

MOUTH PEACE



Shrewsbury and Liverpool Justice and Peace Commissions

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The gap in our economy is between what we have and what we think we ought to have – and that is a moral problem, not an economic one.

‘The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied... but written off as trash. The twentieth-century consumer economy has produced the first culture for which a beggar is a reminder of nothing’. John Berger

Source:

<http://permaculturecottage.wordpress.com/page/2/>



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ENOUGH TO LIVE SIMPLY

The Diocese of Shrewsbury Justice & Peace Day in October

Joan Sharples writes: The day opened with an inspiring contribution from the choir of St Mary's Primary School launching *100 Days of Peace* especially written for the Christian peace initiative which will accompany the 2012 Olympics.

Forty-eight people attended this follow-up to the event Shrewsbury J&P Commission held last April *Enough is Enough: A Christian Challenge to our Current Lifestyle How can we all flourish fairly on a finite planet?* At the end of that event people had been encouraged to write Mandates for Change and these were recalled together with themes from Tim Jackson's book *Prosperity without Growth*, the cartoon *The Story of Stuff* and extracts from scripture and Catholic social teaching – a rich mix. It's all too easy to feel overwhelmed by the scope of the challenge: so it was particularly useful to hear from Shrewsbury CAFOD Manager Sue Bownas of the Live Simply Award, which offers resources to help parishes grapple with the knotty issues of sustainability and solidarity in our present context.

Participants were then able to choose from three workshops. The one led by CAFOD Head of Campaigns, Kevin McLoughlin, studied the Live Simply Award in some detail inspiring many folk to decide this was something worth taking further www.livesimplyaward.org.uk Ged Edwards, Chief Executive of Sustainable Blacon Ltd. www.sustainableblacon.org.uk described how the inhabitants of Blacon, near Chester, had been encouraged to ask: How do you measure a sustainable life? What makes life worth living? And to make changes which contribute to the quality of life for the whole community in the four areas of green spaces, transport, energy, and social enterprises. In the third, Dr Chris Mulhearn, Reader in Economics at Liverpool John Moores University gave a challenging talk on *Re-thinking Economic Growth for Rich and Poor Countries in an Uncertain World*.

After lunch participants were given the opportunity to share insights from their morning workshops and then to identify suggestions for action and finally to identify a specific, personal 'next step' which they were asked to write on a footprint shape. The footprint was that of a three-year-old grandchild of one of the organisers: a reminder of our responsibility to future generations. The full report is available on the website of the J&P Commission of the Diocese of Shrewsbury www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

"Individual actions may seem insignificant but together the small steps of many people can have an astonishing impact"

(Catholic Bishops of England & Wales: Call of Creation, 2002)

THE GREEN THING

In a queue at the supermarket, the cashier told an older woman that she should bring her own bags because plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologised and explained "We didn't have the Green Thing back in my day". The cashier responded "That's our problem today – Your generation did not care enough to save our environment". And she was right- our generation didn't have the Green Thing.

Back then we returned milk bottles and beer bottles, so the same bottles could be used over and over again. So they really were recycled. We walked upstairs, because we didn't have a lift in every shop and office building. We walked to the shops and didn't climb into a huge machine every time we had to go a short distance. Back then, we washed the babies' nappies because we didn't have the throwaway kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up electricity. Wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Children got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers and sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

We had one TV or radio in the house, not a TV in every room; and the TV had a small screen the size of a pocket handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of a football pitch. In the kitchen, we mixed and stirred by hand because we didn't have electric machines to do everything. When we packed a fragile item to send by post, we used up old newspaper, not plastic bubble wrap. Back then we didn't start an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power; we exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a gym to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

We drank from a fountain when we were thirsty, instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled fountain pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got blunt. Back then people took the train or a bus and children rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their parents into a 24-hour taxi service. We had one electric socket in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances, and we didn't need a computerised gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest takeaway. But isn't it sad that the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the Green Thing then?

Editor: Thank you to Ged Cliffe, Editor of Shropshire Christian Newsletter who used this in the October edition. Ged translated it from the original American!



New Open Meetings Across Diocese

The Diocese of Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission has gone **NOMAD**.



Steve Atherton writes: Just before the summer break, when the Justice and Peace Commission reviewed its work, there was a general feeling that lots of good things had happened during the year but they had tended to involve the same groups of people. The Commission is trying out a simple plan to help it become more available and more accessible to people in the parishes.

It is going to go on the road. The plan has 3 separate strands:

1. Some of the Commission meetings will be held in different parts of the archdiocese as open meetings that aim to inform, encourage and inspire. This involves finding four parishes that will become centres where people can gather locally. They are St Michael's Liverpool, St Teresa's Upholland, St Anne's Ormskirk, and one of the churches in Leigh. The hope is that neighbouring parishes and Pastoral Areas will be interested in coming to events that are closer to home.

2. The meetings will follow the same format: opening prayer, brief input on social justice topic, discussion, sharing of ideas, how to respond in daily life, closing prayer.

Because these meetings are intended to support local people rather than replace them, it's an important part of this way of working that local parishioners are involved in organising the meeting; the topic, the venue, the invitations and the hospitality. (The topics might well include: church teaching on social justice, selling arms to dictators, the impact of the cuts agenda, asylum and refugees, caring for the environment, mental health, the work of CAFOD, the work of Pax Christi, etc.)

3. As well as an open meeting, there will be two other events at each centre: on 14th November the Christmas Card Campaign to victims of torture and to parishes in the Latin Patriarchate will be distributed and then on 18th February there will be a Contacts Day where people from the surrounding areas will be invited to come and meet. The centres will also provide the venues for the Romero Mass and the Progressio Lecture.

(At the time of writing we have had one NOMAD meeting in Ormskirk and a CONTACTS DAY at St Teresa's. Both have been very positive experiences and the people involved have chosen to meet again to continue discussion and action-planning.)

The NOMAD plan will be reviewed throughout the year and if it works in practice, then the next step would be to extend into other areas. If you would like to be involved in this development, please contact the J&P office. Full details of the new activities are in the Diary (page 12) under NOMAD Liverpool

A PEACE BELL

Marian Thompson writes: On holiday in the Austrian Tyrol we came across an enormous bell hanging on a large metal frame, named The Peace Bell. It is located in Mösern, a most impressive spot with views over the Inn valley and north across the mountains into Germany. I have since done some research into peace bells. During World War II hundreds of Buddhist temple bells were destroyed in Japan in order to make ship propellers and other military items. When these were replaced immediately after the war, some were called "peace bells" (e.g. Hiroshima 1947 & 1949). Then Japanese bells began to be cast for the express purpose of symbolising peace. This tradition has caught on and spread around the world.

The Peace bell we came across was first rung on Oct 12th 1997 as symbol of co-operation and good neighbourliness in this sensitive Alpine region on the roof of Europe. The bell is rung at 5 pm everyday as a reminder that in the Europe of today, with its varied cultures, languages, living conditions and stories of peace and war, our efforts to stay together in peace are a challenge to be conquered on behalf of coming generations.

To reach the bell in its dramatic location there is a Peace walk. Along the way you are invited to stop and reflect at the 7 stations. This takes about 90 minutes. But of course the reflections can be done without the walk!

As we start we are reminded: 1. 'Peace needs a path and effort'.

2. 'Watch and admire' at a viewpoint. Imagine something beautiful... a view, a flower, a loved child maybe. Enjoy this experience and remember 'Peace grows through gratitude'.

3. 'The human soul is like water' Beside a small lake consider 'Peace needs calm and action'.

4. 'Closeness and fear' Entering the village among the houses. 'Peace lives from the generous treatment of borders'.

5. 'Far-sightedness and responsibility'. Look to the distance (on the walk enjoy a beautiful view across the Inn valley to the mountains for the first time) 'Peace is responsibility for the whole'.

6. Beside the small Mösern church reflect on – 'Values and family' – 'Peace begins with small manageable things'.

7. At the bell itself, the highlight of the walk, reflect that 'Peace is a living resonance that touches the soul.'



THE FORGIVENESS PROJECT

Anne O'Connor writes:

A group of teenage soldiers exchange insults with a mouthy young man as he is stopped and searched at a checkpoint barrier. In a split second a childish game gets out of hand: the young man is shot dead, his family left utterly devastated. What happens next?

This scenario was given to a class of Year 7 students (11/12 years of age) as part of a day on J&P issues at a local Secondary school. A small group was given a sheet with the basic facts and asked to present the story to the rest of the class in any way they chose – they decided to act it out (very enthusiastically!) and added their own embellishments such as war planes circling overhead and improvised dialogue. A lively drama ensued. When they had all settled down one of the lads asked whether this was a true story, which of course it was.

I then told them about **The Forgiveness Project** (www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories) a peace initiative that works at local, national and international levels to help build a future free of conflict and violence by healing the wounds of the past. By collecting and sharing people's stories The Forgiveness Project encourages and empowers people to explore the nature of forgiveness and to find alternatives to revenge. Looking at the case detailed above we discovered that, rather than letting anger and hatred fill his heart, the brother of the young man killed joined **The Parents' Circle** (www.theparentscircle.com) a group of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families who work towards reconciliation and peace through dialogue. This process has already enjoyed considerable success in regions where there had previously been hostility but is the only initiative of its type to bring together people from opposing sides where the conflict is still ongoing. There followed a lively class discussion about the response of the dead man's brother and the students' own views.

The group then looked at both sides of the IRA bombing campaign of the 1980s. When Sir Anthony Berry MP was killed in the IRA Brighton Bombing during the 1984 Tory Party Conference, his daughter Jo was thrown into a conflict she knew very little about. Since then she has visited Ireland many times and worked with victims and former combatants from all sides (www.buildingbridgesforpeace.org). In November 2000 she met Pat Magee, the man responsible for her father's death. Belfast-born Pat Magee, former IRA activist, was given multiple life sentences for the Brighton Bombing. Released under the Good Friday Agreement in 1999, he has since been actively involved in peace work. Jo says: *'perhaps more than anything, I've realised that no matter which side of the conflict you're on, had we all lived each others lives, we could all have done what the other did. In other words, had I come from a Republican background, I could easily have made the same choices Pat made.'* Pat praises her generous approach: *'It's rare to meet someone as gracious and open as Jo. She's come a long way in her journey to understanding; in fact, she's come more than half way to meet me. That's a very humbling experience.'*

Looking at these stories, and others, led us to conclude that there are always two sides to any situation and that understanding, and ultimately even forgiveness, can be reached if you are able to stand in another's shoes. (Paper footprints with messages or prayers of peace can be used effectively to illustrate this point with participants invited to walk along the path they form. A winding route will indicate that the path to peace and reconciliation is not easy or straightforward).

The Forgiveness Project has a wealth of moving and challenging stories from all over the world. The following reflections from some of the participants and are a testament to the power of forgiveness:

You don't need to love each other to build a bridge between two nations: you need respect.

Far more valuable than a violent response, is opening your heart to reconciliation and peace.

Forgiveness is very important because it releases you from the lower emotions of being human.

Once the anger ceases, the heart opens and understanding is possible.

Our dialogue enabled us both to see each other's purity of heart and good intent.

... peace can only come through dialogue and trust.

Continued opposite

BEARING WITNESS

Paul Gandy writes:

In glorious sunshine, on Saturday 1st October 2011, Fr Ned Wall and ten parishioners from the three parishes of All Saints', St Margaret Ward (both in Sale) and Our Lady of Lourdes (Partington) joined delegates from eighteen other dioceses to listen to words of encouragement from various leaders from CAFOD.

On the theme of "Don't Drop The Ball On Climate Change", we wrote messages to David Cameron to remind him of his pledge to be the greenest government ever. Our photographs were taken to create an album which will be delivered in time for the UN climate talks in Durban in November.



We heard from Chris Bain, a director of CAFOD, members of his team and Dominic Goggins, one of CAFOD's parliamentary lobbyists, how their lobbying of governments works. In particular, the recent anti-bribery legislation would have floundered when Labour lost power last year without CAFOD's intervention. We all can make a difference by filling in postcards to The

Rt Hon George Osborne reminding him that we want to be able to leave a healthy planet to our descendants. The postcards need to be sent by 10th November 2011.

CAFOD have introduced an initiative titled *MP Correspondent*. About three times a year, correspondents are asked to write to their MP on a current issue. Occasionally, they will be asked to back up this communication with a visit to the MP's surgery. Full details can be found at www.cafod.org.uk/take-action/mpc

Sadly, we heard that a child dies every 20 seconds somewhere in the world because of lack of drinking water or sanitation. CAFOD's Lenten focus in 2012 will be on providing clean water to dry countries. However, the intention wasn't to depress so Kevin McCullough, Head of Campaigns, led us in recalling what got us started in the justice and peace movement. Naturally, Ghandi and Nelson Mandela were mentioned, but the stronger memories were of unknown (to us) teachers and mentors who, through their enthusiasm and actions, had had impacts often beyond their imagining.

Uplifted and in good spirits, we made our way from Salford Cathedral to Manchester Cathedral, a walk of about twenty minutes. There, we joined fellow campaigners from Christian Aid and Tearfund for an ecumenical service. Speakers included, from South Africa, Theologian Tinyiko Maluleke, who said "Humans act like they have carte blanche to do with the world as we please", and Tearfund partner James Kalikwembe, who said 'It is up to Christians to stand up against injustice'.

And that's exactly what we did, as we took to the streets of Manchester, and marched our message to the Conservative Party Conference. Carrying placards and singing hymns as we walked, onlookers seemed amazed that we were marching for others rather than for ourselves. Several roads were closed but, as we snaked through the early evening crowds, this helped us reach more people.

The evening finished with a moving candlelight vigil in Albert Square. Once again it was left to Kevin McCullough to lift the mood as he said: "At times like these we're reminded of the words of Martin Luther King: 'Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.'"



It makes you think! *And Man created the plastic bag and the tin and aluminium cans and cellophane.*

The Forgiveness Project continued

I began to realise that in the de-humanising of the other, you begin to de-humanise yourself.

For me, telling my story is not about asking for forgiveness but about taking responsibility.

... understanding is the starting point. You can't forgive without understanding.

Forgiveness is really nothing more than an act of self-healing and self-empowerment.

... every human being has the right to live without the pain of the past. For most people there is a big obstacle to forgiveness because society expects revenge.

We are a little ray of light in the darkness, but I believe that one day that light will brighten and we'll be able to see another part of the sky.

The Reverend Alan Morris, Shrewsbury Diocesan Ecumenical Commission and Denominational Ecumenical Officer to Greater Manchester Churches Together writes:

As someone deeply engaged in building bridges of peace and reconciliation between the major world faith communities and the Christian family on behalf of the Diocese of Shrewsbury it has always been my concern to maintain a sense of proportion and balance in our understanding of the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities within the Diocese. That concern for reconciliation, peace and mutual understanding is at the heart of *Nostra Aetate*, the document of Vatican Council II concerning the great world religions beyond Christianity. Of special concern to The Holy See is a right understanding of the Jewish People and the combating of anti-Semitism. To that end I was very pleased when the editorial staff of MouthPeace asked me for an article on Judaism and Israel. Israel is a modern, secular state and a member of the United Nations. As such, its legal system derives very largely from the British system of law inherited from that time when Britain had the mandate to govern that part of the Middle East which was then, after World War I, referred to as Palestine. All citizens of the State of Israel, whether, Jews, Muslims or Christians have absolutely equal rights in law, freedom of worship, equal access to education, health care and the professions, or representation in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. In addition, in the light of the Holocaust, the fledgling State of Israel gave a pledge that anyone with one Jewish grandparent would have the right to a safe haven within its borders. This criterion was chosen as it was that which took people to the gas chambers under Nazi rule. Jews, quite naturally, feel a deep attachment to their historic homeland. As one Jewish man expressed it at a meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews, "Unless you understand the link between the land of Israel and Judaism, you don't understand Judaism." That attachment is, if anything, stronger than that which Catholics feel to the See of Rome. It is my pleasure, therefore, to commend this article by Lucille Cohen, President, Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester and Region

A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON ISRAEL

Lucille Cohen writes:*

It used to be that passengers applauded as the pilot landed in Israel. Many would even kiss the tarmac as they disembarked from planes landing in a country the size of Wales and barely visible on the map of the Middle East.

That rarely happens today, but my heart still soars and my throat tightens as we make that final approach for landing in Israel. Some still burst into spontaneous renditions of 'Heiveinu Shalom Aleichem' (We Bring Peace Unto You) as its refrain is piped over the ELAL loud speaker system.

Israel is a land which arouses strong emotions in all sorts of people and for all sorts of reasons. I am a proud British citizen yet my spiritual, cultural, and historic homeland is in that tiny country at the eastern-most end of the Mediterranean.

It is not surprising that this is so as Jews have prayed for their return to Zion three times a day since the majority of us were exiled by the Romans 2,000 years ago on the destruction of the Temple. We end our Passover service with "Next year in Jerusalem" and the dearest wish for many religious Jews is to be buried there. As a bridegroom marries, he declares, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its skill," and the cantor will often sing a plaintive rendition of those words.

My religiously scholarly grandfather dreamed of having his own orange groves there and my mother took me to Israel shortly after my father had passed away in order to fulfil her own dream when I was about to be 12 years old. We travelled the length and breadth of the land but could not enter the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem or pray

at the Western (Wailing) Wall, then under Jordanian control. As the Six Day War was erupting all around us in 1967 we found ourselves being evacuated on the last civilian plane. By then I too was in love with Israel

My first day there was at Israel's Independence Day celebrations in Jerusalem. The State of Israel came about as the British mandate troops left, just three years after the broken and surviving remnants of Hitler's Holocaust of the Jews of Europe emerged into the light to join those who were already in the Holy Land toiling to redeem it from malarial swamp and desert.

As the British Mandate came to an end in 1948, the region's surrounding Arab and Muslim populations declared war, unable to accept the State of Israel on land which they designated "Dar al-Islam"- the abode of Islam. Most still find it almost impossible to accept and recognise a Jewish state and the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan that do exist are regarded as a "cold peace" whereby their populations are still taught to hate Israelis and Jews in their school text books and through television series, particularly in Egypt.

In the mid-90s I worked for a while on the English language newspaper in Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Post. I interviewed many people but I never once heard anyone say they hated the Arabs. The biblical adage, "And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18) still resonates and is even a popular song at life-cycle landmark celebrations sung in Israel along with the exhortation to "care for the stranger because you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt".

At that time there was a peace process full of hope; and territory and weapons for the Arab police force were



A Jewish perspective on Israel continued....

handed over to the Palestinian Authority. But two Sunday mornings in a row were the worst in my life as I waited for news of our second daughter as one of her buses to school was blown up in the centre of Jerusalem. We were fortunate; others we knew were not. My husband, working abroad at the time, brought us all back to England.

Israel's Declaration of Independence embodies lofty ideals which, even now, Israelis strive to fulfil in order to be "a light unto the nations". Contrary to what many outside Israel may have been led to believe, Israel's minorities enjoy full and equal rights before the law.

In practice, this means that Arabs of all religious affiliations are educated in Israeli universities and, indeed, it would seem that their number correlates pro-rata with their proportion in the population. Although no official note is made in the universities of ethnicity, names make this self-evident. Arabs serve at the highest levels of the judiciary, in the Supreme Court, and are surgeons and heads of department in the hospitals and universities. Some will be surprised to learn that an Arab has been the acting President in recent years. Indeed Arabs, especially women, enjoy more rights in Israel than anywhere else in the Middle East.

The absolute number of Christians continues to grow in Israel – the only country in Middle East where this is happening thanks to the right to freedom of religion and worship. It is only under Israeli sovereignty that the sites of all three Abrahamic faiths can be accessed by the adherents of those religions. Such is Israel's reputation for the freedom of religion that the Baha'is have made their world centre there in their exquisite, terraced gardens in Haifa.

Walk around the south Jerusalem shopping mall and you will see people of all races, faiths and garb mingling freely, but, sadly, not before everyone has to have their vehicle searched for explosives.

Israel has produced a proliferation of voluntary and NGO

bodies which work to bring together Jew and Arab be they Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Druze. They also call to task the country's authorities on matters of equality. Its independent judiciary can, and regularly does, uphold the rights of the individual, of whatever ethnicity, against the government.

Israel's ambulance service, Magen David Adom, is a mainly volunteer-run member of the International Red Cross and prides itself on treating all equally, irrespective of religion or ethnicity, also training the Palestinian Red Crescent and co-operating with them. They undertake international rescue and aid operations including in Islamic countries when they are permitted access.

Israel is a flourishing democracy and enjoys a free press. So free is its press that attacks on politicians can be virulent. However, when these are picked up and used outside the country in the foreign press, Israelis and Jews here sometimes do start to wonder at the motives for that. Israel is certainly not perfect and not above criticism, but it is often judged according to standards even higher than those by which other countries are measured. Those standards of judgement do feel somewhat unbalanced when those other states, with which comparison is made, have not been faced with an existential threat every day since their inception, as has Israel.

Yet despite all this, in an atmosphere where every family has to send off its children to serve in defence of its country, those same children return to study and produce some of the greatest numbers of medical discoveries and technological inventions in the world to benefit mankind. In fact, Israel produces more medical breakthroughs per year than any other state except the USA.

"For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Is this not just one manifestation of that biblical phrase?

**Lucille Cohen M.A. is also an Hon. Research Fellow in the Centre for Jewish Studies, The University of Manchester and has taught in the departments of Middle East Studies and Courses for the Public.*

ADVENT and beyond

Suggested reading from Pax Christi

The Advent of Peace – a gospel journey to Christmas. Against the backdrop of the current conflict, Mary Grey shows how reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian story. £9.00.

The Promise of Peace Anthology for Advent and Christmas includes readings from Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Sheila Cassidy. £2.00.

Both available from www.paxchristi.org.uk

Advent reflections for each Sunday in Advent prepared by Anne O'Connor are available on

www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk



This Icon made especially for Pax Christi at the Monastery of St John in the desert near Jerusalem will be in the North West again early next year.

It will be in the Marple area between February 6 and 10.

If your parish or group would like to use it around that time please contact

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WE CAN'T LIVE ON THE INTERNET

The following talk was given by Ellen Teague during the Evensong service for World Food Day – 16th October - in the Chapel of Hertford College, Oxford University.*

“We lived on farms, then we lived in cities, now we are going to live on the internet”. This quote from the film ‘The Social Network’ is voiced by Sean Parker, a guru of new media who says, excitedly: “We lived on farms, then we lived in cities, now we are going to live on the internet.

This struck me forcibly when I first heard it because in some ways its true of the last three generations of my family. My grandparents spent all their lives on farms. My parents moved to London and now I do tend to live on the internet. But in another sense the view expressed isn't true. Many of us spend a lot of time on the internet but we can't live on the internet. Despite all our modern trappings, what we need to live on is still as basic as it ever was – food and water.

The Somali mother in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp knows this.... along with 12 million others currently facing famine in the Horn of Africa. The Haitian child in Port au Prince knows this as he tucks into his meal of a mud cake – the staple food of the poor and made from dried dirt mixed with salt, shortening and sugar. The self-catering student at university who can allocate only £12 a week to food expenditure knows this.

But many of us risk forgetting it. Food is often taken for granted and unappreciated.

World Food Day is celebrated every year on 16th October in honour of the date of the founding of the UN World Food Programme. This year the international focus is on the volatility of food prices – a crucial issue for people on low income. But all of us – except the very rich - in fact need food price stability for our well-being.

Why is food pricing an issue? Between 2005 and 2008, the world's staple food prices soared to their highest levels in 30 years. In 2008 the maize price increased by 74 percent while that of rice almost tripled. Food riots broke out in more than 20 countries. Over the past year rising food costs pushed nearly 70 million more people into extreme poverty. Tonight, one in five of the world's population will go to sleep hungry and the price of food is a key reason for this. I remember in 1986 sitting in Juba in Southern Sudan and reflecting that around the city were camps holding two million people all in need of food aid, yet I ate three times a day. What was the difference? I could afford to buy food.

Price swings, particularly upwards, represent a major threat to food security in developing countries. Hardest hit are the poorest. For poor countries, food imports become more expensive. For individuals, people living on less than US\$1 a day may need to skip a meal when food prices rise. Farmers everywhere face more anxiety

about the price their crops will fetch at harvest time, months away.

Let me highlight six key reasons why the food market has become so turbulent.

1. Under-funding of agriculture by rich and poor countries alike is probably the main single cause of the problems we face today, according to the UN. Christian Aid recently released a report called ‘Healthy Harvests’ complaining about the under-funding of Africa's small farmers. Instead of nurturing small scale traditional agriculture, the resources from the west - major backers like the World Bank, Britain's Department for International Development, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation - largely go into industrial agriculture which requires the heavy use of fertilisers and pesticides. There has been a huge push of genetically modified seeds, for example, which require specific chemical inputs. Why not focus on renewable and locally available resources of seeds and manure? Why not listen to African women who do most of the farming in Africa. Of course the big biotech corporations such as Monsanto have played a major role in pushing agriculture in an industrial direction and I recommend you to view the film ‘The world according to Monsanto’ which you can download on the internet.

2. The issue of Biofuels – growing crops for fuel instead of food. The cost of the biofuels boom in Indonesia has been the destruction of its tropical forests. Oil palm plantations have caused staggering environmental damage and tremendous loss of biodiversity which is vital for food security.

3. Some pretty disastrous decisions have been made about development and security that have meant a loss of habitat and poisoning of the environment. Did you know that every third bite of food we consume depends on pollination by bees, but all around the world hundreds of millions of bees have disappeared? Do we realise how much this matters? And think of the impacts of war and conflict on food production.

4. Diet is another key issue - People eating more meat and dairy produce means the rising need for feed grains produced for cattle.

5. The recent entry of institutional investors with very large sums of money into food commodity futures markets receives scant regulation. Banks, hedge funds and pension funds are betting on food prices in financial markets, causing drastic price swings in staple foods such as wheat, maize and soy. The World Development Movement, which is running a campaign on food speculation, points out that Barclays – which has little connection with food - makes up to £340 million a year from betting, or speculating, on food prices.

Continued opposite ...



COUNTERPOWER – MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Change can and does happen. But why do some campaigns succeed while others fail? In Counterpower the author Tim Gee seeks to get to the root of how change happens. He takes an in-depth look at the strategies and tactics that contributed to the success (or otherwise) of some of the most prominent movements for change, from the independence campaign led by Ghandi in India to the current revolution in Egypt.

The author Tim Gee was brought up in Stockport where he attended Aquinas College. He was active in Stockport Peace Forum. After studying politics at Edinburgh University he has more recently been involved in various protests including Climate Camp, Dale Farm Solidarity and the 'Occupy' movement. Tim began his research for the book at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford.

The book costing £9.99 is available from www.newint.org/counterpower

WE CAN'T LIVE ON THE INTERNET continued.....

6. The massive issue of Climate Change needs to be addressed in a much more serious way. has been up front in saying that climate change is a factor in the chronic drought, falling crop yields and loss of livestock causing famine in the Horn of Africa region. One thousand people were in Manchester when CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund held a vigil outside the Conservative Party Conference to urge that the British government keep its pledge on ambitious carbon emissions targets made in June. This is in the context of the lead-up to the next UN climate talks in South Africa in late-November.

If we are to address these issues we must stop taking food for granted. We could start with reflecting on food security issues. Follow agencies such as the World Food Programme, the big development agencies, the World Development Movement, the student group People and Planet on Twitter and you'll soon find out more about food concerns. And help those who are hungry through lobbying and financial support.

Appreciate the food you eat every day. Christian Ecology Link suggests that food we consume should follow the LOAF principles as far as possible, LOAF is an acronym for food that is Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly and Fairly traded.

What connections are there between food and faith? Despite the focus of many Christian services on a Eucharistic meal and celebrating the gifts of creation, too often Christians – along with everyone else – have alienated themselves from the natural world which provides the very air, forests, water, soil – the matrix of agriculture – which we depend upon for life. We need a theology that embraces the ecological paradigm. Just as we embrace solidarity with the poorest of humanity, we need to stretch to solidarity with the natural world. The prevalence and persistence of hunger in our world is a sign of the scale of the social and environmental challenges we face. We must begin to understand that we all eat at the same table and that all the tables we gather around in our daily lives are connected.

Among many of the world's great faith traditions, the eating of food is accompanied by some form of a grace-saying act. In offering thanks or a blessing, we show that

we do not take food and our lives for granted. What previous generations of farming families would have understood as a concrete world – the ecological webs of relationship – can be hidden when food is reduced to a sign—a marketing label or brand – without depth or reference to its story. Yes, food items have stories too and far too often they involve journeys of more than a thousand miles to reach our plates and often through various forms of processing. Too often food has been reduced to a commodity that we presume will always be available, provided we can muster the credit card swipe. Saying grace can become a means to the recovery of a world where real food – slow food – is appreciated and celebrated.

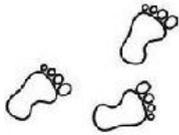
Affordable food pricing is a local as well as a global issue. Oxfam has pointed out that food prices in Britain are rising at a rate more than twice as fast as the National Minimum Wage. One in six parents say they had even gone without a meal themselves so they can put food on the table for their family. You will have seen on the news that globalisation protests at financial centres have reached London – to the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, in fact – and anxiety about food security for the poorest is part of this.

But at the same time, many here and in the global south are acting on the need for greater human humility, responsibility, and celebration. There has been an international food security summit in Rome and peasant movements such as La Via Campesina from Latin America are lobbying for greater control over agriculture and food pricing. And young people are doing their bit here. An increasing number of schools are eco-schools or part of the Soil Association's Food for Life Programme where food is grown on school green spaces.

Through growing food we can see, smell, touch, and taste first-hand the miraculous and fragile processes of birth, growth, death, decay, and rebirth that are all part of God's wonderful creation going on all around us and providing us with our food.

**Ellen Teague is a member of the London-based Columban JPIC Team. She kindly gave permission for this to be used.*





TAKE A STEP FOR FAIRTRADE FAIRTRADE Fortnight February 27—March 11 2012

Two recently introduced firsts for Fairtrade that might be of interest:

'easy bean' one pot meals The beans are cultivated at Jurihe Zhaluteqi, a village in Inner Mongolia—one of China's poorest rural areas. Many children do not get a basic education as schools are ill-equipped and the winter temperatures fall below 20° C. The Fairtrade premium will allow the village improve school facilities and fund such items as heaters and warm clothes for the local families. So far there are 2 pots to choose from: red bean vegetarian new mexican chilli and brown bean african palava with chicken and sweet potato. Some branches of Sainsburys, and Waitrose are stocking them ...also see www.easybean.co.uk

Oromo coffee The Oromo Coffee Company (OCC) is a new concept- community to community Fairtrade. It is managed in England by a group of people originally from the Oromo region in Ethiopia (famous for its quality coffee). This group have full residential status here and don't want to depend on welfare benefits. OCC supplies individual outlets, community groups, institutions, retailers and wholesalers. For more information and contact details see www.oromocoffee.org

THE UNDESERVING POOR

Paul Morrison writes:

The quest to identify those impoverished people who are not to blame for their poverty from the other poor people – who by inference are receiving the poverty they deserve – is as old as the hills. Rowan Williams wrote recently of “a quiet resurgence of the seductive language of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor” within the political debate. He was right to do so. The phrase ‘deserving and undeserving’ is no longer used but there are many codes in its place. The new acceptable discriminator is to talk of ‘people who do the right thing’. The phrase crosses the political divide: David Cameron used the phrase seven times in one pre-election debate; Ed Miliband used it when suggesting some deserving people should have preference in going up housing waiting lists. It is an obvious phrase, which tests well in focus groups, but its implications are, in my view, both socially damaging and profoundly contrary to Christian teaching.

The Government has now begun to haphazardly convert the rhetoric of ‘those who do the right thing’ into policy. Initially, benefit caps—limiting the total amount of benefit which could be received—were to apply to all. As time has passed, those ‘doing the right thing’ have been exempted – the old, the disabled, the war widow(er)s, and other special cases. Every housing benefit claim will be reduced by mathematical formula, but now a discretionary £200 million will go to those considered to be unjustly affected.

The welfare cuts are gaining similar, grossly underfunded, exemptions on a daily basis. The problem is that it is easy for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to supply examples of the feckless poor to be derided in the pages of the Sunday Telegraph – but it is much harder to define a group as undeserving with any degree of justice or accuracy. Whole categories are labelled so that the majority of the public believe them undeserving (alcoholics, for instance) – but talk to your minister, or others who work with addicts, and very quickly it becomes much harder to use words like “undeserving”. Despite many attempts, the

hunt for the undeserving poor has never found large enough numbers of people to save significant amounts of money. This enthusiastically publicised scrounger-hunt has served to stigmatise the people who least deserve it and have little opportunity to fight back. The unjust stigma is also used to penalise those who clearly have ‘done the right thing’ – the reason being that if you just take money from the ‘undeserving’, it doesn't save much – don't be fooled into thinking it does. But even if making moral judgements on past behaviour was a fruitful exercise, I would still argue for a benefit system that focuses on meeting needs rather than judging behaviour.

Some of the most compelling gospel stories are of Jesus' encounters with people as he went about this ministry. My reading of these encounters shows Jesus to be profoundly uninterested in someone's past commitment to ‘doing the right thing’. Jesus was unimpressed by the Pharisees – who made a fetish out of ‘doing the right thing’. Yet those whom society judged harshly, those who hadn't ‘done the right thing’ (for example, Zacchaeus or the woman at the well), seem to emerge much better from their encounters with Jesus. Jesus seemed much more concerned with meeting the needs of the person he met than with judging them on past behaviour.

Our liturgy says we have “all sinned and fallen short”. In past times Christians would describe themselves as ‘wretched’ or ‘sinners’, to acknowledge the fact that even the best of us have not always ‘done the right thing’. The very heart of the Christian faith is the acknowledgement that although we do not always ‘do the right thing’, we are still loved, still valuable and still acknowledged as made in the image of God.

A Christian who wishes others the full consequences of ‘doing the wrong thing’ should really ask themselves if this is a rule they would be happy to see applied to themselves.

Editor : This article originally appeared on Praxis, the blog of the Joint Public Issues Team

(<http://jointpublicissues.blogspot.com>). We thank Paul for his permission to use it.



Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it.
 Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many.
 Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books.
 Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders.
 Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.
 But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it ~ Buddha
 from <http://permaculturecottage.wordpress.com/page/2/>



VOLUNTEER MISSIONARY MOVEMENT IN LIVERPOOL SEEKING OVERSEAS VOLUNTEERS



The concept of authentic human development, outlined in the encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est.* (2005) as integral human development was one of the key concepts in *Populorum Progressio*. It is also a key Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM) principle and a very simple one: authentic development “must foster the development of each person and of the whole person.” Today VMM remains faithful to the challenges of Gospel values.

VMM is an international Christian organisation whose members share their lives, faith, resources and skills to promote equality, respect and dignity for all. The organisation recruits, trains and supports lay personnel to work in areas of great need in developing regions in Africa. Founded in 1969 they work from Liverpool Hope University serving England & Wales.

VMM’s unique experience of over 40 years with Catholic Faith based organisations gives it an added strategic value in regions where regional development and service provision is given by Church groups. A third sector lay organisation like VMM has an important strategic position to work with both civil society and faith based organisations in a co-ordinated manner to positively impact upon the welfare of the global poor.

To date VMM has sent over 2,000 professional skilled personnel who are placed in strategic capacity-building positions in partner organisations. VMM works with overseas faith partners and NGO’s towards the achievement of certain targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

Training and staffing of essential skilled positions in organisations is the core of the programme. At present, more than 40 volunteers are assisting overseas.

A volunteer who recently left for Sierra Leone is Sandy Lyttle, 63, from Preston. She began her involvement with VMM over four years ago after retiring as a Nurse. Sandy worked for several years as a Nurse Trainer in a Hospice in Chilanga, Zambia. She has recently left for a year programme at St John of God Hospital in Sierra Leone.

“My journey to Africa takes me to Sierra Leone this time. Having carried out projects in Kenya and Zambia I am still drawn to Africa. The students’ enthusiasm for knowledge is infectious, you can’t help but admire their commitment to learning, and it is very humbling and gives me the incentive to find as much information to impart to them”

Current positions available through VMM include:

Development and Peace Office Coordinator - Yambio, South Sudan in the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio

Construction Supervisor - Diocese of Lodwar, Kenya

Education Coordinator – Yambio, South Sudan in the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio

There is currently a listing of over 70 positions from partners that are needed. All positions require at least a year of professional experience. Please logon to the website at www.vmminternational.org to find more information.

Supplementing the overseas work, VMM’s expanding home programme seeks to apply the experience and enthusiasm of return volunteers and channel this into a worthwhile and rewarding scheme of reflection and development education for the wider community. Encouraging return volunteers to speak in their local parishes, youth groups, schools and other local forums facilitate this.

The office in Liverpool is always looking for support and volunteers that can help locally as well. If you can help overseas or would like to get more involved with our organisation by assisting on committees, in our office or charity shops in Liverpool, please call the local office at 0151 291 3438 or email Manager, Van Garber at:

van@vmminternational.org

Also of importance, in September 2011, VMM began managing a pilot project in Hampshire and re-named it ‘Geo House – a national centre for global mission and integral human development’. This residential retreat and training centre is available for individual or group stays. It is in the beautiful setting of the New Forest, yet close to rail, road and air networks. There is a four day Lenten Retreat 23-26 March 2012 led by Fr Donal Dorr SPS on Spirituality.

Contact Richard on 023 8029 2337 or see the website www.geoohouse.org.uk



DAIRY DATES

DECEMBER

10 UN Human Rights Day www.unmeditation.org

11 Shrewsbury Diocese J&P Advent Reflection 'Praying for Social Justice in the Psalms' Speaker: Fr Geoff O'Grady. Venue: Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Lane, Crewe CW2 8JS. 4.30 – 6.30 p.m. Please let Joan know if you are coming

27 CAFOD Annual Fun Run Liverpool starting 1 pm prompt at 'The Mystery' Wavertree Park Liverpool L15 4LE. More details from CAFOD office 0151 228 4028 or email liverpool@cafod.org.uk

JANUARY

11 NOMAD Liverpool J&P Commission meeting: 4
LEIGH 7.00 – 9.00

15 Peace Sunday www.paxchristi.org.uk see page 4

15 NOMAD Liverpool Memorial Lecture
David McLaughlin LACE Liverpool 2.00 – 4.00

16 "Global Learning – the challenges ahead" - Heather Swainston of CDEC Chester WDF Forum Meeting 6.45 for 7.00pm, St Peter's by the Cross. 01244 350323

18 – 25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Theme 'We will all be changed'

20 CAFOD Quiz St Saviour's parish centre Great Sutton
Details from Tony Walsh (below)

27 Holocaust Memorial Day Theme 'Speak up, speak out'
www.hmd.org.uk

Jan 28 – Feb 8 'Breaking Barriers' Poverty & Homelessness Action week www.actionweek.org.uk

Jan 30 'India's Dalits: human trafficking & slavery.' Talk by Malcolm Egner of the Dalit Freedom Network UK. 5.00-6.00pm in the Best Building (Dept of Geography & Development Studies) University of Chester. www.dfn.org.uk

FEBRUARY

3 'The Cuts: from rhetoric to reality' As part of Poverty and Homelessness Week, in association with Merseyside and Region Church Action on Poverty Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool 2.00 - 4.00

6-10 The Pax Christi Icon is in the North West see page 7

15 NOMAD Liverpool J&P Commission meeting: 5
St Teresa's Upholland 7.00 – 9.00

18 NOMAD Liverpool CONTACTS DAY Same event at all 4 hubs. 12.00 – 3.00

22 ASH WEDNESDAY

22 NOMAD Liverpool Act of Penitence St Luke's, the bombed-out church, Liverpool

Feb 27 – March 11 Fairtrade Fortnight 'Take a step for Fairtrade' www.fairtrade.org.uk see page 10

MARCH

12 Chester WDF Forum Meeting. 6.45 for 7.00pm, St Peter's by the Cross. Talk by Kat Barton on Chester Zoo's international conservation work. 01244 350323

24 Anniversary of death of Archbishop Oscar Romero www.romerotrue.org.uk

25 NOMAD Liverpool Romero Mass St Anne's, Ormskirk 10.30 -12.00

APRIL

28 Liverpool Annual Assembly: J&P hosts VIP LACE
10.00 – 4.00

ADVANCE NOTICE

MAY

Friday – Sunday 18 - 20 RETREAT (Diarmuid O'Murchu)
Loyola Hall

23 NOMAD Liverpool J&P Commission meeting: 6
Leigh 7.00 – 9.00

JUNE

8-10 Northern Catholic Conference Hope University - Weekend Schools conference LACE

ACAT Overnight Vigil Saturday – Sunday, dates TBC. St Teresa's Upholland 5.00 – 12.00 for more details contact Steve.

Integrating Life and Faith, 4 weekends:

21st -22nd April 23rd -24th June 15th -16th September 3rd – 4th November

This course with the Craighead Institute continues. It is very popular with the people who are doing it. If you would like to enrol for the 2012 course, please get in touch with the office, Loyola Hall, Warrington Rd, Rainhill.

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Copy date

for next issue

1/02/2012 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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