



Shrewsbury and Liverpool Justice and Peace Commissions

Summer 08

Issue 62

A DEBT CREED

We believe life is more precious than money.
We believe people are more important than profits.
We believe it is our duty to work for justice.

We believe slavery is wrong.
We believe that the world's poorest people,
who are enslaved by unpayable debt, should be freed.
We believe it is our duty to work for liberation.

We believe every person has the right to food and
water, healthcare and education.
We believe that access to these things should not
depend on interest rates.
We believe it is our duty to work for justice.

We believe children should not inherit
the debts of their parents.
We believe people born in chains, struggling to pay
a debt they never incurred, should be set free.
We believe it is our duty to work for liberation.

We believe all people are equal.
We believe nobody has the right to grow wealthy
by making others poor.
We believe it is our duty to work for justice.

Mark Topping

www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/education

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JUSTICE & PEACE – a Biblical Perspective

'You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and in need, whether he is one of your own people or a stranger.... You shall not pervert the justice due to a foreigner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment as a pledge for a debt...when you reap your harvest you shall not glean it afterwards; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there.' (Deuteronomy 24: 17 –22)

The Bible is full of references, direct and indirect, to our responsibility to God who creates us and our world and recreates us in Jesus. And how do we fulfil that responsibility? Again, the Bible is crystal clear – we fulfil our responsibility to God by fulfilling our responsibility to our fellow human beings and to the natural world which we share as God's gift. As the First Letter of John puts it *"he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."* (1 John 4:20)

John reminds us of the command to love because *God is love*. The Bible applies this responsibility to be a people of love in two ways.

One way is personal. We have a responsibility to individuals as individuals. We might call it 'face to face' responsibility. A major aspect of this for the Christian is evangelism; to spread the good news of new life in Christ through our words and our actions, helped and empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Church – *"Go make disciples...."* (Matthew 28:19)

Another aspect of this personal responsibility is to help people in all sorts of practical ways – *"You shall love your neighbour as yourself."* (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19)

The second way we fulfil our responsibility to love is to act on much *wider* level than the individual. The culture in which you and I live (the culture of the modern "first world") is *highly* individualistic. More and more aspects of life become part of *my* private world. What is important is to be able "to do my own thing", and to have infinite choice. Even morals and religion, we are told, are private matters. But in other parts of the world *community* is as important as the individual. There is an African saying, "Only the village can bring up a child". Now the Bible belongs to that context, rather than our modern highly individualistic context. So God is understood as being concerned with communities and the quality of life lived in a community. Thus, when the life of the Israelite society has degenerated so much that it is in danger of total collapse, the prophet in the book of Malachi cries out – *"have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we*

faithless to one another?" (Malachi 2:10)

In the New Testament the church is presented to us not as collection of individuals, not even as isolated congregations, but as one Body, the Body of Christ, in which as the apostle Paul puts it- *"if one member suffers all other members suffer with it, and if one member is honoured all the members share a common joy"* (1 Corinthians 12:26)

The Bible presents us with two great characteristics of God which pertain to the community of all humanity – justice and mercy, which *together* make up God's love. Psalm 89 describes this as a "foundation". *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne, steadfast love and faithfulness go before thee."* (Psalm 89:14)

So, if we are to be Biblical Christians, we must act in such a way as to help establish justice and mercy in our communities, communities all around God's world. When Jesus began his public ministry he described his future work in terms of a passage from the prophet Isaiah – *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4:18 –19, Isaiah 61: 1-2)

In our communities, both here and in other parts of the world, there are many who are poor, who are in unjust captivity, who are oppressed. They are so because of the way our modern world is structured; because of our corporate greed, because we have forgotten "that we were slaves in the land of Egypt".



The Christian can never accept being regarded primarily as a "consumer". To do so is to accept the standards of the materialist world. Rather, we are to think and act as "children of God", which means among other things practising a kind of 'passive resistance' to the demands and expectations of this materialist culture. The current *LiveSimply* campaign is hugely relevant to such a witness. The apostle Paul hits the nail on the head – *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within..."* (Romans 12:2 JB Phillips translation.)

Bryan Halson April 2008

Ed: For details of the new Poverty & Justice Bible see Page 10

WEST PAPUA

Have you been alerted to the awful political situation in West Papua where ethnic cleansing has been happening for 40 years and where people are regularly imprisoned and tortured for their political views? In West Papua you can go to prison for 15 years just for raising the national flag.

Did you ever meet Fr Neles Tebay? He toured the northwest in 2005 and I wrote about him in MP 50 (Summer 2005 issue) but I have to admit his story has begun to fade. Recently I was privileged to meet Benny Wenda, one of his friends, an exiled West Papuan leader who escaped from prison, was granted political asylum in the UK and who is at the heart of a campaign to bring West Papua into the political arena.

Despite the atrocities that happen there, West Papua is seldom in the news. It sneaked onto the pages of the Guardian recently when Prince Andrew visited to support British extractive industries and several questions have been asked in the House of Commons.

Because British industry is very heavily involved in West Papua, now is a good time to increase the pressure on MPs and the media to ask awkward questions of the Indonesian government to shine a spotlight on what is happening there. To find out more, visit www.freewestpapua.org

Please e-mail the BBC, ITN, Channel 4 News, the NEWSPAPERS (national & local) to tell them you want them to start reporting news from West Papua. Please write with your own personal response to the current situation in West Papua -- or here's an idea of what you could say:

"Dear

I wonder how many of your viewers/listeners/readers could find WEST PAPUA on a map of the world? Most of us in Britain know about oppression in Burma, Tibet & Zimbabwe, but how many of us know that a million and a half indigenous West Papuans, on the western half of the island of New Guinea, just a few hundred miles north of Australia, are suffering under Indonesian military occupation? If you remember East Timor in the 1990's, you'll know exactly what I mean.

But if we haven't heard about West Papua, and I hadn't until recently, it's not our fault. Indonesia doesn't want us to know its dirty West Papua secret. It doesn't want us to know that it annexed West Papua via a sham referendum in which they forced a thousand Papuan elders at gun-point to vote to join Indonesia and that since then the brutal Indonesian military has wiped out at least 10% of the indigenous Melanesian population and tortured, raped and imprisoned countless others. That's why the Indonesian government doesn't allow foreign journalists permission to report from West Papua and that's why you may not have ever heard of West Papua -- until now.

And you may not also be aware that with the full support of the British, US and Australian governments, Western multi-nationals such as BP & Rio Tinto, are right there inside occupied West Papua extracting natural gas, copper & gold. They don't want us to know about West Papua either.

1 May 2008 marks a very grim anniversary: 45 years of Indonesia's illegal occupation of West Papua. For most of those 45 years, the Papuans' cry for freedom and justice has gone unheard by the outside world. It's time to start to put that right.

Even after 45 years, the Indonesian government still doesn't want us to know what they're doing in West Papua. The only way we will only ever find out is when (e.g. The Guardian, the BBC etc) starts to tell us the truth.

Yours"

Steve Atherton

Advance notice : A DYNAMIC PEACE MESSAGE FOR NOW

on Saturday 4th October at St Anthony of Padua, Queens Drive, Mossley Hill, L18 8AY

This celebration of the feast of St Francis of Assisi will use Franciscan materials from the West Papuan diocese of Jayapura. The main speaker will be Benny Wenda, the exiled leader of the Free West Papua movement in the UK. The south Liverpool area J&P grouping are organising this event.



CATHOLIC MIGRANTS: Opportunities and Challenges

Have you ever researched your family tree? For many, if not all of us, going back through the generations will reveal a mixed heritage that may encompass a wealth of nationalities and cultures. Discovering our roots gives us a sense of identity: it helps us see where we fit in the world around us; where we belong. But what if your identity is challenged; you are denied the right to live where you choose; you are made to feel that you do not belong and are not welcome in the place you want to stay? How do we, as Church, respond to these challenges if we are to take seriously Christ's dictum: "*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*"? These were some of the issues raised at a Conference on Catholic Migrants organised by the Manchester and North Cheshire Newman Association and attended by over 90 people on Saturday 19 April in Hale Barns, Altrincham.

The last two decades have seen some of the largest ever movements of people globally. Some are economic migrants in search of a better life for themselves and their families; others fear persecution in their homeland and are forced to flee. The response to this influx of people has not always been positive: indeed, for many there has been deep-rooted hostility and suspicion. In sharp contrast to this, scripture reveals God's love for the poor and for a people on the move. Jesus himself is portrayed both as a migrant and as someone who welcomes the stranger. As keynote speaker, Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue, Chair of the Bishops' Committee for Migrants 1993-2007, said: "We are called to welcome Christ in the migrant and to welcome the migrant like Christ." Bishop Patrick urged us to be alert; to read the signs of the times; to research the facts but also to be a people of action, extending the hand of friendship to the stranger.

The other keynote speaker, Francis Davis, Director of the Von Hügel Institute, Cambridge challenged us to a wider vision of the world: to see "the Church as much bigger than the local place where we live". He warned against mere "rhetorical solidarity" by the Church, calling for this to be matched with sound practical action. However, help and support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers must not be

left solely in the hands of the clergy, many of whom, he said, are already dangerously "stretched as tight as a piece of string across a large area". In a time of changing populations, lay people are called to ask: "Who is the local Church?" and "What are its needs?"

The Conference theme was '***The renewal of the Church in Britain through welcoming Catholic immigrants, serving their needs and accepting their gifts.***' A new document issued by the Bishops of England and Wales¹ calls for a "more visible culture of welcome" for migrants, who are now present in almost every parish. Francis Davis is currently working on a report on clergy responses to migrants and a comprehensive "mapping" of what services are already being offered to migrants by the Church. This report, due out in June, is on behalf of Caritas Social Action, an umbrella organisation for Catholic social care organisations working within England and Wales (020 7901 4875) www.caritas-socialaction.org.uk

¹ *The Mission of the Church to Migrants in England and Wales* is available to download at www.catholicchurch.org.uk Follow the link to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, click on International Affairs and then click on Migrants and Refugees.

What can we do?

Welcoming Catholic immigrants

- Look out for the stranger and make him or her feel welcome
- Celebrate an International Mass^{**}
- Involve all communities in the liturgy
- Put flags of different nations around the church
- Display notices in the Church porch in different languages
- Write "Welcome" in different languages around the church
- Say bidding prayers in different languages
- Produce the parish newsletter in different languages
- Hold Food Festivals to celebrate different cultures
- Invite parishioners, old and new, to shared Culture Evenings

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What can we do? continued

Serving their needs

- Get involved - help fill out forms, accompany migrants to appointments, etc.
- Provide leaflets in different languages with information about local churches, schools, doctor's surgeries, hospitals, job centres, etc.
- Set up English language classes for the families of new school entrants
- Offer courses for seminarians, clergy and pastoral workers
- Bring migrant and host communities together
- Break down barriers by sharing our stories
- Listen and learn from each other
- Initiate befriending schemes



Accepting their gifts

Bishop Patrick reminded us that St Paul speaks of the many gifts that make up the Body of Christ. Our new arrivals have a wealth of gifts to offer us:

- Symbols and devotional practices that add to the spiritual life of the Church
- A richness of different cultures and experiences
- The opportunity to experience a wider view of the world.

Discussing the opportunities

The wide-ranging afternoon workshops were followed by a question and answer session led by a panel comprising most of the workshop leaders and the two keynote speakers. A local Secondary Head explained how his school had quickly established new practices to serve a sudden influx of Polish children: employing a Polish-speaking Teaching Assistant; putting up signs in Polish and even translating exam papers into Polish to give those pupils an equal chance to succeed. A special Induction Day for new Polish pupils and a Polish Parents' Evening were also set up.

Sr. Martine related her father's story of eagerly coming from the West Indies to Liverpool during World

War II to help out "the Motherland" and receiving a cold welcome, a far cry from what he had expected. She urged us to share our histories and find out where people are coming from. "Listening to them will change you", she said.²

A discussion workshop perhaps encapsulated the closing mood of the Conference. The group decided that they had "moved full circle from discussing the challenges to discussing the opportunities."

We can all look for opportunities to extend the hand of friendship to a stranger. A participant told me that, inspired by the Conference, she spoke to the young woman next to her at Mass the following day, a lonely Polish au pair who was delighted to be invited into the church hall for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Anne O'Connor

** Two very successful International Masses with shared tables of International food have been held at St Vincent's Altrincham with a third planned for 6 July.

** The first Shrewsbury Diocesan International Mass will be held at All Saint's Sale in the late Autumn – look out for more details in the next edition of *MouthPeace* and contact Anne O'Connor 0161 980 8396, or anneoc980@hotmail.com if you would like to take part.

² An interesting idea from Scandinavia has recently been successfully pioneered in London. The Living Library encourages "readers" to "borrow" a person for a 30-minute conversation. Drawing on a "cast" of stereotypes, catalogued with the negative characteristics often attributed to them e.g. Social Worker ("naive"), Immigrant ("wasting resources"), Muslim ("beard"), etc, it hopes to break down barriers by offering space for people to share their stories. Describing the Living Library's aims, founder, Ronni Abergel, explained: "We work on the principle that extreme violence and aggression happens between people who don't know each other. So the Living Library can bring together people who are otherwise unlikely to meet. We want to show that not every Muslim wants to blow you up, not every policeman is a bully."

J&P groups could adapt this idea to bring migrants and existing parishioners together to help both sides learn more about each other's culture, hopes and dreams as a way of building community and countering ignorance and mis-information. This idea could also be adapted for use in a classroom context.



MuCAARD - UK

Following Joan Sharple's article, "News from Romy Tiongco – Mayor of Damulog" in the Spring 2008 issue of "Mouthpiece" I am very grateful for the opportunity to write something about MuCAARD – Muslim Christian Action for Advocacy Relief and Development.

Romy and Linda Tiongco were largely responsible for the establishment of MuCAARD – Inc. in the Philippines in 1984. MuCAARD is very much devoted to the vision of promoting sustainable development in the Philippines, particularly in four of the six poorest provinces in the country (IBON Facts and Figures 2007). This includes Damulog, which is the poorest town in the Province of Bukidnon Province. An essential element in this vision is the making of peace between groups, hitherto in conflict, such as the Muslim and Christian groups in Damulog. Joan's article referred to the work that Romy is doing in Damulog in peace-making.

MuCAARD- UK is a Charity registered in the UK in the last year and set up to support the work of MuCAARD in the Philippines. The first major project to be supported by MuCAARD-UK is the Kahoy Project designed to use land in the Damulog area which is more than 18° in slope and unsuitable for rice and corn farming. It is largely abandoned land and with the misuse and mismanagement of land resources, degradation like silting up of waterways, rivers, reservoirs, soil erosion, shortage of wood, and loss of biodiversity has resulted. Over 60% of the population in the area live below the poverty line and earn less than \$1 a day.

The aim of the project is to help to reduce the number of people earning less than \$1 a day / increase the income of the farmers, encourage planting permanent crops on slopes over 18° thereby decreasing soil erosion and protecting the watersheds. It is MuCAARD-UK's view that this project "ticks the right boxes" of a) assisting in the rural regeneration of a poor part of the world, b) helping in the work of reconciliation between groups in the area based in different cultural traditions, which have been in conflict in the past and c) is in tune with the environmental needs of the area and will contribute to the countering of global carbon emissions.

Robert Auld, a specialist in agro-forestry and a Trustee of MuCAARD-UK, has recently returned from a visit to the Philippines and has taken the opportunity to visit the site of the Kahoy project. Readers can get a flavour of this new sustainable development by visiting the MuCAARD website:

www.mucaard-uk.org/KahoyProject.aspx

MuCAARD-UK is committed to supporting a 3-year programme at an annual cost to the charity of around £6,000 +. The first year's budgeted figure has recently been remitted.

As an ongoing project, as most of the future projects are likely to be, the need for regular giving by standing order is needed. If you would like more information or to know how you can support MuCAARD-UK please contact Peter Linsey, 1st Floor Flat, 5 Grey Friars, Chester. CH1 2NW. Tel. 01244-320562 Email plinsey@gotadsl.co.uk

SUPERMARKET VOUCHER EXCHANGE SCHEME

Where do you do your weekly shopping? How do you choose which supermarket to use: proximity, price or range of goods? How much of your weekly shop do you do in small shops or markets? What would happen to these choices if you had no cash?

Asylum seekers who receive support under section 4 are given £35 each week in supermarket gift vouchers, and rarely have a choice of which vouchers they receive. **They do not receive any cash.**

As a result they often sell their vouchers for much less than the face value (the going rate is about £20) so that they can buy bus tickets to report to immigration centres, to telephone and to choose where to buy food.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Supermarket Vouchers Exchange scheme gives us the opportunity to buy vouchers from JRS which they have exchanged for cash at the face value with asylum seekers to enable them to buy other things they need. JRS are trying to develop a network of individuals and communities willing to buy regularly or occasionally vouchers from asylum seekers through the JRS office

ASDA & Tesco vouchers come as a gift card and these hold any unspent money on the card. The Sainsbury's vouchers are paper and no change is given with these so they are less convenient, especially for the asylum seeker.

Anyone who shops at ASDA, Tesco or Sainsbury's can help for just the cost of a stamp. Send a cheque of £35 made payable to Jesuit Refugee Service stating which supermarket voucher you would like to Jesuit Refugee Service, 6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP

“HEAR MY PEOPLE CRY”

National J & P Network Conference organised in conjunction with Liverpool J & P Commission

July 18 –20 at Hayes Conference Centre Swanwick Derbyshire

The theme is: living as Christians in our modern time, exploring what it means to “love tenderly, live justly, and walk humbly with God”. It will focus on the implications of “doing justice” in the places where we live.

THE SPEAKERS: John Battle MP, Dr Patrick Riordan SJ, Sr Margaret Scott ACI, Fr Tom Cullinan

Booking forms from Steve Atherton, Joan Sharples or www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Late booking ring 020 7901 4864

JUNE 21st is BIG TEAM DAY

Final planning for the Conference at Sacred Heart Church, Liverpool Road, Warrington.

Please come to this day if you would like to help at Swanwick

GOOD NEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE!

Environment Sunday (June 1st this year) is a good time to reflect on how well we are caring for the beautiful, varied and fragile creation which we enjoy. We're all aware of the concerns regarding climate change and the damage which may result to our environment as global temperatures rise. Sea levels will rise, seasons are changing, some species can adapt to change, whilst others cannot and may face extinction.

Each of us leaves a footprint on the earth – based on our lifestyles and what we consume during our daily lives. If that footprint is measured in terms of the amount of carbon we use up (in travel, heating, lighting, plastic, fertilisers for foods, and consumer goods) then about a third of the average personal carbon footprint comes from heating our homes. Its not often we hear good news concerning climate change but here is some!

The ‘Keep Shropshire Warm’ initiative, run by the Marches Energy Agency, will provide both cavity wall insulation and roof insulation free of charge to anyone over 70 years old or on benefits, and at low cost to anyone else. The work will be carried out within weeks with the minimum of hassle and paperwork.

Well-insulated houses keep in the heat that costs us so much to provide. This will lower fuel bills considerably and also reduce our personal carbon footprint, benefiting the environment. Saving money, saving hassle and caring for the environment – all just for a phone call.

Remember that a warm, well-insulated house will also be a cooler house during hot weather. Insulation works both ways – keeping heat inside a house in cold weather and keeping out too much heat during hot weather!!

Recent fuel price rises combined with poorly insulated homes mean there are thousands of people struggling to keep warm in our area during cold weather. Don't just keep this information to yourself. If you know anyone else who might benefit from this offer, be a good neighbour!! Tell them about this offer and if they would like advice and help, then phone ‘Keep Shropshire Warm’ on 01743 277123.

NB: Dr Isobel Carter from Keep Shropshire Warm was the speaker at the recent AGM of Churches Together in Shropshire. Our thanks to Ged Cliffe for supplying the article.

‘JUST FOR FUN’

J & P Commission Walk

SATURDAY 28 JUNE

Meet at 10.00am at the Beeston Castle Hotel car park (next to Beeston Market on the A 49). Enjoy a pleasant 5 mile stroll alongside the canal and on paths and byways in the Beeston countryside.

Please ring Tony Walsh (0151 355 6419) by 21st June if you wish to have a pub lunch at the end of the walk. Everyone is welcome!

LIVING THEOLOGY 2008

Understanding your everyday Christian Faith

A Summer School led by Jesuits and others

21 – 25 JULY at HOPE UNIVERSITY
(Everton Campus, Liverpool)

10 am—4 pm daily Cost £70 (subsidies available)

For more details and course booklet
contact Debbie Reynolds 0151 298 1911



PRISONERS SET FREE

I'd like you to think about miracles and our experiences of God. The Oxford English dictionary states that a miracle is a marvellous event due to some supposed supernatural agency. Can you believe that a 19 year old ex convict can tell you about not one but two miracles?

The experience that I had was in many ways like the parable of the lost son in Luke chapter 15. I'd like to tell you about a modern interpretation written by an American named Phillip Yancey.

A young girl grows up on a farm in Traverse City, Michigan. Her parents are a bit old-fashioned and tend to overreact to her nose ring, her music and the length of her skirts. They ground her a few times and she seethes inside. "I hate you" she screams at her father when he knocks on her door after an argument. That night she decides to run away from home.

She'd only ever been to Detroit once before, with her youth club to watch a football game. With its reputation for drugs, gangs and violence, she reckons that this would be the last place that her parents would look for her.

On her second day she meets a man who has a flash car and lots of money. He gives her a lift, buys her lunch and even gives her somewhere to stay. He also gives her something to make her feel better than she has ever felt before. She was right all along. Her parents were keeping her from all the fun.

For the next 12 months or so the good life continued. This man taught her what men like. She's underage and men pay a premium for her. Every now and then she thinks about her family but her old life seems like ancient history by now. She is shocked to see a picture of herself posted on a missing children's bulletin. But with her peroxide hair and body piercings, who is going to mistake her for a child now?

A few months later, the first signs of illness appear. She is amazed how the man kicks her out without a penny to her name. She still does a few tricks but her money goes on her habit. She has to try to sleep on the streets but as a teenage girl in downtown Detroit, she could never relax her guard.

One night she loses control and sobs like a lost child. Her pockets are empty, she's hungry and she's in desperate need of a fix. She eventually nods off and starts to dream an image of home. Spring blossom on the trees and her golden retriever dashing about chasing an old ball in the fields.

Why did I leave? The pain stabs at her heart. My dog eats better food than I do. She sobs and sobs and then realises that more than anything else she wants to go home.

Three times she rings, twice hanging up but on the third time she leaves a message on the machine. "Mum, Dad, it's me. I was hoping to come home. My bus gets in at midnight tomorrow. If you're not there don't worry. I might go on up to Canada."

She tries to prepare a speech for her father. "Dad, I'm sorry. It's not your fault but mine. Please forgive me, dad." Her throat tightens. She hasn't apologised to any-

one in years.

It's raining. The road is dark. She had forgotten how dark it was once you leave the city. A sign looms up. Traverse City 1 mile. This is it. With brakes hissing, the bus rolls into the station. "Traverse City, here we are," says the bus driver down the microphone.

She looks at her reflection in the bus window, licks off the lipstick stain on her teeth, and tries to smooth her hair. She wonders if her parents would see the nicotine stains on her fingers. She wonders if they are even there at all.

Nothing could have prepared her for the sight that met her at the bus station. There among the vending machines stood a group of brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles and even her grandparents, all wearing party hats and blowing on silly plastic hooters.

Through tear filled eyes she watches her parents break out of the crowd. "Dad, I'm sorry...Mum, I know I've..."

Her dad interrupts and says, "Hush, child. We've not time for that. No time for apologies. For you were lost, my child, and now you're found. You were dead but now you're alive."

A huge banner on the wall said "WELCOME HOME."

Just over ten years ago, on 20th February 1998, I lost two of my friends and a role model. My mum, Dianne, passed away. She was a great role model and she was also my best friend. Secondly, I lost God. By taking my mum it felt like God had betrayed me and my trust. As far as I was concerned he was the last thing I needed. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't understand how he had blessed me with such a wonderful mum only to take her away from me. Almost immediately I lost interest in God and had no plan to let him back into my life.

Then in 2006, I put that little bit of extra distance between God and me. On 9th February, after a heated argument with my dad, I viciously assaulted him, leaving him needing urgent medical attention. I'm in no way proud of what I did. In fact, I felt excruciating pain after I did it. Then in July 2006 I was incarcerated for my actions. For me, going to prison was less of a worry than throwing away a loving family. I thought I'd got off lightly getting a 22-month prison sentence. I didn't think it was a long enough sentence for my actions.

Going to prison is a huge reality shock for anyone, but for me it was a chance to take a step back and look at myself. I knew I had to change but I didn't know how. Three weeks into my sentence I was at the end of my tether. I couldn't cope. Prison wasn't for me. I know this may seem drastic but I no longer wanted to live. I was placed on suicide watch.

A few days later I decided I wanted to go down to the chaplain. I wasn't religious but I just had an uncontrollable desire telling me to go down. While I was in the chapel talking to a member of staff, I felt a warm feeling run through my body. It felt like someone had an arm round my shoulder but that was impossible because there were only two of us in the room. It really freaked me out. In that slight moment, all my worries just seemed to disappear.

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The weeks passed and I still had this unfamiliar feeling. It wasn't until about five weeks later that I realised what it was. I was in my cell reading a letter from one of my closest friends and he had enclosed a copy of the poem 'Footprints in the Sand.' I didn't understand why he had sent it me. Later that night, I read it over and over again and then it hit me that this was a sign from God, telling me that he was here with me, helping me and supporting me. I realised that God was telling me he wanted to play a part in my life.

In that slight moment I realised why my mum died when she did. I realized that God was doing my mum a favour. By taking her life he was saving her from her pain and suffering. He was helping her to be at peace. I instantly forgave God and it dawned on me for the first time that everything happens for a reason. We may not like what God does but at the end of the day we just have to trust him.

What amazes me was that after eight years of turning my back on God, he was the first to come to my aid when I was at my lowest. All along it was God that had kept me going and had stopped me from killing myself.

After a day or two I began to ask God for forgiveness for my sins. I also prayed for my dad. I prayed that God would look after my dad and help him to come to terms with what had happened and, somehow, to find it in his heart to forgive me.

One Wednesday morning early in December 2006, I had a visit from my caseworker. He told me that now, after ten months of being apart, my dad was ready to forgive me. I knew straight away that God had worked a miracle for me because whilst I was being sentenced in court the judge had read out a statement that my dad had given. It read "I no longer class or see Michael as my son and I don't want anything to do with him." And here we were arranging when my dad was going to give me the chance to try and build some bridges and most importantly to say sorry and to prove that I was actually sorry. It's OK saying that you're sorry but it's hard when you haven't said it to anyone and meant it for a long time. Saying it would be the easy part. Proving it was the challenge for me because I had so much to prove that I didn't know where to start.

LIFE IN A SHOWER OF SADNESS

*All this thanks to conflict,
now we are enshrouded in an unwanted abyss.
Of course none of us want it,
but over 2 million already dead,
we are simply a feast*

*Sadness, dejection and loneliness,
overcame peace love and laughter.
Overall we are showered in not just a mess,
but distress, anger and rancour.*

*Death tracking daggers pierce into my head,
making me unable to think.
Trapped in a cage of negative happenings make
me already feel dead.
But they suffer in silence but me, I am on the brink.*

Written by Emil Tansinda (age 10 years) in
St Margaret Ward School

Thanks to Fr Ned Wall for sending it.

On the 31st January 2007 my dad came to Hindley, where I was locked up. God gave us the courage to meet face to face. He also gave me the strength to apologise to my dad face to face and to ask for his forgiveness. I'm not lying when I tell you that this is the second most difficult thing I have ever done, second only to burying my mum. It honestly felt like I was a little child and someone was holding my hand whilst crossing a busy road. God was hand in hand with my dad and me, helping us both at this difficult time.

In my experience, God makes things seem easier while he's helping me through it, rather than me trying to go on my own. Without God's guidance, I had fallen off the right path and got sucked into the world of drugs, crime and alcohol. When I look back at the drug taking, I think it's ridiculous but at the time they were my problem solvers. I used to cope with my problems by blacking them out through drugs. I no longer feel the need for drugs. They are a waste of time and a waste of money.

Each and every one of us knows that God doesn't always do things that we like and we may turn our back on him. No matter how much we turn away from God, he will always welcome us back with open arms.

God has given me another chance to make something of my life. I know that I don't deserve it. It just shows that if we have God on our side, anything is possible. God is guiding me once more. He is my teacher and I am his pupil. I love God and he loves me; and only now do I realise that God has a plan for my life. This is true for all of us.

*"Lord, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us
from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our
hearts, our world, our universe. Amen."*

Michael Doyle

Michael was released from Hindley Prison in June 2007. He is still living at home with his dad, very happily, and studying for a degree in - wait for it - law!

* See the poem on www.footprints-inthe-sand.com

DON'T FORGET BURMA

My apologies for Maureen for inadvertently cutting a phrase out of her prayer in MouthPeace 61. As the people of Burma need our help and prayers even more today I am pleased to include the prayer in full this time.

Editor

Let us pray for the people of Burma
That their struggle for democracy may
be achieved without further bloodshed
and repression.
That these beautiful and gentle people
may not be stifled by hunger, poverty
and the forces of power against them.
That those who are refugees from their homeland
may soon be assured of a safe repatriation.
And that the children and young people of Burma may
grow up in a land that respects the value of all its people.

Written by Maureen Matthews after her visit to Burma
with CAFOD in 1998



PURE GOLD?

CAFOD's new **Unearth Justice** photographic exhibition reveals the truth behind the glamour of gold through striking images and accounts from three continents.



Many of us will have taken actions to improve conditions for communities involved in gold mining but now you can see the reality in the Democratic Republic of Congo – where gold mining has contributed to a cycle of violence and poverty.

Hear the voices of communities in Honduras whose water supplies have been poisoned.

Meet the indigenous people fighting backing the Philippines after seeing their sacred mountain destroyed to make way for a gold mine.

Visit the exhibition and discover how you can help turn gold from a curse into a blessing in the countries where it is mined. It is in the Liverpool Archdiocese on:

Monday 30th June at St Augustine's Catholic College, Boardmans Lane, St Helens, 6.30—8 pm

Free entry. Light refreshments will be served

“This exhibition can have an impact on those who manufacture gold and who buy it, so that people from the place where it is mined will be justly and fairly treated.”

Monsignor Dieudonné Uringi Uuci Bishop and mining campaigner from Democratic Republic of Congo

THE OTHER FACE OF CHINA

China is putting on a celebratory face for the Olympics and a caring face in coping with the devastation of the recent earthquake. But those who know China well are still conscious of the darker face that the government tries to hide. To help raise our awareness and prompt us into action.....

Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) in its Spotlight on the Beijing Olympics is monitoring human rights issues.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (www.csw.org.uk) in its Countries of Focus—China tells of religious freedom standards being routinely ignored and various forms of persecution of Christians.

National J & P Network (www.justice-and-peace.org) in its Latest Information has a news item and photograph of Chinese soldiers getting ready to change into monks clothes and provoke violence during the protests in Lhasa (Tibet) in March

NEW BOOKS

THE POVERTY & JUSTICE BIBLE

We all know there are many verses in the Bible that inspire us and would be helpful to us in our work – but how many and where are they? The members of the Bible Society have recently brought out an edition of the Contemporary English Version of the Bible that highlights in orange over 2,000 verses revealing God's heart for the poor and oppressed.

It also includes a unique 32-page guide with in-depth studies from equality to education, wages to water and practical suggestions on what to do next. It builds on issues raised by influential Christians and public figures including Bono, Rob Bell, Jim Wallace and Tony Campolo.

Available on line from www.thebiblesociety.org.uk

PLANETWISE by Dave Bookless, £7.99

“I was in the act of throwing away my family's rubbish while holidaying on a beautiful island when I heard God speak: ‘How do you think I feel about what you are doing to my world?’” Since that day, Dave Bookless has been on a mission: to share with others the compelling biblical case for caring for the planet God made for his glory and his people's enjoyment.

This is not another book on green issues to make you feel guilty. There is hope. God can take your small and insignificant efforts and multiply them in his great plan. Besides honouring him, living simply can be an exciting adventure. Available online from <http://en.arocha.org.uk>

NB: A Rocha UK is part of A Rocha International which is a Christian charity which is passionate about the planet. A Rocha has a practical presence in some 16 countries on all 5 continents and is expanding rapidly. The work started 25 years ago with a field study on a threatened site in Portugal, where A Rocha means "The Rock"



RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Youth Bible *'The Word on the Street'* by Rob Lacey, his reworking of the New Testament *'The Liberator'* and his practical handbook *'Street Life'* (in collaboration with Nick Page) are well worth using with groups (all available from www.wesleyowen.com 0800 83 43 15). *'Street Life'* examines a wide range of issues that are relevant to young people in a lively, easily accessible style that's great for generating discussions.

For a fast-moving and challenging re-telling of the gospel David Rhodes' *'Sparrow Story'* is hard to beat. The story is set in a place of military occupation, oppression and rebellion with characters from the original gospel, but in new clothes, driving fast cars and drinking cold beers. And maybe a few of them are carrying guns. Find out who shot Johnny Palotski – and why he carried on making trouble for the authorities long after he was dead and gone. Meet the evil Mr Mammon and discover why the greatest story in the world is told by a sparrow. (available from Turbulent Books 0845 345 3964 www.turbulentbooks.co.uk).

Another useful resource, full of scripture passages, prayers and reflection is *'How to Survive the Rest of your Life: a Practical User's Guide'* by Dermott Donnelly and Gerard Conroy (available from Pauline Books& Media www.pauline-uk.org 01753 577629)

Currently featured on Pax Christi's excellent youth page www.paxchristi.org.uk/YoungPeacemakers - *'Illegal Attacks'* by Ian Brown (formerly of the Stone Roses) with Sinead O'Connor is a very powerful anti-war video – available to download from www.youtube.com or via www.stopwar.org.uk which has a selection of other videos (also to be found on you tube) including James Blunt's *'No Bravery'* and Edwin Starr's *'War, What is it Good For? (Absolutely Nothing)'*. A PowerPoint presentation to *'No Bravery'* using images of war and destruction is available on request, plus several others on justice and peace topics (email:youthmatters@hotmail.co.uk)

Four young people, Emma Atherton, Reggie Doherty, Daniel Hayes and Claire Linford, from St John Fisher RC School in Wigan, made a trip to the Pax Christi Peace House in Florence in April as the award winners of the 2008 Pax Christi European Peace Contest. There they met other young people who participated in the contest from Portugal, France and Belgium. Their challenge was to create a film or PowerPoint to increase awareness of the link between peace and the environment and of how we can help build peace by living more sustainably and sharing the world's resources. Commenting on the winning entry, *'A little piece of peace'*, Hilary Topp, the Peace Education worker for Pax Christi said: "A little piece of peace shows how complex issues of poverty, peace, the environment, and global warming are all linked and suggests practical ways that all of us can build a more peaceful world."

Emma and Claire, two members of the team from St John Fisher Catholic High School in Wigan said: "We feel inspired! Inspired by the other teams' videos, inspired by the stories of Giovanni Scudiero, (exec member of Pax Christi International) the other teams and the people who live at Casa per la Pace. It shows that no matter where you are from you can communicate, understand one another, teach one another and most importantly break bread together. We feel as though everybody has the potential to change the world!"

The winning entry is available to download from www.paxchristi.org.uk/YoungPeacemakers

Anne O'Connor

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION CENTRES

Cheshire Development Education Centre promotes an understanding of and a respect for the lives of everyone in order for us all to contribute and actively participate in the development of a fair society, which celebrates diversity and difference and our global interdependency.

Through its work the centre contributes to:

Developing understanding of global issues	Promoting understanding of		
loco-global interdependence	Challenging stereotypes	Developing positive attitudes	Taking action

There are centres at Chester, Winsford, Halton and Macclesfield and a new one recently opened in Warrington (on the community floor of the Halliwell Jones Stadium (Thursday 12-5 term time only) For more details of all the Cheshire centres see www.cheshiredec.org

There are similar resources at:

The Liverpool World Centre
The Alima Centre,
35 Sefton Street,
Liverpool L8 5SL t:0151 708 6515

Bridges DEC
The Studios, Mansell Rd,
Wellington, Shropshire TF1 1QQ
t: 01952 255526 f: 01952 247158
e: info@shropshirebridges.org.uk
w: www.shropshirebridges.org.uk

Manchester Development Education
Project c/o Manchester Metropolitan
University, 799 Wilmslow Rd,
Didsbury, Manchester M20 2RR
t: 0161 921 8020 f: 0161 921 8010
e: info@dep.org.uk



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JUNE

7 Contacts Day 12—4 St Anne's Prescot Rd. Ormskirk L39 4GT in the main hall. A look at ways of developing J & P involvement in the new Pastoral Areas

7 World Environment Day www.unep.org/wed

8 Campaign Against Arms Trade Christian Network Day of Prayer 020 7281 0297

9 'Restorative Justice' Speaker Charles Perryman—Newman Association St Theresa's Wilmslow. Eucharist 7.30 pm Talk 8.15 pm Visitors welcome Chris Quirke 0161 941 1707

10 'Global humanitarian crises - their effects on the UK' Asylum Link Merseyside. For venue & time contact Dr J O'Neill, 0151 709 1713

16—22 Refugee Week Refugee Council 020 7346 6752 (see p7 for voucher scheme)

21 Big Team Day Final planning for Swanwick (for details see page 7)

22 Coffee Afternoon - raising funds for CAFOD. 2.00 - 5.00 p.m. at High Legh Village Hall, near Warrington, on the A50 opposite High Legh Garden Centre. Contact Maureen Garnett 01925 267973.

28 'Just for Fun' J & P Walk (for details p7)

30 CAFOD'S 'Pure Gold' exhibition in St Helens (for details see p11)

JULY

6 Day for Life The day in the Church's year dedicated to celebrating the sacredness of life—will focus this year on the theme of mental health. It will help raise awareness of the needs of those affected by mental ill-health, their friends, their family and their carers, and the

support that the parish community can bring. www.dayforlife.org

13 Sea Sunday www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

18—20 'Hear my people cry' National J & P Conference at Swanwick arranged by Liverpool Diocese, see page 7

21– 25 Living Theology 2008 Summer School at Hope University see page 7

AUGUST

6 & 9 Anniversaries of the first use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima & Nagasaki Contact Pax Christi 020 8203 4884 www.paxchristi.org.uk

SEPTEMBER

14 Racial Justice Sunday Contact CARJ (Catholic Association for Racial Justice) 020 8802 8080 www.carj.co.uk

14 Shrewsbury Diocese Racial Harmony Mass 'A Banquet for all people' 2.30 pm St Anne's Pillory Street, Nantwich CH5 5SS

21 Global Ceasefire Day Peace One Day 020 7456 9180 www.peaceoneday.org

30 Bishop Declan & Mary Colwell at LACE Croxteth Drive Sefton Park Liverpool L17 1AA

ADVANCE NOTICE:

4 OCTOBER Benny Wanda: speaker from West Papua (see p 3 for details)

8 NOVEMBER Faith & Justice Day - to reflect on the environment with Stephen Hoyland from the Loyola Hall Spirituality team. Loyola Hall Warrington Road, Rainhill, Prescot 0151 426 4137

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

www.archdiocese-of-liverpool.co.uk

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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