

Newsletter

March-May 2025



Journals From Jerusalem



Hope was the essence of the visit to Jerusalem by the Holy Land Co-ordination in January 2025. Hope that the fragile ceasefire announced while the group were travelling would hold. Hope that the ceasefire amounts to more than a pause in hostilities and marks the start of a genuine and lasting peace. Hope that the witness and presence of the Christian Church in The Holy Land can be a light shining in the darkness.

Justice & Peace Scotland's Anne-Marie Clements was among the delegates who travelled to Jerusalem for the visit, accompanying Archbishop William Nolan. An insight into the places they visited, people they encountered and the stories they heard are the main feature of this issue on p2.

If your parish, group, or school would like to hear more *Journals From Jerusalem*, contact us to book a free visit.

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Use your voice to aid calls for debt justice in this Jubilee Year



It is one of the great injustices of our time that 3.3m billion people live in countries forced to spend more on servicing debt than the welfare of their citizens. Falling most heavily on lower-income nations, the burden of debt perpetuates global poverty and destructive inequalities.

A Jubilee Year has its Biblical roots in debt cancellation to restore justice and human dignity. Taking the theme of 'Pilgrims of Hope' in 2025, Justice & Peace Scotland are backing the campaign established across the Caritas network, faith-based organisations, such as Christian Aid, and other civil groups, to seek financial reforms and fairer laws that prioritise people and the planet over profits.

The *Jubilee 2025: Turn Debt Into Hope* campaign is inspired by Pope Francis' invitation letter to mark this year, *Spes Non Confundit* ("Hope does not disappoint", Rom 5:5). In this the Pope states that debt cancellation should not be seen as an act of generosity, but of justice. "If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry," he said.



Earlier this month, the campaign secured a debate in the UK Parliament, following the launch of a new report from SCIAF, CAFOD, and Caritas Internationalis, *Jubilee 2025: The New Global Debt Crisis and its Solutions*. The report highlights that 54 countries are in debt crisis, with devastating impacts on people's lives and livelihoods.

The report explains why, following the historic success of the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign, the world once again faces an acute global debt crisis. It also charts a course for transformative change needed to overcome this injustice, change we are all called to support.

- Sign the petition to Turn Debt Into Hope [here](#).
- Download *Jubilee 2025: The New Global Debt Crisis and its Solutions* [here](#).

What is the Holy Land Coordination?

The Holy Land Coordination is an annual meeting of bishops, mandated by the Holy See, that is defined by 'four Ps' – Presence, Prayer, Pilgrimage, and Pressure. The bishops, joined by representatives from episcopal conferences and various Christian organisations, travel to be present with the Christians who remain in the Holy Land; to let them know they are not forgotten; to pray with them; to encourage pilgrimage to their land; and to advocate on their behalf at home. The Coordination exists to act in solidarity with the region's Christian communities and share in the pastoral life of the local Church as it experiences extreme political and social-economic pressure.

Restrictions on clean water for seminarians

The Latin Patriarchal Seminary in Beit Jala is home to around 15 Arab Christian students. During a tour of the seminary, its rector Fr Bernard shared how they form men for the priesthood in the very land where Jesus established the Church. On the roof terrace looking out over the surrounding villages, and with a view of the Separation Wall that surrounds the West Bank, he told us about the daily struggle of rationing their water supply to ensure all students have enough.

As is the case for most properties in Palestinian towns, the seminary is forced to cope with limited access to clean and safe water. The students have running water once a week. Restrictions on water provision by the Israeli authorities is a common concern for Palestinians yet the Israeli settlements in the West Bank have uninterrupted access to clean, safe running water. When the water does come, it is not of a standard fit for human use. Recent tests conducted on the seminary's tap water revealed harmful bacteria, leading to some students developing skin conditions on their scalps. Earlier this year, one young man received treatment for a liver parasite that was likely contracted from the water.



Image credit for all HLC images used: Marcin Mazur, CBCEW

Images clockwise from top left: Sunday Mass in Aboud, visit to Caritas Elderly Day Care Centre in Ramallah, meeting with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem H.B. Cardinal Pizzaballa, young parishioners with Archbishop Nolan.

A significant part of the Holy Land Coordination's visit is the celebration of Sunday Mass with a local parish. On Sunday, 19th January, we travelled to Aboud, a Palestinian village in the West Bank where Christians and Muslims live together harmoniously. We were graciously welcomed by Father Remon Haddad and the Catholic community of the parish of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

It was heart-warming to see the flags representing the nations of all the Bishops in the Coordination, which were gathered by the parish for this special occasion, carried in the entrance procession by the Palestinian Catholic Scout Association of St John the Baptist. The people's deep faith and strong sense of community were genuinely inspiring—a true "light shining in the darkness," reflecting the theme for this year's Holy Land Coordination. At home we may take our faith and communities for granted, yet the Palestinian Christian communities we encountered remain unwavering in their love for Jesus and in their dedication to maintaining the presence of Christians in the Holy Land.

Ghadeer's story

Ghadeer sings in the church choir and is a nurse working in Ramallah. At a parish gathering after Mass, she shared a deeply moving personal account with us about how the Israeli occupation inhibits Palestinian access to healthcare.

Two years ago when their mother fell ill, Ghadeer's family attempted the journey to Jerusalem to access the medical care required but were refused passage at a checkpoint by the Israeli military. Ghadeer requested instead that emergency assistance come from Jerusalem to them to collect her mother at the checkpoint but was told that this also could not be authorised.

In an effort to take their mother to a hospital in Ramallah, the family turned around but tragically, Ghadeer's mum died while on the journey.

Ghadeer's story reflects the stories of many Palestinians who are arbitrarily denied access to critical healthcare at military checkpoints. Only two days after we heard Ghadeer's testimony, the Palestinian Health Ministry reported that a 45 year-old mother died in an ambulance held at a checkpoint for over an hour. It is crucial that as the world watches Gaza, we do not forget the daily injustices prevalent across the West Bank.



Lights, Camera, Climate Action!



We are at a pivotal point in Scotland's climate journey. The Scottish Government must take fast and fair action to get Scotland's climate progress back on track. We once had ambitious climate targets, but backsliding since setting them meant they were abandoned last year.

This year, 2025, brings concrete opportunities to make much needed progress on climate action – to inspire hope and lead to a greener, fairer, healthier Scotland that plays its full part towards global efforts to limit the devastation being caused by rising temperatures.

Justice & Peace Scotland joined others who are part of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland to put pressure on the Scottish Government as MSPs returned in January. Our Lights, Camera, Climate Action! gathering outside Parliament was to send the message that there can be no more rewrites, no more delays. By joining our Scotland United for Climate Action campaign, together we can show political leaders that people across Scotland are united for climate action, and that this will have positive impacts on our health, jobs, and planet.

- Write to your MSPs [here](#).
- Visit the Scotland United for Climate Action website to find resources and local climate stories [here](#).
- Watch the Lights, Camera, Climate Action! video [here](#).

REFLECTION

“A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it integrates questions of justice in the debate on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Pope Francis, Laudato Si'



Scotland United for Climate Action plan

- Make cleaner, greener travel easier for everyone
- Make our homes warmer and cheaper to heat
- Look after our land and seas in ways that work for people and nature
- Create and support good green jobs and transform our economy
- Deliver a fast, fair phase out of fossil fuels
- Accelerate investment and fair funding for climate action

Courage to be Catholic Conference

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) have launched tickets for the *Courage to be Catholic* Conference – which will feature speakers including a bishop from the Holy Land, a bishop from Nigeria and the head of Divine Renovation UK.

The event is the first conference of its kind in Scotland. It will run from 9.30am to 4pm on Saturday, 29th March 2025 and Mass will be celebrated at 5pm in St Aloysius' Church, Glasgow. Tea, coffee and lunch will be provided for all attendees. Tickets can be purchased [here](#).



Building faith bridges

The need to always take a “loving and peaceful” approach to strengthening bonds between faiths was the message conveyed by a globally renowned humanitarian and Islamic scholar on a visit to Glasgow in January.

Norway-based Dr Ali Mousa Hassan Al-Mousawi is Secretary General of the International Council for Religion and Humanitarian Dialogue and has received many honours for his dedication within this field. Indeed, the life work of this prolific author, respected academic and multi-media presence, has been recognised by Pope Francis, who conferred him with the Peace Maker award at an audience in the Vatican.

On his recent trip to Scotland, Dr Ali Almousawi was given a guided tour of St Andrew's Cathedral (pictured left) before he met with representatives from Justice & Peace Scotland and other faith and inter-faith organisations for a round-table discussion.

In these he stressed his conviction that belief foundations can allow for closer ties between the Roman Catholic community and the Scottish Shia community, through staying on a pathway of humility and respect.



Forthcoming Events

Sunday, 23rd February - Global Day of Action Against Military Bases, STUC Anti-Racism March, Meet at St Giles Cathedral on the Royal Mile, 3pm for walk up to Edinburgh Castle

Known as the 'defender of the nation', Edinburgh Castle remains an active military base. This iconic tourist landmark is a clear example of militarism being celebrated. Justice & Peace Scotland will join other peace groups to show opposition to this oppressive military presence at the heart of our capital.

Monday, 24th February - Prayers for Peace in the Middle East, Monthly Zoom Meeting, 7pm to 8pm

Join Christian Aid and partners as they continue their monthly prayer sessions for peace in the Middle East. Attending will be the Very Rev Canon Richard Sewell, the Dean of St George's College Jerusalem. With a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas welcomed, sustainable peace is not possible until the illegal occupation of Gaza, and the West Bank - including East Jerusalem - is ended and Palestinians and Israelis are treated as equals.. Learn more and [sign up here](#).



Wednesday, 5th March - Ash Wednesday Liturgy at Faslane, South Gate at 2:45pm

J&PS will be joining the Glasgow Catholic Worker and others at their annual Ash Wednesday Service of Repentance and Resistance at the home of the UK's weapons of mass destruction. This will start at the car park next to the South Gate where attendees will receive ashes and then process with the Nagasaki cross to the South Gate accompanied by readings, prayers and hymns. All are welcome. This year's main guest will be Pax Christi International's Secretary General, Martha Inés Romero.

Saturday, 29th March, Aid to the Church in Need: Scottish Conference 'Courage to be Catholic', Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, 9:30am to 4pm

See item on page 3 for full details.

Save the dates

Sunday, 15th June - Dungavel Solidarity Gathering, Dungavel IRC, 1pm to 1.45pm

J&PS among those involved in the regular Solidarity Gatherings at Dungavel Detention Centre for the asylum seekers detained there. A warm welcome is extended to any groups or individuals who wish to attend.

Saturday, 3rd August - Faslane Peace Vigil, 10.30am to 12 noon

J&PS president Archbishop William Nolan, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, a clergy representative from the Scottish Episcopal Church and members of the Iona Community will join in prayer for a world without nuclear weapons on a site where these affronts to humanity are housed. This vigil will be held in the very month of the 80-year anniversary since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All are encouraged to attend.



Offering sanctuary to the vulnerable in the Calais encampments

Maria Skobtsova House, in Calais, France is inspired by the ethos of Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, and Maria Skobtsova, 'Saint Mary of Paris'. It offers safe sanctuary to the most vulnerable from within the Calais refugee community, namely women and women with children. Guests and volunteers live together in community.

"The house is a rare place of resistance against Europe's violent border policies," says volunteer Margreet Oele. "This resistance looks like children playing without care, and a kitchen which sees different cuisines day after day. It looks like joy and laughter, popcorn and home-baked cakes, endless cups of coffee and tea with too much sugar, eating breakfast together and then a second breakfast when everyone else wakes up."

The first refugee community served by the house back in 2016-17 was the Eritrean community. We continue our connection with this community who now live in small encampments.

Alex Holmes, volunteer at Calais encampments

- Read Alex Holmes' blog on J&PS website [here](#).
- Find out more about the work of Maria Skobtsova [here](#).

