



On the road together A-mazed by migration

Summary Report
of the open space at the
31st National Justice & Peace Conference
17 - 19 July
Swanwick

National Justice & Peace Network
www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

On the road together – A-mazed by migration

Summary report of the 31st National Justice and Peace Conference

This report is based on the workshops which took place at the National Justice and Peace Conference held at Swanwick on 17-19 July 2009. The conference used “Open Space Technology” to give everyone who took part the opportunity to decide the agenda.

The organising group were representatives from Westminster, Southwark and Brentwood Diocese Justice and Peace groups, Housing Justice and the Jesuit Refugee Service with assistance from the National Justice and Peace Committee.

Everyone who came to the conference was invited to respond to the question:

Migration, Asylum, People on the Move: How can we respond to the challenge of the Gospel?

This question prompted all of the workshop discussions, recommendations and action plans that were produced. It is worth noting that open space is not an exact science. Many of the workshops on at the Conference produced unique discussions and in trying to group together the workshop points and recommendations into themes it was sometimes not easy to find an exact “fit”. The full report groups related points and recommendations together from each workshop under the linked Action Plan number in the executive summary.

Both the full report and this summary should be read with the understanding that the contents reflect the views of the people who discussed each topic on the day and, in some case, only the views of the people who took part in a particular workshop. These views should not be taken as the opinion or policy of NJPN or any of the dioceses or agencies that organised the conference.

This summary cannot hope to do justice to the experience of the conference or to the action plans and recommendations in the full report. This is rather a summary of the key points that the participants - some 300 people: mainly (but by no means exclusively) Catholic, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, Directors of NGOs and ordinary parishioners, old and young – believe should be taken forward as actions – a challenge to NJPN, to the Church and to us all.

The report contains 20 Action Plans:

1 Fighting the causes of migration

Support existing organisations that campaign on the issues that cause migration e.g. Oxfam, Cafod, Christian Aid, CAAT, War on Want, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth esp. for Just Trade rules.

Lobby British Government to change foreign policy to stop funding regimes (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo) oppressing their people. General Election coming in 2010...

Vote for MPs who support issues such as just trade, against arms trade, against international debt, against climate change, limit multinational companies, etc. Money for education & health- not for arms.

We need an International Arms Treaty. Applying arms embargo to oppressive regimes.

Mining Corporations should be held to account.

Bishops in developed countries need to support church leaders in developing countries in their struggles for Justice and Peace, and to speak out against corruption.

More focus on Latin American countries re: Just Trade issues.

2 Lobbying Government

Activists - NJPN workers - to meet individual asylum seekers and refugees to listen to their anxieties and frustrations.

Meet with sympathetic MPs sensitive to the needs of asylum seekers, to highlight concerns, personal cases.

Draw up list of MPs to target by constituency, geographical area, Parishes with experience, refugee agencies.

Meet with local and regional press to report injustices

3 Creating better shared information systems

Information and expertise are available from many sources

Create a shared database of pooled knowledge.

Use it to produce fact sheets which can be used across all organisations, Update it regularly.

4 Telling the stories of asylum seekers and detention centres

Be aware of the UN Charter of Human Rights.

Improve networking between different agencies involved in supporting refugees and people in detention.

Involve schools, universities and churches.

Host performances by Actors for Human Rights

<http://iceandfire.co.uk/index.php/outreach>

Use the media.

5 Hospitality – Welcoming the stranger / developing responses to practical needs

Start or support hospitality schemes for destitute migrants e.g. hosting scheme. OK to start small – just 2 or 3 committed people needed!

Help and resources available from Leeds asylum seekers support network “short stop” scheme www.lassn.org.uk, Boaz Trust and the NACCOMM (No Accommodation) network boaztrust.org.uk. Other examples of practical help: a buddy system, drop in centres providing advice and practical help. Parishioners can help organise assistance for destitute migrants e.g. food and clothes.

Support a culture of welcome in parishes. Responding to needs beyond ourselves can grow across cultural barriers. International liturgy – inclusive and culturally diverse (and see below)

6 Spirituality - engaging with migrants

Heighten awareness in Parishes, recognising the prophetic voice of migrants.

Make contact / listen to asylum seekers. Provide hospitality.

Focus on worship, liturgy, prayer, nurturing our spirituality of justice and peace. International liturgy. (and see above)

Enable mutual growth between migrants and settled communities.

“Desert spirituality” is the necessary foundation for action.

7 Tackling the BNP and debating immigration

Identify and promote sources of reliable evidence to counter false BNP claims.

Challenge the BNP with direct questions e.g. what is British? Who is British? Counter fear with research into positive contribution of migrants.

Be creative in J & P group responses about reactions to Britishness and the value of diversity.

Support 13 September “Racial Justice Sunday”

www.carj.org.uk/CARJ_rjs.html

Connect with organisations like Searchlight, Unite against Fascism, Migrant Rights Network, Runnymede Trust, AVAAZ www.avaaz.org/en Church organisations and trade unions can work together.

Monitor new LIT’s (Local Immigration Teams), local press, courts, national media, local district and town councils, esp. with elections coming up.

Education – lobby to improve curriculum to include greater awareness of historical background e.g. citizenship. Research personal ancestry, relevance of history to modern world.

Border controls should be exercised with compassion and justice.

We need to inform ourselves. Suggested reading “The Holiness of hospitality” by Luke Bretherton. Also resources available from Jesuit Refugee Service website www.jrsuk.net

Ask questions of our MPs and MEPs and copy to Neil Gerrard of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees.

8 Catholic Social Teaching

Need for Parish groups to study and discuss Catholic social teaching in order to make it known to all – not a luxury!

National resource group to be set up before Advent, made up of Caritas, Progressio, Cafod etc. Write to Bishops to stress the importance of social teaching before Advent. Financial support could be sought from the Plater Trust or from Porticus.

9 The role of the Priest

Recommend to bishops Conference an annual day to dedicate (bless/commission) everyone who works for J & P groups, as individuals and groups. “No one can do everything, but everyone can do something”.

Invite J & P speakers to your parish.

Priest’s formation / Seminary syllabus. Is there reduced emphasis on J & P issues?

Invite seminarians to next year’s NJPN conference.

10 Strangers into Citizens

See www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk

Lobby MPs to give amnesty to long stay migrants – in UK over 4 years and with no criminal record. By hand written letters, email. Include website link

Lobby local councils to support SIC. by organising public meetings with councillors and candidates (prior to general election)

Write to local councillors with draft resolution to support SIC

11 Support for undocumented migrants

Attend hustings, talk to election candidates about undocumented migrants and Strangers into Citizens Write to MPs and attend their surgeries. Ask them to sign the Strangers into Citizens (see above) early day motion to change the asylum system and implement the recommendations of the Independent Asylum Commission

Raise awareness and stimulate action in parishes (use NJPN)

Ask MPs to pressure the government to sign the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers

12 EU migration and work

There is a need for a European network of One Stop Shops providing advice and assistance in both sending and receiving countries. Plus provide vital web information: link with EURES

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>

Campaign for the administration fee for Workers Registration Fee at £90 to be reduced

There is still need for the qualifying period/habitual residency test

European Treaty Rights – need for a legal test case for UK to be forced to meet Treaty obligations. Link with European Citizen Action Service www.ecas.org

13 Asylum Seekers and the right to work

Create a media campaign, working with others – including journalists and especially asylum seekers who are journalists. Get correct info into the media. Lobby MPs.

Build awareness of the problem - Listen to the stories. Invite people seeking asylum/sanctuary to meetings in local churches, schools etc.

Sign up to the Refugee Council campaign and petition “Let them work”

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/campaigning/letthemwork

14 Cities of Sanctuary

See www.cityofsanctuary.com Sheffield, Liverpool, Coventry, London and many others already joined. Find out what is happening in your area.

Join together with others e.g. London Citizens, Refugee Groups, Churches, Unions etc.

Share stories and provide practical assistance e.g. housing, legal help, medical care, advocacy/accompanying, befriending, work, language support.

15 It is you who has to change!

Get the correct facts – educate ourselves in the issues.

Personal prayer.

Personal encounters.

Look at our own experiences.

16 Climate Change and over population

Acknowledging and promoting a theology of life and human flourishing that already exists in scripture and CST to lead to a change in the church’s policy on birth control and the use of condoms.

“Carrying” capacity of the land, education of women and poverty are all factors in the growth of population and migration and should be included in the church’s teaching on this issue.

17 Climate Change and environmental refugees

Need for responses at the personal, local and national levels.

Change your life style.

Take action as a parish.

Lobby MPs, MEPs, Welsh Assembly Members.

18 Combating discrimination – gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, travellers

Report / collate experiences of discrimination. Via Phone lines and appropriate agencies. Display information on notice boards.

Invite people who have experienced discrimination to talk to a group (School, parish, community group).

Seek advice from e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux.

19 Media

We can all respond to stories about refugees and migrants in the media. E.g. write letters to the local press and BBC.

Local J & P groups could organise ½ day media training.

See [www.refugee-](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/information/challengingthemyths1.aspx)

[action.org.uk/information/challengingthemyths1.aspx](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/information/challengingthemyths1.aspx)

NJPN to begin circulation of information from

Refugee Action to counter many common myths.

20 Palestine/Israel

Inform ourselves and support the work of organisations such as Sabeel www.sabeel.org, EAPPI www.eappi.org Pax Christi, etc. Importance of cross-societal groups e.g. Jews for Justice. Use films (e.g. “Encounter Points”) and returned visitors and companions.

Lobby MPs, MEPs, US re arms for Israel See

www.stoparmingisrael.org.

Follow the actions of the Council for Christians and Jews.

Support alternative pilgrimages/tourism and buy Palestinian goods.

Haaretz website/ publication www.haaretz.com.

The conference organisers wish to express their thanks to all of our expert speakers who gave input over the weekend, both in the introductory talks on the Friday evening and through participation in the open space sessions, liturgy and celebration over the weekend: **Don Flynn** of the Migrants’ Rights Network, Professor **Mary C Grey**, **Neil Jameson** of the Citizen Organising Foundation and Bishop **Patrick Lynch** SSCC of the Diocese of Southwark. Also to **Annette Zera** who facilitated the conference, all at the Hayes Conference Centre and all who took part. For more details about open space see www.openspaceworld.org and also the website of our expert facilitator, **Annette Zera** www.gettingonbrilliantly.co.uk

Taking things forward ...

- Download the full report here: <http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference.html>
- Join the working group: email admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk
- Pick up and action and run with it in your area