



NewsNotes

January 2024

Pundits have pointing out that 2024 is the year of elections. Half of the Earth's population will participate in elections this year, more than in any other year on record, with US & UK voters among those going to the poles. This may, at first, be delightful news for those who believe in democracy, but many of those same pundits also suggest that the trends show many people are willing to relinquish some of their rights for more authoritarian, rather than democratic leadership. Why? The premier reason folks are considering this change is because they see the need to strengthen their national identity by denying admittance and or citizenship to those who are not "one of us" but one of "them". They fear the influence and disruption caused by migrants who are not of their own national bloodlines, heritage, language and culture.

Despite the claims of the former president and his followers there are no such bloodlines in the USA. We are and have always been a nation of immigrants. Sometimes they are welcomed and not at other times. Other than the first nations peoples, we are all immigrants. Anyone who comes to this nation has as much right to be an American as anyone else. That is our national heritage and culture. Shame on those who speak otherwise in an effort to divide and create a culture of hate.

Those of us who live by faith (any by reason) ought to understand the deeper truth, that we are eight billion people of various cultures, languages, skin colors, etc. who share one common home, which just happens to be in peril. We are one family. We have no time or resources to waste on fights over "them," who they are, or why they want to enter our nations. Show them welcome and lets improve ourselves and our nation together.

Peace and all good,

Frank

Frank McCann

Peace through Justice Facilitator

Congregation's NGO Representative to the UN

Laudato Si' Action Platform Coordinator



Global Day of action for COP28



By David Richardson

On Saturday, December 9th, a Global Day of Action took place worldwide, with 40 protests happening in London and across the UK, coinciding with the COP26 climate summit in Dubai.

I attended the Global Day of Action in London, where we gathered at St James's Square outside the offices of Rio Tinto and BP. As more and more people arrived, many banners in the Faith section were displayed, including Tearfund, Christian Climate Action, Quakers, Operation Noah, and Sisters of St Joseph of Peace. Prayers were led outside of BP by Tearfund, CAFOD, and

Christian aid using the 'Prayer for our Earth' from the Laudato Si' encyclical.

As more secular organisations joined us, our numbers grew to the hundreds. Climate Justice Coalition held a rally outside BP, which helped attract more people. A representative from Global Justice Now emphasised that grassroots movements were responsible for fossil fuels being on the COP26 agenda. The protest became louder and more lively as we chanted, 'What do we want? Climate Justice, When do we want it? Now!'

Led by Extinction Rebellion drummers, we marched to the offices of BAE Systems, where more speeches took place from other organisations who reported blocking BAE Systems sites across the UK in a demonstration against weapons being sent to Israel. After 20 minutes, the procession marched to Trafalgar Square, where we joined the National March of 100,000 people through London for peace in Palestine.

What there any hope in the outcome of COP 28?

The keywords from COP 28 are: "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner." The words themselves are perhaps empty and require nothing specific. If they remain that, then COP 28 will go down as one of the great failures in the climate movement. But even Bill McKibben sees these words as potentially powerful in the mouths of activists following up on the talks and for all further talks going forward. Bill writes: "the worlds nations have now publicly agreed that they need to transition off fossil fuels, and that sentence will hang over every discussion from now on—especially discussions about any further expansion of the fossil fuel energy. There may be barriers to shutting down operations...but if the language means anything at all, it means no more opening of oil fields, no more new pipeline. No more new liquid natural gas (LNG) export terminals."

McKibben sees the US as a test since they have in the "pipeline" a build out of LNG terminals. Will the permits be granted?

The key words themselves are meaningless but we can put meaning into them by actions we take.



Our CSJP Congregation participated in the Pax Christi *Bread not Stones* Campaign late last year by sending letters to Cardinal Tobin of Newark and Archbishop Etienne of Seattle asking for their agreement to endorse policies that would use funds from our nation's military budget to provide necessary relief to those suffering from hunger and poverty. Cardinal Tobin signed the statement, and penned a gracious reply. Archbishop Etienne has not responded to us, but Pax Christi reports he has declined to sign on.

In the letter to Cardinal Tobin, the Leadership Team pointed to our congregation's years of service especially in Jersey City which began with Mother Clare's arrival in 1884. Our Charism recognizes that peace is only possible when justice exists, when everyone's basic needs are met. We gave the example of how near the end of 2021, child poverty had been cut in half by increasing the child tax credit. Nevertheless, Congress ended the program in 2022 and we watched child poverty rise again. While cutting the child-centered program because of its cost, Congress nevertheless increased the defense department budget by seventy billion dollars.

In his reply to our Leadership Team, the Cardinal assured us of his "constant prayers for the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, who continue to show, by word and example, that what the world needs is not an increase in military spending but 'Peace through Justice.'"

Through the Bread not Stones Campaign, Pax Christi hopes to engage the US Bishops in more leadership against the constant increases in defense spending.



Two Nations: The state of poverty in the UK report

By David Richardson In December 2023, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) released a report called [Two Nations: The State of Poverty in the UK](#). The report identified the UK is at risk of reverting to a "Two Nations" society, similar to the Victorian era, where there was a significant gap between mainstream society and a poverty-stricken underclass.

The report highlights the growing income disparity, which pandemic lockdowns have worsened. The lockdown measures severely impacted the most disadvantaged, affecting various aspects of their lives. Mental health conditions saw a significant increase during the lockdown, and there was a 700% rise in calls to domestic abuse helplines.

The report highlights the economic vulnerability of the most deprived, with work often being financially unrewarding due to poor quality, insecure jobs, and stagnant wages. The welfare system ends up topping up the incomes of over two million people, creating a situation where being economically inactive due to sickness becomes a more viable option for many.

Crime rates have decreased overall, but violent crime remains high, destroying public trust in the justice system. The report emphasises the concentration of crime within a small percentage of families, indicating systemic issues that need consideration.

Housing has become a critical problem, with poor quality, expensive, and insecure housing disproportionately affecting the most deprived. Communities are also torn apart by addiction, with approximately 5,000 people dying of drug poisoning in 2022. Charities that support these communities are under strain, facing funding challenges despite increased service demand. Family breakdown is identified as a root cause of various societal issues, affecting the poorest families the hardest. The UK has a high percentage of single-parent families whose children can have disrupted attachment, developmental delays, and increased vulnerability to mental health issues. Mental health problems among children have risen significantly, with 1 in 5 young people facing mental health challenges after the pandemic. The educational system is struggling with the aftermath of the lockdown, with many children missing more school than they attend. The report highlights poverty in society worsened by COVID-19 and calls for comprehensive measures to tackle the root causes.

In October 2023, the [Bishops Conference of England and Wales issued a statement](#) in response to the UK's cost of living crisis. The statement provided guidance and reflection that complements the Two Nations report. They urged the UK Government to take a long-term approach to address issues such as taxation, housing, and welfare benefits. They called political parties to prioritise the common good over party interests and consider the preferential option principle for low-income people.

The Bishops encouraged all Catholics to play their part in influencing Government policy, supporting Catholic charities and civil society groups, promoting the dignity of others, and responding to the spiritual needs of the poor.

All Catholics can play a part in influencing Government policy. As Christ said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house" (Matthew 5:14-16).

'Visible signs of hope' for Haiti, Assembly President Francis insists



© WFP/Jonathan Dumont

People walk through downtown Port-au-Prince during a tropical storm.
18 December 2023 [Peace and Security](#)

"Haiti is not hopeless", the President of the UN General Assembly said on Monday during a meeting addressing the multiple crises besetting the Caribbean nation, alongside the presidents of the UN Security Council and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Dennis Francis, a veteran diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, said he had returned from a visit to Haiti at the end of last month "with hope and the full knowledge that while Haiti is facing extraordinary challenges, its future holds indomitable promise."

The country has seen almost 4,000 killed and 3,000 kidnapped in gang-related violence just this year, following a political, economic and security crisis that has left much of the country descend into lawlessness.

Driving in the streets of Port au Prince, I saw visible signs of hope – sustained by the undying resilience and perseverance of the Haitian people – who seem to create inventive ways to meet the daily challenges”, Mr. Francis told the meeting.

“There is, in my view, no shortage of potential in Haiti – and it is not too late that, as the international community, we must do something to accompany the Haitian people, further”, he said noting that the most pressing need is for greater security.

“Uncontrollable violence has robbed and continues to rob the Haitian people of their freedoms and rights; and it is stifling the country’s path to sustainable development”, he said.

Around 40 per cent of Haiti’s healthcare workers have reportedly left the country, while women and girls have been subject to brutal sexual violence “with many living in a cycle of fear and trauma.”

He said “we cannot be credible, as the UN and the international community, to just look the other way.”

Mr. Francis noted that the much-needed deployment of a Multinational Security Support Mission authorized by the [Security Council](#) on 2 October, has not materialised.

It is “awaited with great urgency by many in Haiti”, with 80 per cent of the capital under gang control and spreading further afield into rural areas, he said.

He expressed “deepest thanks” to Kenya for “demonstrating leadership of this critical mission”, as well as all other countries that have pledged or are planning to contribute.

According to news reports, despite political and legal setbacks the first group of Kenyan officers are due to be deployed early next year.

“I encouraged the authorities, as well as representatives of Haiti’s political parties and civil society representatives, to surmount their differences – emphasizing that every stakeholder has a duty to work for the interests of the country and the people.”

He called on political elites in Haiti to abandon their self-centred pre-occupation and to prioritize their constituents “who have endured too much turmoil and who deserve to be given a chance, to succeed. I emphasized that Haiti belongs to them too and that it is their responsibility as elites seeking office to fix the country so that young Haitians would be guaranteed a life chance.”

The President of [ECOSOC](#), Paula Narváez said that as the principal bodies of the UN met with a call for collective action, they needed to send “a strong signal that we firmly stand with the Haitian people.”

She said that while Haiti had to take a lead, a “holistic approach” is needed for the long-term, including the support of Haitian civil society, women and youth. “Saving Haitian lives must be our utmost priority said Ms. Narváez, calling on

all partners to substantially increase their support for the Haiti Humanitarian Response Plan which as of last week, is only 33 per cent funded.

Secondly, efforts must be focused on long-term resilience through sustainable development. This means strengthening institutions, initiating justice and rule of law reforms and gender equality led through women's empowerment. Third she called for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, a four year plan setting out priorities and a clear pathway forward.

Also is support for Haitian youth who are 60 per cent of the population and mobilizing private sector and civil society investments.

She said ECOSOC is "dedicated to finding solutions to enable long-term stability" and address the root causes of crises afflicting Haiti

People with disabilities are being systematically ignored by governments around the world when it comes to the climate crisis

By David Richardson

During my early days of training to become a Social Worker, I remember spending a day exploring what it would be like to live with a disability. We used various tools, such as earplugs to muffle noise, dark glasses to restrict vision, and wheelchairs to simulate limited mobility. This experience, although brief, had a lasting impression on me. I realised that things I once took for granted, such as mobility and sensory abilities, became complex, cumbersome, and disempowering. However, the experience couldn't replicate the reality of living a life of marginalisation, stigma, exclusion, oppression, and poverty.

In the UK, approximately eight million people have a disability, which equates to one in five adults. Worldwide, the [World Health Organisation](#) estimates that there are 1.3 billion people, about 16% of the global population, currently experience significant disability. They are often the last to benefit from programmes that are designed to reduce poverty. As a result, they are more likely to live in isolation and experience exclusion from their communities, the education system, healthcare, and other vital services.

In times of climate-related disasters, people with disabilities are at a higher risk of injury or death, as they have limited access to essential resources such as information, emergency shelters, transportation, and mobility. When people evacuate, those with disabilities are often left behind, becoming more vulnerable as their support networks begin to evaporate.

Extreme temperatures can pose a significant threat to the health of those with pre-existing conditions. Very low temperatures can create physical barriers for the disabled community, while extreme heat can lead to death. Furthermore, disabled climate migrants are often compelled to settle in low-income areas where the risks of climate change already have a disproportionate impact.

The climate justice dialogue often fails to include the disability community,

resulting in a lack of diversity. This situation is exacerbated by eco-ableism, which applies ableist views to the environmental movement. According to Greenpeace, disabled individuals are often the most affected by plastic pollution, but they also rely on plastic products for health and independence, which eco-ableism often overlooks.

The inequalities faced by disabled individuals are a result of an unequal distribution of power and resources, as well as a lack of diversity in positions of authority. Ignoring the social justice component of the climate crisis results in ineffective policies and only perpetuates patterns of exclusion and injustice.

According to a study conducted at [McGill University](#), only 35 out of 192 countries mentioned people with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are the climate pledges and policies submitted under the Paris Agreement. Even significant economies such as the US and the UK failed to recognise people with disabilities in their NDCs. Governments need to redraft their policies to take account of the needs of people with disabilities,

[Professor Sébastien Jodoin at McGill University](#) says, "The failure to integrate the disability community and their rights in climate policies do not only put the lives of people with disabilities at risk and reinforce social inequalities. It undermines the effectiveness of our efforts to reduce carbon emissions and ensure the climate resilience of our societies,"

God is present within every human being, and therefore, it is our duty to treat every person and creature with love and respect. Solidarity is a reminder that we are all interconnected, and we must acknowledge the presence of Christ in every individual. Every person deserves to have their voice heard. Sometimes, it is necessary to say less and let others say more.

Reflections on Pope Francis' 2024 World Day of Peace message



by [Tony Magliano](#) ·

Fast-moving advancements in science and technology grab our attention, spark fascination, and receive automatic acceptance within our modern societies which crave new things, quick results, and instant gratification. Within such an atmosphere there is often little time given to examine the pros and cons of budding technological innovations before they become mainstream – for good, or for bad. And the quickly developing world of artificial intelligence (AI) is a prime example.

In an insightful and challenging effort to stay morally ahead of the AI curve, Pope Francis has penned “Artificial Intelligence and Peace” as his Jan. 1, 2024, World Day of Peace message (see: <https://bitly.ws/37M6b>).

Regarding AI the pope writes, we “cannot presume a priori [from logical reasoning based on self-evident truths] that its development will make a beneficial contribution to the future of humanity and to peace among peoples. That a positive outcome will only be achieved if we show ourselves capable of acting responsibly and respect such fundamental human values as ‘inclusion, transparency, security, equity, privacy and reliability.’”

“Freedom and peaceful coexistence are threatened whenever human beings yield to the temptation to selfishness, self-interest, the desire for profit and the thirst for power. We thus have a duty to broaden our gaze and to direct techno-scientific research towards the pursuit of peace and the common good, in the service of the integral development of individuals and communities,” writes the pope.

“Ethical considerations should also be taken into account from the very beginning of research, and continue through the phases of experimentation, design, production, distribution and marketing. This is the approach of ethics by design, and it is one in which educational institutions and decision-makers have an essential role to play.”

But when ethics by design is not employed, we endanger the truth! A serious example raised by Pope Francis is found in the lies of misinformation – “fake news.” And AI is becoming so technically sophisticated that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish real news from fake news. We need to carefully discern, fact check, and consult highly reputable sources (see: <https://bitly.ws/37Lwe>).

Turning to AI and its increasing role in weapon development and use, the Holy Father writes, “In these days, as we look at the world around us, there can be no escaping serious ethical questions related to the armaments sector. The ability to conduct military operations through remote control systems has led to a lessened perception of the devastation caused by those weapon systems and the burden of responsibility for their use, resulting in an even more cold and detached approach to the immense tragedy of war” (listen to “The Take” <https://bitly.ws/37Iux>).

“Research on emerging technologies in the area of so-called Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, including the weaponisation of artificial intelligence, is a cause for grave ethical concern. Autonomous weapon systems can never be morally responsible subjects.”

Warning: As weapon systems become increasingly autonomous, it is reasonable to see these weapons developing to a point where humans could lose partial or even full control of them. The 1983 movie “War Games” presents a realistically chilling scenario of humans initially losing computer control of a nuclear weapons system.

Amidst these necessary warnings Pope Francis has raised regarding AI, he adds, “On a more positive note, if artificial intelligence were used to promote integral human development, it could introduce important innovations in agriculture, education and culture, an improved level of life for entire nations and peoples, and the growth of human fraternity and social friendship. In the end, the way we use it to include the least of our brothers and sisters, the vulnerable and those most in need, will be the true measure of our humanity.”

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist.



Free Film Screening with NJ Poor People's Campaign

- Saturday, January 13, 2024
- 7:00 PM 9:00 PM
- The Reformed Church of Highland Park ([map](#))

Gather together with us at the Reformed Church of Highland Park and view the film "[On the Case](#)" the 1968 footage of the initial Poor People's Campaign. We will bring together history and the present struggles in New Jersey and across the land. The New Jersey Poor People's Campaign Coordinating Committee members are glad to invite you to support the NJ Poor People's Campaign starting with the multi-state mass assemblies taking place March 2nd. To [RSVP, click HERE](#). To register to receive alerts from NJ Poor People's Campaign, fill out the form here:

<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/committee/new-jersey/> or email newjersey@poorpeoplescampaign.org

Monmouth County Faith & Ecology Meetup

- Thursday, January 25, 2024
- 5:30 PM 6:30 PM
- 4 E. River Road Rumson, NJ 07760 ([map](#))

Please join us at the Monmouth County Faith & Ecology Meetup! This is an informal, interfaith gathering for people of faith working on environmental issues in our county. Let's meet each other and learn what we are working on in our faith communities! What issues are inspiring us? What challenges are we facing? Let's grow and learn together at this fun networking event.

Refreshments will be provided.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Winter Beach Clean-up Jan 27

- Saturday, January 27, 2024
- 10:00 AM 12:00 PM
- Sandy Hook Fishing Beach ([map](#))

Waterspirit is asking you to come out in the cold to help us protect the sacred waters. We will be conducting our next scheduled beach clean-up at Sandy Hook on 1/27/24 from 10 am - noon. Please join us. Together we can make a difference. Registration required.

[register here](#)

Please bring gloves. Wear clothes that can get dirty. Please wear boots or old shoes that can get muddy. We need lots of people to help remove lots of trash!

Seal Monitoring at Sandy Hook

- Saturday, January 27, 2024
- 1:30 PM 2:30 PM
- Sandy Hook Lot C ([map](#))

Join Waterspirit's program manager, Anne Price, as she monitors seals at Sandy Hook.

Did you know there are several species of seal which visit NJ? The Seals feed and then haul out to rest and digest. Save Coastal Wildlife and has been recruiting and training volunteers to monitor these seasonal populations. Our own Anne Price has been trained as a volunteer. She is inviting the public to join her at Sandy Hook to see the seals in person. We will watch the seals and record data to report. While we are there, we will discuss all of the wildlife around us.

Registration is required for this free event.

We will meet near the restrooms in parking area C in Sandy Hook. So grab your binoculars, your spotting scope and your camera, and come join us. Dress for the weather. There is no protection from the elements. The seals don't mind wind and rain, so we have to be prepared as well.

In the U.S., all marine mammals, including seals, are federally protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Please be respectful. Whether with us or on your own, please view and photograph seals from a distance of at least a 150 feet away (half a football field). Further is better! For the seals' sake,

please do not bring pets to this event.

Joining us is free, but spaces are limited and registration is required.
[register here for Jan 27 seal monitoring](#)



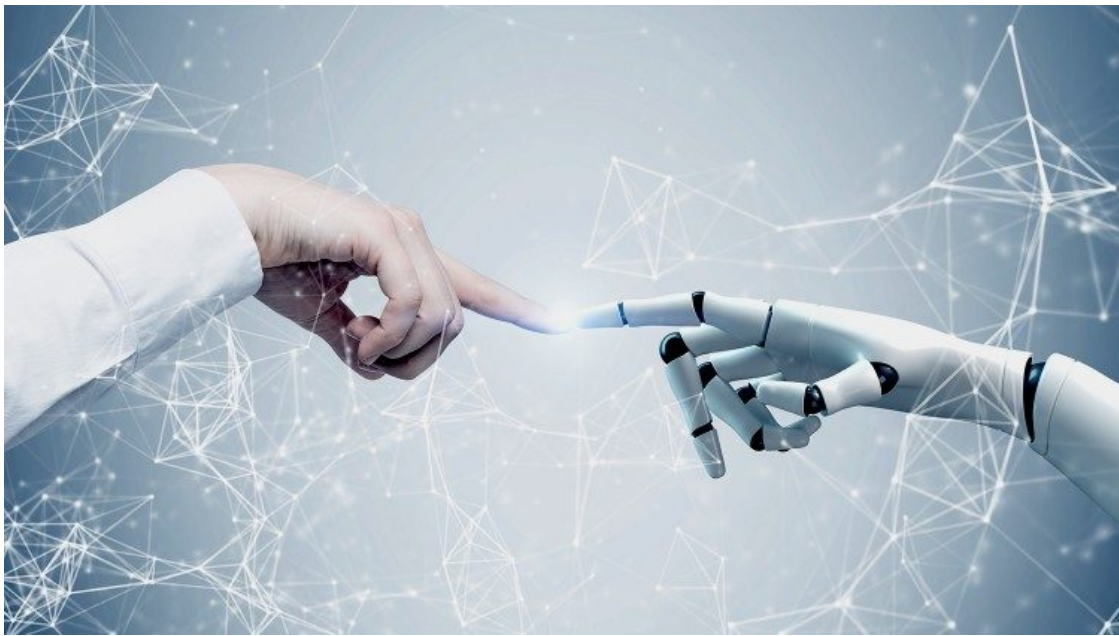
Meditation for Earth



Tue, Jan 9, 2024 12:15 PM
Tue, Jan 13, 2026 12:45 PM

Meditation for Earth is held every Tuesday at 12:15 p.m. ET.
In-person in the Sanctuary at Rumson Presbyterian Church 4 East River Rd.
Rumson, NJ
Join our virtual meditation on our YouTube channel [HERE](#)

Sunday is Peace Sunday in the UK



'Artificial Intelligence and Peace'

Every year, with the support of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, England and Wales, we promote Peace Sunday as a way of observing the World Day of Peace.

Peace Sunday 2024 is Sunday 14th January and the theme chosen by Pope Francis is 'Artificial Intelligence and Peace'. You can read a full copy of his message for the World Day of Peace here:

[Pope Francis Message for World Day of Peace 2024](#)

We have produced a number of resources to help churches and groups mark the day all of which you can download by clicking on the links below. We have also produced a prayer card specifically for the day which you can order through our shop.

For further info on Peace Sunday or any of our resources, please contact us on info@paxchristi.org.uk

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Letter to Parishes from Archbishop Malcolm](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Liturgy Booklet](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Alternative Homily](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Short Talk](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Resources for Children](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Resource Leaflet](#)

[Peace Sunday 2024 – Justpeace and Poster](#)

Pax Christi USA Lent booklets

Lenten Booklets from Pax Christi USA now available.

Lent starts on February 14th so we're so excited to announce [the special pre-order sale of Pax Christi USA's Lent 2024 reflection booklet](#) by Frida Berrigan. If you pre-order now, you'll get [the special pre-order price of \\$4.00 a copy](#) (with further discounts of 10% on orders of 10-99 or 30% for 100+). Pre-ordered booklets will ship starting in early January.



Engaging Democracy, Pursuing Justice course to resume



The NETWORK course to help Region 3 organize before the 2024 elections will resume and conclude on Wednesday, January 17th at 6:30 PM. We will be discussing specific tactics that will help build coalitions for the 2024 election.

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If you want to share this email with friends, we have a mailing list for them. Anyone desiring to receive this newsletter monthly should [sign up for it on our website](#).

Visit our CSJP website!

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