

SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION

Annual Report - 2022



A Message from the Commission Chair, Ashley Ralston:

I am amazed by how much the Social Action Commission has managed to achieve during 2021. There has been a very successful Covid-19 vaccine take-up over the last few months and while the pandemic is still with us, England has moved out of 'Plan B' measures and we have learnt to live with Covid bit by bit, with face-to-face meetings gradually resuming (ably supported by ZOOM and other internet meeting software).

Key highlights during the last twelve months include: the introduction of parish-based modern slavery Abolition Ambassadors – an ecumenical initiative the Diocese is undertaking in conjunction with our Anglican counterparts, the launch of Journey to 2030 Working Groups established within a framework of Laudato Si - with the subsequent introduction of a diocesan Environmental Policy - and the COP 26 summit in Glasgow which highlighted how people of faith can work together for the Common Good.

These highlights are just a snapshot of how much has been achieved and is being planned within the Social Action Commission – as this report will highlight.

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Rosie Read, who has left her role as diocesan Formation Team Secretary after nearly 17 years. Many thanks to Rosie for the secretarial support she has given the Commission, with best wishes for her future endeavours. David Farey has also stepped down from his role as Chair of the Modern Slavery group. We are deeply grateful to David for the work he has undertaken, raising awareness of Modern Slavery across Sussex and Surrey while collating the fantastic Fighting Slavery Newsletter. We wish him all the very best for the future.

My grateful appreciation to Canon Kieran O'Brien and Tessa Ricketts, the members of the Commission, and our working parties for all their efforts and support.

Ashley Ralston

WORKING PARTY REPORTS

Refugee Crisis Working Group

Our diocesan Social Action Adviser, Tessa Ricketts, has been continuing her work with core members of the Refugee Crisis Steering Group; Bishop Richard, Canon Kieron O'Brien, Sarah Kilmartin, Laura Maydew-Gale, and Mia Stace, raising awareness of the plight of our refugee brothers and sisters and helping to distribute funds from the diocesan Refugee Crisis Fund.

This year has seen a variety of applications granted to a range of individuals and families, though the Fund is somewhat depleted presently. The Diocese plans to relaunch the initiative during Lent this year, with a Refugee Slavery Newsletter for 2022 issued across our parishes supported by a new [Refugee Crisis Fund resource](#) on the diocesan website. If you would like to donate to the Fund, you can do so through the Diocesan website [here >>>](#)

For further details about the fund please visit the [diocesan website](#) or contact Tessa Ricketts:

E: tessa.ricketts@abdiocese.org.uk

Fighting Slavery

The Modern Slavery Steering Group have continued to raise awareness of the crime of modern slavery across the Diocese during 2021 utilising the diocesan website and regular Fighting Slavery Newsletters. You can read the latest [Newsletter here >>>](#)

The formal launch of the diocesan Modern Slavery Abolition Ambassador's programme took place on October 18, in conjunction with our friends and partners

at the charity [Together in Sussex](#) and the Anglican Diocese of Chichester. Ten Ambassadors from our Diocese joined five from the Diocese of Chichester in a special service at St John the Evangelist in Horsham, led by Bishop Richard and the Bishop of Lewes, Will Hazelwood (*picture below*).

Abolition Ambassadors have hit the ground running and have already started raising awareness of modern slavery across our parish communities and local areas, meeting online regularly. The group are planning to develop training and additional parish resources in 2022, including the creation of a short film.

If you are interested in receiving the free Fighting Slavery Newsletter or becoming an Abolition Ambassador, please visit the [diocesan website](#)

or contact E: tessa.ricketts@abdiocese.org.uk

News on the diocesan Safe House

Despite several logistical challenges, a diocesan safe house providing short-term accommodation for victims of modern slavery is going to be launched this Spring. The undertaking is the result of a much-valued partnership between the Diocese, Sussex and Surrey Police, and the charity [Justice and Care](#) who provide help and support for victims.

The pioneering project will be trialed for a period of six months, and then reviewed. For more information, please contact the diocesan Social Action Adviser:

E: tessa.ricketts@abdiocese.org.uk





Protecting the Environment

Our **Environment Working Group** have focussed on Laudato Si' platform goals this last year, and have worked hard, in partnership with the **Ecological Conversion Group**, to get environmental policies into parishes,

The team were fully committed to COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, taking part in webinars, signing and sharing petitions, and meeting with local MPs.

The group keep themselves informed on a range of environmental and ethical issues (the diocese has been very helpful) and hope to be able to explore local Eco-Audits and Biodiversity Challenges in the coming year.

[The Ecological Conversion Group](#), and [Journey to 2030](#) have had further success in the field of education, releasing a Sixth Form Syllabus (Year 12-13) 'On Care for Our Common Home - Looking at life through the lens of Laudato Si'. This brilliant resource can also be used as a Parish course. [See here >>>](#)

Journey 2030 have also added a range of new resources to their website which look to accompany parish communities on social and ecological action. The team will be adding further resources during 2022.

Working Groups

A Journey to 2030 working group has launched in Arundel & Brighton. It aims to facilitate dialogue between different areas of the Diocese, enable creative thinking, brave new ideas, and boldness in addressing the social and ecological problems we face. They will be launching a 'Care of Creation' Mission statement in 2022. To find out more:

E: jp@ecg.org

or visit the Journey to 2030 website:
www.journeyto2030.org

Would you like a speaker or facilitator on ecological issues to help your parish? For more information contact Ashley Ralston:

E: ajralston37@gmail.com

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Looking at life through the lens of Laudato Si'

Sixth Form Syllabus



The
ECOLOGICAL
CONVERSION
GROUP

An update from Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG)

Each year Gatwick Detainees staff and volunteers provide emotional and practical support to approximately 1,000 people experiencing immigration detention at Gatwick. When Covid-19 struck, the Home Office started to release them. Whilst some were adequately housed, others were released to homelessness and destitution. Our staff adapted our services by providing food vouchers to the destitute and helping to find accommodation. We set up a Destitution Fund which has raised £12,000 and provided a monthly food voucher for 57 people - we appreciated the Diocese's contribution.

It was frightening for those not released, often with underlying health conditions such as diabetes and asthma, they were particularly at risk. While we could not visit them, we continued to provide support by phone, giving mobile top-ups and signposting sources of advice and help.

This summer people started to arrive in small, often not very seaworthy boats, across the Channel. Many are from Iran, Iraq and Yemen. They think they are safe, then they are detained, often with no understanding that this may lead to return to another European country (a Dublin 3 regulation). When they discover this, they are desperate. We provide what support we can, using interpreters, and referring them to sources of help. If you speak Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya or Kurdish Sorani and would like to help, please contact:

E: josie@gdwg.org.uk.

To find out more about GDWG please visit their website: <https://www.gdwg.org.uk>

Caritas

Caritas members from Dioceses across England and Wales have been collaborating on issues ranging from prison advice, human trafficking, food poverty, and much more.

The Caritas Southern Dioceses are working together as the Southern Diocese Environment Group (SDEG), an undertaking in line with the Northern Diocese Environment Group, with an initial meeting already held.

You can find out more about the work of Caritas by visiting their website:

W: www.caritas.org.uk

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. The Network does this primarily by sharing information and offering the opportunity for members to link directly with other network members and work together, perhaps by geographical area or by type of activity.

The Network encourages and facilitates engagement to protect human life at all stages. In 2022 it aims to:

- Continue to oppose ongoing campaigns to radically change abortion law in ways which would further endanger women and babies and deny women the opportunity to explore alternative solutions.
- Support measures to provide better palliative care and discourage inappropriate use of Do Not Resuscitate orders.
- Oppose moves to legalise assisted suicide.

For further information click on the 'Join Our Groups' link [here >>>](#)

or contact the CLN coordinator, Pauline Gately:

E: p.gately@outlook.com





CAFOD A&B

CAFOD's **Walk for Water Appeal** was launched in 2021. It encouraged people to walk 5 miles a day during Lent, fundraising in solidarity with Abdella, a young man in Ethiopia who walked ten hours a day to collect water for his family. People across the Diocese generously responded to this challenge.

Parliament in your Parish was launched in April. Catholics across the Diocese organised 17 virtual meetings with local Members of Parliament, discussing how to rebuild from the pandemic in a way that tackles the major global issues of our time - including climate change and unjust foreign debts. 65% of MPs in our Diocese met with their constituents.

CAFOD's **Eyes of the World Campaign** began in the summer encouraging schools to help fight the climate crisis by calling upon the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to support the world's poorest communities, who are greatly affected by the climate crisis. Students from diocesan schools supported the campaign, prior to the COP26 talks in Glasgow.

An Apostolic Papal Blessing - In September Ashley Ralston parishioner of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish Adur Valley (and Chair of the Social Action Commission) was awarded an Apostolic Papal Blessing for serving CAFOD as a volunteer for 37 years - since 1984. The award was presented by Fr Graham Ricketts.

Get involved! CAFOD's work would be impossible without the generosity and kindness of people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds who serve and support

us tirelessly. CAFOD has a number of volunteers working in Arundel & Brighton parishes and schools but urgently need new school and parish volunteers in a number of parishes. To find out more:

T: 07710 094448 or

E: arundelandbrighton@cafod.org.uk

The Livesimply Award

The Award is an opportunity for Catholic communities - parishes, schools, religious orders and chaplaincies - to respond to Pope Francis' invitation to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us". It is awarded to communities who can show they have been living simply, in solidarity with people in poverty, sustainably with creation.

Are you up to the challenge? Why not consider joining our growing band of livesimply communities. We have 6 parishes and schools signed up across the Diocese with 4 registered and 9 awarded. There is lots of help available, and plenty of ideas when planning for the award.

Find out more: Our livesimply volunteer can help get you started meeting your community in person, or virtually, online. We aim is to have all communities awarded before 2030. To find out more visit the [livesimply website >>>](#)

or contact Rod Thick:

E: rod.504t@ntlworld.com

Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Group are delighted that diocesan Trustees have accepted the Fairtrade Policy we submitted. The policy now appears on the diocesan website and will be highlighted in a short article for the diocesan news channels.

At the Group's most recent meeting the possibility of being a Fairtrade Church, as part of the criteria of being a Livesimply Church, was discussed and will be pursued with CAFOD. The Group plan to make contact with the EYE programme for young people, the various university chaplaincies which have Fairtrade University status.

In other news

Fairtrade Fortnight 2022 will run from 22 February until 7 March 2022.

Fairtrade farmers led the Be Fair With Your Climate Promise Campaign at COP26 in Glasgow, with over 333,000 people backing their challenge to world leaders.

The Fairtrade Foundation have recently reviewed its award scheme to make it simpler and to present its future priorities. The changes, which were both very positive and welcome, were outlined via a number of Zoom seminars.

For more information on Fairtrade please contact Susan Joy:

E: susanjoy471@hotmail.com



Our Working Parties welcome new members!
For more information please contact:

Ashley Ralston, Chair Social Action Commission

E: ajralston37@gmail.com

or **Tessa Ricketts, diocesan Caritas Social Action Adviser**

E: Tessa.Ricketts@abdiocese.org



National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN)

The NJPN seeks to encourage work for justice and peace, promoting communication and shared action between members, supporters, and partners. Their **43rd Annual Conference Action for 2021, Life on Earth** took place in Swanwick, Derbyshire last July.

It was the first face-to-face NJPN Conference since Covid-19 started, providing an opportunity to talk and network within a busy conference programme. A comprehensive report on the Conference can be found [here >>>](#)

The theme for this year's Conference (July 22 – 24) is HOPE 2022 – Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up. The Conference is being sponsored by NJPN in partnership with [Stella Maris](#) – formerly Apostleship of the Sea.

Useful Justice & Peace resources:

A Call to Action (ACTA): An instrument to establish and promote space for a trusting dialogue within a hierarchically structured peoples' Church.

www.acalltoaction.org.uk

JPIT: a network of Baptists, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working on Justice & Peace issues

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

Christians Aware: an ecumenical inter-faith and inter-cultural action group.

www.christiansaware.co.uk

www.abdiocese.org.uk

The Arundel and Brighton Diocesan Trust
is a Registered Charity No. 252878