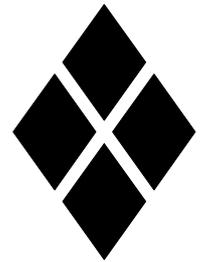


MOUTH PEACE



Shrewsbury and Liverpool Justice and Peace Commissions

Winter 2008/9



OPERATION NOAH ADVENT PRAYER

*We reclaim this Holy Season – your gift to us:
a poor, humble child in a stable
– this is your idea of wealth, Creator God –
to be surrounded by loved ones and animals in a lowly
barn under the limitless stars of the clear night sky.*

*So this Advent: we turn our back on waste,
on excess and destruction,
We vow to build up lives of simplicity,*

*To use our gifts to nourish each other in loving
Community as sisters and brothers,
And to put the “waiting back into wanting.”
Amen*

POVERTY ACTION WEEK PRAYER

*Just and merciful God,
you listen with compassion to the voices
of those with burdens of poverty and homelessness.*

*Open our ears to the voices from the edge,
And in them may we hear your voice.*

*Guide us with your Spirit to act justly,
that poverty and homelessness will be ended
for all your children.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

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Issue 64



Sue Bownas writes:

As we approach Advent, the season which gives centre stage to three key figures: the Prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary, the Mother of our Saviour, we are called to action, to "Make the Word Flesh" and "Shine a Light in the Darkness." Can we respond to this call and to the many people for whom the coming weeks will bring isolation, pain, suffering and continuing struggle?

The successful "Pure Gold?" Exhibition at The Catholic High School Chester focussed on the struggle of three communities against governments and powerful organisations. The exhibition highlighted recent struggles, but as we write each of these communities is facing new crises and is calling for our help through action.

For the thousands of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who have been forced to leave their homes yet again to seek safety on the road, our prayers and help are urgently needed. Can you be generous this Advent?

In Honduras, the people are facing a repeat of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Continuous heavy rain has washed away homes, roads, bridges, and destroyed around 50% of crops. As if this was not enough, the communities in the Siria Valley (where Gold Corp are mining for gold) now face further anxiety. The vast lakes of cyanide contaminated water, produced by the mining process, are in danger of overflowing, after the heavy rains and winds. If the lakes overflow onto nearby lands there will be further pollution of the water table, soil and crops.

We have shown our solidarity with these people in the past. Can we do so again?

Whilst in Macambol in Mindanao in the Philippines people also wait in trepidation as the world's largest mining company Billiton continues to make plans to develop a nickel mine and processing plant. For the local people, who rely on fishing and farming to support them, the mine threatens their very way of life. The arrival of mining has created deep division and unease in this formerly close-knit community. They doubt whether mining can lead to sustainable development and fear that it will displace people from their homes and lands; pollute rivers and seas with waste and cause irreversible loss of biodiversity.

These are just three communities waiting
Waiting in fear... Waiting in hope...

Can we hear their call ?

Can we bring them hope through our prayers and support?

CAFOD offers practical ways of supporting these communities this Advent.

Please can you:

- give generously to the Congo Crisis Appeal
- take action to call on the Pension and Mining companies to behave responsibly.
- organise a community action "To shine a light in the darkness" for the people of Macambol and
- show solidarity by praying for justice and peace?

For details of all these actions please look at

www.cafod.org.uk

Or phone Sue or Liz on 01244 677594

LIVERPOOL CAFOD FUN RUN Saturday 27th December 2008

Mike Merriman CAFOD Fun Run Co-ordinator writes:

I've been involved with the Fun Run for the past 24 years – never as a runner I might add! In 1983 I volunteered to help with car parking at Upholland Seminary and then was promoted to be the designer and poster of signs around the course. Now I find myself as the Fun Run Coordinator.

It has always been great fun on the day seeing hundreds of participants taking the opportunity to support CAFOD whilst enjoying the exercise and fresh air and trying to remove the excesses of food and drink consumed over the Christmas holiday. To date this event has raised over £380,000.

Families, parish and schools groups, and individuals young and old have been the backbone of the support for the run over the years. The run has developed into a good 'day out' with plenty of atmosphere from stalls, live jazz music and lovely hot refreshments including excellent changing facilities and HOT SHOWERS !

I would greatly encourage any of you who we haven't seen for a while to please come back - don't worry if you can't run any more you can take a leisurely walk around the course. You may also like to be reunited with people who you befriended during your years at previous runs.

I am delighted to say that Rob J Collier, aka Liam Connor star of Coronation Street, has agreed to be our official starter once again.

Please phone me on 0151 228 4028 if you would like any more details otherwise I hope to see you on Saturday at The Mystery, Wellington Road, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 4LE .

CAFOD QUIZ NIGHTS

Fridays 16th January, 13th February & 6th March 2009

at Our Lady's Parish Centre Ellesmere Port. 7.30 pm All money raised goes to CAFOD's Focus Africa project. For further details contact Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419

NEW PRIORITIES FOR LIVERPOOL J&P COMMISSION

Steve Atherton writes:

Liverpool J&P Annual Assembly used the model of the Pastoral Cycle to look at our current situation and decide what actions we should concentrate on in the coming year.

The day moved between theory and practice, emphasizing that our experience forms our opinions and that these opinions need to lead us into actions. Fr Arthur Fitzgerald described the result of using the See – Judge – Act model in his parish and then everyone present was invited to share their concerns, first in small groups and later with the whole Assembly. After this sharing of ideas, people were invited to decide which of the topics should form the content of the rest of the day. Five concerns were chosen, people put themselves in to groups and planning began for turning these opinions into action, emphasizing that we should take on 'bite-size' tasks. The day ended with a reflection from Fr Tom Cullinan.

The Commission meeting the following week endorsed the priorities and the Commission now has five new working groups.

1. JPIC / *livesimply*: This group has communicated through emails and has reached the following stage.

- The Commission has a role of celebrating our links with creation via our public events and by taking the message to parish groups. In celebrating these links we should be proclaiming the gift of creation, the need for justice for all creation, and the interdependence of all areas of creation.
- The Commission should be adequately resourced to allow Commission members to make presentations to parish groups.
- The Commission should act as liaison across the Archdiocese between groups that are working in these areas. The meeting has been arranged to plan how to take this forward.

2. Israel – Palestine: the group has been busy electronically and is gathering friends and allies to prepare a working strategy. Dates have been arranged for two meetings. The starting point is:

A Set Of Targets That We Could Realistically Achieve, e.g.:

- A talk in a church in at least two Pastoral Areas, or
- An article in MouthPeace, or a stall at an event, or
- A meeting with an MP, or
- An overnight vigil in Holy Week, or
- Some other goal that we can plan for.

Consulting: Liverpool Friends of Palestine; Friends of Sabeel(UK)

3. Debt: Our tasks for now are to fact find and correlate the information about what is actually happening locally. We do not want give ourselves an impossible task or become ineffective. One meeting has been held The starting point here was also: A Set Of Targets That We Could Realistically Achieve e.g.

- Finding out what is needed in local areas.
- Find out what is available to people in debt.
- Find out which agencies are offering help at the moment.
- Where to place posters advertising help?
- What info goes on the poster?
- Point towards Listening Services e.g. "Listening Ear".
- Poster "It's ok to downsize Christmas".
- Possible "Roadshow".

Consulting: MPs; Councillors; CAP; Listening Ear; CAB; Board of Social Responsibility

4. Supporting CAFOD's CLIMATE CHANGE campaign '09:

Discussions have begun with CAFOD campaigns team about a regional launch for the project in late spring '09, possibly with world-music and visiting partners at a large central venue in Liverpool

5. CONNECTIONS: Communication within parishes and pastoral areas; leadership; resources; identification of people; training.

- Build on the work done with the Craighead Institute
- Improve J&P communications in all Pastoral Areas
- Give leadership and information on social justice issues within Pastoral Areas

NEW TEAM FOR LIVERPOOL J&P :

Chair: Austin Kirwan Vice-chair: Rosemary Turner Secretary: Denise Parker



NOAH TODAY

Fran Butler from Ellesmere Shropshire writes:

I am no scientist, but various snippets of information that have been stored away in my brain have been connecting themselves up in my thinking over the last week. They concern how we treat our neighbour.

I remember a TV programme about a year ago: it was about how, during the last ice age, when so much water was frozen, the North Sea / English Channel area was dry land from the Humber all around to the Isle of Wight. When the ice sheets melted, the sea level rose once more, and all the people who had been living off those low level hunting grounds of the North Sea were displaced and had to move to higher ground, as Britain became, once more, an island.

That warming up time also brought great changes to our part of the country. Before that ice-age the Severn came down from the Welsh hills and flowed north to meet up with the Dee. When things warmed up the retreating glaciers left behind our humpy-bumpy landscape of hills and meres, a countryside which blocked the Severn in, creating a huge lake, between here and Welshpool. Eventually the pressure of water discovered the weak point at Ironbridge and broke through what is now the Severn Gorge, and the Severn as we know it today, flowing south, came into existence. The torrent of water, as the lake escaped, must have been a scary event for those who lived in its path, although since temperatures had been so cold, presumably there were not many folk around here at that time.

The saga of the great flood, which the Bible tells as the Noah story, comes into many ancient cultures. The story must have been triggered by some cataclysmic event. I remember another programme on the TV suggesting the flood story came from a build up of water in the Mediterranean, which then burst through the Bosphorus, flooding the low lying area which is now the Black Sea. Maybe that too was a consequence of rising temperatures and the melting of glaciers throughout southern Europe, just like Shropshire experienced.

I speculate that, with such an increase of liquid water, there would have been changes in rainfall patterns, just as we, now, are noticing changes to our usual seasonal weather. Long ago people would have interpreted these changes in climate as being punishment from the gods – that was how they thought. Today science can explain for us what is going on, about the build up of CO₂ in the atmosphere and the effect this is having on global weather patterns.

In the past people created stories to explain what was happening, so today there will be people who do not understand what is happening to the climate; they just know it has changed. In Bangladesh people live with the daily experience of flooding from

rising sea levels, elsewhere others live in fear of disturbed weather patterns bringing hurricanes, cyclones and tsunamis, and yet others watch as their land dries up, their crops fail and, as the deserts extend, their cattle, and families, starve. These are the effects of today's rising average temperatures.

Scientists have calculated that the average temperature has risen by 0.7°C over the last 150 years; a rise of 2°C will have a catastrophic effect on our globe.

It is relatively easy to be a Christian and lend a practical hand to our real neighbour. We can notice an individual's need and respond.

It is relatively easy to dig in our pockets and donate cash to those who are struggling to find food or schooling or medical care in far flung parts of the world.

It is much harder to notice the social sin of our own life-styles and make the connection that how I live here is causing flooding, or drought, in other parts of the world.

It is harder still to pluck up the courage to look critically at how I live, and to make changes, which seem sacrificial, in order to stop destruction that I am not noticing.

But my neighbour is not only the person I stumble across on the road to Jericho, he is also the person whose home and livelihood is being destroyed by rising temperatures, and with whom I have no personal contact.

In our not very Christian society we are being urged to 'cut our carbon' because it will save us money (very true); we are being urged to 'cut our carbon' to save our planet ... and thereby our lives (which is all a bit too remote for us to connect to). The message that our actions are having difficult consequences for other people in the developing world is not one which fits easily into our individualistic, consumer oriented, culture, but it is the Christian message.

The wealthier countries, like the UK, have a moral responsibility:

- To cut their carbon emissions: the figure being talked about is by 80% before 2050.
- To support poor countries as they develop in a 'carbon-clean' manner
- And to develop new, carbon neutral technologies which will pave the way for future life.

In order to look out for the widow, the orphan and the foreigner, to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves, we need to pray, to pray with the newspaper in one hand (or the TV going in one eye and ear) and the Bible in the other, mulling over what we read and hear until, as I did last week, we make new and meaningful connections... and then we need the courage to check those ideas out with others to see that they hold water. *Contd.*

ETHICAL INVESTMENT

Early in October I attended a seminar in Manchester on Ethical Investing. It was put on by the **ECUMENICAL COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY** (ECCR) on "Faith, Values and Business". ECCR was founded in 1989. About 70 faith organisations are members; but not all faith group members are Christian, and ECCR also welcomes those of no faith.

ECCR campaigns for corporate and investor responsibility in companies and the churches; it campaigns for companies to publish social accounts which would include subjects such as water sustainability and extractive practices. ECCR asks the question "UK companies trading internationally – are they exploitative or do they help international development?"

An ECCR researcher focussed on water sustainability: it is predicted that by 2020-25 20-25% of the world's population will be in water-threatened areas. Water is going to provoke conflict increasingly. ECCR identified industry in the developed world using 25% of all water. In the developing world agriculture takes 70% of all water. Her conclusion: responsible water use is a corporate responsibility. The ECCR researcher urged faith groups to raise awareness and engage with companies.

Next a speaker, from **TRAIDCRAFT EXCHANGE** (a charity set up by Traidcraft for research, campaigning and training programmes for producers) focussed on responsible purchasing; she highlighted the problem of gang labour in the UK. The Competition Commission in 2008 found evidence of UK food retailers abusing buying power, pushing the risks down the supply chain. Traidcraft Exchange proposes an Ombudsman for supply chain relations; a public policy and a level playing field (Traidcraft PLC was the first PLC to publish social accounts).

Another interesting contribution was given by a speaker from **OIKOCREDIT**, a worldwide co-operative society founded in 1975 to help small producers with a combination of fair trade and microfinance. Oikocredit is stronger in Europe than GB. It has 30,000 investors, operates microfinance in 68 countries reaching 619,763 clients; but they estimate that their work helps 10 million people.

Oikocredit's costs are only 2.4% of total assets and in 33 years have only lost 10% of their total lending. 65% of the clients getting these small loans are women. Oikocredit believes microfinance breaks the cycle of poverty. In this they endorse the philosophy of Nobel Prize Winner Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh who set up the Grameen Bank making small loans to poor people, overwhelmingly women. Mohammad Yunis is quoted as saying "it was not that poor people are not credit-worthy but that banks are not people worthy."

Altogether, a stimulating ½ day – it would have been good to have had more time. Anyone interested in more information about ECCR should contact Helen Boothroyd, their Church and Membership Relations Officer, on 01325 580028 or helenboothroyd@eccr.org.uk

Kath Stephenson Chester World Development Forum Oct 08

Editor's note: The next issue of MouthPeace will continue to explore the theme of ethical investment with an article about the co-operative lending society "Shared Interest". See also the Diary listing for the event at Hoole URC on 3rd March.

NOAH TODAY continued

We need to support those who struggle with charity
But we also need to work for justice, campaigning for change, and changing our own lives – finding the splinter in our own eyes, rather than observing the plank in the eyes of others. Life is a communal experience – we are dependent upon each other – we need to support one another – and then God's Kingdom will grow.

Join in Christian Aid's "Count down to Copenhagen" campaign which urges our government to commit to the real changes that are needed:
www.christianaid.org.uk/climatechange

Discover more about climate change and the Church's social teaching with Operation Noah:
www.operationnoah.org

And if you are bold enough, take a look at your own life. In Ellesmere, Churches Together, with the Marches Energy Agency (mea.org.uk), have run carbon footprinting workshops. Following a session with Ellesmere Wildlife trust a new group has been formed, Ellesmere Going Green, to carry this work forward.

How might your community take this forward? Individually we tire; working collectively sparks energy which propels us forwards. Fran Butler Nov. 08

Are you an internet campaigner?

The site www.snopes.com/inboxer/petition/internet.asp raises some important issues:

- Are the campaigns based on accurate information?
- Is the email directed to the right person?
- Will the recipient send all bulk emails directly to a junk folder?
- Will the recipient open the email?

I'm still convinced that letters have more impact than emails.

Steve Atherton



COMBATING POVERTY

Launched in September 2008 GET FAIR is a national campaign calling for an end to poverty in the UK by 2020. Already, more than 50 organisations have joined the coalition which is being coordinated by Church Action on Poverty. By uniting the voices of children and older people's organisations, refugee and disabled groups, housing groups, faith and community groups already working to alleviate poverty, it is hoped the GET FAIR message will be heard loud and clear.

Its aims are: - To mobilise public opinion to support action to tackle poverty in the UK.

- To secure the commitment of all major political parties to deliver on their existing commitment to end child poverty by 2020 and to extend this goal to ending poverty across all the generations in the UK by 2020.

The campaign will draw on fundamental human rights principles of equality, dignity and respect for everyone living in the UK, at all life stages, having:

- A decent, adequate income.
- The right not to be marginalized or excluded from society.
- Equal opportunities and fair access to services.
- Neighbourhoods that secure health and wellbeing.



There are some simple ways you can get involved:



Sign up! Visit the GET FAIR website www.getfair.org and sign up to receive updates and actions by email.

Find out more and spread the word Download the campaigner's briefing. It provides some background on the issues, and can be used to sign up as a GET FAIR campaigner. Pass it on to your friends, your church, and anyone else who's interested.

POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS ACTION WEEK 31 January - 8 February 2009

After the first ever Poverty & Homelessness Action Week in 2008, the three partners behind the project - Church Action on Poverty, Scottish Churches Housing Action and Housing Justice - have been busy laying the foundations of PHAW 2009. This is a unique, annual opportunity for churches, church groups and others to raise the profile of poverty, housing and homelessness related issues within local churches and the wider community. To help this process PHAW have produced a hard-hitting piece of documentary drama: *Voices from the Edge*. Based on genuine testimonies from people experiencing poverty and exclusion, the *Voices from the Edge* script will be used in local events up and down the UK, raising awareness of the deprivation that exists in our midst. Download the script and other resources free from www.actionweek.org.uk



- Run a church service on Homelessness Sunday (1 February) or Poverty Action Sunday (8 February) using extracts from *Voices from the Edge*.
 - Put on a public performance of *Voices from the Edge* in your school, church or project.
 - Come along to a professional performance of *Voices from the Edge* – or help us to organise one in your area!
 - Encourage your church to get involved; uncover the reality of hidden poverty or homelessness in your community; celebrate what is already going on locally; make new links with others working on the same issues.
- For more information, see www.church-poverty.org.uk and www.housingjustice.org.uk

HELPING THE HOMELESS

Sofa Surfers Variety Night Friday 23rd January

The Salvation Army Oakengates is currently organising its 4th Sofa Surfers Variety Night in aid of the Kip Homelessness Project—part of The Salvation Army, Oakengates, Telford. They are looking for musicians from local churches to take part and would appreciate hearing from anyone interested. They are looking in particular for those playing string and wind instruments to join with a variety of other artists in taking part free of charge to support this vital work with the homeless in the borough of Telford and Wrekin.

The event is to be held at The Salvation Army Halls in Lion St Oakengates at 7pm. Admission will be by donation ticket (£3 or a family ticket for £6) All those interested are invited to contact Alan on 01952 256 007

"Voices from the Edge" Wednesday 28th January

The Romiley Methodist Circuit with Marple Sixth Form College is hosting a performance of "Voices from the Edge" by the students at 7.30pm. at The Buxton Lane campus, Marple. The drama will be followed by discussion/questions with a panel of representatives from Wellspring, Church Action against Poverty & a local councillor. Refreshments will be available and an exhibition of appropriate materials. A collection for the work of Wellspring (www.thewellspring.co.uk) For more information contact Graham Hawley 0161 449 5647.



PEACE MATTERS

PEACE SUNDAY 18 January 2009

The theme for 42nd World Day of Peace message by Pope Benedict XVI is: **Combating Poverty: Building Peace**



This theme highlights the need for the human family to find an urgent response to the serious questions of poverty, seen as a material problem but above all as a moral and spiritual one... "The scandal of poverty reveals the inadequacy of current systems of human coexistence in promoting the realisation of the common good. This imposes the need for reflection on the deep roots of material poverty and, consequently, also on the spiritual poverty that makes man indifferent to the suffering of others."

PAX CHRISTI PEACE CHALLENGE is an annual competition for young people age 15 –18 (Year 10 and above). Peace Challenge '09 asks "What do you think about conflict and violence? How do they affect young people? How are you and your friends making a difference? Here is a chance for young people to get their voices heard, learn new skills, and work together to make a positive difference. The winning team will join others from across Europe at the Pax Christi Peace House in Italy. See www.paxchristi.org

I CAN Can you?

Bruce Kent Vice Chair of Pax Christi writes: ICAN - the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons - has just issued an attractive little leaflet which shows someone on a mountain top looking out into the distance. The text reads "I can see a world with NO nuclear weapons. Can you?"

In about twenty months the next review conference of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty will start in New York. ICAN has produced a text of a draft abolition treaty. It runs to over 60 pages and it covers all the contentious issues.

You and I are not negotiators. Our job is to build up the public pressure to get negotiations started. There is already a petition text in the name of CND and MEDACT. The Japanese hope for millions of signatures and why not? Getting them should be a push-over in our Church. The current Pope has called nuclear weapon policies fallacious and baneful. The right wing, political and clerical, always said that what they really wanted was abolition by negotiation. Well that road is now wide open. All of us should be able to take it.

Please look up ICAN (www.icanw.org) for more information and material. Get hold of some petition forms and make sure your Bishop, Parish Priest, MP, local Councillors, representatives of CAFOD and Friends of the Earth, are all asked to sign.

The full text of Bruce Kent's article is on the front of Pax Christi's latest newsletter. (October 2008)
Details of all the above and resources for Peace Sunday are on www.paxchristi.org

The reason we still have nuclear weapons deployed on our behalf is that most people think it is a good idea. And these are good people - many of them good Christians - failing to see any inconsistency in their position. We need vigorous campaigning and sound arguments; but the place to resolve the problem is in peoples minds.

This is the basis for the **Morality of Nuclear Deterrence Flowchart**. It is a simple and logical way for people to face all the questions and the consequences. Individuals or groups can take up this challenge and then take it to decision makers in Government - their thought processes will be exposed to a logical scrutiny.

When people can see for themselves, then the world will change.

Download a copy from www.nuclearmorality.com

Contact Martin Birdseye at 077 6264 6895 or martin@nuclearmorality.com

This is an ongoing project. Martin will be happy to hear from anyone who can contribute to development and promotion. He is available for workshops and talks.

'BETHLEHEM SPEAKS: VOICES FROM THE LITTLE TOWN CRY OUT' by Garth Hewitt

A singer, songwriter, Director of the Amos Trust & a Canon of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, Garth in this new book tells of the 'living stones' of Bethlehem, peacemakers from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities and those who are not necessarily religious. The 'little town of Bethlehem' has shrunk in the last few years without people even noticing. There has been ethnic cleansing of the indigenous community and a struggle for human rights; the amazingly resilient community can take no more. Its raw wound is an indication of the lack of balance and wisdom in the way the West has responded to the cry for justice. The book ends with a look at why fundamentalists claim the Holy Land and suggests that there might be another way forward. £9.99

Following the launch of Garth's book this August he has produced a CD/DVD of songs for and about Bethlehem. £7.99 Available on line from www.books.ekklesia.co.uk and www.crossrhythms.co.uk



PEACEMAKING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Editor: Before giving an update it may be helpful to fill in some background. Romy Tiongco, known to us for his valuable work with Christian Aid and the J & P Commission, was persuaded to return to his native Philippines where in May 2007 he was elected Mayor of Damulog, a town in the Bukidnon region. During the last 40 years the area has been volatile due to what has been called 'Muslim-Christian' conflict. **Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)** is a Muslim separatist rebel group which is active in the area. There have been sporadic outbreaks of fighting but in between peace has never been firmly established. Romy when elected thought it was time to try some other strategies – pursuit of justice, delivery of services and empowerment of peoples, especially those who have been marginalized for a long, long time. The following extracts from his letters are interesting in revealing the slow patient process needed to build peace.

Starting to build a Peace Zone

In August 08 Romy attended a meeting of the Mayors' League of Bukidnon. The Mayors were preparing for armed attacks on their towns as some fighting had already broken out in the area. Everyone wanted more guns and bullets. Romy says: *"I was the lone voice that didn't ask for additional military personnel nor guns nor bullets. When the crisis is over, I said that I would ask for ten water buffaloes."*

He also contacted the MILF Commanders to see if they would support a proposal to make Damulog a peace zone: *"This would mean that I will not allow the establishment of a combat troop of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Damulog. We will only have our existing police force to maintain internal peace and order. The MILF cannot station any combat troops within the municipality. Furthermore, no armed skirmishes should take place within our territory. Commanders Kineg and Taunting welcomed the proposal. If we can get the MILF, MNLF* and NPA** to support this 'project', we would save effort, time, money, LIVES to promote development!!!"*

The next day Romy talked on the phone with the Vice Chair of the Central Committee of the MILF. *"He was most pleased that I didn't go for arming civilians. This would transform them into combatants. We talked about human rights and the Geneva Convention. I told him that I already instructed one person to ask about the procedure for declaring Damulog a peace zone. He had no objections and will support our move to ensure that no armed confrontation ever takes place inside our territory. If the armed conflict escalates, he would*

welcome Damulog to be the place where civilians can seek safe refuge."

On September 3 it was arranged that Romy with some colleagues have an audience with the Governor of the Province. He was very supportive and later signed the joint resolution that had been passed by the Municipal Peace and Order Council and the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council declaring Damulog a 'Peace Zone'. After he had signed, the Governor made arrangements for Romy's team to go to the Provincial Director of the Philippine National Police.

"PD Armilla sang praises to the initiative and the document. This crisis cannot be solved militarily. It needs strategic diplomatic and political solutions. It was re-affirming to listen to his experiences in relation to what we were trying to do in building the peace in Damulog. He wishes that other municipalities would also take similar initiatives instead of relying mainly on guns and bullets. It was a most successful day."

Then Romy sought to publicise the peace zone declaration and seek the support of local organizations. He hoped *"that this small and quiet initiative will be owned by the people of Damulog – a people's journey for lasting peace."* With his team he planned a Peace Conference with presentations in the morning and workshops in the afternoon.

*"The participants surprised me. I didn't expect that they would be **that** interested in the peace conference that the team organized. I knew that the theme was very relevant to the times. But I didn't expect them to come back after lunch to participate in the workshops. I was wrong. The participants came back. It was inspiring and enriching to listen them giving suggestions on what the people of Damulog can do achieve lasting peace. I said to the team that we should make a careful study of the results of the small group workshops. The participants gave out so many suggestions. Many of them were concrete activities. What the team needs to do is to sit down and formulate goals and objectives into which the activities could be arranged."*

During this time Romy and his 'peace team' started visiting the outlying villages: *"The first three were big enough in terms of households and population to have children to send to day-care centres. Buluan was big enough to have a primary school. All were too remote from existing schools to send their children to school. None of them ever experienced being paid a visit by a medical team or a doctor. And I learned that there were other villages that had very similar experiences. Contd."*

*The **Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)** is a political organization. It is accredited by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference which allows it to represent Moros with an observer status.

The **New People's Army (NPA) is the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) .

Continued from page 8:

Along the Muleta and Pulangi rivers are villages that have never been visited by doctors, agriculturists or a Mayor. A lot of them feel that they are only remembered and made use of during elections and then promptly forgotten. I am not surprised why some of these areas are reputed to be havens for cattle rustlers and other criminal elements."

A Walk for Peace

In September the Damulog Government Employees Association (DAGEA) raise money for charity with a walk. The walkers themselves donate money rather than ask for sponsors. But this year, instead of holding the usual walk around the town centre, it was decided to hold a sponsored walk from Tukod to Agong. The trail is only about 4km and not very hilly. Agong was once populated by more than a 100 households but during the 'war' of 2003, everyone left and no-one has returned until now. Some farmers are keen to go back to work and live there but they are seeking assurance that they would never be bombed again.

Romy invited people to join the Walk for Peace and for the first time issued sponsorship forms. He suggested that half of the collection be used for DAGEA's projects. But the other half was to be presented to the group that is organising the return of farmers to Agong. The group will designate an area in Agong to be declared as a Peace Park.

Day of the Walk S e p t e m b e r 2 2

"The day started ominously. I was awakened by the sound of heavy rain. I felt quite discouraged. But we couldn't cancel the walk. We could delay it for a few hours and watch the PowerPoint presentations instead. And that's what we did. When I arrived at the municipal hall, many walkers were already there. I asked three persons to go ahead by motorbike to assess the road situation. The rest watched and listened to a photo presentation on our latest visit to Agong. I also gave the PowerPoint shows of other visits in the area.

"We finally left at 08.30 am. We were forced to start the walk farther back than planned. But it didn't rain from Tukod to Agong. Some people found the walk quite challenging. But we all got there. I was impressed with what the local community had done. They had cut the grass along the pathway and built a new wooden bridge. They also had cleared the area surrounding the assembly hall, the destroyed warehouse and the abandoned cement solar drier.

"We were a crowd. There was a good number of staff from the local government together with numerous former residents, neighbours and curious onlookers. But the big hit and celebrity was Commander Taunting of MILF.. Many of our staff wanted photos with him.

"The tree planting went as planned in spite of the rain. Then I explained the double purpose of the Peace Park and the signature campaign to protect the park. We also held a public signing of three documents needed to finally approve the school building project and to start it this year, rather than wait for 2009.

"We started to walk back to Tukod at 12.00 noon. It

was a very good day, very fulfilling and full of hope. We could all now dare to dream of a brighter future. Almost all of us were hungry. And it was a real struggle to hike back on empty stomachs and under the hot sun. But I felt that it was worth all the pain. I hope that every one felt the same."

Sharing the good news

October 9

"I went early to see the Governor at his home. He was pleased with our efforts and congratulated us for what we have achieved. But he advised us not to be complacent and remain vigilant. This was what we intend to do but we also push forward to new frontiers to strengthen the peace process. In our trips, the teams sensed a deep longing for peace from different communities. But people are just short of ideas."

To Uncharted Territories

October 26

"Early tomorrow morning, a team of us are sailing out to uncharted territories. None among us has been to the places we plan to visit before. But we will have a guide in the person of the headman of Omonay and Commander Andez will also be with us. I don't think we are taking unnecessary risks in visiting the villages along the Muleta river.

"I again heard the accusation that I care for the MILF more than the people of Damulog proper. My rational response was to use statistical proof comparing the few days I allocated visiting the MILF communities to the days I spent within the 17 barangays of Damulog. The accusation becomes even more ridiculous when we take a look at resources and services to the 'outsiders' and the 'insiders'. But people are not always logical and rational. Then I received a brilliant help from our office clerk. She said that when a farm is in danger of being attacked by rats, the first thing that a farmer does is clean the surroundings. He doesn't put poison on the corn field nor station hundreds of cats. He cuts the grass around the farm.

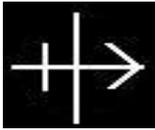
"Then she goes on, 'In a similar way the Mayor is clearing the surroundings of ill-will and misunderstanding by going out to the 'hills' to meet and talk with the people. He is taking risks and is making sacrifices because he cares for the whole of Damulog. Through the peace building work, he hopes that Damulog will never be again suffer raids from armed groups hiding in the 'hills'. She is very right. Brilliant!

"What we hope will happen in the future is that the Municipalities of Carmen, President Roxas and Damulog will join forces and develop a program of how services can reach the villages we are visiting tomorrow. If I can serve as a temporary bridge between the local governments and their respective constituencies, wow, that would be great. Talks are not enough. Peace packs are insufficient. Actual, practical, concrete presence in the form of services are need to make the people see and feel that the government cares for them also. May this happen and happen soon."

Romy P. Tiongco

If you would like to receive the letters as they arrive please email Joan Sharples: joansharples620@btinternet.com





AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED

The charity was founded in 1947 by Fr Werenfried van Straaten, a Belgian who launched an appeal for refugees from eastern Germany left starving and exiled from their homes after the war. His appeal for basic needs such as food earned him the nickname “Bacon Priest”. Fearless and filled with faith, he travelled behind the Iron Curtain, risking life and limb to help the Church struggling under communist rule.

Following a request by the Pope, Fr Werenfried expanded ACN’s work to new continents and now the charity undertakes thousands of projects in over 140 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Directly under the Holy See, ACN is recognised by Pope Benedict XVI as “a very important charity for the entire Church”. Today, ACN is one of the largest charities in the world, and is present wherever the Church is threatened by persecution or poverty. The examples which follow give some indication of the scope of ACN’s work.

Helping Christians in need

Desperate to escape persecution in Iraq, vast numbers of Christians have fled to neighbouring nations of Jordan, Syria and Turkey. ACN staff have made frequent visits to these refugee communities to assess the plight of the faithful and channel aid to those most in need.

Working with senior clergy including Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo, Syria, ACN is spearheading programmes providing food, blankets and medical aid as well as help for priests, sisters and catechists committed to providing for the people’s spiritual needs.

ACN emergency help is also going to displaced Christians still in Iraq. Relief programme leader Sister Merna said: “Many people in the villages have nothing. They turn to us for their most basic needs.”

Catechesis

ACN has also helped catechetical centres to be built in the north of Iraq. One of these is run by a young woman called Batul, who ACN met in a village deep in the Kurdish countryside.

Batul said that she had moved to the north from the Dora region of Baghdad – where she earned the respect even of extremists for her willingness to enter bomb-damaged buildings, rescuing the injured and burying the dead. She said: “It is not possible to do anything without Faith.”

Mass Stipends

In countries where the Church is poor or oppressed, ACN provides Mass stipends, which we pass on from our benefactors. Many priests in poor countries like Haiti and Siberia, depend on these stipends for their very existence.

With an offering, ACN’s benefactors help the charity support these priests by asking for a Mass to be said for their intentions, and are assured of the prayers of the suffering Church.

Supporting Vocations

“To be ordained priest would be a wonderful thing. I have waited so long for this.” The Seminarian from central China said he had been training for nearly 15 years. Years of persecution had postponed his ordination again and again.

ACN helps those training for priesthood and religious life who could not otherwise afford the training. The Chinese seminarian said: “So many benefactors have supported me along the way. I know that I will never forget them when I say Mass.”

Churches and Chapels

Franciscan Sisters were lucky to escape with their lives after a mob armed with petrol bombs descended on Sukkur in the Sindh province of Pakistan and set fire to the Church compound. The Church and the school were torched by the mob, but not before they had wreaked devastation in the buildings even trying to smash open the tabernacle.

On the Sundays that followed, Mass attendance doubled with 1,000 members of the faithful flocking to church. With the church building reduced to a charred wreck, services were held in a half-built school hall nearby. Through our benefactors’ generosity ACN is helping to rebuild the house of God so people can celebrate their Faith.

ACN in the UK

The UK office is in Sutton, with a small and dedicated staff, and their work is supported by Area Secretaries throughout the country who visit parishes and schools to talk about the charity and to make appeals. If you would like to know more, see the website, www.acn.org.uk or contact Terry Gorman who lives near Northwich. His number is 07808 479145.

PLAN AHEAD FOR FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Editor: Because of the publication dates of MouthPeace, Fairtrade Fortnight often gets overlooked. Thank you to Shrewsbury J & P Commission for offering a few suggestions if you would like to plan ahead this time.

Ideas for celebrating Fair Trade Fortnight 23 Feb-9 March 2009

Bake a Cake with Fairtrade goods and cut up after Mass offering pieces to parishioners – supply recipe

Tea / Coffee tasting - Which brand do people prefer? Can they tell the difference between Fairtrade and non- Fairtrade?

Chocolate tasting - Combine with a chocolate quiz and a chocolate charades game (give out names of well-known brands e.g. Kit-Kat, Mars, Snickers and fair trade brands e.g. Divine, Dubble, Fair Break and invite individuals or groups to mime for others to guess).

Wine tasting – using a selection of Fairtrade wines easily available locally – offer different ones during evening and give details about each vineyard



Come and see – to find out more about Fairtrade with speakers and displays of goods

The above activities can be combined with a Fairtrade Quiz or Fairtrade game (such as the Banana game on Traidcraft website)

With young people in mind!

Shop till you drop Game: To buy an item, the entire team must run across the room and back for the number of times shown beside the item on the list.

Team 1: Your aim is to buy as much as possible! Have a look at the list before starting and discuss as a team what you want to buy. As your team buys (runs for) an item you must tick it off the list. When your team has bought all the items you want, you all sit down.

Team 2: Your aim is to decide what items you need to be happy, but once you've got them to sit down and take time to enjoy them! Have a look at the list before starting and discuss as a team what you want to buy. As your team buys (runs for) an item you must tick it off the list. When your team has bought all the items you want, you all sit down. The game finishes once both teams have sat down.

Shopping list:

Small flat: 4	Penthouse/mansion: 8	
Healthy home-cooked food: 1	Regular meals at the Ritz!: 8	Charity shop clothes: 2
Designer wardrobe: 7	Basic TV and music system: 2	State-of-the-art i-pod system: 6
Monthly bus pass/travel card: 3	Sports car: 7	

Cooking Challenge: Make a meal using as many Fair Trade Ingredients as possible - have a fun competition and tasting. TIP: Watch for inspiration www.smartplanet.com/news/food/10000852/video-fairtrade-cooking-challenge-with-acorn-house-s-top-eco-chef.htm

Recycled fashion show: Invite people to design and make new and inventive garments from old items and 'scraps'. Decorate with milk bottle tops, ribbon, tape, string, etc. Ask volunteers to model the finished items. Serve Fair Trade refreshments and play music from producer countries (Traidcraft or New Internationalist have CDs on sale).

In schools:

- Serve Fairtrade breakfast before school – bananas, fruit juice, marmalade & jam. Perhaps follow up with assembly on same day .
- Send a Fairtrade bag to the staff room - tea, coffee, sugar and also include details of how to become a Fairtrade school and an offer to come in and talk to children.

In the Community:

- Ask a local supermarket if you can set up a Fairtrade information stall - as well as posters, leaflets and samples from Fairtrade pack also ask supermarket to provide a selection of the Fairtrade goods they stock
- Provide a list of all shops and cafes locally that stock Fairtrade goods – if possible have a stall near the shops to give out lists and Fairtrade samples.
- Organize banana races around the shopping area (using inflatable Fairtrade bananas)
- Green fair – use bike to generate energy to make Fairtrade smoothies – encourage bystanders to pedal!

Useful websites:

www.traidcraft.co.uk - a wide range of food, paper, clothing, jewellery and crafts
www.fairtrade.org.uk - The Fairtrade Foundation
www.newint.org/shop/uk - books, cards, CDs and DVDs, clothing
www.lovethatstuff.co.uk - clothing, jewellery, accessories, soapstone, gifts
www.onlyfair.co.uk - clothing, jewellery, accessories, cards, homeware
www.manumituk.com - jewellery and accessories
www.ethicalsuperstore.com - food products, cards, household goods from a variety of fair trade and ethical suppliers
www.tovboxcharity.org.uk - promotes awareness of the plight of the street children of Guatemala and Latin America
www.thenakedmonkey.co.uk - clothing and accessories
www.gossvpium.co.uk - organic fair trade cotton clothing
www.adili.com - organic cotton clothing
www.peopletree.co.uk - clothing, bed linen
www.makesachange.co.uk - organic baby clothes



DECEMBER

DIARY DATES

- 1 **World Aids Day** www.worldaidsday.org
- 3 **'Bethlehem, Hidden from View'** Garth Hewitt, 10.30 - 3.30 p.m. Luther King House, Manchester. Booking fee £15.00 - includes lunch. Organised by Friends of Sabeel UK North West Region 0151 423 1215.
- 6 **'Working for Justice & Peace'** Joan Sharples Chester and Wirral Newman Association 4 Hamilton Street, Chester, CH2 3 JG 7.30—9 pm. Contact Joseph O'Neill 01244 322440.
- 9 **'The UN and Asylum Seekers: 60 Years of Progress'** Organised by MASH – Merseyside Asylum Seekers Health, at CASA, 29 Hope St Liverpool, L1 9BQ. Public session with range of speakers, 9.30 - 13.00. Limited numbers, phone 0151 709 2148.
- 10 **UN Human Rights Day** www.unmeditation.org/
- 12 **'Signs of Trafficking and Responses in the West Midlands'** 9.30am – 3.45pm Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham City Centre organised by a broad coalition of agencies. For more information, please contact Stephen Willey on 0121 767 2911 or email: stephen.willey@necgroup.co.uk
- 14 **'Waiting for God'** Shrewsbury J & P Advent Reflection. Led by Fr Ned Wall, 4.30 –6.30 pm Wistaston Hall, Crewe. Contact Joan Sharples.
- 27 **CAFOD Fun Run** in Liverpool see page 2.

JANUARY

- 5 **'Mary: Icon of Christ and the Church'** Alan Morris Deacon & Shrewsbury Ecumenical Officer, arranged by Manchester & North Cheshire Newman Association. St Benedict's Church Hall Handforth. Visitors welcome 7.30 pm Eucharist, 8.15 pm talk . Contact Chris Quirke 0161 941 1707.
- 6 **'Asylum Seekers, Poverty, and Homelessness'** Public Meeting arranged by MASH. 9.00 am – 1.00 pm at CASA, see Dec 9. Places limited to 50 people – book early. Free. Contact 0151 709 2148.
- 10 **'Conflict Resolution'** Fr Owen Hardwicke, Pax Christi, Chester Newman Assn, see Dec 6.
- 16 **Peace Vigil - Marple J & P Group** 8—10 pm St Thomas Church Mellor Contact Marian Thompson.
- 16 **CAFOD Quiz.** Ellesmere Port. See page 2.
- 18 **Peace Sunday** see page 7.

- 18-25 **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** This year the service is available free as a PDF download from the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer
- 23 **Sofa Surfers Variety Night** in Telford see page 6.
- 25 **Memorial Lecture** LACE 2– 4 pm **'Our Money, Whose Church? – Reordering Church Finances for Justice & Peace'** Francis Davis Director of Von Hügel Institute St Edmund's College, Cambridge.
- 28 **'Voices on the Edge'** drama in Marple see page 6.
- 31 Jan—8 Feb **Poverty Action Week** see page 6.

FEBRUARY

- 2 **'Jesus– the only way to God?'** Giles Hibbert OP Manchester Newman Assn. see Jan 5.
- 13 **CAFOD Quiz** see page 2.
- 14 **'Welcoming the Stranger'** Chester and Wirral Newman Association Spring Conference: 10—4 The Bishop Tutu War and Peace Centre' Frank Wood, Hope University & other speakers: contact see Dec 6.
- 23 - 8 **March Fairtrade Fortnight**—ideas on page 11.
- 24 **Fairtrade wine tasting**, Hoole. Limited numbers, phone 01244 347001.

MARCH

- 2 **'A Search for the Sacred'** Austin Milner OP Manchester Newman Assn. see Jan 5.
- 3 **'Shared Interest'** speaker from Shared Interest co-operative lending society, 7.30pm at Hoole URC, Hoole Rd Chester. Details 01244 400906.
- 6 **'The Great Africa Scandal'** Showing of broadcaster and theologian Robert Beckford's film on how the current trade system penalises the global poor. Chester-Venue and timing details 01244 678087/ 350323.
- 6 **CAFOD Quiz** see page 2.
- 14 **'Universal charity – Eucharist and hospitality'** Mr Francis Davis, Von Hugel Institute, Cambridge Chester Newman Assn. see Dec 6.
- 15 **Romero Mass** Speaker: Raymond Perrier (CAFOD). Followed by a family friendly workshop on 'Prophets and prophecy' and a shared lunch St Helen's, Crosby 11.00 am -2.00 pm.
- 28 **Spirituality Day** led by Susy Bruard (CAFOD) Evron Centre, Stockport. Contact Joan Sharples.

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Copy date for next issue 1/02/ 09
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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