



WHO ARE YOU VOTING FOR?



Yes, I engage in politics. What I do not do, nor should the Church do, is party politics. But the Gospel has a political dimension, which is to transform the social, even religious, mentality of people so that it is directed to the common good.

Quoted in "El Pastor", a book by journalists Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin

So, who are you voting for on July 4th?

Catholics are well-known for their opposition to abortion— probably the key social issue that gets coverage in the media. However, this is not a lot of help when it comes to Catholics deciding who to vote for in a General Election. Picking on a single issue would be entirely the wrong thing to do because we live in a messy world where there are *many* shortcomings in the way that we treat one another both at a personal level and at a societal level, through the social policies that our governments enact. So how do we make a faith-based decision on who to vote for?

Luckily, we have Catholic Social Teaching and the Holy Spirit to help us in the process of discerning how to cast our vote!

In this newsletter we have given over most space to some reflections about the Commission's priority issues and the election. We also provide some links for places where you will find more information.

One of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching is *Participation*. We are fortunate to live in a country where we can participate in the affairs of our country on a regular basis at both a national and a local level.

From a Catholic point of view it is our duty to go out and vote - to fully participate.



If you are going to be away or unable to get to a polling station when the election takes place there is still time to apply for either a postal vote or a proxy vote.

Postal Votes

Applications for postal votes have to be in by 5pm on 19 June. You can apply online using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>

Proxy Votes

If you can't make it to the polling station you can ask someone to be your proxy and vote in your place. Applications for this need to be submitted by 5pm on 26 June. Again, you can apply online to do this by using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote>

Tactical Voting

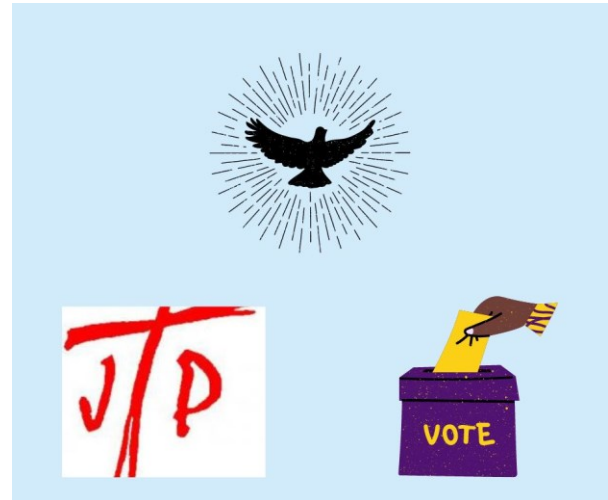
Finally, if you live in a marginal seat you need to evaluate if you should vote tactically if you know that you do not want to elect a Conservative but are unsure who else to vote for. This website might be able to help you:

<https://tactical.vote/all/>

UK POVERTY

By Sara Forrest, Commission Member & member of the UK Poverty Action Group

Jesus teaches us by example. He taught us that we must respect every individual as a Child of God. And love them. We are made in the image of God and this gives each and every human a dignity that must be respected. He told us not to be judgmental. He reached out to people on the margins of society and made a point of assisting them.



In the parable of the good Samaritan the priest ignores the injured man on the roadside but the Samaritan, considered outcast by many Jews, took care of him. God provided for the widow who was prepared to share her last food with Elijah. Jesus befriended the kind of people who were often judged inferior or unworthy.

He upheld the state's authority when he told us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's.

He lost His temper when traders exploited worshippers attending the Synagogue.

In intervening to save the adulteress who was about to be stoned some think that he discreetly wrote a sin committed by each of the men planning to deliver her punishment and said 'Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone'. They walked away and left her alone.

We are very lucky to live in a Democracy where we have freedom to speak out and to vote for one of a range of candidates.

As Catholics we are the people of Jesus. We follow His example and work for 'the Common Good.' As such we must make choices that reduce the disadvantages and differences that marginalise some of our fellow citizens.



Marginalisation can be due to:

- Insufficient income,
- insecure or unsafe employment,
- insecure housing /homelessness,
- poor health, infirmity,
- lack of education,
- poor English, inability to read,
- disability / neurodiversity,
- lack of IT access,
- lack of family/other support,
- exploitation,
- domestic violence,
- anti-social behavior,
- addiction,
- Modern-day Slavery.

.....the list is long.

The gap between those living in material and/or spiritual poverty and those living comfortably in the UK is growing. Our Faith requires us to reduce that gap and the number of 'have-nots' – the 'preferential option for the poor'.

So, we have until 4 July to think about which of those issues are important to us.

Then we need to look beyond any promises of lower taxes and inform ourselves about what each Party and our Candidates say they will do to address the needs of the poorest. Only then we can decide who to vote for and cast our vote.

FIND OUT MORE

The SVP & CAFOD have collaborated to produce this resource:

www.svpyearofencounter

Check what the Bishops' Conference has to say:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/election24/>

Globally, ending poverty is also one of the revised UN Sustainable Development Goals

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_Development_Goal_1

CLIMATE CHANGE

By Paul Kelly, Trish Sandbach & Keith Pitcher from the Commission's Climate Action Group

The climate crisis is one of the biggest challenges facing humanity. It is already causing displacement of people and damaging the natural world on which life depends. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*¹ is clear on the need for us to protect our beautiful but fragile world. He says, "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods." The scientific consensus is also unusually strong. All, including the UK's Climate Change Committee, confirm the need to take urgent, sustained action – especially a transition away from fossil fuels – to halt the current unsustainable trend in order to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. They also

¹ [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encycli](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

[als/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)



confirm we have many of the solutions needed to do this.



Pope Francis asks us, collectively and individually, to

- consider the way we look at creation
- pray about this to identify and stop practices causing damage
- start new initiatives to improve our environment, and then
- reset our lifestyles

In *The Call of Creation*² the Catholic Bishops of England & Wales state: “We must respond as Christians, considering how we live our lives so that we are good stewards of our fragile planet,” and “We all urgently need to review our relationship with God’s creation and take action to help reverse the trends that are causing climate change and the loss of biodiversity. We seek the intercession of St. Francis of Assisi in the necessary action that must take place at every level in Church and Society.”

Catholic Social Teaching emphasises a ‘right relationship’ with all of creation for

individuals, government and leaders, and all nations across the globe. A relationship of respect, treading lightly, not exploitative and extractive, leaving our common home better than we found it. Climate change is not just about carbon but about the economics and social structures that steer our relationship with our environment.

The UK is one of the largest historic emitters of greenhouse gases driving the climate crisis, so it (and we) have a particular responsibility to take urgent and meaningful action. Its Climate Change Act sets out legally binding emission reduction targets that the UK must comply with. This election offers us the opportunity to ask candidates:

- what policies has your party developed/will you develop and put into legislation to tackle climate change?
- will you work to ensure that the UK ends all new oil, coal and gas projects and phases out existing ones? What programmes, resources and finance is your party providing to promote the transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy?
- how will you decarbonise heating and transport?
- will you work to speed up the transition to clean energies in the world’s poorest communities and ensure small-scale farmers who are practising sustainable techniques, such as agroecology, receive support from the UK? How will you do this?

² <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/10/Call-of-Creation-2022b.pdf>



PEACE & NONVIOLENCE

By Joe Burns, Member of Leeds Pax Christi group

Pope Francis and others have put peace and nonviolence at the centre of Catholic Social Teaching. This includes a commitment to nonviolence and related themes of just peace, just war, and peacebuilding. Nonviolence is seen as a positive reverence for dignity and life, and a consistent effort to avoid dehumanisation.



One of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching is the promotion of peace and non-violence. This principle emphasizes the importance of peace in allowing people to live together in harmony and avoid conflict.

Given all the rhetoric about increasing defence spending arising from the war in Ukraine and more strained relationships with China, it is difficult to nudge the political agenda towards actions that facilitate dealing with international relations and incidents in a more nonviolent way. The Columbans in their own election preparation materials have provided 3 good questions that could be put to candidates. I find the first question particularly fitting as it emphasises the interconnectedness of seemingly different issues. Their questions are:

1. How concerned are you that military spending in UK stands at a minimum of 2% of GDP, the NATO target, while the climate crisis, the most urgent threat to human security worldwide, receives far less funding?

2. How far do you agree that in place of militarism, we need to put sustainable, human security at the centre of our security thinking, and provide resources accordingly.
3. How far do you agree that the UK should move towards becoming a non-nuclear-armed country? This would include the disarmament of existing Trident nuclear weapons and support for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

For more information, the website of the Catholic Bishops' Conference has details of a new document from the Conference: "Called to be Peacemakers". This sets out very clearly the position of the Catholic Church in relation to arms control and disarmament.

Use this link:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/called-to-be-peacemakers-document-on-arms-control-and-disarmament-released/>

RACIAL JUSTICE

By John Duffy & members of the Racial Justice Action Group

Consideration of racism is grounded in fundamental scriptural beliefs: equal dignity of all people, created in God's image; and Christ's redemption of all. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* spells this out:

The equality of men [NB: and women!] rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: "Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design."

Pope Francis has said "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in



any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.” In 2001, Pope John Paul II wrote that every upright conscience cannot but decisively condemn any racism, no matter in what heart or place it is found.

The English and Welsh Bishops state *Every one of our parishes, schools and organisations has a responsibility to actively practise anti-racism in all aspects of our mission. We need to address the lack of visible diversity at every level, so that people can see themselves, their race, their culture and their history in the Church’s life. Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting. Instances of racism continue to shame us, for they show that our supposed social progress is not as real or definitive as we think.*

For those who benefit from the express and hidden advantages of racial inequities—still continuing—the church urges honesty about the past and present so that everyone’s future will be different. An honest look at the past makes plain the need for restitution wherever possible— makes evident the justice of restoration and redistribution.

During this election, we should

- look at those uncomfortable aspects of our history, institutions and policies,
- listen to the voices of those for whom discrimination is an everyday reality,
- and look for ways in which we can change structures and attitudes.



Some points made from the Racial Justice Group:

- Immigration- the treatment of asylum seekers and the obstacles they face trying to present, progress and settle their cases. The current government's immigration policies make the process so much more time consuming and stressful than it needs to be.
- Social care services- local councils need to provide more care and services to the community but when budgets are being cut and government funding is lacking this can't happen and the vulnerable people, including people from minority groups, in our communities are suffering.

THE ELECTION - A VIEW FROM THE SPARK COMMUNITY

By Anthony Bracuti



The non-optional presence of Good Works in the life of a Christian is paradoxically often ignored and focused on in equal measure.



Jesus' core teachings revolve around care for your neighbour, and to ignore this is to ignore Jesus.

The Church's long history of social teaching, formed into our Catholic Social Teaching, is particularly overlooked when it comes to election time, and so it's worth emphasising, especially in these particularly trying times.

When Jesus called us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the imprisoned, he did not call us to abandon these principles for our own politics when convenient.

This also comes at a time in our Church's history of crises where our youth, raised on stories of the goodwill, charity, and empathy of Christians, are leaving in droves due to the hypocrisy we demonstrate through our actions not aligning with our words.

By demonstrating that being a Catholic is to be an agent of Christ through words and actions in Christ's teaching, we can demonstrate that the Church is worth participating in and that our faith in Christ is meaningful, both spiritually and materially. Our failure to do this, to implement the ideas that Christ told us we must enact to be His followers; has created these crises in our Church, crises which we deserve.

Through politics, and a coherent social policy agenda, we can collectively work to enact this fundamental part of our faith. Indeed, by failing to fight for this social justice in our political system, i.e. in our failing to use this tool available to us, this talent which we have buried in the sand; we fail in our faith as Christians.

Using Christ as our beacon, we can see the path we must pave: an end to hunger, to dirty water, to homelessness, to poverty, to

declining access to healthcare, to the prison crisis. These must form the basis of our life, our communities, and our politics; and not let chronic individualists relegate the responsibilities for these sufferings onto those who suffer.

In addition to these basic positive principles, we should also oppose the stripping away of dignity which seems so universal in our political system, and across our media. We must oppose the vilification and weaponisation of refugees who suffer so much, of activists who fight for a better world, and of our youth who are just trying to survive.

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CITIZENS ORGANISING AND THE ELECTION

By Graham, Becky & Gemma from Citizens Groups in West Yorkshire. Both the Commission and the Diocese of Leeds itself are members of Citizens

Citizens UK have been working for 12 months on our manifesto, launched yesterday, which contains eight asks. It's a great resource to use in coffee mornings, community hubs, students' union meetings or in assemblies and tutor time in schools to ask questions around democracy and making change. What do we think of these priorities?

<https://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/citizens-manifesto/>

What difference would these changes make? Alongside this in Leeds we have been campaigning on accountability, fares, reliability, and safety on buses/public transport; and routes to employment and work experience; and a real living wage for care workers.

For schools, the following link is useful:



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

We also partner with Democracy Classroom, which has a huge amount of resources to support you in this, particularly their Election Countdown series. We've also got a short CUK ppt coming out.

Candidates meetings

We are aiming to hold a series of meetings with Candidates over the next few weeks. These will be short, scripted events where a range of pupils from the constituency will get to put our local and national campaign asks and ask for support from the candidates if they are elected.

They are NOT formal hustings and are not open to the public. We will NOT be speaking to every candidate for a constituency.

The Constituencies we are focusing on are: Leeds Central and Headingley, Leeds East, Leeds North East, Leeds North West, Leeds South and Leeds West and Pudsey

- Do you know which constituency your organisation is in and which constituencies your people live in? Have you already met your MP/candidate?
- Does your organisation want to HOST a meeting?
- Do your members/pupils/students want to TAKE PART?
- We will be in touch with times/dates ASAP.

We can add our voices to the national campaign:

- Join in a **National Action**. There are plans for a national Citizens UK Assembly in London on 26th June. Do you want to go and represent our Alliance?

- Hold a **Local Action** to coincide with a national one to raise the profile. What could you do? It could be a radio show, a podcast, an assembly, a parents'/community event, a creative event.

DO JUSTICE



This is the title of a website and a booklet published by Caritas Social Action Network, an agency of the Bishops' Conference.

It is about helping communities and schools to take meaningful action in relation to the needs of their communities. See this link:

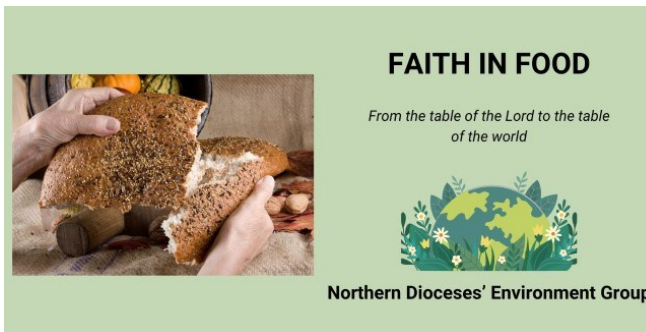
<https://dojustice.co.uk/do-justice-renewed-vision/>

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FAITH AND FOOD EVENT

By Mark Wiggin, Northern Dioceses' Environment Group Chair

The Northern Dioceses Environment Group (NDEG) met in-person on **Saturday 18th May** at St. Wilfred's Parish Centre, Preston. **"Faith in Food – From the table of the Lord to the table of the world"** was an opportunity for us to gather together, share and develop our understanding of the importance of food and its local, global and faith significance in today's world.



- Countries need to integrate into global markets.
- The private sector has a central role to play in expanding access to food by expanding markets.
- Technology will solve the hunger crisis.

The meeting welcomed three key speakers, Francis Stewart (CAFOD Theology Team), Anna Clayton (Food Futures – North Lancashire’s Sustainable Food Network) and a lived experience perspective on using foodbanks from the Poverty Truth Commission. A Question and Response plenary was followed by a news and events sharing session. The day was rounded off by a community sing-along.

Francis Stewart shared insights on agriculture and the global food system from a policy and theology perspective working with CAFOD, the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development – the official aid agency for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. Francis argued that the debate about agriculture should not just be about how we ensure food security and avoid malnutrition in a changing climate but it should also be about how we reform the whole food system in the interests of both justice and sustainability.

A big concern is about the many misconceptions – the myths about the food system such as:

- We need to produce more food to feed the world.
- We have to produce at scale to have enough for all, so the industrial agriculture model is the only one.

The myths, he said, were contributing to a narrative about agriculture that favours the industrial model of agriculture that currently prevails- intensive production at scale, with chemical inputs and commercial seeds, with a view to export for cash. Turning to how we might support the development of food systems and agriculture that benefit everyone he pointed to the great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world’s peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste. An orientation towards good living and a flourishing based on the common good needs to be an important goal for us all. Francis concluded with the statement: Catholic Social Teaching offers much for us to reflect upon and a task for each of us would be to connect the theology of God’s providence with a realistic understanding of natural systems that we rely upon for food. Food which, for Catholics, is not mere fuel but the focal point of our liturgical life, the material through which God meets us in the Eucharist.



Anna Clayton of Food Futures – North Lancashire’s Sustainable Food Network,



shared how the scheme had started life as Sustainable Food City Lancaster as part of the Transition towns movement in 2014. It was originally completely voluntary and met monthly but in 2018 a grant was secured to employ a partnership coordinator and the scheme was rebranded as Food Futures: North Lancashire's Sustainable Food Network following a co-design process.

Food Futures seeks to create the conditions that allow for healthy relationships and a sustainable food system to emerge through joined up collaborative work across Lancaster District by address food sustainability and social justice issues through:

- Developing a collaborative, cross-sector food partnership.
- Developing a joined up sustainable food strategy.
- Harnessing local passion and expertise for sustainable and fair food in order to help it spread and grow.
- Developing & connecting with local, North West, national & international networks doing similar work.

The key to its success is that everyone has a role to play. Harnessing local passion and expertise for healthy, resilient and fair food, skill shares and an induction process and pathway to food citizenship are key ingredients to its success. Sharing lived experience through storytelling and local journalism spreads the good news and attracts new members and cultivates a collaborative, inclusive, dynamic and decentralised working culture that has produced a regional development model that is constantly changing and growing to meet the needs of local growers and consumers alike.

The inputs concluded with a very personal, eloquent and moving input from Alison



Presenters: Alison Fisher from the Poverty Truth Commission, Francis Stewart from CAFOD's Theology Team, Anna Clayton of Food Futures – North Lancashire's Sustainable Food Network and Mark Wiggan who is currently the chair of the Northern Dioceses Environment Group.

Fisher who shared the experience of the combined destructive nature of poverty and abuse that leads people to rely on the charity of foodbanks. Stressing the need to always place the dignity of the individual above social benefit systems she focused the need to recognise the complex nature of poverty and an understanding that many people relying on services such as foodbanks were often coping with a multitude of other social and emotional issues that made it hard to break out of the dependency on such charitable services.

In summary, all three presenters drew from their experience and made the link between the global food systems and how they work with the local realities they encounter. Many of the actions and ideas that came out of the meeting can be replicated in the different settings our members come from. Justice, resilience, sustainability, treading lightly on the earth, and respect for the dignity of all living things were all concepts that resonated strongly with the participants.



REFLECTION

Solidarity, one of the cornerstones of Catholic Social Thought, is something that should be uppermost in our minds when thinking about voting in the upcoming General Election.



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As Martin Luther King puts it:-



Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured.

John Donne caught it years ago and placed it in graphic terms: "No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." And he goes on toward the end to say, "Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." We must see this, believe this, and live by it if we are to remain awake through a great revolution.

Martin Luther King Jr 'Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution', Address at Morehouse College Commencement, 2 June 1959







This is a re-print from a 2019 newsletter prior to that year's General Election. In memoriam Suzanne Oakes who provided this regular feature for a number of years.

EVENTS

 08 Jun	<p>Big Green Week</p> <p>A celebration of community action to tackle climate change. Every year, people up and down the country come together to show the heartfelt, brace, everyday actions being taken to stand up for nature and fight climate change.</p> <p>More info: https://greatbiggreenweek.com/</p>
 Tue 11th Jun	<p>Extinction and Biodiversity: Evolution, Action and Hope</p> <p><i>Holy Name Church @5:30om – 7pm</i></p> <p>Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science (ECLAS), an ecumenical science-faith engagement project, is holding a free panel discussion at the Church of the Holy Name on Manchester Oxford Road on Tuesday 11 June, 5.30-7pm. Hear from leading scientists and theologians 'as we explore this topic in a spirit of openness and honesty'.</p> <p>More info: https://www.eclasproject.org/extinctionpanel/</p>



NEWSLETTER June 2024

 Fri 28th Jun	<p>Catholic Social Teaching: Revisiting the Basics Boarbank Hall 28th Jun 6pm – 1st Jul 2pm 3 day course if for anyone interested in discovering, refreshing or deepening their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. Taught by Sr Margaret Atkins, former lecturer at Trinity and All Saints, Leeds, and Oscott College seminary. Aged 18-30 and living or working in the Leeds Diocese? – SPARK Social Justice may be able to pay for part of the cost – email mailto:info@sparksocialjustice.org.uk To book email: margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk</p>
 Thu 4th Jul	<p>GENERAL ELECTION DAY Make sure you go out to vote!</p>
 19 -21 Jul	<p>National Justice & Peace Network Conference 2024 – Just Politics. <i>Swanwick Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> A great opportunity to meet people from across the country who are passionate about issues of social justice. The Commission can afford to pay the public transport travel costs of up to 4 people to help with the costs of attending this conference. Just email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk if you are interested in taking up this offer. More details about the conference, and booking, can be found by using this link https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/category/conference-2024/</p>
 01Sep – 04 Oct	<p>Season of Creation The theme for 2024 is ‘To Hope and Act with Creation’. For more details and ideas about what to do in your church community use this link https://seasonofcreation.org/</p>
 Sat 21 Sep	<p>Racial Justice: Agenda for Change with CARJ <i>St. Patrick’s Church, Foundry Street, Oldham, OL8 1FR</i> This one day conference is the Northern conference in celebration of 40 years of CARJ (The Catholic Association for Racial Justice).The first keynote speaker is Max Farrar (Emeritus professor of Leeds Beckett University).Max will be followed by Alison Lowe (Deputy Mayor of West Yorkshire). Public Transport costs to get there can be claimed from the Commission. Email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk if interested</p>
 Sat 28 Sep	<p>Leeds J&P Extended Commission Planning Meeting <i>Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, Leeds 10:30 – 14:30</i> A time for the Commission to review its priorities and the way in which it works. Anyone is welcome to attend but please email us if you would like to come along.</p>

Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.