

# The Need for Change

Southwark has a history to be proud of when it comes to Justice and Peace. In the past 30 years the diocese has established the J&P office and employed a series of workers. It has also had a variety of structures, the most recent being the Area Commissions and the Coordinating Committee.

Times, and challenges, change. So does the complexity of life, and the diocese. There are hundreds of people working in a myriad of different groups to try and bring about something of the Kingdom of God among us. For some it might be issues of newly arrived asylum seekers, for others Third World debt, for others prisoners of conscience, for others campaigning for racial equality. Some work in parish groups, others in dedicated organisations, some of which are Catholic, others of which are not.

Our context too has changed. We are not simply London and Kent, but suburbia and the inner city, coastal and rural, international corporation and local businesses, large parish and small parish. We are a multi-cultural, multi-faceted diocese where much of our population originates from outside the area, be it the north of England or South America.

In our Review of 2004, one issue came up time and again: we need to come together, to share our rich experiences so that we can support and encourage one another. ***That is why we have decided to make the new Commission not a committee but an Assembly to which all can be invited and take a place at the table.*** Together we can do great things for God and His Kingdom.

# THE NEW COMMISSION

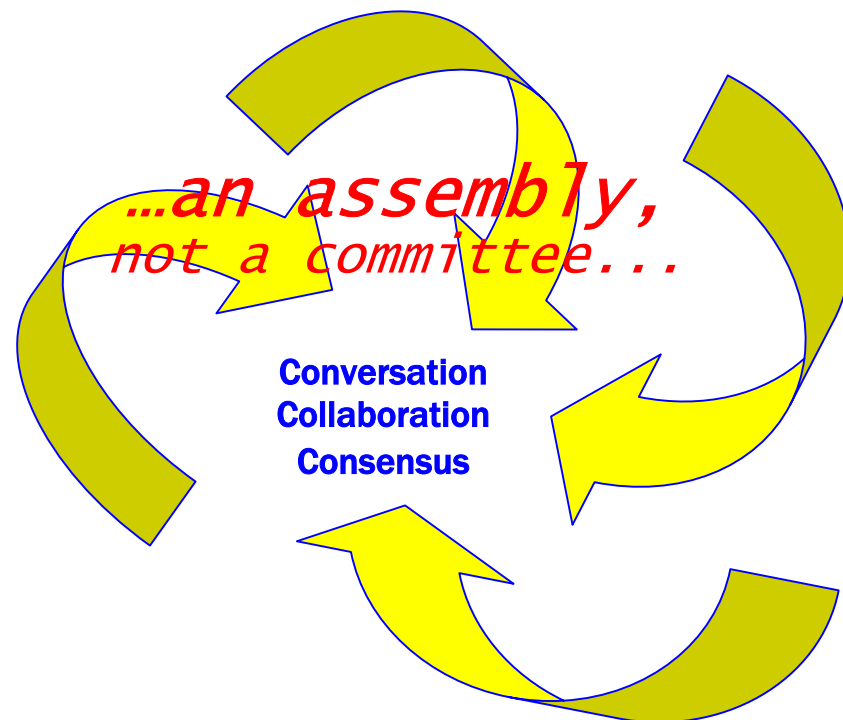
## Who is it?

We wrote to all those on the **J&P contact list** to invite those who would like to volunteer to be on the new Commission to write and let us know. The list was divided up into deaneries, and where there were more than two volunteers from one deanery we circulated their names to all the others on their deanery list and asked people to vote for two of them. The ones with the most votes became the Deanery Representatives on the Commission.

The Archbishop also invited **clergy** in London who are Borough Deans to join the Commission, and in Kent Bishop Hine asked for a priest in every deanery to volunteer to join the Commission.

The Archbishop also invited those **groups working for Justice and Peace** in the diocese, such as CAFOD, to send representatives. An invitation was also sent to our partners from **other faith communities and secular bodies**. They too are part of the Commission.

Yes its big – but not that big. ***This is an assembly, not a committee, one that brings together all the different strands of Justice and Peace in our diocese so that conversation, collaboration and consensus can be developed among us and other people of good will.***



## 'Come and See!'

St Andrew expresses the model for catechesis we discover in John's Gospel, when he says to his brother 'come and see!' A Commission that meets as an assembly gives an opportunity for others to come along, see what's going on and to be inspired. Confirmation groups, RCIA, seminarians, those hoping to develop something in their own parish – all can come along and see for themselves what's going on.

It also gives the Archbishop an opportunity to meet with those engaged promoting Justice and Peace across his diocese, to share his thoughts directly with those on the ground and to hear first hand what is going on.

This is an open and inclusive way of being a Commission, with a radically new way of offering support and encouragement to those promoting the Church's social teaching.

## Just a talking shop?

By operating as an assembly the Commission is far more effective at facilitating networking between the very varied groups working for Justice & Peace in the diocese. Obviously part of this means talking, but talking also implies **listening, sharing, supporting, and growing in understanding.**

The main role of the Commission, like parish groups, will be nurturing an awareness of the richness of Catholic social teaching at the heart of the Christian life. Action is something which flows from this, and which in turn informs the way in which we come to understand the implications of Catholic social teaching.

Justice and Peace activists in Kent already come together 2 –3 times a year with Bishop John Hine to talk over their experiences and successes. Fr Michael attends to listen and share what's happening elsewhere. It is hoped that when the new London area bishops are in place, they will adopt similar opportunities to meet with anyone who is involved in justice and peace in their areas. Although not a decision-making forum, they can then bring to the Assembly any issues that are raised.

The Assembly will be able to invite people of national and international standing to come and enter into our conversations, people who can inform, challenge, and inspire. With such a range of people present, the richness of the exchange will be more easily passed on to others at the grass roots – the stories will continue to be told, connections made, themes discerned and consensus built.

Action can follow from the conversations if and when the Assembly chooses; perhaps working parties could be set up to look deeper into particular issues, or to develop ways of people across the diocese working more effectively together. The possibilities are enormous; the new Commission is a way of seizing those possibilities and making them happen.

## The Assembly

**The Commission hopes to meet twice yearly, once at a Kent venue, the second at Amigo Hall.**

How is the Commission to operate effectively? Is it simply going to be a talking shop? Who gets to decide what it does and how it does it?

The development of the Commission is a partnership between those committed to promoting Justice and Peace in the Diocese, and Archbishop Kevin, who has already shown his deep commitment to justice and peace, through his homilies, letters etc. The Archbishop appointed Fr Michael Scanlon as Chair of the Commission, to its guide the future shape.

The power to shape the future is in the Commission's own hands, under the guidance of a Facilitating Committee. It was suggested by the (previous) Coordinating Committee that the Commission should meet in Assembly twice a year, and that this should alternate between a London and a Kent venue and this was agreed at the first meeting. The Assemblies so far have been successful in raising issues and enabling people to share their experiences throughout the Diocese. This chance to talk together has been voiced by attendees as one of the main reasons they enjoy coming. A variety of subjects have already been covered – finance & debt; multi-faith, multi-ethnic & multi-racial Southwark in 2005, and the environment.

One of the problems we found in doing the Review was the difficulty of sharing information, let alone making decisions collaboratively. The Assembly structure will enable such collaboration to be ongoing and organic.

# The new Justice & Peace Commission



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