



# PEACE AND JUSTICE WEEK

5<sup>TH</sup> TO 9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT ON THE WEEK – more at [these4parishes.co.uk](http://these4parishes.co.uk)

## Monday ISRAEL-PALESTINE



**More than a hundred people** packed into Saint Margaret's Hornby for the first evening of *Peace and Justice Week* with international writer and speaker **Robert Cohen**, Jewish campaigner for Palestinian human rights. Robert concluded his address: *'In the end, there can be no absolute guarantee of safety and security for Jews, or for any other religious, ethnic or racial minority. We are only as safe as the communities we work together to create. I have become convinced that narrow Jewish nationalism will not be the answer to antisemitism; in the end they are the flip side of each other. Peace will never be achieved if justice is left out of the equation. Working to build tolerant and inclusive communities is our best and only course of action.'* The last word for the evening was the combined voice of hope of Rami, a Jewish Israeli, and Bassam, a Palestinian Arab, who both lost school-age daughters to the conflict: *'He is my dearest friend and brother';* and in their work together for peace, they are *'fearless, because the worst that could happen already happened.'* They became the voice of hope, and the inspiration to work for peace.

## Tuesday LUNE VALLEY REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME



Asylum-claim delays continue to leave people trapped in limbo for months or even years on end, and those waiting for a decision have to live in designated accommodation on an allowance of just £36 a week, forbidden from seeking work, and not even allowed a television. **Simple human compassion** sees the people of Bentham offering weekends in the countryside to asylum seekers housed in Bradford, and groups in Lancaster offering a whole range of social opportunities and practical support. **The Lune Valley Refugee Sponsorship Project** aims to provide the support that a recognised-refugee family will need to settle, integrate, find work, and start to build a new life - all in response to the global challenge from Pope Francis for every catholic parish and community to welcome and support a Syrian refugee family. **The sixty who gathered** ended the evening inspired by the realisation that even small donations or simple pieces of voluntary work can make a huge difference to people in desperate need right on our doorstep.

## Wednesday CHRISTIAN AID and CAFOD



**Christian Aid and Cafod** have support in every parish, and global reach, connecting local churches here with communities all over the world. **Everywhere, they work with local organisations** to ensure that the help they offer reaches those who need it, and responds to practical needs in ways that work in each place. **Stephen Garsed** for Cafod and **Arton Medd** for Christian Aid talked about the work of both organisations, from emergency aid, to long-term support and development work, to lobbying and advocacy. **The over-all impression** was of a global faith-based network working for good where the world's most powerful have no interest. It felt almost subversive - like a well-funded, well-organised, highly-motivated, truly global network, dedicated to the practical support of the most vulnerable, working in the powerless margins of every society on earth.

## Thursday CHURCH-SPONSORED WORK in LANCASTER and MORECAMBE



**The news from Lancaster and Morecambe** is that for those who really are 'only just managing' - even in Britain in 2018 - it only takes one misfortune (an illness, a late payment, a child's lost shoe) to end up with no food, or even no home. **Churches and charities** in Lancaster and Morecambe provide emergency Food Banks, a Night Shelter for the otherwise street-homeless, and, between them, a pattern of free meals through the week, warm daytime venues, and company and support, that can restore some human dignity, and help get people back on their feet. **Six speakers** from various projects talked about their work, and the joy that can come through helping others and making a real difference - but they also talked about their frustration that even parliamentarians now take them for granted as an extra safety-net making up for the inadequacies of official provision in welfare, mental health, and a whole range of other support services for the vulnerable. **But while ever these needs remain**, the churches and charities are there, meeting human need with human compassion.

## Friday IN TRANSITION



**And finally... So many young people are choosing gender transition** that it is now affecting virtually every high school in the country. **We began the evening** with a series of video pieces in which young trans folks could speak for themselves. Most were accompanied by their parents, who had themselves been on a long journey of discovery. The youngsters had been "insistent, consistent, and persistent" - from an early age - that they knew their gender, and were increasingly bewildered, confused, and distressed, that everyone else was telling them the opposite, and demanding that they behave accordingly. This set the agenda for the evening. **Chris Newlands**, vicar of Lancaster Priory, spoke movingly about being alongside trans folks in their spiritual journey, and how he had taken, all the way to national General Synod, a motion in support of church services to recognise gender transition. **Our own Fr Luiz** talked about his work as head of education for the Diocese of Lancaster, in which he oversees twelve catholic high schools across Lancashire and Cumbria. All twelve have trans pupils. Fr Luiz challenged the prevalent individualistic assumption that makes 'identity' into something an individual declares, reminding us of the higher ideal whereby our identity develops and is nurtured within a community of mutual love and trust. **Kirsty Allan** described how the theatre has satirised gender norms for three thousand years, from the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare, and from pantomime to burlesque. In each show, the host encourages the nervous performers, and encourages applause as affirmation; and in the theatre of the church, Christ is the host, and we are all both nervous performers in need of affirmation, and the supportive community that gives that affirmation to each other. **Finally Dr Lewis Turner** of Lancashire LGBT talked about his work providing training and support services to Lancaster's schools, colleges and universities, and his delight that even the most remote rural primary school can rally round to be the confident community of love, trust and support that a trans young person needs.