



The Archdiocese of Southwark Justice and Peace Commission

Proposals for a renewed Justice and Peace Commission from the Coordinating Committee of the Justice & Peace Office, Archdiocese of Southwark.

Introduction

1. The charism of Justice & Peace raises many important issues that face contemporary British society and that of the wider world.

2. The Second Vatican called for the creation of a body which would "stimulate the Catholic Community to foster progress in needy regions and social justice on the international scene" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 90) which led to the formation of the Pontifical Commission for Justice & Peace, which in 1988 became the Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace. In the document *Bonus Pastor*, the Holy Father outlined the work of this Council as

- Bringing the spirit of the Gospel to impact on the relationships between workers and employers
- Focusing upon the development of peoples and human rights
- Giving direction to diocesan bodies
- Promoting collaboration between international Catholic organisations, and between them and other bodies committed to the promotion of the values of justice and peace in the world.
- Highlighting the importance of promoting peace in the world.

3. Much of what is described by the Holy Father in *Bonus Pastor (1988)* is about bringing people together, facilitating understanding in the light of the Gospel, and helping people of goodwill to work together to bring the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bear upon our wounded world. It is a work of mercy, compassion, courage and optimism in an age devoid of most of these graces, graces which the Holy Spirit has poured out upon the world in the lives of heroic individuals and communities throughout the Church's history. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* reiterated many of the traditional concerns and the imperative for these to be addressed with urgency in the 21st century.

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4. In seeking to renew the work of Justice and Peace in our diocese, it is as well to keep this description in mind, so that, as the local Church, we ensure that the universality and power of the Gospel is brought to bear upon the particular context in which we live.

1. The Need for Change

The Diocese of Southwark in London and Kent today

5. Over the past 30 years the Archdiocese of Southwark has emerged as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse diocese in Europe. Almost every parish is a culturally diverse entity. The multi-cultural make up of London and its environs has been reflected in our parishes for many years, while over the past thirty years many thousands of refugees and migrant workers from every part of the world have made their home in our parishes. From Ireland to Goa, from China to Peru the rich current of cultural diversity flows through the veins of parish life. A recent consultation about possible ways forward has been welcomed and received a variety of responses from people in

many strands of church life. The issues raised are addressed in the proposals that are now presented.

6. Many Catholics, of every type of background, who sit in our pews week by week play a significant part in the life of our city and its impact upon the wider world. Businessmen, politicians, charity volunteers, academics, policy advisors, those working for NGO's, trade unionists, civil servants and journalists are all to be found as faithful members of our diocese. Many of them look to their faith to form and shape the values which they take into their work environment, values which impact directly not just upon people in this country but in many of the world's most vulnerable nations. In doing so they reflect the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which said, "Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardour of the spirit of Christ" (*Ad Gentes*, 8).

7. The importance of their position is made clear when we consider what sort of place London now is. For it is no longer simply the capital of Great Britain and the remnants of a one mighty Empire, but a major centre of global finance, a major centre of the European Union, and the home of a government which is a major player in the affairs of the United Nations, of the G7, the WTO, as well as a key player in an expanded NATO. It is home to a whole range of global headquarters from banks to NGOs, as well as housing some of the most influential financial institutions on the planet. At the same time it is a city with some of the country's poorest people, the most ethnically diverse city in the UK, and where low pay, exploitation and spiralling drug related crime are real problems. Half of this city is under the pastoral care of the Archdiocese of Southwark, and many who live in Kent work there or are dependent upon it. For a diocese which includes such a city under its pastoral care, the opportunity "to foster progress in needy regions and social justice on the international scene" is too obvious to be ignored.

8. Kent too has changed. As the European Union has emerged and Eurotunnel has been built, so Kent has become the interface between Britain and the rest of Europe. With euros common currency in Ashford, and human trafficking a major problem in ports such as Dover, Kent too is meeting new and complex changes in building a just and peaceful society. And Kent like London shares in some of the great evils which have become prevalent in the past 30 years, be that the enormous numbers of unborn children aborted each year, the disintegration of family relationships, the collapse of heavy industry, or the rise of the far right peddling racism.

9. It is now nearly 25 years since the three Area Commissions and the Coordinating Committee were set up. They evolved from the first Commission, established in the 1970's out of the initiative of a few pioneering laity and clergy who wanted to employ a Justice and Peace worker in the Diocese. When it did employ a Worker it was only the second diocese in England and Wales to do so. However, with so much having changed over this last quarter of a century, we think the time is ripe for a re-evaluation of the way in which the charism of Justice and Peace is being served in our Diocese, so that we can build on this important legacy and fulfil the mandate of the Second Vatican Council to bring the Gospel to bare upon the world in which we live, which in turn plays such an influential role in our global village where exploitation, poverty and death are a rampant reality.

What sort of change do we need?

10. Out of 185 parishes, some 103 have an official J&P contact person. Of these, 69 have parish groups. Every deanery has at least one parish with a group.

The shape of Justice and Peace at deanery level is as follows:

Deanery	Parish Groups	Parish contacts only
Balham	5	2
Bexley	2	1
Bromley	2	1
Camberwell	2	0
Canterbury	4	1
Cathedral	3	0
Chatham	4	0
Croydon	9	0

Dover	2	1
Gravesend	3	1
Greenwich	3	2
Kingston	4	0
Lambeth	3	2
Lewisham	4	0
Maidstone	3	3
Merton	3	1
Mortlake	4	0
Sutton	4	1
Thanet	*	2
Tunbridge Wells	1	3

* Thanet is the only known example of an active deanery group.

11. Many parish groups are small, consisting of maybe three or four people. These are usually highly committed, and many have undertaken some heroic work in support of the most needy and vulnerable in our UK society, as well as championing the needs of the poorest people elsewhere around the world. There are, in addition, small parishes where a group operating under some other banner (e.g. UCM, CWL, KSC) has – perhaps unconsciously - taken issues arising from the promotion of Catholic Social Teaching.

12. For the past thirty years the work of the J&P Commission/s have focused on establishing parish J&P groups, mainly through a 'road-show', as well as providing study days, days of reflection, and through the production of a Newsletter. However, from the Review it is clear that many of those belonging to parish J&P groups feel isolated, and have a real thirst to know what others are doing and to collaborate across parish boundaries.

13. As in many other church activities, age is also an issue, as the majority of those involved in J&P groups are retired and have been involved for many years. There is a notable absence of young people from the groups as well as on the Commissions.

14. Support and promulgation of Catholic Social Teaching happens way beyond the formal J&P groups. For example, the work of CAFOD is now very well developed across the Diocese. Catholic parishes are also among the leading groups involved in the development of South London Citizens, a new political initiative bringing power back to local communities. Other agencies are working in specific areas, for example the Philippino chaplaincy in defending the rights of migrant workers and the Manna Centre in supporting the homeless. All of this activity promotes Justice & Peace, yet has no formal place within, or even a relationship to, the existing Commissions.

15. Many of those who are J&P parish contacts are also the local CAFOD rep. Others are often involved with groups such as CARJ. This indicates how much of J&P work overlaps with other work being done. From the responses to the Review it was clear that those people in a J&P parish group value them as a place where they can work alongside others. There is a general openness to working beyond the narrow confines of a particular parish, not least working ecumenically. A new Commission needs to build on this openness and willingness to collaborate.

16. Much of the work of Justice and Peace is most poignant on the international level, be that campaigning to reduce the debt of the world's poorest nations or supporting prisoners of conscience, but there is also much work to be done more locally, be that at borough, city, county or national level. At each of these levels there are others within and outside the Catholic Church who are working to address certain injustices, be that fair wages for cleaners on the underground, the promotion of Fair Trade or tackling racial injustice. A new Commission needs to facilitate closer working with such people of good will and integrate it into its life and mission.

17. Some of the clergy and religious of the diocese are highly committed to supporting Justice and Peace. This takes various forms, but it makes a great difference to the enthusiasm of the laity and the possibility of forming and maintaining a parish group. There are already various priests of the diocese involved as Borough Deans in liaising with local political bodies in cooperation with other Christian community groups. Others are involved in the Pro-Life movement and London Citizens, in both cases working alongside other faith communities, or work with others to highlight and alleviate imbalances in access to housing, health care and other services. Others have first hand experience

as missionaries in developing nations, or maintain contacts with brother priests through international fraternities such as Jesus Caritas, or have developed contacts with local churches abroad.

18. However, there is no guarantee that these or other clergy are very supportive of Justice and Peace groups in the parish, or that the groups value and support these various initiatives, and this makes the formation or sustenance of a parish group very difficult. As for the formation of new priests and deacons, input at St John's Seminary is in the hands of the Arundel & Brighton J&P Commission whose offices are located at Wonersh, while the students themselves have a fairly strong One World Group. The Area Commissions' formal contribution has been very small; the South East Area Commission provided a day on racial awareness in 2001, due to be repeated in 2005. The On-going Formation of Priests programme has not had any input on Justice & Peace, and it is uncertain as to what take up there would be. One area of development has been the recent revision of the diaconate course which now includes three lectures on fundamental aspects of the Church's teaching in this area, together with essays on basic topics. A new Commission needs to develop links with the parish clergy as a priority, as well as developing links with those responsible for clergy training and formation. It also needs to integrate the clergy into its structure and working.

18a. Many religious are very committed to the charism of Justice & Peace. A number of Religious Congregations have expended much effort in renewing their mission in the light of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. They also have invaluable experiences in working alongside many of the most oppressed people of our world. However, the benefits of this understanding and knowledge reach only a few in the diocese and we need to have a more effective link with this section of the Church.

19. Justice and Peace embraces a vast and unwieldy series of concerns. This can be overwhelming when trying to know where to begin, or how to prioritise. There are so many groups and campaigns demanding our attention, commitment and action. A group necessarily relies upon the expertise of its members. When groups are small and only loosely connected with others, this can be very limiting, and make for a lack of focus and a dissipation of resources. A new Commission will need to be able to give leadership in facilitating a consensus about the ways in which the charism of Justice and Peace can be brought to bear upon the world around us, and resourcing its application.

20. Therefore we conclude that there is a need for a new, single Diocesan Commission which enables greater collaboration between all those working to promote Catholic Social Teaching and which enables the parish groups to find a new dynamism at the heart of the local Church's life.

21. There are a number of factors which make this a less than easy task.

- People live increasingly pressurised lives. Most adults under 60 now work full-time (and often for very long hours away from home), leaving the voluntary sector as a whole heavily dependent upon those who are retired. In turn many of those who are retired look forward to a time of relaxation and a certain amount of enjoyment such as their health allows.
- More and more demands are being made upon parishes to find committed Catholics willing to take on more and more responsibilities in the parish. This is at the same time as only a few parishes are growing in numbers, and some are shrinking.
- Young people are less available for voluntary work with the heavy focus upon examinations through continual assessment from the age of 14 until they leave for university.
- There is a 'democratic deficit' in the United Kingdom, with most people alienated from politics and social action, and sometimes unwilling to look at the bigger picture.
- The Church's Social Teaching is widely misunderstood as being too closely allied with particular political views. CAFOD, by way of example, has done an excellent job in establishing their credibility as a broad based response of the whole Church community to justice at an international level, and we need to emulate this if the charism is to become more mainstream in the life of the diocese.
- Clergy are an absolute essential for the success of Justice and Peace in the life of the Diocese. The larger J&P groups all have supportive and encouraging parish clergy. However, not all clergy share that enthusiasm. The only clergy involved in the life of the current commissions are the Area Bishops, the Vicar General and the Chair of the Coordinating Committee. The last Archbishop's Pastoral Letter on Justice & Peace was in 1986.

22. In our diocese the J&P worker is part time and her work largely restricted to the office. She produces a Newsletter regularly, and from the responses to the Review it is clear that is the most appreciated work of the Commission. However, it tends to cover national/international issues while there seems to be a consensus that more feedback about what other parish groups are doing – and how – would be the most appreciated content. She acts as a vital point of contact. The Area Commissions are largely unknown to those groups who do not have representatives on them, so Sr. Pat is effectively the public face of the Commissions, a role she fulfils very well, being a mine of information and proactive in regularly distributing details of meetings and events. However, the current role leaves her still somewhat remote from the local groups.

23. Nationally there is no clear pattern or working or organisation. Westminster has only just launched its Commission and Liverpool is in a state of flux. The majority of dioceses, however, do have a Justice and Peace worker, which seems to be an important point of contact as well as a resource for maintaining some momentum to the work. Representation on the National Justice and Peace Network is also an important source of information. Over the past 20 years or so, Southwark has provided the Network with two Chairs, a Treasurer, Executive members and two of the four part-time staff that have been employed.

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2. The New Commission

24. Justice & Peace raises a myriad of important issues facing our own society and that of the wider world. The following extract from the Vatican website gives a useful summary as to how the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has sought to address these issues:

- The primary work of the Pontifical Council is to engage in action-oriented studies based on both the papal and episcopal social teaching of the Church. Through them, the Pontifical Council also contributes to the development of this teaching in the following vast fields:
JUSTICE. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is concerned with all that touches upon social justice, the world of work, international life, development in general and social development in particular. It also promotes ethical reflection on the evolution of economic and financial systems and addresses problems related to the environment and the responsible use of the earth's resources.
PEACE. The Pontifical Council reflects on a broad range of questions related to war, disarmament and the arms trade, international security, and violence in its various and ever-changing forms (terrorism, exaggerated nationalism etc.). It also considers the question of political systems and the role of Catholics in the political arena. It is responsible for the promotion of the World Day of Peace.
HUMAN RIGHTS. This question has assumed increasing importance in the mission of the Church and consequently in the work of the Pontifical Council. Pope John Paul II consistently stresses that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of the promotion and defence of his or her inalienable rights. The Council deals with the subject from three perspectives: deepening the doctrinal aspect, dealing with questions under discussion in international organizations, showing concern for the victims of the violation of human rights.

(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_pro_20011004_en.html.)

25. In seeking to renew the work of Justice and Peace in our diocese, it is well to keep this description at the back of our minds, so that as the local Church we ensure that the universality of the Gospel is brought into the particular context in which we live.

26. Much of what is described in *Bonus Pastor* is about bringing people together, facilitating understanding in the light of the Gospel, helping people of goodwill to work together to bring the values of justice and peace to bear upon our wounded world.

27. It is echoed in many of the thoughts and reflections we have received in the Review. People value the many ways in which they are already working with others, especially ecumenically. They yearn to understand more of what other parish groups are doing. They want to work more collaboratively and with a more united sense of purpose. Those involved with J&P work usually value the support and encouragement they receive from belonging to a group, but are often only

too aware that for the most part groups are small and their membership not that young. Therefore there is a need to strengthen the collaboration and support which is taking place at the grass roots.

28. The new Commission is a response to all of these concerns and aspirations, summarised in section 20 ***“Therefore we conclude that there is a need for a new, single Diocesan Commission which enables greater collaboration between all those working to promote Catholic Social Teaching and which enables the parish groups to find a new dynamism at the heart of the local Church’s life.”*** What shape should a new Commission take in order to do this?

29. Firstly the emphasis is not about a small group of people making decisions from the top which everyone else receives third hand and has little influence upon. Rather it needs to be rooted in those actively engaged in the promotion of Catholic Social Teaching, and be broad based enough so as to be an effective forum for the development of consensus and effective collaboration. The Commission needs to be directly inclusive of and answerable to the groups and individuals active in this field from across the diocese. In this way when the Archbishop meets with his Commission it gives him an immediate and accurate connection with what is going on across the diocese.

30. Secondly, it needs to be open, flexible and organic in its development. Justice & Peace is a vast area of Church life, and the demands, concerns and opportunities shift constantly. Development to meet these changes needs to be on-going. Nor do Catholics work alone in this field, and the Commission needs to be fundamentally open to the input of those taking new initiatives from outside its existing membership. This includes other faith communities, other Christian communities and civic groups of people of good will. The new Commission needs to provide a structure within which such development and consultation can take place.

31. Thirdly, the new Commission needs to be constructed in such a way that a vast variety of concerns and experiences can be shared effectively. The nature of the diocese is such that it embraces many different geographical locations which are not naturally homogenous. These differences are not just between Kent and London, but between the inner city and suburbia, between coastal ports and scattered rural communities, between prosperous towns and problem housing estates. While this is a real challenge it is also a real richness and strength. This variety gives a breadth of perspective on many issues of Justice and Peace, which the new Commission needs to bring out and consolidate so that insight grows and collaboration becomes more effective. The issue of asylum seekers, for example, is a common theme in Dover, Croydon and Peckham – but in Dover it is those who have just arrived, in Croydon those trying to access justice from the Home Office, and in Peckham those trying to settle in a new host country. The Commission needs to be a place where everyone can tell their story and be heard, so that a new understanding emerges which in turn makes collaboration easier.

32. Finally the Commission should be a body which is accessible to the diocese as a whole, especially the young and those in the process of catechetical formation. It needs to serve not just those directly involved in Justice and Peace but serve the diocese as a whole. While the written word is one way in which this is done, we should not forget the fundamental picture of catechesis presented in St John’s Gospel, where the apostle Andrew says simply ‘come and see’. The new Commission needs to operate in such a way that not only is it a forum where people can tell their stories but where others from outside can come and hear them and see for themselves something of what is being done to serve the cause of Justice and the poor.

33. With all of this in mind we are suggesting that the Commission

1. Be a broad body of people drawn from parish groups and individuals in every deanery, and open to all Catholic groups working in this field in the Diocese.
2. Be an assembly rather than a committee, with its focus being upon consensus and collaboration.

How would such a Commission be formed?

34. The J&P Office has a list of people in parishes with an active interest in Justice and Peace. We suggest that this is arranged into deanery lists, and those on it circulated and invited to attend the assembly. However, in order to prevent the assembly becoming unwieldy we suggest that there should be no more than two representatives per deanery. Where three or more people on a deanery list respond to the invitation then we suggest that their names are circulated to the people

on their list with an invitation to vote for two of the names. Those with the most votes go forward as the deanery representatives.

35. There are also a substantial number of other groups and religious communities working in this area across the Diocese. We suggest that, at the Archbishop's discretion, those listed in the Diocesan Handbook are invited to send a participant to the Assembly. Other groups not in the Handbook could be recommended to the Archbishop by anyone in the Diocese or they could themselves request to be able to send a representative. However, to ensure that the Assembly doesn't become unwieldy or the members of parish groups overshadowed, the Archbishop may wish to restrict the range of invitations to key groups such as Cafod, at least until the size of the response has been determined.

36. The involvement of clergy from all parts of the Diocese is also very important, and we suggest that in London the Borough Deans be invited by the Archbishop to attend the Assembly. They are already involved to some degree with the promotion of the Church's Social Teaching at a civic level and membership of the Commission would both support them in this task and give an opportunity for them to feedback what they are doing to a wider audience. It would also provide an opportunity for them to make contact with lay people in their deaneries who share concern for Justice & Peace. In Kent, where there are no Borough Deans, we suggest that the Deans, at the request of their Area Bishop, are asked to invite a member of their deanery chapter who is interested in J&P to attend the assembly.

37. Invitations could also be sent to members of other faith communities, Christian groups and civic associations who, as people of goodwill, are partners with us in the work of Justice and Peace.

38. Thus the Commission meets as an Assembly, an open body, of which you are a member simply by being there. By accepting an invitation to be a member of the Commission a person would simply be committing himself or herself to attending the assemblies.

How would such a Commission operate?

39. Such a gathering of people is a formidable task. Therefore we suggest that it should be infrequent but substantial. We suggest that there should be two assemblies a year and that they should meet from mid-morning until mid-afternoon. In order to ensure that a balance is kept between Kent and London we suggest that the location should alternate between a London and a Kent venue, for example Amigo Hall and Aylesford Priory.

40. The Commission would need a chair, be that a lay person or a cleric, who would be appointed by the Archbishop. It would be his responsibility to invite people to the Assembly, to facilitate its meeting and to follow up matters of common concern. To do this he or she would need a small group of people to assist him or her, which we suggest be called the Facilitation Group.

41. The essence of the Commission is in being a meeting place for all those working for Justice and Peace. At its core are, therefore, the conversations taking place between those attending. These provide the substance for reflection and growth in understanding, enabling the diocese to value the vast range of work being done in this field. It provides an opportunity for people to meet more effectively, to network and to collaborate on a broad basis. The ultimate context for such dialogue is with the Lord Himself; the celebration of Mass and the opportunity for spiritual reflection would therefore be an essential element of such a gathering.

42. We suggest that the first meeting of the Commission in November be spent as a conversation between the Chair and the assembly to decide how the Assembly should operate and setting up its Facilitation Group. The existing Coordinating Committee will make its own suggestions to help get the process going, but the final decisions will be in the hands of the new Commission itself.

43. The Commission may need to establish, from time to time, particular groups to meet particular needs as they arise. For example, new parish groups have been set up through the 'J&P road show'. The new Commission may wish to continue this practice, and perhaps organise one for each Episcopal Area. Also, as an assembly, it will give the Commission the resources to be able to discern areas of concern, to establish groups of people with energy and enthusiasm who are able to take these issues further, and to present them to the diocese as a whole. As an assembly it will also be able to call upon people with particular insight and expertise to share their experience.

44. As an assembly it would be possible for confirmation groups, RCIA groups, etc. to come along and observe what is going on, and indeed to participate in the conversations and reflections. The attendance of the Archbishop and Area bishops would enable them to easily enter into the conversations taking place, both gaining an insight into what was going on around the diocese and to make their own contribution. This would build upon the conversations the Archbishop has had with the Deaneries.

45. The Assemblies would also provide an opportunity for displays, feedback on events, together with the distribution of literature and resources.

What about the Justice and Peace Office and the Worker?

46. The work of the Office and Worker becomes focused on working with the Facilitation Group and the Commission Chair in resourcing the Assemblies, and especially in liaising with the Deanery representatives.

47. The production of the Newsletter would not only continue, but be vitally important in reporting to a wider audience what has taken place in the assemblies, and keeping people up to date with developments which have taken place. The stories being told at the assemblies about what is taking place around the diocese would be a great source of information, which could then be reproduced in the Newsletter.

48. The Worker's line manager would be the Chair of the Commission.

49. The running of the Justice & Peace Office would continue under the Worker as at present.

In conclusion

50. Begun as an initiative of the Coordinating Committee, these proposals reflect the widespread consultation, which we conducted as part of our Review between February and May 2004. The clergy, the Deaneries, parish J&P groups, the existing commissions, religious communities and individuals were all sent copies of the proposals. They have also been discussed with staff from CAFOD, the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales, and our neighbouring diocese of Westminster. People from the Diocese involved in working for Justice and Peace generally value the many ways in which they are already working with others, especially ecumenically. They yearn to understand more of what other parish groups are doing. They want to work more collaboratively and with a more united sense of purpose. We have listened and responded to their observations, suggestions and concerns and developed our proposals accordingly.

We believe that these proposals will enable the Diocese to develop the work of Justice & Peace by building upon the best of what has been done over the past thirty years, while enabling a greater cohesion and collaboration between the many individuals and groups already working to promote the Church's Social Teaching. In this way we hope to have facilitated a new chapter in the work of building up God's Kingdom in this small but significant part of our world.

"I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" [Luke 12:49]

Father Ian Knowles, Chair.
September 24th 2004

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