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The newsletter of the Joint Public Issues Team

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Newsletter 162

March 2024

Dear Friends,

Another month has passed and we can see signs of Spring outside, the blossom and buds, the daffodils and lambs, and the beginning of so much rebirth and new life.

Perhaps we welcome this as hope following the darkness of winter, or see it as joy in our broken world.

In our Politics in the Pulpit episode this week our host, Jacky Embrey, and our guest, Michael Wakelin, were thinking about the readings for Palm Sunday and the story of Easter. Michael was reflecting that we are so used to the cross and the image of Jesus dying, that we are almost desensitised to the pain and agony of crucifixion, we forget how awful it was. We are tempted to go from the jubilation of Palm Sunday to the celebration of Easter without stopping to dwell in the grief, pain and darkness of the events at the end of Holy Week. To truly experience and understand Easter, we must linger in the waiting and the fear.

**“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” Jesus said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”**

**Mark 13:34**

We can wait in solidarity with Jesus and his disciples, but also with all those who are waiting today and living in unknowns – of asylum seekers waiting to hear a decision on their claim, of people waiting for Universal Credit to appear in their bank accounts, of people on hospital waiting lists, of people in war zones waiting for aid and safety. It is easy to fall asleep to injustices, like the disciples in the garden, who slept when Jesus needed them in his fear and despair. We deny and disappoint Jesus like Peter did, and God knows we will do so, yet loves and forgives us anyway.



As we begin to look toward the events of Holy Week and Easter next week, the culmination of this reflecting and waiting time of Lent, let us not overlook the grief, the pain and the darkness in our haste to reach the celebration of Easter.

As you read about all the things we have been doing and will be doing, I invite you to reflect on who you can wait with in solidarity, and how you can be awake to their pain and suffering.

Wishing you a blessed and reflective Holy Week and Easter,

Annie and the Joint Public Issues Team

## Responding to the Spring Budget

After the Budget on 6th March, we drew together a group of church and community leaders working in places of deprivation, to ask how it would impact the people they live and work alongside. Their responses sadly echoed the conclusion of our policy expert, Paul Morrison: the Budget was a masterclass in ignoring poverty.

You can access all our Budget analysis below, including a blog from Paul, a conversation between Simeon and Paul in a 10 Minutes On episode, and videos of some of the comments from community leaders. Make sure to follow our social media channels to see the clips.



## **A SOCIETY WHERE THE POOREST AND MOST MARGINALISED ARE AT THE CENTRE**

**Read Paul's roundup**

**Listen to 10 Minutes On The Budget**

**Read responses from individuals around the country**

### **Voter Registration Week**



The denominations in JPIT have been announced as among the first ambassadors for a new initiative to champion voter registration.

Throughout Voter Registration Week (4-11 March) we were encouraging people register, check they have a form of photo ID that will be needed to vote in the General Election, engage and get ready to vote.

We want churches to encourage as many people as possible to register to vote and participate in the election, particularly those in communities with often low voter turn-out.

You can listen to Sienna and Steve T chat about the importance of registering and voting in our 10 Minutes On podcast episode.

Voter Registration Week was just the beginning of the Voter Registration Champions initiative. Follow the links below to find out how your church can sign up, and be supported to become a champion.

**Read more about our churches becoming Champions**

**Listen to 10 Minutes On Voter Registration**

## Two ongoing conflicts

The world seems so rife with conflict and violence at the moment, it is overwhelming. We continue to pray for peace with justice everywhere, and for the safety and security of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

24th February marked two years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a blog post, Steve H reflects on these past two years, moving from lament to justice and thinking about the future.

Sienna's new blog post is about the conflict in Myanmar, after three years of violence and unrest. Sienna explores the history of the situation, the reality for civilians in Myanmar, and suggests some actions we might take in solidarity and for justice.



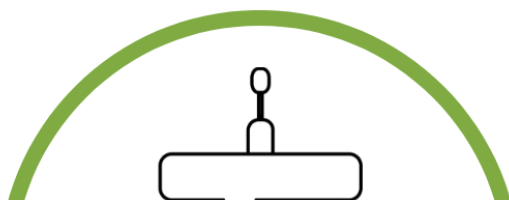
# A WORLD WHICH ACTIVELY WORKS FOR PEACE

**Read Steve's piece on Ukraine**

**Read Sienna's piece on Myanmar**

## Politics in the Pulpit

**Lectionary readings for  
Sunday 24th March**





The last episode of our current series is out now, discussing themes of justice in Sunday's lectionary readings, touching on the events of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter.

We'd like to give huge thanks and gratitude to Jacky Embrey, who has hosted this podcast since early January, and enjoyed conversations with many interesting guests. In this most recent episode, Jacky chats to Michael Wakelin, who will host the podcast in the new series beginning after Easter.

We'll be back on 9th April with the first episode of the new series with Michael. Make sure to follow our social media channels to be reminded, or join our [Facebook group](#) for further conversation. You can subscribe to our podcast on your podcast provider to be notified when new episodes are released.

**Listen to our new episode**

## Let's End Poverty – Neighbourhood Voices

**LET'S END  
POVERTY** 

Take part in a conversation in your community and share your neighbourhood voice, record it and use it to amplify unheard and new voices ahead of the general election.

Could you bring a group of people together to talk about their hopes, dreams and challenges and the action they would like to see at the General Election, and share their voices with others?

Find a useful toolkit on the Let's End Poverty website and once you've recorded your conversations, you can publish blogs, videos or audio clips (assistance is available). Help the voices of your neighbourhood to be heard more widely in this election year, so we can challenge all aspiring politicians to truly listen and commit to action to end poverty.

**Find out more about Neighbourhood Voices**

## Order a Let's End Poverty banner for your church



Here's a very visible way you can show that you want to see an end to poverty, and start conversations about it in your community. Order banners in different sizes and formats – and download digital versions for your website.

**Order your banner here**

## Act on Poverty webinar



Join our webinar to find out how you can have an effective meeting with your MP or parliamentary candidates to discuss poverty ahead of the election.

**Thursday 18 April, 7-8.30pm**

**Find out more and register**

## Housing and Homelessness Gathering

Come along to this gathering at Carrs Lane Church in Birmingham, to hear from speakers from both within the church and from the housing world. Be inspired, find out how church property can be used for affordable and supported housing, and discover how you can work with housing organisations.



**Wednesday 8 May**

**10:30 - 16:00**

**The Church at Carrs Lane, B4 7SX**

**Find out more and register**

## **Earth Hour**

Did you know that Earth Hour is this Sunday?

Every year in March, millions of people across the world unite to show that they care about the future of our planet, by switching off for one hour.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have put together 11 different ways you can get involved in Earth Hour and do your bit to help bring our world back to life. The activities and actions are suitable for all ages, groups or individuals, at home or elsewhere.



**Find out more and get involved**

**Experience Camas with the Iona Community**



Looking for a very special residential setting to bring groups to? Camas is the Iona Community's outdoor centre on the Isle of Mull. Experiencing Camas is an opportunity to experience the wonder of Camas first-hand, available at a discounted rate, for all those working in the voluntary sector, support and social care services or education.

Other open weeks at Camas are available [here](#), and the 2024 Abbey Programme is [here](#).

**Find out more and book your place**

## **EAPPI call for Ecumenical Accompaniers**

The global ecumenical initiative, EAPPI, is recruiting Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) for 2025. If safe, EAs will spend three months in Palestine and Israel monitoring human rights violations and standing in solidarity with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists. When they come home they give talks in their local communities and advocate for an end to the military occupation of Palestine.

**Find out more and apply**

## Vacancy with Operation Noah

Our friends at Operation Noah are hiring a full-time Campaigns Manager.

They are looking for an experienced and motivated person to help develop and implement the Bright Now campaign. The Bright Now campaign encourages UK Churches to divest from fossil fuel companies and invest in climate solutions – working with partners in the UK and globally.

**Find out more and apply**

## Dates for your diary

See [jpit.uk/calendar](http://jpit.uk/calendar) for a full list of dates.

### March

#### Women's History Month

**21 UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

21 World Down Syndrome Day

**22 World Water Day**

23 Earth Hour (8:30-9:30pm)

**25 UN International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade**

**30 International Day of Zero Waste**

**31 International Transgender Day of Visibility**

### April

**2 World Autism Awareness Day**

**22 Stephen Lawrence Day**

**22 World Earth Day**

**25 World Malaria Day**

**28 International Workers' Memorial Day**

To publicise an event or project, or to follow up on any of the issues mentioned here, contact us on

[enquiries@jpit.uk](mailto:enquiries@jpit.uk).



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