

NORTHERN DIOCESE ENVIROMENT GROUP

MEETING

Date Wednesday 29th November 2023

Present

Mark Wiggin (Chair)	Caritas Diocese of Salford (volunteer)
Paul Kelly	Climate Change group - Leeds J&P Commission and NJPN Environment Group.
Edward de Quay	Laudato Si Research Institute, Oxford
Gareth Rowe	Durham University + Cafod
Justine Silcock	Archdiocese of Liverpool J+P
Chris Myers	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Stephen Garsed	Lancaster Diocese J+P
Pablo Guidi	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Anthony Brown	Our Lady of the Valley Parish (Diocese of Salford)
Columba Timmins	Hallam Diocese
Bernadette Jordan	St Marys, Horwich, Bolton

Apologies Thanks to many whose apologies were received

Agenda

12.30	Welcome and Opening prayer
12.45	Introductions and programme outline
12.50	Laudate Deum and CST - Deacon Gareth Rowe – Researcher at the University of Durham and with CAFOD - discussion and feedback
1.30	National updates – Edward de Quay (Laudato Si Research Institute, Campion College, University of Oxford and participants news shari
1.45	Closing prayer

Opening Prayer

'For Peace' from Benedictus by John O'Donohue with special remembrance of Geoff Thompson RIP and for world peace.

Laudate Deum

Deacon Gareth Rowe – Researcher at the University of Durham and with CAFOD - offered insights into the recent Apostolic Exhortation 'Laudate Deum'.

Pope Francis begins his Apostolic Exhortation "Laudate Deum" with the following:

“Eight years have passed since I published the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, when I wanted to share with all of you, my brothers and sisters of our suffering planet, my heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home. Yet, with the passage of time, I have realised that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.”

In this short exhortation Francis is frustrated that not much has happened in the last 8 years to avert a climate catastrophe. Francis argues against the ‘Technocratic Paradigm’ that we have become over dependent upon rather than looking to ourselves and the ecological conversion we need alongside the political solutions that politicians are failing to deliver as they are not showing the leadership needed.

Laudate Deum can be seen as part of the evolution and tradition of Catholic Social Teaching dating back to Pope Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* – the Dignity of Labour in 1891 an ‘internal’ call to action between the European states of the Industrial Revolution. Today Francis has promoted the bottom-up rather than top-down approach. His emphasis is upon the ‘interconnectivity’ of everything beyond the human experience to include nature and creation. *Laudate Deum* is a blunt reminder of the importance of taking action!

(Please see the attached recording of Gareth’s talk)

National updates

Resolutions released after the Bishops’ Autumn Plenary 2023 focusing on Environmental Concerns, the Shrine of St Winefride in Holywell, north Wales, the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress, and the Conflict in Gaza.

Environmental Concerns

The Bishops of England and Wales welcome Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*. We ask Catholics to consider how they can respond to the Pope’s urgent call to action by deepening their relationship with Christ and, through doing so, resolve to undertake and promote practical action to respect and nurture God’s creation and the natural world. We recognise the wonderful work that Catholics, and many others, are doing to change our culture in relation to how we view and act towards the environment.

We echo Pope Francis’s call for our political leaders to take decisive action at COP 28 and to create energy transition targets that are efficient, obligatory and readily monitored, and we ask them to consider how such targets can be enforced. We commend for further study the intellectual resources of the Church in this area, including Pope Francis’s letters *Laudate Deum* and *Laudato Si* and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s publication *The Call of Creation*. We also commend the practical work that is being undertaken through the *Guardians of Creation* project, which provides practical guidance and resources to support transition in dioceses and parishes, and through Cafod’s *Live Simply* programme.

Carbon Emissions (CBCEW Autumn 2022)

The Bishops' Conference asks dioceses of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to declare target dates for a stated reduction of carbon emissions or report on how close they are to having the information necessary to set such a target. These may be informed by the current research undertaken by the project [Guardians of Creation](#). The bishops will report on the progress of the dioceses at the Easter season and November Plenary Assemblies in 2023.

- Portsmouth, Clifton, Northampton and Birmingham dioceses were [visited over the summer by 21 students from Walsh University](#) who used Guardians of Creation guides to analyse emissions data and make recommendations. The students also visited Westminster diocese to discuss its carbon accounting journey and engaged with Plymouth diocese over a video call.
- Liverpool is working with Fordham University students on a similar project.

(Please see attached power-point notes from Edward de Quay)

News and Events

Social Action Network Workshop Series 2023/2024 ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE 9th March 2024

This partnership event between Justice and Peace Commission and Liverpool Archdiocese will bring together parishioners and a space to reflect on climate issues and how our Catholic faith calls us to action. Speakers include Bishop John Arnold (Environmental Lead for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales); Sr Margaret Aitkens (member of the Community of Augustinian Sisters at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria and Research Fellow of Blackfriars, Oxford); and John-Paul DeQuay from Guardians of Creation.

To Book: www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/department/pastoral-development/environment

End piece

Sr Margaret's contribution – "Slow Down for the Planet"

I invite you to join us in signalling your support for phasing out fossil fuels through simple, peaceful but transformative action.

Just adopt **one or more** of the following resolutions, during COP28, and maybe beyond:

- 1) Drive at no more than 55 m.p.h. on major roads.
- 2) Drive at no more than 20 m.p.h. near homes, shops or schools.
- 3) Switch off your engine when idling.
- 4) Put in your car back window a notice saying: SLOW DOWN FOR THE PLANET.

Driving less hastily:

- * reduces GHGs
- * saves money
- * avoids serious accidents

- * reduces respiratory disease
- * reduces local pollution
- * makes driving less stressful
- * shows that you are serious about fossil fuels.

Nothing to lose, everything to gain. Please join us yourselves and spread the word.
Sr Margaret Atkins, Boarbank Hall, Cumbria.

Closing prayers – Creation tide Intercessions (Cafod)

Prayer for the COP28 climate summit

God of blessings,
the universe sings of your glory.
Deepen our gratitude for all you have made
and awaken in us a renewed commitment
to care for the earth and each other.
Inspire world leaders at COP28,
with openness to listen to those most affected by climate change
and with courage to act urgently and wisely,
so that our common home may be healed and restored
and all people, and generations to come, may delight in it.
Amen.

Next meeting – Date to be confirmed.