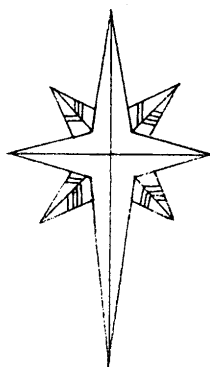


Shrewsbury and Liverpool Justice and Peace Commissions

Winter 2009/10



O BROKEN TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

A prayer from Christian Aid

Lead us to Bethlehem Lord.

*Show us the Christ Child -
the King of Kings in a manger.*

Remind us you came with no glamour,

*but a quiet, extravagant love that
whispered revolution:*

*'freedom from oppression
and good news to the poor'.*

Lead us to the broken places -

use us to build hope

and work for their transformation.

Amen

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Issue 68

LEARNING TO BE GREENER

Marian Thompson writes:

It is a well known fact that those who prepare and plan for talks and events learn much more than those who merely turn up on the day. So it has been for our Marple area J & P group during the past six months. After Easter we usually discuss what are the issues of the day and choose an appropriate theme for our main event in October around the time of One World Week. This year we decided, with the Copenhagen Conference coming up in December, we should think about Climate Change and the Environment. We realised there was so much to consider that our usual evening would not be long enough so we stepped out in faith and booked St Mary's Parish Hall in Marple Bridge for a full Saturday. We also started collecting articles, pictures, information etc. that might be useful. As our antennae tuned in to environmental issues ideas seem to pop up everywhere.

Those of us who had missed seeing Al Gore's film 'An Inconvenient Truth' at the cinema managed to watch and copy it when it came late night on television. Also one of the group saw 'The Age of Stupid' in central Manchester and was so impressed that she arranged a public showing in Marple in July. Widely advertised, this attracted very good numbers including three local councillors. It was an excellent introduction to and advertisement for our day which we were by now calling ECO Day. As both these films are now available on DVD we are hoping in future to have small group showings around our area for those who have not yet seen them. There are, even in our churches, sceptics who still do not believe that climate change is man-made and that we need to do anything about it. They of course did not get to the Day but may be prepared to watch a film in a neighbour's home.

We hoped the ECO Day would include listening to speakers and also workshop-type activities when we could talk to each other and learn in that way. Being an ecumenical group some of us had already heard and been impressed on different occasions by Brendan Bowles from A Rocha and Mike Monaghan from Christian Ecology Link. Fortunately both were able to be with us. Brendan spoke in the morning and introduced with a colourful PowerPoint presentation the facts of climate change now – swiftly shrinking ice caps, rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions - and the affects on human beings world wide of drought, flooding, migration etc. It was uncomfortable viewing on a beautiful sunny Autumn day in Marple Bridge. He also gave a Christian perspective as to why we should care. In the afternoon Mike spoke of signs of hope. He was aware he was taking on the 'graveyard' slot and so kept us on our toes by giving us tasks to do together in small groups which

we then fed back to him. This session was much more encouraging, and it is reassuring how many positive initiatives we found already being taken.

During our time of preparation for the Day, someone asked about Transition Towns and at that stage, although we had heard vaguely about them (there was a short piece in MouthPeace a couple of years ago!) no one was really sure. However at Marple Carnival in June when we had our usual card singing and information stall – the CAFOD climate justice hand cards made a good display as they were strung up – we made contact with the Stockport Friends of the Earth. Surprise! Surprise! we learnt that a group had recently formed and was looking into Stockport becoming a Transition Town. I got myself on their email list. I have since read around the subject and been to one meeting. The project is still very much in the early discussion and planning stage so it looks as if I may be in almost at the start. So having focused our day on Climate Change and Copenhagen, we realised we needed also to consider Peak Oil and Transition Towns. In the end this was done by posters that raised the topic. We also learnt that nearby Buxton where Mike Monaghan lives had already become a Transition Town. (More about Transition Towns on page 11.)



Also as we were planning we heard about the Energy Saving Trust and Green Communities. They were eager to have a stall at the ECO Day and from that contact we were invited to the North West Green Communities Launch in October in Manchester. Two of the group managed to go and found it a useful information gathering and networking experience. Apparently there are already three Green Communities in Manchester, two of these in Stockport. Interestingly, these two started from church initiatives. So we learnt that the girls who were having a stall at our day had their own agenda..i.e. could the Marple area become another green community?! See:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/community

After the Launch there was an opportunity to visit the Manchester City Eco house in Miles Platting. This is recommended for a group visit for those who live near enough. (See page 11.)

We decided that one useful activity we could do together on the Day would be to work out our carbon footprint. So in preparation at a group meeting we tried to do this from the calculator produced by the Quaker Living Witness Project. Most of us found this difficult as we did not have the information readily available and gave up before we were half way through. Then we discovered some website calculators with simpler questions. (**www.footprint.wwf.org.uk**)

LEARNING TO BE GREENER continued...

These did the hard work for you but were not practical for a workshop on the Day. In the end we gave a few hints as to how the footprint could be calculated and left groups to discuss personal strengths and weaknesses in this area. It was reassuring to learn that 'Could do better' seemed to apply to us all!

Another interesting group activity in the afternoon was considering the electrical gadgets in our homes. Starting with the premise that 50 years ago our grandparents probably managed with only 7 pieces of electrical equipment we first listed as a group how many we now have (many more than 7!). Then we discussed which we could do without if we could only keep 7 of those on the list. Most of us agreed about a washing machine and a fridge being essential. But do we have to have a computer, a television, an electric kettle? Our great grandparents certainly didn't!

As we prepared for the Day we discovered amongst ourselves energy-saving aids. So these became testimonies on the ECO Day. One household has become very aware of energy use by connecting a semi-smart meter to the mains cable near the main switchboard. This transmits information to a monitor in a prominent place in the house. It seems by

keeping an eye on the monitor as appliances are switched on and off you soon appreciate which ones have high energy consumption and can act accordingly. We heard about solar panels fitted to a roof for water heating. These are both practical for energy saving but also indicate to the neighbours that the household cares about the environment. Some one else who found it impractical to get to work by public transport had invested in a battery bike that he used almost daily instead of a car.

Reflecting now as I write this I realise that over the last six months of preparation, my approach has changed. I started thinking that we can achieve very little on our own and so need strong legislation and a forceful Copenhagen Treaty for our future survival—things that do not seem likely to happen in the real world. I now feel more optimistic and see our future hope in our local neighbourhoods and communities. We all need to pool our varied gifts and talents to manage together the inevitable energy decline that we will all face during the next fifty years. It is not just a matter of changing our own light bulbs and recycling. We can start now to get to know our neighbours and by example and persuasion together to begin to build sustainable local communities.

Peace Sunday 17 January 2010

The theme for 43rd World Day of Peace message by Pope Benedict XVI is:
If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.

The theme aims to raise awareness about the strong bond that exists in our globalized and interconnected world between protecting the creation and cultivating peace.

... "If the human family is unable to face these new challenges with a renewed sense of social justice and equity, and of international solidarity, we run the risk of sowing seeds of violence among peoples, and between current generations and those to come... ecological questions must be faced,"

From Vatican Press Notice

From Pax Christi's leaflet for 2010:

To sow peace - protect the earth

Is our search for security and prosperity costing the earth?

- In 2009 the UK budget for defence was £38 billion yet the budget for work to reduce UK carbon emissions was £1.4 billion.
- Many recent wars and conflicts have been about access to resources - oil in Iraq, water in Northern Kenya and Israel and Palestine, minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have cost thousands of lives.
- Wars cause direct harm to the earth: damaging water supplies and causing water shortages, destroying farm lands and food supplies. Whole life-systems are affected.
- The heavy military use of oil and other fossil fuels in war and war preparations contributes to climate change

Peace - Care of Creation - Human Rights

The 2008 Pax Christi International Peace Prize was awarded to Brazilian Bishop Luiz Flavio Cappio for his 3-year nonviolent campaign to stop a project of the Brazilian government to divert water from South America's fourth largest river - for the benefit of rich landowners. This struggle echoes many others around the world where competition over land and water obscures the rights of people and the protection of the planet

Of his campaign of prayer and fasting Bishop Luiz said: *"I will only stop with the withdrawal of the army from the construction site of the diversion protect... There is no other alternative."*



CELEBRATING CATHOLIC ACTION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

The Mass held at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday 7th November was a lively occasion with an array of bishops and priests, a steel band, two choirs, and a goodly-sized crowd there held to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ). Ten of us from Shrewsbury diocese had made the journey down to London for the event – including our Bishop, Brian Noble. All of us, in one way or another, have been involved in the work of CARJ - some for very many years. Some had been active earlier in the year responding to CARJ's challenge to look at our own diocese as part of the Changing Face of Britain initiative. The conference which preceded the Mass developed that conversation a little further with contributions from three speakers.

Leeds MP John Battle maintained that 'the global is local' drawing on experience in his constituency to describe 'how the conflicts of the whole world can emerge on our school playgrounds' and charging the churches with the task to address the local. Quoting from Pope Benedict's recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* 'as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers' (19). John posed the question, 'Have we a moral responsibility to know the people next door?'

Rose Hudson Wilkin, an Anglican priest and chair of the Church of England Minority Ethnic Concerns Committee, spoke about community cohesion, citing the motto of her native Jamaica, 'out of many, one people' and ascribing the country's success to the people's security in their own identity. 'We knew our roots', she asserted.

The third speaker was an accomplished young Muslim woman, Khola Hasan, an executive member of the East London Three Faiths Forum. She described growing up secure with dual British and Muslim identities, a stark contrast to the situation she found while briefly living in Manningham, Bradford which she described as 'a community not at ease with who they were'. She observed that on the recent *Question Time* programme, MEP Nick Griffin had been challenged on his homophobic and racist remarks, but not on remarks which offended Muslims. She deplored the way the media concentrates on extreme Muslim activity, whilst failing to report positive contributions made to society by Muslims.

CARJ has achieved much in its twenty-five years, but there is still so much to do and the context in which it works continues to change. For me, the message of the conference was that we must start where we are, and be comfortable with who we are, if we are to build community with others. The Diocesan Catholics for Racial Harmony Group plan an event in early Spring to look at what this might mean in our diocese. If you are interested in attending, please contact the J&P Coordinator Joan Sharples (01270 620584), email joansharples620@btinternet.com

ASYLUM SEEKERS—SOME VOICES

Provided by Anne O'Connor

1. In my homeland I was a Maths teacher: well-known in my local community, valued, respected. Here I am nothing: worse than nothing. I have no papers to prove my identity – they were destroyed in the civil war. The authorities here do not believe that I can teach, be useful, make a contribution to this society, this place. I have nothing to do, no money and just the clothes I stand up in. I have to walk the streets all day, finding food and shelter where I can, hoping for the kindness of strangers.
2. Maybe I shouldn't have spoken out against the government in my home country, shouldn't have caused trouble. But once I had, I knew I had signed my own death warrant. I didn't want to come to this cold, wet country. At home I could smell the fruit of the mango tree as it ripened in the hot sun. I could enjoy spending time with my neighbours and see my family whenever I wanted. Here I am utterly alone: no family; no friends; the people around me cold and unfriendly. Sometimes they abuse me because of the colour of my skin. I do not feel welcome here.
3. We've been walking around for hours now. I'm beginning to wonder if we'll ever find a place to stay. Every door I knock on, they give me the same answer: 'no room'. If we don't get a place soon I think my wife will fall down with exhaustion. There must be somewhere we can stay. If only someone would offer us shelter.
4. I don't mind so much for myself, but my husband is worn out with the burden of looking after me. Surely someone can take us in? We're not fussy. We just need somewhere dry and warm to take refuge from the cold: just a place to lie down and give birth to my baby. Anywhere will do – an outbuilding, a barn, a stable even.

PILGRIMS MARCH AGAINST POVERTY

Jean Cox & Ann Taylor, Heald Green J & P group write:

On Saturday 17th October 2009, supporters of Church Action on Poverty (CAP) took to the streets in a number of cities for a walk of witness. They became Pilgrims Against Poverty. Five walkers from Heald Green joined about thirty others for the Manchester walk organised by CAP Central office. The occasion marked the 10th anniversary of the original Pilgrimage Against Poverty walk which saw pilgrims travel on foot all the way from Iona to London in 1999 to deliver an Agenda for Change to the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown. Two of the original walkers joined the anniversary walk in Manchester.

We assembled at Manchester's Piccadilly Station and took the train to Gorton – two stops east of the city centre. The route was then a walk back by footpaths and towpath of the Ashton Canal to the CAP Central Office in Oldham Street, Manchester. At three points along the walk we stopped to hear testimonies read, telling stories of people living in Britain in poverty now, with gospel readings and a time of reflection and prayer. We even celebrated one of our number's birthday en route with cake, candles and all. On arrival at the CAP offices, after a welcome cup of tea and biscuits, the pilgrimage ended with a short service of readings and prayers in the chapel.

The pilgrims were an assorted bunch of people ranging in age from seven to seventy+. The walk was not difficult but with our stops it took just over two and a half hours. Most of us had never noticed the Ashton canal which follows an interesting route into the heart of the city as part of the complex of canals which provided a transport network built up when Manchester was "King Cotton" in the 18/19th centuries. Much of the land in East Manchester has been redeveloped, some of it for the Commonwealth Games several years ago. There is a sharp contrast between the old mill buildings and new residential areas, the canal itself having been cleaned up and well landscaped. We were fortunate in the weather and were able to photograph interesting reflections in the still waters.

It was sad to realise that ten years after the Iona/London Pilgrimage the need for action against poverty in Britain remains with us. It is estimated one child in five still lives in poverty and Church Action on Poverty is unlikely to close down its campaigning any time soon. Let us pray that in another ten years we may be able to walk along the Ashton Canal to give thanks that severe poverty has become a thing of the past.

Remember POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS ACTION WEEK Sat 30th January to Sun 7th February 2010



Times are hard as the recession has hit individuals, families and communities throughout Britain. But there is ENOUGH FOR ALL if instead of retreating into our shells, we greet our neighbours, give what we can, share our ideas, hopes, goods and skill.

See www.actionweek.org.uk



CHURCH ACTION
ON POVERTY

30 YEARS OF J & P WORK IN CHORLEY

Ann Parkinson writes:

TWIG (Third World Involvement Group) began in 1980 when Sr Elizabeth Crehan (the first J&P worker for Liverpool) visited Chorley to encourage J&P activities. As a result TWIG was born in the Sacred Heart parish, although the TWIG members are from all the parishes of Chorley. Charles Cogley was the first Chair of TWIG and over the years he was very much the driving force. Charles retired two years ago.

Since it began TWIG has raised awareness of J&P issues, organised events and raised money for charities working in the Third World. The amount of money raised is believed to be around £250,000.

Most of the money comes from a charity shop in what was the priest's garage at the side of the church. The shop is open Wed & Sat 1-4pm. The people of the area are generous in their support, donating all sorts of things - you name it, we get it- and buying too. We are lucky to have a very dedicated team of workers but really need more helpers. We meet on the last Monday of each month in the parish house at Sacred Heart. Next year 2010 will be TWIG's 30th Anniversary so we are making plans to celebrate in various ways. We have decided to organise events around the idea of worship, education, community and action.

We have begun by promoting the work of the medical charity Inter Care, we plan a series of talks on Catholic Social Teaching early in the year, we'll have a picnic for our volunteers in the local park when the weather warms up and we'll end our year of celebration with a Mass at Sacred Heart in the autumn.

For more information on these events or for joining the group, contact Liverpool J&P office, 0151 522 1080
For details about Inter Care, visit their web site www.intercare.org.uk/



FINANCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE POVERTY PREMIUM

Editor: On September 19th the National J & P Networking Day was held at the Evron Centre in Stockport. Ian Guest, Chief executive of South Yorkshire Credit Union came to talk to the group. I thank Ann Kelly NJPN for allowing me to use this report.

Prior to becoming Chief Executive of the South Yorkshire Credit Union, Ian had worked as a Trainee Advisor for the Citizens Advice Bureau where he had seen the fall-out of the miners' strike and realised that more needed to be done for people who were permanently on benefits. He spoke about the poverty premium from his experience of people he met every day. The poverty premium refers to the extra that people on low income have to pay for goods and services, estimated at around £1,000 per annum. This is not just a financial cost however; it is linked to poor housing, poor health, low educational attainment and poor job prospects. The areas covered in his talk were fuel, food, household goods and financial services.

FUEL Most people on low income are on pre-payment meters, and there has been a big increase on companies putting people back on meters. Many people appreciate meters as a means of budgeting but some are forced into it, for example, if they are in arrears and can't make an arrangement to pay this back. They are unable to take advantage of dual fuel or direct debit discounts, and do not even get a discount on early payment. On average, they pay £340 a year extra. Because they are on fixed incomes, if they are unable to pay for extra heating in cold weather they self-disconnect and this is unrecorded; often they will only heat one room, causing dampness which leads to health problems. Another problem is that many companies do not recalibrate meters for up to 12 months to accommodate price changes, and then present customers with estimated bills of up to £84.

FOOD Little research has been done on the extra amounts poor people have to pay for food: they are unable to access discounts at big supermarkets; they cannot lay out for a "big shop", nor do they have the transport to carry it home. They are thus forced to shop at local convenience stores which are more expensive and do not have the range of foods, especially fresh foods, available at supermarkets.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS Many items are now considered essential which were not in the past, such as TVs and fridge-freezers, but these are difficult for people to buy without credit or debit cards; they therefore buy on hire-purchase at high cost stores such as Bright House where they are encouraged to take out additional warranties and insurance, pushing the APR up to 86.2%. If they miss a payment they are charged £1.50, and if they miss 4 or 5 payments the store will take goods back, even children's beds, though this is against Hire Purchase law. In addition, many goods are second hand, but people don't understand what "reconditioned" means. An example was given of bunk beds which cost £199 in Argos costing £400 without

mattresses at Bright House. The estimated additional costs for household goods is £346 per annum. A scheme had been set up in Doncaster with social enterprise to recycle goods, and provide loans for new items from credit unions.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Insurance: Many people on the lowest income are in private rented accommodation which is excluded from home contents insurance. They also live in areas which attract high premiums for home and car insurance. Because they live in high risk areas, they are 50% more likely to be burgled, and then turn to high-cost lenders to replace stolen items. Another difficulty is that they cannot make regular payments through direct debits or standing orders because benefits are paid irregularly.

Banking: Banks do not want people on benefits even for basic accounts because of the way that benefits are paid. Some banks do not offer a counter service; banking can be done via the Post Office, and there are telephone helplines, but these are people who often need more help and someone to talk to directly.

Credit: The average Credit Union loan is £380. High street banks won't lend small amounts. Many people go to doorstep lenders; the largest of these is Provident, who are not shy about charging 254% - this has risen despite interest rates generally falling; For example, a woman who took out a loan of £500 ended up paying back £1,023—with the Credit Union the repayment would have been £575.

Cashing cheques: £16.50 on a £200 cheque at a cheque cashing shop.

Log book loans: this is where the final repayment on a loan is a larger amount which the borrower is unable to pay, so the lender advances a further amount which is then added to the loan, and makes the borrower sign an agreement.

Pawn shops, or their modern version Cash Converters, are booming at the moment. The Credit Union is often called on to rescue family heirlooms.

Loan sharks are more and more prevalent. The Government has set up "Illegal Lending Teams", but people are often afraid to report loan sharks to them because of the threats that have been made against them.

Ian referred to the cycle of deprivation experienced by the poorest sectors of society: they are more likely to live in private rented accommodation rather than social housing; these don't have central heating and are damp. If only one room is heated, children don't have a separate room to do homework; they often turn up at school without a decent breakfast and become disruptive in class; in Barnsley it has been shown that often children are brighter when they start school than when they leave. Poor educational attainment then leads to poor job prospects.

Continued on next page

THE END OF 'THE VULTURE CULTURE' CAMPAIGN IN CHESTER



Peter Byrne writes:

On Saturday, 17th October, lunchtime shoppers in Chester City centre were confronted by placards bearing a strange symbol: a black vulture enclosed in a red stop-sign, the symbol of a national campaign to "End the Vulture Culture". Just as vultures circle the weak looking for an easy kill, so certain Investment Fund Companies – they sometimes use names such as *Distress Fund*. buy the debt of poor countries cheaply then use the courts of developed countries to recover the full value of the debt. The so-called "investment" does not create economic or

social output, merely monstrous profits for the Fund. This is finance gone mad, literally unhinged. Just like all the unethical trading which has pushed the world into recession. Once people grasp the fact that debt can be bought and the debtors squeezed, they reach for the pen.

In a recent case the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country still crippled by years of war and looting, was faced with fines of \$20,000 a week in a case brought in the US by a New York Vulture Fund. The debts had been incurred by the obnoxious dictator Mobutu Sese Seko 20 years ago. UK courts also have been used by Vulture Funds. A British judge had to, reluctantly, compel Zambia to repay \$15 million to Donegal International – Donegal had bought this for a mere \$3 million.

Our Government is taking the problem seriously, as are several MPs from all parties. But urgent action in the form of solid legislation is needed. We were urging the Government to include a bill in the Queen's Speech in November. Petitions and postcards to this effect were available for a couple of hours at The Cross, in the middle of the shopping day. Our MP Christine Russell kindly agreed to attend this event and to accept the petitions on behalf of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Chester citizens contributed 235 signatures in two hours on the day. The action continued in churches and other venues where petitions were made available.

Peter Linsey and Linda Manning organised the campaign day. Peter Linsey is Executive Secretary of the Chester Campaign – 01244 320562.

For up to date information see
www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk

FINANCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE POVERTY PREMIUM

Continued

ISSUES ARISING FROM DISCUSSION The Credit Union works with Primary Care Physicians to encourage people to give up smoking as this makes up a large portion of their expenditure. Ian's Credit Union had taken advantage of a growth fund set up by Gordon Brown as Chancellor to scrap the requirement of 13 weeks saving before being eligible for loans; this had encouraged more people to join, and once in they were encouraged to save and manage money better. There was a scheme working with local housing providers to have Housing Benefits paid via the Credit Union to help people avoid getting into arrears. He was keen to get Savings Clubs set up in schools, to teach children good habits, but also to bring parents in. There was also an initiative to help teachers deliver financial literacy. In response to a question of how to be informed before trying to set up credit unions or other financial inclusion schemes, he advised doing the relevant modules of the CAB training; local Welfare Rights Teams would also do training. On average the level of bad debts was around 5%; some had to be written off, but the Credit Union would always chase people for them; they were "a hand up, not a hand-out."



National J & P Network urgently needs your support now.

Recently, we have seen an unprecedented increase in interest in Justice and Peace within our parishes and communities. The work of NJPN has also been expanding as this demand grows. However, NJPN is facing dramatic reductions in its core funding and needs your support now to continue its vital work.

Please help by:

- Giving a donation
- Committing to a regular donation (monthly/quarterly)
- Organising a fundraising event for NJPN, or taking a collection for NJPN at your J&P events.
- Promoting *Phones for Justice*—why not become a local collector?

To find out more see www.justice-and-peace.org.uk
or phone 020 7901 4864

justice is a new 68 page bi-monthly colour magazine looking at social issues from a Catholic perspective. It includes articles from a wide range of contributors, reflecting all aspects of the Church's rich history of social teaching. It covers such issues as the environment, migration, the world of work, the economy, poverty and conflict.

It also features contains a lifestyle section with book, fairtrade fashion and food features.

See www.justicemagazine.co.uk

“GIVE IT UP”

Sue Bownas writes:

Almost fifty years ago, in 1960, a small group of members of the National Board of Catholic Women called on parishes across England and Wales to invite every family member to make a special act of self denial. Fathers could give up beer for example, and children their sweets, while mothers could cook with the cheapest ingredients; all to raise funds to provide much needed support for mothers and babies in Dominica.

This was the inspiration for the very first Family Fast Day and two years later, for the formation of CAFOD, as the Agency of the Bishops' Conference here in England and Wales. Now in 2010, it will be the cause for celebrations as we look back at all that has been achieved in the intervening fifty years as CAFOD has enjoyed increasing support from Parishes, Religious, Schools, Groups and individuals alike.

On Friday 26th February 2010, CAFOD's Lent Fast Day we will be inviting all our supporters to join in our celebrations by asking them once again "to give it up", be that beer, wine, coffee, sweets, chocolate, crisps, biscuits magazines or even their time. Time to organise a fundraising event, time to share this story with others, or time for prayer: for the success of CAFOD's work and for a change of heart amongst peoples and nations. This time however we will be inviting people to fast from something not just on Fast Day itself but throughout Lent 2010, and to donate what you save to support CAFOD's work around the world.

If remembering our humble beginnings teaches us anything, surely it is how small, simple gestures carried out by many people and blessed by God can grow into something that brings hope in the shape of relief and development to countless peoples around the world. As Oscar Romero wrote *"We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise"*.

It is a fact that many Catholics traditionally give something up during Lent; this year we ask more people to do so and to do it for the benefit of those less fortunate than ourselves. *"How many people could be nourished by the meal which you did not take today? Fast then, in such a way that when another has eaten in your place, you may rejoice in the meal you have not taken. Then your offering will be received by God."* (St Augustine of Hippo)

CAFOD's Lent Fast Day materials may look different this year, and we will be providing more information and stories from the last fifty years. We would however love to hear from you if you remember that very first Fast Day on 11th March 1960, or have a special memory or story of your own to share? If so please contact Sue or Liz: tel 01244 677594 or e-mail us at: shrewsbury@cafod.org.uk

CAFOD QUIZZES

Our Lady's & St. Bernard's J & P Group are running the next series of CAFOD Quizzes on January 15th, February 5th and March 19th 2010.



Each Quiz starts at 7.30pm and takes place in Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port. Entry charge is £2.50 for adults and £1.00 for children, with all money raised going towards CAFOD's Focus Africa fund raising projects.

Come along and enjoy a sociable evening that will contribute to a very good cause. Bring along your own team or join with one of the other groups on the night.

INTEGRATING LIFE & FAITH

A course accredited by Craighead Institute explores the role of Christians as citizens in society and the way in which, inspired by the Gospel and Ignatian spirituality, they can make a difference.

Starting again in the Birkenhead area.
Four non-residential weekend modules in 2010:
January 23-24, March 20-21,
May 8-9, June 26-27

With the encouragement of Bishop Brian this will be the third time the course has run in the Shrewsbury Diocese.

To find out more ask Joan Sharples

30th ANNIVERSARY of the DEATH OF OSCAR ROMERO is on MARCH 24th

Why not encourage your parish or group to do something special to mark this anniversary. There are resources available on www.cafod.org.uk and www.romerotrue.org.uk

ONE SMALL EFFORT

Bryan Halson writes:

For many years now I have been a believer in the value of Lent study groups. Why? The form of such groups nowadays gives people the opportunity to discuss and reflect on subjects of Christian concern. Such groups are usually small and engender an atmosphere in which all can contribute. Many participants describe them as 'growth points' in their spiritual pilgrimage. They can be informative - and this takes on an important dimension when a study is linked to a Justice & Peace campaign. In this respect they can be challenging.

Last year I used Church Action on Poverty's *Just Church* material. We found the various resources provided an encouragement to positive discussion. The worship resources attached to each module were greatly appreciated. This year I offered to construct a similar Lent Course which would lead us into the *Live Simply* project. The structure of *Just Church* had been so effective that we kept to it. The course would be essentially one of discussion and reflection. Handouts were prepared to stimulate discussion, and each session would close with a brief liturgy.

Our first session, "What is Rich and What is Poor?", explored the different ways in which we use those words. What came out clearly in the discussion was the 'duality' of material poverty/riches, and spiritual/moral poverty and riches. On material poverty we were careful to include a case-study of poverty in the UK as well as the more extreme poverty in so many parts of the developing world.

Our second session, "What does the Bible say?", took us into two passages from the Old Testament (from Deuteronomy and Isaiah) and two from the New (Luke, the parable of the rich fool, and the Epistle of James). We noted the demands which scripture makes on us both in terms of personal attitudes and way of life, and active participation in relieving poverty.

We then went on to consider "Voluntary Poverty", asking what can we learn from (for example) the early hermits, St. Francis, present-day Religious Orders. Clearly there is a difference between voluntary poverty and the material poverty forced upon two thirds of the world, yet we can still learn much about the nature of spiritual poverty; and there were some 'spin-offs' too - we had an animated discussion on "Never acquire for yourself anything you might hesitate to give to your brother if he asked you for it..." (*Sayings of the Desert Fathers*)!

Session four asked, Is (material) poverty inevitable in our world? We looked at two examples of successful poverty alleviation - the Grameen Bank, and Credit Unions. And then took on board John Viet-Wilson's words: "We must never confuse proposals to help people who are poor and excluded with the political action needed to prevent and abolish poverty..."

Our final session homed in on *Living Simply*. Using material from Harriet Paterson (CAFOD), John V. Taylor (*Enough is Enough*), and Gail Ballinger. According to a number of participants a *Living Simply* check list (which I had compiled) gave rise to some soul-searching. In the end we agreed that differing personal circumstances meant there could be no "one size fits all" approach.

A topic which uncovers huge problems, yet paradoxically presents us with challenges we can meet both as individuals and as members of congregations. "One Small Effort" – yes: but in the grace of God so worthwhile

ACT NOW !



Now is the time to take action. Next May in New York there will be another review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed in 1968. This title is misleading. It was, and is, a treaty aimed at getting rid of all nuclear weapons.

With the UK facing its biggest economic crisis in decades, there is no case for wasting £76 billion on replacing the Trident nuclear weapons system. The latest poll shows a majority of people wants Britain to rid itself of nuclear weapons, which have been described by retired generals as 'useless'. Following serious concerns from across the political spectrum, the Government has now delayed the next stage of the replacement process and is considering reductions in submarines and warheads. This acknowledges that serious steps towards multilateral disarmament may be agreed at the review conference in May, and that there is growing opposition from the public.

Now is the time to ensure there is a thorough rethink of Britain's possession of nuclear weapons. CND is urging us to help to prevent these tentative steps being reversed in the aftermath of the General Election. Instead, Trident must be included in the Strategic Defence Review which will begin next spring. The option of scrapping the system must be included in the discussion.

If you haven't done so already CND is encouraging you to sign their petition and download a copy to get others to sign. All the petitions will be taken to New York in May. See www.cnduk.org

UPDATE FROM DAMULOG IN THE PHILLIPINES

Romy Tiongco writes:

Where am I? It seems so much has happened and yet nothing has happened. It seems I have just been very busy doing nothing. Have I?

Unlike several provinces in Luzon, there has not been a lot of rain in Damulog. The reverse has been the case. Together with other municipalities of North Cotabato, we have had very little rain. Farmers were in real danger of losing their corn crops. Some rain came just when the corn started to tussle. In the past three days we also had continuous rain but nowhere near the amount of rain that poured in Luzon.

I went to Tukod yesterday to bring 400 seedlings of narra and mahogany to be planted at the Kalinaw (Peace) Park. Yes, the park project is being maintained. 95% of the trees we planted last year survived. We held the Peace Walk again. There were about 125 on it last year and most of them were municipal employees. We had over 200 this year but only about 75 were members of our staff. Most of the participants were parents of the school children. If we include the children, we were easily over 300.

We walked from Tukod to Balud. Last year we went to Agong where the peace pact and the memorandum of agreement to build a two-classroom school building were signed. We also inaugurated the Kalinaw Park. This time we walked to Balud. I wanted people to see the school that emerged from last year's event. We renewed our commitment to care for the Kalinaw Park and signed a new memorandum of agreement for the building of two additional classrooms. For me the highlight of the celebration was the testimony of two parents and two school children who related to us the impact of the school on their lives. Many of the children didn't go to school in the past because they needed to bring lunch with them, but they were so poor that the parents couldn't afford to prepare rice meals. Now that the school is nearby, the children can rush home to eat root crops or bananas. The children can still help in the household chores and not be too tired to do their homework when they arrive at their homes. Two school girls sang Maguindanao and Talaandig ballads. Both had very beautiful voices and it was really great that they sang their own cultural songs and music. But I don't know yet how much we fundraised through the sponsored walk.

There is a very good chance that we will get some assistance from the World Bank to build our farm-to-market roads. Last week we submitted all the necessary papers and we are just waiting word from Manila to inform us that we fulfilled all the requirements and we can open the bidding process for the project to construction firms. WB will provide an equal amount

for our farm-to-market budget through the Mindanao Rural Development Program. If we do well, we may also be provided access to livelihood projects. We will only be required 20% equity fund.

Last Friday we successfully concluded the celebration of Civil Service Month. The staff were split into three teams and there were weekly sports and cultural competitions. There was a lot of fun but also tensions in some offices. Competitiveness and team-bonding activities frustrated some heads of offices. Work targets suffered and I had to mediate in one particular office to settle matters.

I didn't spend as much time in the farm as I wished. I just didn't have the time except for short visits. But the vegetable project is moving forward. The Department of Agriculture and a seed company, East West, wanted a joint venture on vegetable production farm. They asked if they could use 2,000 sq m for the project. In the original plan, East West would provide the seeds and technological know-how, DuPont supply the chemical inputs and DA would provide the labour. In the current implementation, one DA personnel monitors the project, EW provides the planting materials but I am providing organic inputs and the labour. DuPont pulled out of the project because I didn't want chemical inputs. I couldn't allow government money to be used in the project because the project is on a privately-owned land. If the project makes a profit, I'll split it into three: for the farm, for the workers and for DA.

We had several villages celebrating their foundation anniversaries and I also had to be there. August and September are busy days for foundation days and fiestas. The next celebrations will be after the 2010 elections.

Governor Zubiri called the Mayors to a meeting last Friday. He invited us to join him in supporting Undersecretary of Defense Gilbert Teodoro for President in the May 2010 elections. He is the least popular of the presidential aspirants but he may be the most suitable candidate from what I have heard about him. I've been 'rooting' for him since August 2009. I've been most impressed with him in the public appearances of the Presidentiables.

Now that Ramadan is over, the work on the four school-building projects will start. Two have actually been started so the work will just proceed. The two other projects will start tomorrow. We are targeting to finish the four schools by the end of November. If the rains are not as strong and persistent as in the past two days, there is a very good chance that we beat the deadline.

27 September 2009

WHAT IS A TRANSITION TOWN (or village / city / forest / island)?

It all starts off when a few motivated individuals within a community come together with a shared concern: *how can our community respond to the challenges, and opportunities of Peak Oil and Climate Change?*

We are all now familiar with the idea of climate change - even the sceptics know what it means. But how many people are aware that we are also now reaching the end of the Age of Cheap (and plentiful) Oil. In other words the ready availability of oil that we have become used to it over the past century has reached its peak. From now on it is becoming more and more difficult and expensive to provide for oil needs world-wide.

This suggests that the challenges we face in the 21st century will be to develop a sustainable lifestyle which does not involve using barrels and barrels of oil and emitting large quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere. The Transition model, based on individuals in a local community planning and working together to manage the transition from high energy use to a more self-reliant existence, offers one way forward.

(See <http://transitiontowns.org>).

The idea is that a small group of individuals in an area go through a comprehensive and creative process of:

- Raising awareness locally about peak oil, climate change and the need to work together as a community to rebuild resilience and reduce carbon emission
- Connecting with existing groups in the community
- Building bridges to local government
- Connecting with other transition initiatives
- Forming groups to look at all the key areas of life (food, energy, transport, health, heart & soul, economics & livelihoods, etc)
- Kicking off projects aimed at building people's understanding of resilience and carbon issues and community engagement eventually launching a community defined, community implemented "Energy Descent Action Plan" over a 15 to 20 year timescale.

This process hopefully results in a coordinated range of projects across all areas of life that strive to rebuild the resilience we've lost as a result of cheap oil and reduce the community's carbon emissions drastically.

For more information and books on the topic see www.energyandhome.co.uk/page1.htm



ECO HOUSE MANCHESTER *Taken from Manchester City Council's website.*

Free advice at the eco house. Come to the Manchester eco house and see how to save your cash!

Get free, impartial advice on how to make your home more energy efficient, cut your fuel bills, and reduce damage to the environment.

The Manchester eco house in Miles Platting is kitted out with simple, everyday examples of how to reduce the energy you use. From low-energy light bulbs to solar-powered hot water. From garden composting to recycling and water-saving devices. Get expert money-saving tips, and find out about grants and discounts.

Want a look round? Hot-foot it down to the eco house soon, and start to save! But please call us first on 0161 234 5499.

DIARY DATES

NOVEMBER

- 30 'The Gift of Creation'. Advent Reflection at Twelve Apostles, Leigh 7.30 – 8.30
Contact 0151 522 1080/81

DECEMBER

- 1 **World Aids Day** National AIDS Trust
www.worldaidsday.org/index.asp
- 5 'THE WAVE' London
www.stopclimatechaos.org/
- 7 'The Gift of Creation'. Advent Reflection at St Ambrose Barlow, Astley 7.30 – 8.30 Contact 0151 522 1080/81 This reflection follows on from the themes of the previous week
- 10 **CAFOD Carol Service**, St Theresa's. College Rd, Upholland WN68 0PY 7pm
For details contact CAFOD office, 0151 228 4028
- 10 **World Migration Day** Catholic Church in England & Wales www.catholic-ew.org.uk
- 10 **UN Human Rights Day** www.unmeditation.org
- 11-14 **Copenhagen climate change conference**
- 13 **Shrewsbury Commission 25th Anniversary Celebration** at Wistaston Hall. 3.30—6 pm
Contact Joan Sharples
- 17 **Multicultural & Multifaith Celebration**. Hosted by Chester Asian Council, 12.30pm at University of Chester Lead guest speaker Yasmin Alibhai Brown. Contact 01244 343570

JANUARY

- 14 **Peace Vigil** 8-10 pm Marple URC, Hibbert Lane
Contact Marian Thompson
- 15 **CAFOD Quiz** Ellesmere Port See page 8
- 17 **Peace Sunday** www.paxchristi.org.uk 0208203
- 18-25 **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**
www.ctbi.org.uk 020 75647254

23-24 **ILF course**—Birkenhead area

24 **Annual Memorial Lecture at LACE**. 2-4 (Doors open 1.30) Peter McVerry SJ (Author of 'Jesus: Social Revolutionary?') Contact 0151 522 1080/81

27 **Holocaust Memorial Day** www.hmd.org.uk

FEBRUARY

5 **CAFOD Quiz** Ellesmere Port See page 8

Feb 22—March 7 **Fairtrade Fortnight**
www.fairtrade.org.uk

26 **CAFOD Lent Fast Day** See page 8

MARCH

3 "Food Security & Food Justice" 7.30 pm in the Best Building University of Chester. Main speaker: Matthew Carter, CAFOD's head of Humanitarian Support. Chester WDF event organized in conjunction with University Dept. of Geography and Development Studies. Further info from 01244 512190 or 678087

5 **Women's World Day of Prayer** www.wwdp-natcomm.org Prepared by women of Cameroon

7 **30th Anniversary Romero Mass** Lowe House, St Helens, WA10 2BE Contact 0151 522 1080/81

19 **CAFOD Quiz** Ellesmere Port See page 8

20-21 **ILF course** Birkenhead area

24 **30th Anniversary of death of Archbishop Romero**. www.romerotrust.org.uk

ADVANCE NOTICE

MAY 21 -23 **J&P Retreat at Loyola Hall**, Rainhill, Prescot. L35 6NZ With Stephen Hoyland, Pat Gaffney and Liverpool J&P. Theme: 'Discerning the right actions for J&P work'
For details contact 0151 522 1080/81

JULY 16-18 **Annual J & P Conference** Swanwick 'Our Daily Bread—Food Security, People & Planet'

MAY 8-9 & JUNE 26-27 **ILF course** Birkenhead area

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Don't forget to send in reports of events and dates for the diary

The opinions expressed in MouthPeace are the views of the individual contributors or organisations concerned and do not necessarily reflect those of the Justice and Peace Commissions of the dioceses of Shrewsbury and Liverpool

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