



## **Answering God's Call**

### **through Justice and Peace activities in the Diocese of Shrewsbury**

**July 2009**

*Summary of an audit carried out by the Shrewsbury  
Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission in 2008*

#### **Background**

In 2008 the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission carried out an audit of parish based J&P activities so as to inform its new three year plan. Information was obtained from a questionnaire sent to all parishes, commissioned case studies and comments from Commission members. Together these sources demonstrate the richness and diversity of Diocesan J&P activities together with some areas for development. The full report carries the details of the audit findings, including the full case studies. It can be obtained from the diocesan co-ordinator or accessed via the Diocesan J&P website. The main points are summarised below.

#### **What was covered in the questionnaire ?**

The questions were designed to cover the following areas:

- What parish activities were considered to be informed by J&P aims
- Whether J&P activities were organised by an identified group
- What links existed between groups in the parish
- What activities were designed to promote community cohesion
- How Diocesan, national and international J&P information was disseminated in the parish

#### **Who responded ?**

- About a third of the Diocese's 111 parishes responded to the audit questionnaire.
- From anecdotal evidence, we know that this does not represent the totality of Diocesan J&P activities.
- However, the audit's questionnaire still indicated a high level of J&P activities.

#### **Principal findings**

- Across the diocese as a whole, there is a considerable level of J&P activity, with about two thirds of parishes making returns indicating some level of involvement.
- There appear to be at least 15 organised J&P groups, of which 7 are cross parish, ecumenically or area based. Most of these are laity led.
- There is no discernible difference in levels of J&P activity shown by parishes with and without organised groups. However, organised groups may engage in more campaigning, awareness raising and educational activities.
- Commission members considered that successful parish activities were driven by Gospel values and especially by how the poor would benefit. The communication of this message to the parish as a whole was all important.

#### **What does J&P look like in practice?**

- There is a high level of consensus among parishes with and without organised groups about a 'core' of activities perceived to be J&P related. These are all supported by a national or international organisation. They are:
  - \* The Saint Vincent de Paul Society
  - \* CAFOD
  - \* Traidcraft / Fair Trade
  - \* Prisoners of Conscience campaigns

- Many respondents were not clear about what was meant by 'community cohesion'. Of those who did, some thought that the J & P remit did not include issues of local and systemic poverty, and social and racial dissension, and that poverty was already well addressed by the SVP
- Individual parishes engage in a range of additional activities, often also nationally or internationally organised.
- On - line information and communication is often a feature of these.
- Many parishes also support a project or parish overseas, including fundraising for these.
- Individual parishes also engage in one or more other J&P related activities linked to a national or international organisation. These include a number which are either inter-faith or non-faith in character.
- Activities not originating in an external organisation include:
 

* networking	* liturgies
* raising awareness	* dedicated liturgical practices (e.g. peace vigils)
* campaigning	
* community building	* the promotion of ecumenical activity
* educational and parish development	* responding to parish needs
* involvement in parish organised	
- Some particularly engaged parishes also address issues of 'poverty on our doorstep', usually through projects offering practical help to, for example, the homeless and asylum seekers.
- Although it was thought that fundraising should not be a central feature of J&P activity, it serves a useful purpose in awareness raising.

#### Communication of J&P issues and activities

- Commission mailings (*Mouthpeace* and *Quick News Network*) were overwhelmingly seen as the most important sources of information.
- Parishes without an organised group relied heavily on CAFOD and Traidcraft mailings, perhaps supporting a view of Justice and Peace as relating mainly to developing countries.

#### Moving on

- J&P issues are well addressed in a number of parishes and the experience of these should inform dissemination to the Diocese as a whole .
- The success of J&P at parish level depends on a the clear communication of the Gospel message and strong leadership
- There is a need to discuss, clarify and extend our understanding of what constitutes an appropriate J&P agenda, particularly in relation to community cohesion, national and local issues of poverty and injustice, the avoidance of duplication with other parish agencies (e.g. the SVP), and J&P's contribution to parish formation and ecumenism.
- Communication of J&P issues and activities within a geographical and socially diverse Diocese needs to be flexible and versatile as does the organisation of activities at parish level.

Margaret Cook, June 2009

### Shrewsbury Diocese Justice and Peace Commission

The full version of the audit is available on the website  
[www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk](http://www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk)

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07/09