise. Across the UK, faith based charities like ours are being relied on to fill the gaps in adequate social security provision. In sharing these case studies, we are sharing the lived experience of those who are bearing the brunt of the economic crisis and ensuring that their voice is heard.”*

**Elizabeth Palmer, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society**

## Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

Research shows that, for most households, out of work benefits do not even cover 70% of the Minimum Income Standard. This is the income necessary for a minimum acceptable standard of living.

*“The crises of recent years have highlighted the limits of an economic system aimed more at creating profit for a few than at providing opportunities for the benefit of the many; an economy more focused on money than on the production of useful goods. This has created more fragile businesses and unjust labour markets. There is a need to restore dignity to business and to work, combating all forms of exploitation that end up treating workers as a commodity, for without dignified work and just remuneration, young people will not truly become adults and inequality will increase”.*

**Pope Francis  
to Diplomatic Corps,  
9 January 2023**

*“It is encouraging to see so many parishes involved in supporting food banks for the hungry and in providing warm places for those shivering with cold. And it is commendable that many people pressure those in power to respect the human dignity of all in need: whether it’s the poor in our own country, the refugees seeking shelter from oppression, or those in foreign lands whose climate we have destroyed.”*

**Archbishop William Nolan  
of Glasgow,  
New Year Message 2023**

*“Care homes are struggling too. Bills have risen; hiring and keeping staff is a challenge. Why work as a carer when you might get paid more in less demanding jobs? Caring is not easy. Good carers are wonderful people to be valued. We know our care system is broken, but it doesn’t have to be. We can rise to the challenge of fixing it. That means action from all of us: you, me, families, communities and government.”*

**Archbishop Justin Welby,  
1 January 2023**

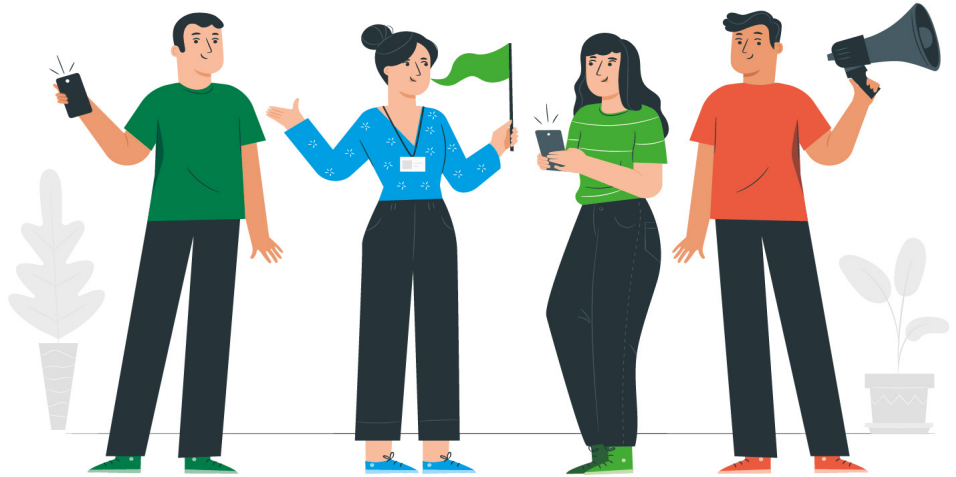


# BUT SO IS JUSTICE

## Catholic Bishops of England and Wales:

In a Briefing Paper, 'Cost of Living Crisis' in September 2022, the Bishops' Conference Department for Social Justice said that, as the UK government assesses its future priorities, we ask that it:

- Recognises the work that faith and other civil society groups were able to do during the pandemic to ameliorate suffering and ensure that their role is fully recognised in government policy initiatives to relieve the cost-of-living crisis.



- Recognises the long-term nature of many of the problems that are causing the cost-of-living crisis and devote itself to the promotion of the common good and inter-generational solidarity above factionalism and party interest. As the Church Council, Vatican II, taught: "Political parties, for their part, must promote those things which in their judgement are required for the common good; it is never allowable to give their interests priority over the common good." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 75).

- We also recognise the responsibilities of employers at this time. Businesses, especially the owners of small businesses and the self-employed, may themselves be struggling with increased costs. Nevertheless, Catholic Social Teaching demands that, if an enterprise can afford it, it should pay a living wage to its staff. We also ask employers and managers to be aware of the stress that their staff may be under and respond with compassion and understanding.

### In November 2022, the Bishops' Department urged the government to:

- ◆ Ensure that the uprating of benefits in line with inflation announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement are effective immediately, not in April 2023.
- ◆ Remove the two-child cap on universal credit payments or, at the very least, suspend it pending a review of its impact.
- ◆ Reform the tax system so that it better recognises family, child-rearing and other caring responsibilities.
- ◆ Reverse the decision in the Autumn Statement to delay the introduction of the social care reforms, a key manifesto pledge of the government.



Trussell Trust letter from food bank staff and volunteers delivered to Downing Street in December 2022.

Caritas Shrewsbury and Church Action on Poverty are among the Christian organisations joining the 'End Child Poverty' Coalition, which has 82 members all committed to ending child poverty in the UK. "Sadly, there's even more to do in 2023 but we know we can make a difference together" says Caritas Shrewsbury.

Church Action on Poverty, is organising an all-day conference in Leeds on Saturday 10 June, to build links between activists who are based in churches and other organisations and campaigners with lived experience of poverty to address the high level of poverty in the UK.

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/dignityconference/>

## Women and Poverty

**Nikki Dhillon Keane**

***Our writer sits on the Violence Against Women and Girls Committee, National Board of Catholic Women, and advises the Bishops of England and Wales on domestic abuse.***

"Anna" (name changed) is asking me where God is. She is talking to me from her home, freezing and desperate. Listening from my warm office, I find it hard to answer.

Like many domestic abuse survivors, "Anna" has been subjected to economic abuse. One of the "luckier ones", she still managed to leave, but post separation abuse and the cost of living crisis have created huge debts. Economic abuse, recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, is one of the most powerful forms of coercive control, intentionally trapping victims with poverty. Domestic abuse perpetrators are now using the cost of living crisis as a tool of coercive control. While we are all dealing with strained finances, some women are now no longer able to flee their abuse.

The cost of living crisis is disproportionately affecting all women. We are more likely to fulfil unpaid caring roles, have part time and lower paid work, or be expected to work on a voluntary basis. Women are also more likely to be the person in the household responsible for making ends meet. Research in October from the British Psychological Society described increasing anxiety and depression among women as they bear the brunt of keeping the family going with less money.

Women's physical health suffers too, according to a report from the Women's Budget Group, which described women as the "shock absorbers of poverty." The gender disparity is starker still for Black and minoritised women, women with disabilities and women who are lone parents. The correlation between poverty and early death is well known, but the difference it makes in the UK is higher than any other OECD country except Mexico. Poverty in the UK has been exacerbated by Brexit and 12 years of austerity, and women are disproportionately paying the price.

A joint statement from the CEOs and directors of UK women's

organisations, released in November, highlighted the impact of the cost of living crisis on women. Calling on the government for urgent action, the statement warned of increasing risks of abuse to women and girls, as they are forced to choose between staying with their abuser or destitution.

Some vital organisations face closure, and all are struggling with increasing demand, higher costs and fewer resources. Welsh Women's Aid contributed to the statement; their CEO, Sara Kirkpatrick, is also a member of the National Board of Catholic Women's Violence Against Women And Girls committee. Speaking about the statement, Sara described, "unprecedented concern that years of austerity, social and political factors have intersected to create a perfect storm, severely hindering service provision to those in need of life-saving support."

Globally, the violence against women crisis is getting worse in the wake of financial insecurity, the pandemic, the climate crisis and war. Women are extremely vulnerable when forced to flee their country. In the UK, women with insecure immigration status often cannot access support - a fact their abusers commonly exploit. Sexual violence is rife in refugee camps. Across the world, a woman is murdered by a partner or family member every eleven minutes.

As Catholics, we cannot be silent in the face of such injustice. Pope Francis has repeatedly called for all of us to unite to respond to this crisis - recently in a statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November. Catholic organisations, like Caritas Westminster, are responding with initiatives ranging from supermarket vouchers to projects addressing gender-based violence, like Bakhita House and Safe in Faith.

Women are becoming more visible in the Church through the Synodal process; a fact highlighted by the National Board of Catholic Women at their recent conference. The Board has a long history of addressing these social justice issues disproportionately affecting women. Their booklet on domestic abuse was updated in 2020 and is available on their website.

The last decade has seen increasing recognition of domestic abuse, with the Bishop's Conference Domestic Abuse Working Group, now the Domestic Abuse Alliance of the Catholic Social Action Network. Yet, clearly, much more needs to be done.

The Church has always had the role of stepping in to support those who fall through the gaps when statutory care fails; those people pushed to the margins, forgotten by policy makers. Large numbers of those people are women. We face a great need to step up and support individual women and women's organisations. And perhaps here, after all, I will find an answer to Anna's question. ■

<https://www.nbcw.co.uk/news>



Nikki Dhillon Keane speaking during the recent NBCW Conference at Ushaw.



# Money Makes Change

**Sarah Edwards**

## ***From the Executive Director of the JustMoney Movement.***

As we begin to emerge from this long, difficult winter, churches around the UK are valiantly striving to meet the immediate needs of their communities – providing food, shelter, warmth and often simply a comforting word – showing love of neighbour to those on the sharp edge of the cost of living crisis.

### **But what about Churches' prophetic duty? How can we build a movement speaking out for justice and for measures to help tackle the root causes of this crisis?**

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said: *"There comes a point where we need to stop just **pulling people out** of the river. We need to go upstream and find **out** why they're falling in."*

We live in times of extreme inequality. An Oxfam report in 2022, *'Inequality kills'*, found that the wealth of the world's ten richest men doubled during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the UK, according to the most recent Global Wealth Report by Credit Suisse, inequality has also risen so that the top 1% of households now have 230 times the wealth of the bottom 10%.

This inequality has consequences. If more of that wealth were shared, we wouldn't be facing a situation where, according to The Fairness Index, 21% of people in the UK live in poverty and 34% are unable to maintain a decent living standard. Moreover, if those with the broadest shoulders were to contribute a fairer share, there would be more revenue available for investment in the NHS and schools, to tackle the climate emergency, and Churches wouldn't have to be papering over the increasingly gaping holes in our social safety nets.

### **At the JustMoney Movement we believe that Christians should be joining together in speaking out against such excessive inequality.**

Scripture is full of principles and practices to deal with economic injustice. For example, in the concepts of Sabbath and Jubilee,

God ordains patterns of living together which include periods of rest and re-set every 7 and 50 years (*Leviticus 25*) where social, economic and environmental inequities can be redressed, including the release of slaves, cancelling of debts and restoration of land.

In the gospels, Jesus begins his ministry declaring that he had come to "bring good news to the poor". He tells a rich man to sell his property and give to the poor, states that it is "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" and, on becoming one of his followers, Zacchaeus the tax collector gives away half of his wealth. It has been argued that Jesus' teaching has a particular focus on the need to give away *wealth* (possessions) as opposed to *income*, an approach that does more to redress inequality.

What would it look like to focus on redressing these economic imbalances today? How can we love our neighbour by calling for structural changes to the systems that create and sustain wealth in our world?

Our 'Church Action for Tax Justice' campaign has been calling for changes in the tax system to rebalance it towards those who can afford to contribute more. At the moment earned income is taxed much more heavily than taxes on unearned income like capital gains and dividends. The wealthiest in society use income from investments, rents and inheritances to live on, meaning they pay proportionately much less tax than those on low or middle incomes.

Globally, hundreds of billions of dollars that could be spent on public services in poorer nations is siphoned off into tax havens and other forms of tax dodging by multinational corporations.

Over the past year we've seen some progress – we helped lobby for (admittedly limited) windfall taxes

that the Government introduced on fossil fuel companies who have made such obscene profits from energy prices, and saw the formation of a new parliamentary group to investigate wealth taxes. Momentum has grown among a wide movement of allies calling for a fairer tax system to address the sky-high inequality we face.

Internationally too there have been some steps forward, with a move in rulemaking on global tax to the UN (which includes all nations) from the OECD (a group of wealthier countries) late in 2022. This should be more inclusive and democratic global tax rules, and we look forward to seeing how this works out later this year.

The JustMoney Movement also provides a range of resources and actions to enable individuals and congregations to connect our own finances to efforts to shape a fairer world. Often in churches we only think about our money in terms of what we give away – but what about the rest? Is your bank account or pension fund supporting fossil fuels or the arms trade? Thinking specifically about the cost of living crisis, are you doing your shopping from companies that pay fair and responsible levels of tax and pay their workers a decent wage? If you have investments, you can choose for them to have an impact on communities for the better, aligning with your faith and your values.

**Money shapes the world around us, for better or worse.** Our 'Money Makes Change' hub on our website has information to help you think this through and make choices to support the creation of a fairer, more inclusive society.

The cost of living crisis is the latest brutal manifestation of a system that prioritises profit and growth over the wellbeing of all. As Christians we must challenge this – we need a broader movement willing to speak out for changes in policy and make different financial choices ourselves that align with our faith principles of loving our neighbour, seeking the common good and recognising the dignity of all. ■

[justmoney.org.uk](https://justmoney.org.uk)  
[fairness.org.uk](https://fairness.org.uk)

## Church leaders protest coal mine

On 15 December the Columban Director in Britain, Fr John Boles, joined Archbishop William Nolan of Glasgow and Bishop John Arnold of Salford - both episcopal leads on the environment for England, Wales and Scotland - and more than 450 Church and Christian leaders, to send an open letter to the UK government deploring the decision to approve a new coal mine in Cumbria. They said it contradicts the UK government's commitment to phase out coal during its COP26 presidency. Bishop Arnold said, "it is a blatant contribution to further climate damage." The letter was coordinated by the Young Christian Climate Network.

## VATICAN: Guidelines for faith-consistent investing

The Vatican's first-ever guidelines on 'faith-consistent investing' are the highest-level effort so far to direct investments in accordance with Catholic teaching and the priorities of Pope Francis. The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences published 'Mensuram Bonam' (For Good Measure) on 25 November. The document calls for investment in industries such as renewable energy and microfinance. It suggests shunning companies making materials for abortion, capital punishment, chemical or nuclear weapons or landmines. Also, avoiding genetically modified seeds "especially in developing countries where multinational groups patent seeds to dominate the market."

## Ethical Bank wins award

Triodos Bank has been awarded 'Best Buy' status for personal current accounts by *Ethical Consumer* magazine. The magazine rated 31 UK banks, taking into account each bank's environmental approach and governance issues, as well as the sort of activities each bank is funding and the ethical policies they have in place to prevent the financing of harmful practices. Triodos was recognised for its transparency and positive investment strategy. <https://www.triodos.co.uk/>

## 'Don't let refugees drown'

A vigil at Downing Street on 15 December displayed banners, 'Don't let refugees drown' and

'Refugees Welcome Here'.

Organised by Care4Calais and Stand up to Racism, it lamented the deaths of four people in the Channel the previous day and condemned the asylum policy of the UK government. A candlelit event was held in Deal, Kent, the same evening, and a vigil - with people from local churches and a mosque - on Folkestone beach to lay flowers and to demand safe migrant routes. Phil Kerton of Seeking Sanctuary called for, "a reception centre in Calais where asylum seekers can make their claims in safe and legal ways and cross to the UK once claims have been registered". The Jesuit Refugee Service urges, "protection of refugees as the UK government cracks down on asylum". The UN says 100 million people were forced to leave their homes in 2022, and calls for more legal, and safe ways for people to migrate.



Refugee Vigil at Downing Street

## Laudato Si' Animators Course

The next Laudato Si' Animators Course will begin in April 2023, including online and face-to-face sessions in some regions. Important dates include Laudato Si' Week: May 21-28; Season of Creation: September 1- October 4; COP28 on Climate Change in November and COP16 on Biodiversity in December.

## Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

An international conference was held in Rome in December titled, 'Pope Francis, Nonviolence and the Fullness of Pacem in Terris'. Sponsored by Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission of Religious Superiors, the conference drew Church leaders and change-makers from nearly 30 countries. <https://paxchristi.net/programmes/catholic-nonviolence-initiative/>

## Transforming Learning for a Just and Sustainable World

Over the last three years, Columban Justice and Peace has worked with a Birmingham-based refugee storytelling charity, Stories of Hope and Home, to organise 'Festivals of Encounter'. This methodology, partially inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti', involves zooms, workshops and residencies bringing together educators from Catholic schools with asylum seekers and refugees. We recently presented the methodology at an academic conference on teacher education. This was a great opportunity to look properly at what we are doing and some of the impact it is having.

## Some quotes from headteachers:

"It gave the school confidence to continue doing what is right even when we felt vulnerable to Department of Education directives. This resolve led to events throughout the year and a continued positive message of welcome."

"It made me recognise that unconsciously, I had predetermined ideas and views of asylum seekers and refugees. Encountering people in the way we did enabled me to gain an understanding of others' experiences. It was authentic, nothing was staged. It was just people being people and that's what made it so significant because hearing the stories and experiences in the structured conversations reminded me that we are all just people."

"The power of first-hand encounter cannot be underestimated. As educators we have a duty to ensure we are helping to form young people with a deep understanding of our global responsibilities to humanity and our common home. With conflict and the ever-increasing effects of climate change it seems likely there will be a continuing increase in people being displaced and needing to seek sanctuary. This makes it even more important to challenge the negative rhetoric, to make sure we are all well informed, and to care!"

**James Trewby, Columban Justice and Peace Education Worker**



**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**

**BUILDING PEACEFUL FUTURES**

**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 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 they might like to create an article/image about building peaceful futures in their own community, country and/or internationally.

**Full details and ideas at the dedicated website:**

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

**The deadline for submissions is 10 February 2023.**

**Winners will be announced in Columban media on 13 March 2023.**

### SIGN UP TO OUR FREE E-NEWSLETTER

Receive updates, news, stories and reflections by Columban Missionaries direct to your email, including special focus on a Justice, Peace or Ecology theme six times a year. Join us in campaigning and praying for a world of peace, justice and care for God's creation. Scan the QR code or visit: [www.columbans.co.uk/enewsletter](http://www.columbans.co.uk/enewsletter)



## Columban Peace Action

Every Ash Wednesday Christians gather for an afternoon vigil outside the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, where military violence is planned. Columbans join those who stand before the front of the building and repent "the moral blindness of our nuclear intentions." The UK has the Trident system and four nuclear submarines, which carry some of the UK's 225 nuclear missiles. So, we will have a group there this year on Wednesday 22 February.

And Columbans will join protests at the 12-15 September international Arms Fair at the ExCel Exhibition Centre in East London. Arms manufacturers, governments and military will display the most lethal weapons available in the world. The event takes place every two years, and on the opening day in 2023 Christian peace activists will gather at the site to pray and protest the arms fair.

Columban groups will attend both events - and we invite you to join us. We will meet online beforehand to get to know one another and learn about what will happen on the day, then meet in person at the events. To register your interest please contact James Trewby at [education@columbans.co.uk](mailto:education@columbans.co.uk)

## Campaign with CAFOD

The next phase of CAFOD'S 'Fix the Food System' campaign will focus on the critical issue of seed sovereignty, that is farmers' rights to choose their own seeds and to be able to save and share those seeds as they wish. The context is that large corporations are trying to privatise seeds.

Campaign details at: <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Fix-the-food-system>

CAFOD continues to encourage parishes and schools to live and act more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor. Find out about the LiveSimply Award at: <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/LiveSimply-award>

## Video: Tackling Root Causes of Poverty

### Church Action on Poverty

Short video calling for a look beyond symptoms to causes of poverty and finding solutions.  
<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/rootcauses/>

## Stories from the Frontline

### St Vincent de Paul Society

A snapshot of the cost of living crisis and how it is affecting people's financial, emotional and physical wellbeing. Stories and insights from frontline SVP members, volunteers and Community Support Projects.  
<https://www.svp.org.uk/cost-living-crisis>

## State of Hunger

### The Trussell Trust

A landmark 2021 report that reveals the extreme poverty faced by people in UK using food banks and suggests ways to work together to build a hunger-free future.  
<https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

## Church Investments in Climate Solutions

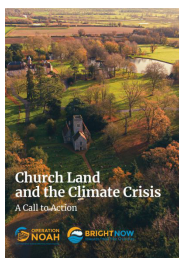
### Operation Noah

Suggests that Churches have a vital role to play in accelerating the transition to net zero emissions through ethical investments.  
<https://brightnow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Church-Investment-in-Climate-Solutions.pdf>

## Church Land and the Climate Crisis: A Call to Action

### Operation Noah

Recommendations on ways to reduce and store carbon emissions to one of the country's largest landowners, the Church of England. Also relevant to other UK Churches. Download at  
<https://brightnow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Church-Land-and-the-Climate-Crisis.pdf>



## The Call of Creation

### Catholic Bishops - England & Wales

A new edition of the bishops' teaching document on the environment, released in 2002.  
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/10/Call-of-Creation-2022b.pdf>

## Terra Viva: My life in a Biodiversity of Movements

### Vandana Shiva

A memoir published to coincide with Vandana Shiva's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The World-renowned environmental thinker and activist, and a tireless crusader for farmers', peasants', and women's rights spoke at the 2010 NJPN Conference. She advocates for an alternative world order, where issues of environmental protection, conservation, food sovereignty, peace and nonviolence are uppermost. Her influential books include *Making Peace with the Earth*; *Soil Not Oil*; *Globalization's New Wars*; *Seed Sovereignty*, *Food Security: Women in the Vanguard*; and *Who Really Feeds the World?*  
**ISBN-10: 1645021882**

## Peace Be With You

### Christian CND

A new resource helps young people to be peacemakers. Contains varied activities which are rooted in scripture with real-world applications, and it's suitable for all ages. Youth and children's workers and volunteers can request a free copy using the form on this link:  
<http://christiancnd.org.uk/youth-resource/>

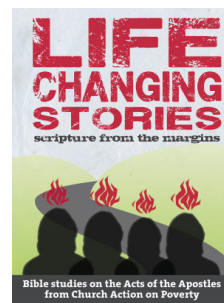
**Borrowed Time** is a project of Green Christian with two programmes. The next 8-week run of **Deep Waters** begins online in late January. Groups will explore the spiritual, emotional and vocational journey further into environmental breakdown, and its implications for faith and for the way we live. A similar **Cloud and Fire** programme starts in March 2023.  
<https://borrowedtime.earth/resources-information-and-support/>

## FOR LENT

## Scripture from the Margins

### Church Action on Poverty

The Bible shows us again and again that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed. But too often, when we read scripture in our churches, we focus on other aspects of the story, or we are so familiar with the text that we don't notice the challenging things it has to say to us. *Scripture from the Margins* is a series of Bible studies suitable for Lent programmes. Download from <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible/>



## DVD - Stations of the Forests

### Columbans

An audio-visual lamenting devastation of rainforests and tribal people. A Resource Booklet provides agendas and reflections for meetings. £7.00 inclusive of p&p or view at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ancWU2YInHE> with a booklet at: <https://columbans.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/stationsoftheforestBookletinners5.pdf>

## Creation and the Cross: Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril

### Elizabeth A. Johnson

How can we extend the Christian belief in salvation to include all created beings? What might cosmic redemption mean in our own time?  
**ISBN-10: 162698266X**

**Resources from CAFOD** for Lent and the Lent Family Fast Day on Friday 3 March at:  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk).

The Lent 2023 theme will focus on Climate and how communities have had to adapt to it.

**Resources from Pax Christi England and Wales** at:  
[paxchristi.org.uk](http://paxchristi.org.uk)

## VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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