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President: Bishop William Nolan

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

If slogans could change the world then the world would indeed be a better place.

In the midst of the covid pandemic we heard the slogan: Build Back Better. Expressing the desire that, when we come out of this, we don't want to go back to the way things used to be, but we want to make the world a better place. Many charitable organisations prefer the slogan: a Just and Green Recovery. A reminder that, for a better world to be achieved, all people need to be treated justly and fairly. "Green", of course, reminds us that the environmental crisis we faced before covid still remains to be dealt with.

In order to overcome the coronavirus we have had to make changes to our lifestyle which a year ago we would not have thought possible. Now, as we work for a better future, we have to recognise that the way we have lived our life in the past has to change, if we are to see that people are treated with justice and that the world we live in is treated with care.

As we begin a new year and as we celebrate the day of prayer for justice and peace, we need to ask ourselves: how prepared are we to make the changes necessary to our **own** lifestyle? Otherwise our desire for a better world remains but a wish. Society cannot live the way it lived before and expect that the hungry will be fed, that the homeless will be housed, that refugees will be welcomed, that weapons of war will be put aside, that grievances will be settled by discussion, and that peoples and nations will live in peace. And, of

course, the world, our common home, cannot continue to be exploited and polluted without a care for tomorrow.

Today is a day of prayer, for we need to pray. For the better world begins in each of our hearts. May God touch our hearts and deepen our love for the brother and sister we do not know and have not met, yet who needs our help. May God help us appreciate the gift of creation that he has given us. A gift to be shared by all God's children, whether in this generation or in generations to come.

Many people in Scotland are engaged in the work of justice and peace because they recognise that to change the world for the better is not a solo effort - we need to work together. We need to encourage others, including those who govern our country, to be concerned for the welfare of all our brothers and sisters and to be committed to look after our common home. We need to encourage by our word, but above all by our example, so that together we do build that better, just and green world.

With my prayers and best wishes for peace and justice in the coming year,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Nolan', written in a cursive style.

+William Nolan

Bishop of Galloway

President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland Justice and Peace Commission