



SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION

Annual Report - 2024



Chair's Report

There are many issues and challenges confronting us currently, including the escalating conflict in the Middle East which has brought about such sadness; three words stick in my mind: "disproportionate", "peace" and "blame". The current conflict is neither proportionate nor lawful. Peace is turned into a "humanitarian pause" or "ceasefire", yet there is no mention of armaments being abandoned, only a blame culture between nations - which also applies to many other conflicts taking place across the world.

We still have many challenges ahead: our changing environment, migrants, refugees, modern slavery and so much more - it is to the credit of those who have contributed to this report that we continue to raise awareness and attempt to bring forward solutions.

On a positive note, the diocesan Pastoral Plan: The Call to Mission has just been released; I believe it is an opportunity to bring our shared social action vision to a wider audience.

Please do read this report, it offers a snapshot of the challenges being faced locally and globally, highlighting how diocesan groups are responding and how you can help.

My appreciation to Tessa, the members of the Commission and the working parties for all their efforts and support.

Ashley Ralston

WORKING PARTY REPORTS

Refugee Crisis Steering Group

Our Refugee Crisis Steering Group has continued to raise awareness of the diocesan Refugee Crisis Fund and has given out 18 grants this year. It has tried to publicise the Fund widely, so that a variety of organisations and schools helping refugees in our diocese can apply. The fund is being depleted fast, as the need is great. To make a donation, please visit our website:

W: www.abdiocese.org.uk/rcf

or contact our Social Action Adviser, Tessa.

E: tessa.ricketts@abdiocese.org.uk

Refugee Week Coffee Morning with Bishop Richard, CSAN and SJOG Homes for Ukraine

People across our community joined our Refugee Week Coffee Morning in East Grinstead during the summer to look at how we can welcome and support refugees. Canon Kieron O'Brien encouraged everyone present to read [Love the Stranger](#), a new publication from Bishops' Conference, which presents a Catholic response to migrants and refugees.

Aliya Zahn, the Migration Officer from the **Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)**, presented a very helpful, comprehensive guide to resettlement, outlining the schemes available to support refugees in the UK. You can read the guide here:

W: www.csan.org.uk/resettlement-toolkit

A presentation by **SJOG Homes for Ukraine**, which finds hosts for displaced Ukrainian people and is now looking for suitable properties to rent. Tessa organised a webinar with SJOG Homes for Ukraine after the Coffee Morning to provide further information and recruit more hosts. To find out more, visit:

W: sjog-homesforukraine.uk

Modern Slavery Steering Group

It has been another busy but fruitful year raising awareness of the crime of modern slavery and human trafficking. The work of the Modern Slavery Group is guided by the diocesan Modern Slavery Abolition Steering Group, set up a few years ago. It meets every two months and has 17 members. It includes members from the Anglican Church, and from other Catholic dioceses who want to establish similar initiatives. The Group has had speakers from Sussex Police and the Medaille charity.

The Modern Slavery Ambassadors scheme, run in partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Chichester is continuing to grow. Currently it has 20 ambassadors and offers recruitment, training and support to ambassadors who are raising awareness in different parishes and local communities.

On 18 October, Anti-Slavery Day, together with the Diocese of Chichester, the Group held an event in Brighton entitled Slavery on our Doorstep: Hidden in Plain Sight, to raise awareness. Over 50 people attended with speakers from Justice & Care, and other organisations supporting victims of slavery. This October's anti-slavery event will be held at Chichester Cathedral with further details to follow.

For more information, contact

E: tessa.ricketts@abdiocese.org.uk

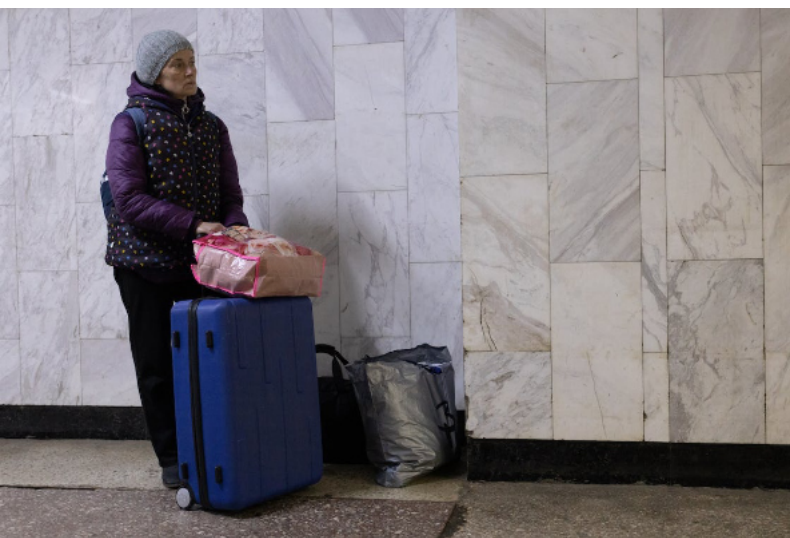
Environment Working Party (EWP)

Diocesan Environmental issues: A small number of policies may be due for review shortly, including the Environment and Fairtrade policies. An update will be reported at the next Assembly.

Ethical investments: The Diocese has an ethical investment policy, has divested from fossil fuels and is working towards a future which safeguards care for our common home, with diocesan and parish investments held in two multi-asset funds. You can find out more about these by visiting the [diocesan website](#)

or contacting Ashley Ralston:

E: ajralston37@gmail.com





THE JOURNEY TO 2030

Ecological Conversion Group / Journey to 2030

The Ecological Conversion Group, through The Journey to 2030 project, is working hard to help our Church respond to the root causes of our ecological and social crises.

It recently launched a “Building a Caring Community” project, sharing its Parish Pack and delivering deanery day workshops – meeting many new faces and hearing participants’ stories and journeys so far.

Since lockdown, it has hit the ground running: becoming more established in parishes and schools and finally having its charity status application approved (despite delays due to the pandemic).

The ECG invite everyone to read their annual report, available at **W:** www.theecg.org, and make contact if they have any questions.
E: info@journeyto2030.org

Highlights

Journey to 2030 Website
W: www.journeyto2030.org

The charity has been working hard to build and expand its website, highlighting the vision of the Church as a vehicle of environmental and social justice, springing from our faith.

Journey to 2030 have added new website content, resources, blogs and good news stories from across our global community, sharing expertise, tools and support to enable churches to work together to make a difference. Their new schools page can be viewed here:
W: www.journeyto2030.org/school

The group updates its blog regularly with stories from across its network: **W:** www.journeyto2030.org/blog

“Building a Caring Community” Activity Packs

Journey to 2030 recently launched a “[Building a Caring Community](#)” poster activity pack, an exciting new resource that introduces integral ecology as a lens or community mission, linking faith, environmental and social action. It uses the “See – Judge – Act” framework as a guide to creating a starting point, or refresher for communities to work together to address the needs of their local area and beyond.

“Let Us Dream” Creative Activity

“[Let Us Dream](#)” is a creative activity to help communities imagine an ideal future, giving them a shared vision to work towards.

Deanery workshops and research project

Since October 2023, Journey to 2030 have been trialling ready-made resource packs and creative activities with deanery communities. The trials have been run in partnership with the Guardians of Creation Project, a behavioural change research project, which should publish its findings in the Spring of 2024, with evidence of how best to encourage the Catholic community to act on climate change.

The group will be conducting more of these workshops across Arundel & Brighton in the coming months. These workshops are for everyone in the parish.


W: www.journeyto2030.org/let-us-dream-activity-workshops-begin

Talks and Education

Journey to 2030 is continuing to deliver talks across the country, both in person and online. It is rerunning its successful “Living Laudato Si” retreats in partnership with Boarbank Hall in two weekends in January and February 2024. These are online events to which they invite individuals to come and share the joys and difficulties of their environmental activism in their parishes, and welcome expert speakers across several sessions to share ideas and solutions to common problems.

For more information contact:

E: jp@ecg.org



Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG)

The work of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) has never been more necessary, with an increase in self-harm in detention and people facing greater levels of destitution on release. For the first time since the charity began its work, a man died in hospital following an attempt to end his life in detention at Gatwick. This has had a marked impact upon the detained population, and the group's trained visitors and staff team who have supported people destabilised in the aftermath of the tragedy - with some in crisis as a result.

The lack of legal aid has been a problem since the charity started and is now worse than ever with GDWG staff spending hours trying to get legal representation for its clients (Legal representation is essential for people to have access to justice). A lack of interpreters is another challenge. The group would be grateful to anyone who can give their time interpreting: Albanian, Romanian, Polish, Portuguese, Arabic and Vietnamese. Please contact **E:** info@gdwg.org.uk if you can help.

The charity is grateful to many people in the Diocese who donate good quality, second-hand clothes. **GDWG currently need men's clothes:** small, medium and

large t-shirts; jumpers, hoodies and jogging bottoms, and trainers in sizes 7, 8 and 9. Please phone **T:** 01293 657070 if you have items to deliver to the charity's Crawley office.

A Public Inquiry into the way people were treated in detention at Gatwick was released in September 2023. It showed wholesale failures of safeguarding systems. GDWG was involved as a Core Participant and with report available to read on the [Brook House Enquiry website](#).

The Inquiry made 33 recommendations with the Government asked to respond by March 2024. GDWG continues to monitor progress towards the recommendations, working with its self-advocacy group of men with first-hand experience of being detained, to make crucial calls for change.

To contact the charity:
E: josie@gdwg.org.uk



Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

Highlights from the Southern Area Report, compiled by Jenny Finlayson

CAFOD Appeals

Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal: All parishes were notified of this appeal in November 2023 and asked to invite parishioners to donate to the [Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal](#), to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts who have been working alongside communities helping those most in need. Donations support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid.

CAFOD School volunteers urgently needed in your area

Will you inspire and empower children in Catholic schools to bring alive their sense of global justice? Are you free any weekdays in term time? All training and resources provided. Sign up [on the Cafod website](#) and get involved.

Fix the Food System feedback

Cafod would like to thank everyone who signed "Salina's letter" this summer. Salina, a small-scale farmer from Bangladesh, is calling on the World Bank to protect the rights of farmers over their own seeds. 70,000 parishioners in England and Wales signed the letter, and a third of all parishes took part. Salina said, "I am very happy to know [that there were] 70,000 signatures along with mine." This action helped CAFOD to secure initial meetings with World Bank staff, who heard the message that seeds are for all. This is a long struggle, but CAFOD has made a very good start, thanks to all those who added their voices.

Handing in of Salina's letter at the World Bank annual meetings October 2023

Watch Ruth Segal and Farida Akhter present one of the "Salina letters" signed by parishes to the World Bank Global Director of Agriculture and Food at the World Bank annual meetings in Morocco, October 2023, at [W: youtu.be/EdYgelU5Tlw](#)

Walk 200km in 40 Days to Help Fight Global Poverty

Cafod invites supporters to challenge themselves and take on **The Big Lent Walk!** Walking when and where they choose over 40 days, alone or with friends, participants will raise money to help people as they overcome poverty.

W: parishes.walk.cafod.org.uk

CAFOD

Arundel and Brighton Volunteer Centre
St Pius X Church, Laustan Close, Merrow,
Guildford, Surrey GU1 2TS

T: 07710 094448

E: arundelandbrighton@cafod.org.uk

LiveSimply Report

The Cafod LiveSimply award is an opportunity for Catholic communities – parishes, schools, religious orders and chaplaincies – to respond to Pope Francis' invitation in *Laudato Si'* to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us". It is an opportunity to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people in our communities around the world. Becoming a LiveSimply parish or school shows that the Church is taking a lead in the fight against climate change & poverty in the local community.

The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton has six schools and four parishes signed up to work towards the LiveSimply award, and eight parishes and one school have earned and been presented with the award.

Cafod hopes to see all parishes, schools and communities take up the challenge by 2030, which is a crucial year in the fight against climate change. If your organisation is interested in signing up, our Diocese Volunteer Coordinator would be happy to answer any question by or have an informal meeting with you or your representatives.

Please contact:

E: rod.504t@ntlworld.com or sign up directly on the [Cafod website](#).



The Cherish Life Network

This diocesan network is designed for those who wish to engage in the defence of human life, whether this be spiritually, through practical help or by giving witness. It does this primarily by sharing information and offering the opportunity for members to link directly with one another, perhaps according to geographical area or type of activity, and then to work together.

The network encourages and facilitates engagement to protect human life at all stages, in particular, this year it will:

- [Encourage support](#) for three Private Member's Bills relating to abortion recently tabled in the House of Lords.
- [Oppose two backbench amendments](#) to the Government's Justice Bill, which if passed would legalise self-induced abortion for any reason up to birth.

- Encourage, support and defend the provision of resources to enable women to explore alternatives to abortion and to be protected from coercion to abort.
- Oppose ongoing moves to legalise assisted suicide, highlighting the clear evidence from elsewhere in the world of expansion of scope and abuse, regardless of initial assurances given. See, for example, [Living and Dying Well's review](#) of evidence from Canada.

For further information contact the Cherish Life Network coordinator, Pauline Gately:

E: p.gately@outlook.com

Diocesan Fairtrade Report

This coming year, the diocesan Fairtrade team will begin re-registering parishes, as the Diocese has to show that it is complying with Fairtrade rules.

The Fairtrade Foundation is celebrating 30 years of the Fairtrade mark in the UK this year with the organisation's website illustrating how much Fairtraders have been doing.

W: www.fairtrade.org.uk

For more information, contact Susan Joy

E: susanjoy471@hotmail.com





Prisoners · Families · Communities
A Fresh Start Together



Pact is a national Catholic charity supporting prisoners and their families. This year it produced two important reports: [Nobody's Listening](#) and [Serving a Hidden Sentence](#). In each, families affected by imprisonment led the call for change in the criminal justice system.

Pact works in all six prisons in the Diocese, and in the community. Its staff and volunteers warmly welcome families arriving to visit their loved ones inside.

On Prisoners' Sunday, Pact Parish Representative, Dan McNamara, spoke about Pact's work at dedicated Masses in the Cathedral. Five other parishes in the Diocese heard directly from Pact staff or parish representatives on Prisoners' Sunday, too.

Pact's Operation Elf Appeal supports mums and dads in prison to give a Christmas gift to their child. The parishes of St Ann's, Banstead; Bognor Regis & Slindon and Sacred Heart, Sunningdale, as well as St Philip Howard School, Barnham, donated very generously to Operation Elf while St Joseph's School, Redhill, made lovely cards.

Working with Pact, Catholic Women's League members are providing backpacks filled with essentials, for people leaving prison. Backpacks have been provided to HMPs Coldingley and Downview in the Diocese.

Pact wishes to thank everyone who has supported people in prison, their families and Pact's work, by volunteering, giving, helping to raise awareness, or through prayer.

You can follow Pact's Faith in Action team on Facebook, **W:** www.facebook.com/pactprisonadvice and X, **W:** www.twitter.com/PactFaithAction

Contact:
E: parish.action@prisonadvice.org.uk

National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN)

45th Annual Conference, 21-23rd July 2023

Theme: Sustainability? Survival or Shutdown

Justice and Peace is "needed more than ever before," a former MP and Minister of State at the Foreign Office told the annual Conference of the NJPN of England and Wales. In a talk entitled, "Advocacy and Faith Action", Sir John Battle, an NJPN patron and activist, said, "We need to shift from charitable action to challenging the causes of injustice, in line with preferential option for the poor".

The 45th annual conference, which took place in Derbyshire, with around 150 participants, addressed issues crucial to the Common Good and the well-being of the natural world, with a particular focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Commitments at the end included lobbying politicians and leaders in general, involving the Bishops' Conference, to remind the UK government of its promises regarding the SDG goals. "No new oil, coal and gas" was another call and a promise to live more simply as individuals and in our communities was made.

The next annual conference will take place 22-24 July 2024, on the theme "Just Politics".

For more information visit:

W: www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

or contact Ashley Ralston:
E: ajralston37@gmail.com



Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Social Action web pages:

Fighting Modern Slavery

W: www.abdiocese.org.uk/formation/combating-modern-slavery

Refugee Crisis Fund

W: www.abdiocese.org.uk/rcf

For more information on the external organisations mentioned in this report, please visit their websites:

Care of Migrants

St John of God (SJOG) Homes for Ukraine

W: sjog-homesforukraine.uk

Gatwick Detainees' Welfare Group

W: www.gdwg.org.uk

Care of Prisoners

The Prison Advice & Care Trust (Pact)

W: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Environment & Community

The Ecological Conversion Group (ECG)

W: www.theecg.org

The ECG's Journey to 2030 project

W: www.journeyto2030.org

Fair Trade

Fairtrade Foundation

W: www.fairtrade.org.uk

Life & Ethics

Right to Life

W: www.righttolife.org.uk

Living and Dying Well

W: www.livinganddyingwell.org.uk

Overseas Development

CAFOD

W: www.cafod.org.uk

Peace & Social Justice

National Justice & Peace Network

W: www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN):

W: www.csan.org.uk

If you are interested in joining a diocesan working party please contact:

Ashley Ralston, Chair of the Social Action Commission

E: ajralston37@gmail.com

Tessa Ricketts, diocesan Caritas Social Action Adviser

E: Tessa.Ricketts@abdiocese.org

www.abdiocese.org.uk

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