

The monthly e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com
Download earlier bulletins at: <http://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/e-bulletins/>

BISHOP PATRICK LYNCH URGES EU TO ACT ON BOAT REFUGEE CRISIS

In the wake of the latest tragedy in which up to 900 refugees fleeing war and persecution drowned in the Mediterranean, Bishop Patrick Lynch, Bishop for Migration in the Department for International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, has urged EU countries to do more to assist in the rescue operations and seek long term solutions to the crisis. In recent months, Malta, the smallest country in the EU, and Italy, have been on their own, dealing with an influx of thousands of refugees coming from North Africa - since the EU stopped funding rescue operations last summer. Bishop Lynch said: "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the men, women and children dying almost daily in the Mediterranean Sea as they desperately search for a safer life in Europe. We call on all EU member states to involve themselves in the relief efforts and to work collaboratively to find a swift, just, effective and compassionate solution to these humanitarian disasters."

Pope Francis has urged the international community to take "swift and decisive action" to assist the refugees.

See ICN 19 April 2015 <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=27229>

To commemorate the recent drownings **Freedom from Torture** is highlighting a poem by *Write to Life* member Faryad:

For you, stranger, passenger
who trusted the sea
and lent your breath to the sea:*
when you gasp for air
our own breath begins to die.
Your eyes were full of the endless sea
the sky turned so grey
and the water turned black
when it became a grave for your dreams.
I touch your pain
I wish you had not trusted the sea
Even though I did trust it myself.
Shame on the world!
Do not imagine I don't understand your language
without any word or syllable.
Your language is every single syllable
of hidden voices from me and all the women of my motherland.
Even though now, today,
I have chosen exile.
Your groans become screams
Your cries are the screams of our daughters being raped,
buried alive, stifled, murdered.
I am so sick of these bleeding wounds.
Why does the sky not weep to quench the pain?
Why does the sky not weep to quench the pain?

* 'lent your breath' - a colloquial Iranian phrase meaning deeply trusting, risk-taking.

<http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/survivor-voices/7086/writing/8079>

POPE FRANCIS: MESSAGE FOR EARTH DAY 22 APRIL 2015

Pope Francis has appealed to mankind not to manipulate or exploit the planet. Speaking at the end of the weekly General Audience in St Peter's Square the Pope noted that on 22 April we celebrate Earth Day. "I exhort everyone to see the world through the eyes of God the Creator: the earth is an environment to be safeguarded, a garden to be cultivated. The relationship of mankind with nature must not be conducted with greed, manipulation and exploitation, but it must conserve the divine harmony that exists between creatures and Creation within the logic of respect and care, so it can be put to the service of our brothers, also of future generations." In his Twitter Message for Earth Day, Pope Francis said: 'We need to care for the earth so it may continue, as God willed, to be a source of life for the entire human family.'

CAN POPE FRANCIS MOBILISE CATHOLICS TO TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE?

Nick Breeze writes: Pope Francis is shortly to host a conference at the Vatican that will directly address the threats faced by humanity from a hotter planet. Devastating extreme weather events such as flooding and droughts are becoming increasingly more intense and will cause much hardship going forward. The major food producing regions of the world are now under growing pressure from water shortages, increases in pest outbreaks and other symptoms of a hotter world.

The oceans are acidifying and forests are dying. Whereas it used to be humans cutting down forests, now the dying off of forests is becoming a self-reinforcing feedback loop. The oceans and forests that used to digest the atmospheric carbon (carbon "sinks") and produce the oxygen we breathe, are now reversing and themselves becoming sources of carbon. Without carbon sinks, life for humans will become very difficult and eventually impossible.

Scientists are now speaking loud and clear about the need to take action to make our cities and infrastructure more resilient to the growing threats from a range of impacts. However, their voices are often not heard because of the corporate mainstream media, which has ties to industries that make huge profits from the consumerist lifestyles that people in developed countries take for granted. By being "consumers" we do by default create a rift between who we are as beings and the ecology that underwrites our very existence. The real damage here is that mass-consumerism is driving pollution and the needless extraction of limited resources, often simply to acquire objects we don't really need. After decades of this lifestyle the impact on the natural world has become too much.

Pope Francis and other faith leaders realise that the time has come to address the emergency we now face from a disrupted climate. As individuals of differing faiths and philosophies, we can all agree that a destructive life is not one that we can endorse and so change must happen fast.

For change to happen it will require that many of us look inside ourselves and assess our own intrinsic value system. What truly makes us happy? Can we really continue to consume the Earth's resources whilst over a billion people around the world experience worsening hardships due to the onset of extreme climate change? Can we communicate with our local political leaders and express our concerns about the environment? Can they tell us their policies and how they address these important issues? Based on these questions, we can make it clear that our votes and our support are dependent on responsible policies formed in accordance with a healthier environment and a more equitable quality of life for all.

This is a global issue and one that transcends national borders and identities. History has shown that conflict increases when humanity is under stress, but we have a chance now to unite peacefully to tackle this global threat. The value in the peaceful path is not just idealistic rhetoric, rather it is the only chance we have to achieve a balance of justice and a minimal loss of life.

Pope Francis speaks to a Church that spans the entire globe. Joined with other faith leaders the influence extends to over half of the world's human population. That is an astonishing figure. If every member of every faith community can become an agent of change then humanity will be able to avert the worst impacts of climate change. If not then we will see suffering on a scale beyond our worst nightmares. On this note I will end with a statement made by Pope Francis in February of this year: "a Christian who does not protect creation is a Christian who does not care about the work of God."

Nick Breeze is the Media Director of United Planet Faith & Science Initiative www.upfsi.org and also writes about climate change and produces filmed interviews at www.envisionation.co.uk

'POLITICIANS DISCUSSING GLOBAL WARMING'

– a sculpture in Berlin by Spanish artist **Isaac Cordal**.

Originally titled **Electoral Campaign**, the work went viral when it was renamed **Politicians discussing global warming**. With sea levels projected to rise up to three feet by the end of the century, it's a stark reminder of our collective failure to act on climate change.

The installation is part of a series called **Follow the Leaders**. The tiny cement figures, arranged in bleak scenes of urban disintegration, represent the faceless businessmen who run our capitalist global order. 'These pieces reflect our own decline,' says Cordal. 'We live immersed in the collapse of a system that needs change.'



<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/culture-lifestyle/140325/street-art-politicians-discussing-global-warming>

MENGELE TWIN AND SS 'BOOK-KEEPER' EMBRACE IN COURT

In a remarkable moment of reconciliation after an emotional day at the Auschwitz trial, Oskar Groening, the former SS man on trial for hundreds of thousands of murders, and a Holocaust survivor, whose family were killed there, embraced. Eva Kor has become a controversial figure for having forgiven the Nazis. "Former enemies can get along as human beings," she said. "What on earth do we want to tell the world? Killing each other has never created anything good."

Read more of Eva Kor's inspiring story at: <http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/eva-kor-poland/>

The following extract is from Eva Kor's facebook blog dated 23 April:

Today after the afternoon session of the court, I went up to Oskar Groening. ... I just shook his hand and said, "I appreciate the fact that you are willing to come here and face us. But I would like you to appeal to the old Nazis who are still alive to come forward and address the problem of neo-Nazis in Germany today. Because these young misguided Germans who want Hitler and fascism to come back - they will not listen to Eva Kor or any other survivor. You can tell them you were in Auschwitz, you were involved with the Nazi party, and it was a terrible thing."

As I was talking to him, he grabbed me and gave me a kiss on the cheek. Well I probably wouldn't have gone that far, but I guess it is better than what he would have done to me 70 years ago.

Everything he is accused of - I am saying he did all that. I told him that my forgiveness did not prevent me from accusing him nor from him taking responsibility for his actions. And I told the media that he was a small screw in a big killing machine, and the machine cannot function without the small screws. But obviously he is a human being. His response to me is exactly what I was talking about when I said you cannot predict what will happen when someone from the victims' side and someone from the perpetrators' side meet in a spirit of humanity.

I know many people will criticise me for this photo [*of the two embracing* – Ed], but so be it. It was two human beings seventy years after it happened. For the life of me I will never understand why anger is preferable to a goodwill gesture. Nothing good ever comes from anger. Any goodwill gesture in my book will win over anger any time. The energy that anger creates is a violent energy.

I feel sorry for Oskar Groening for one reason: He lived a miserable life. I think if I were the judge, I would ask him one question: "Did you live a happy life?" When he looks back, he probably cannot be proud of anything, and will see he was wrong. So he would judge himself.

The purpose of this trial from my perspective is not to give him a piece of my mind but to teach the young neo-Nazis that Auschwitz existed. They can pretend and say it didn't, and if I testify and say it was there, they dismiss me because I am a Jew and I have an interest in telling that story. But a former Nazi has no interest in saying Auschwitz existed - in fact he has an interest in denying it.

99.9% of the perpetrators will die without bearing witness. I would prefer that every Nazi, every perpetrator ... should come out of hiding and own up to what they have done. For that very simple reason I have to acknowledge that Groening at least made an effort. I do not think he is a hero for that, but at least he was willing to admit it in a public court.

I am asking a question: What do we want in the future? Do we want to keep pointing fingers and the accused stay in one corner and the accuser stay in the other corner and they never connect? How will that work out? Look at the world – it doesn't work out. All we have is people who are feeling angry, people who are running around doing crazy things.

When tragic things happen, we have to sit down and discuss, what are the options for the victims and for the perpetrators? Most people are only here in court to accuse him of things he has already admitted. So now what? I don't think we should raise a statue in his honour, but he can serve as a good example to young people that what he participated in was terrible, that it was wrong, and that he is sorry that he was part of it. Now there is a message that has some usefulness for society.

If I had it my way, the dialogue between the survivors and perpetrators would have started a long time ago. And it would have helped the survivors cope and maybe heal themselves, but even more so not to pass the pain on to their children.

My ideas in life are very different, I know. I am in the minority - maybe a minority of one. I know how society looks at it, but as I look at society, I do not think it is working very well. So what I am saying is, maybe we ought to try something else. And my idea is for people from the victims' side and people from the perpetrators' side to come together, face the truth, try to heal, and work together to prevent it from ever happening again.

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=747342575386346&id=490578304396109&substory_index=0

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: 'IT WAS THE WOMEN WHO STAYED'

At the 2015 **Voices of Faith** storytelling event at the Vatican, held for the second consecutive year to celebrate **International Women's Day** (8 March), a group of remarkable women shared their personal stories demonstrating how their unwavering faith has positively impacted their life, greater society and the world. Narrated live and interlaced with conversations among the speakers, *Voices of Faith* aimed for a creative exchange and a connection of ideas from a female perspective to help build a better future.

Watch speakers and discussion panels online at: <http://voicesoffaith.org/>

Inspired by the Voices of Faith event Sr. Christine Schenk writes: British theologian Tina Beattie noted that the faithfulness of women both opens and closes our Gospel stories. The feast of the Annunciation marks the beginning of Jesus' earthly sojourn. On Palm Sunday, we commence a week-long journey remembering Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. Yet Jesus' female disciples are all but invisible to most Christians. Often no more painfully so than during Holy Week, when preachers commonly emphasize that Jesus was "abandoned by everyone." Everyone, that is, but the women, whose presence must have meant a great deal to Jesus, if to no one else.

One of Jesus' female disciples is the unnamed anointing woman about whom Jesus says: "Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13). Yet we rarely tell the story "in memory of her" because the lectionary allows for a shortened Palm Sunday reading, thereby deleting from history the insightful woman who seems to have understood Jesus' impending passion the best. While her brothers accuse her of wasting expensive ointment, she evokes Samuel's prophetic anointing of David as king in Israel. Her symbolic ritual must have been very consoling to Jesus, who was facing a horrendous death before entering his own kingdom.

All four Gospels show Mary of Magdala leading the group of women who at no small risk to themselves accompanied Jesus through passion, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. I used to think the women stayed because it was less politically risky for them compared to their brothers who fled to Galilee. Not so. Turns out that the Romans had no compunction about crucifying women and even children to terrorize subjugated people. Sadly, Mary's apostolic commissioning to "go to my brothers" and announce the good news (John 20:17) is never proclaimed on a Sunday.

Luke's Gospel tells us that Mary of Magdala, Johanna, Susanna "and many others" were members of Jesus' Galilean entourage and financially supported his mission. Since it was not customary for men to speak to women outside their kinship circles in public, much less travel around the countryside with them, Jesus' inclusion of women would have been shocking to Greco-Roman and elite Jewish sensibilities. That being said, social expectations for rural freeborn or freedwomen were probably quite different than those for higher-status women from urban households. Small agrarian villages like Nazareth had to rely on the hard, skillful work of both women and men simply to survive. A more pragmatic, egalitarian social ethos probably prevailed in the rural towns and villages of Galilee that gave birth to the Jesus movement.

A common misreading of Luke's Gospel attributes the "seven demons" that Jesus expelled from Mary of Magdala to grave sinfulness. There is no biblical evidence whatsoever of Pope Gregory's sixth-century characterisation of her as a prostitute rather than the first witness to the Resurrection. To first-century ears, Jesus' expulsion of seven devils would simply have meant she had been cured of a very serious or chronic illness. Illness and misfortune were commonly attributed to the work of malign spirits, and being afflicted with such a "demon" did not necessarily imply moral failure or sin. Jesus' success as a healer and exorcist was strong affirmation of divine power at work in him to overcome evil and usher in God's new reign of justice and right relationship.

Jesus welcomed women into his itinerant discipleship to learn about the new "reign of God" alongside their brothers. His prophetic inclusion of married and single women and his special compassion for widows and the landless poor were part and parcel of his fidelity to Israel's God who, throughout history, upheld the lowly. Upholding the lowly and criticizing his own religious leadership for their complicity in economic and political oppression ultimately led to Jesus' execution. He simply could not stop himself from denouncing injustice, especially when sanctioned by the silence of purportedly religious guides. He bitterly chastises them for "straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel" as they tithe cheap herbs but neglect "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Justice and mercy and faith. How much easier it is to seek cheap grace in rote religious observance rather than embrace the far heavier demands of justice, forgiveness and accompaniment of the destitute and despairing. Holy Week is a sacred time of remembrance. It is also a time to ask if I will stay with Jesus, embodied in the suffering of God's marginalized, demeaned people, whether in my own environs or in the wider world. Mostly, I'd rather take off for the beautiful (and safer) shores of Galilee. But since my sisters stayed, I'm thinking maybe I will, too.

<http://nconline.org/blogs/simple-spirit/it-was-women-who-stayed>

- Pope Francis says there is still much to be done in order to give due recognition to women, both in society and in the Church. Addressing pilgrims during the General Audience in St Peter's Square on 15 April, the Pope said that not only must the voice of women be listened to, but that it must also be given ... "real weight, recognised authority, in society and in the Church."

SERMON ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, Jerusalem April 12, 2015 by Canon Naim Ateek

Today's Gospel (John 20:19 - end) has a special relevance to the life of our Palestinian community as well as to the Christian communities in the region, especially in Syria and Iraq and wherever Christians face dangers and difficulties. Let us begin with a question. Why did Jesus die? Our usual response is Jesus died for our sins. We generally emphasize individualized and personalized faith. Christ died to save us. This is an essential part of our faith. The apostle Paul wrote, Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification. One of the earliest statements of faith written by Paul to the Church in Corinth: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve..." (1Cor. 15)

In addition to this, we believe that Jesus Christ was crucified and killed because he dared to challenge the religious-political and socio-economic powers of his day. At the time of Jesus, Palestine was occupied by the Roman Empire. Many of the religious leaders in Jerusalem were collaborating with the occupiers. Jesus confronted the powers of evil in society when he drove all those who were corrupting and desecrating the temple. No wonder the religious leaders conspired against him. More than that, Jesus heard the cry of the people when they were shouting "Hosanna" (Hosha'na). It is an Aramaic word that means, SAVE US NOW. It was a political statement. It was the cry of oppressed people seeking liberation. It is very similar to the slogans we see and hear daily on our TVs by our Palestinian people who are struggling to end the Israeli occupation of our country. We believe that Jesus was crucified because he challenged the structures of domination that were oppressing the people. The crucifixion and death of Jesus shattered the hopes of the disciples. In the words of the two disappointed disciples on the way to Emmaus, "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." (Luke 24)

On that first Sunday evening the disciples, with other friends, were meeting together in Jerusalem behind closed doors. Mary Magdalene was proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. Peter was witnessing that Jesus is alive. The other disciples were confused, bewildered, and afraid. Tragically, this has become a familiar picture of Christian communities in Iraq and Syria who have been targeted and live in fear. Christians have been recently killed in Libya and Kenya because they were Christians. Here in Palestine both Christians and Muslims suffer injustice and their human and political rights are violated by the Israeli government simply because they are Palestinians.

As the disciples were huddled together in fear and despair behind the closed doors, the risen Christ came and stood in their midst and greeted them with the salutation of peace. It is important to remember that Christ never leaves us. He always stands in the midst of the community of faith. He is with us in our joys and in our sorrows.

Jesus showed them his hands and his side. Jesus has a new identity. It is the marks of his wounded hands. Death did not erase the marks of the nails. The clear lesson for us is that of nonviolence. Indeed Christ suffered the agony of torture and death but he did not inflict suffering on others. And Christ's resurrection is the proof of his victory over evil and death. Indeed, through nonviolent struggle, we can overcome.

When we look perceptively at our situation in life here in Palestine and Israel and across the world, we need to take a stand against the structures that dominate and humiliate our brothers and sisters. We need to expand our understanding of salvation and liberation to include not only liberation from our sins, but equally from the injustices that dehumanize our fellow human beings everywhere. This is God's world and God wills that all people live in freedom and dignity. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to give us life and life abundant – life in its fullness. It is time for our church leaders in Palestine and Israel to become more involved. The creeping confiscation of Palestinian land continues, the oppressive Israeli occupation is more entrenched, and our people's suffering is becoming unbearable. The church must be involved and must take a stand on the side of the oppressed and the marginalized. Yet it seems that many of our church leaders are living behind closed doors unwilling to confront the unjust powers. It is our mandate as Christians to speak truth to power.

Jesus was aware of the disciples' human limitations as he is aware of ours -- our fears, frailties, and weaknesses. So he says to us as he said to the disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit. As the Father sent me, I send you." You must not remain hiding behind closed doors. The power of the Holy Spirit will dispel your fears and will give you the courage to face and engage the powers so that justice will be done and peace and reconciliation will be achieved.

Today's Gospel presents a challenge to all of us and especially to our religious leaders. I believe that our Bishop Suhail can play an important role because of his good relationship with the Orthodox Patriarch and other bishops. The Christian community of the land has a crucial role to play. It is important to articulate a nonviolent strategy in line with the spirit of our risen Lord. It is equally important to lift up the prophetic voice of liberation for all oppressed people. I believe that when our Patriarchs and bishops take the lead many Christians and non-Christians both in Israel/Palestine and from around the world will take a stand with us and support us. This is the challenge before us. May the Risen Lord give us the strength and courage to take such a stand for the achievement of justice and peace for all the people of our land! Amen.

Sent by **Friends of Sabeel UK** – working for peace for the people of Palestine and Israel <http://www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk/>

PAX CHRISTI STATEMENT ON WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE

On the **Global Day of Action on Military Spending** (13 April) Pax Christi International expressed deep concern about the scandal of excessive military spending in a world where human and ecological well-being are in dire need of investment. Figures recently published by SIPRI - the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, estimate world military expenditures in real terms for 2014 at roughly \$ 1.8 trillion, a significant increase from the already shocking \$ 1.75 trillion spent in 2013. The top 10 spenders in 2014 are the United States (USA), China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, United Kingdom, India, Germany, Japan and South Korea. Although the USA has decreased its military expenditure to some extent due to limits imposed by Budget Control Act, China and Russia, but especially Saudi Arabia, have significantly increased their budgets.

While Western Europe's military expenditures have continued to fall due to austerity measures, spending increased again in Central Europe, led by Poland. Military expenditures in Ukraine are significantly higher and there are signs that the crisis over Ukraine is leading to a further increase spending in many Central European and Nordic countries in 2015. SIPRI figures point to large increases in military spending in Eastern Europe, including in Russia and Ukraine, in the Middle East and in Africa, both Northern and sub-Saharan. A significant increase is also evident in Asia and Oceania, led by China.

Just 10 countries accounted for roughly half of all imports of major conventional weapons during this period. The USA and Russia dominate global arms exports concerning major conventional weapons. The USA accounted for 31 % and Russia has 27 % of the market (2010 - 2014).

Middle East conflicts give a hefty boost to arms merchants. The ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Israel/Palestine have helped spiral arms sales to the Middle East upwards. The primary beneficiaries are the USA and Russia, whose overall arms exports show a marked increase through 2014, with China lagging behind. Arms sales to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE increased by 71 % from 2005 to 2009, accounting for 54 % of imports to the Middle East for the period 2010 - 2014. Saudi Arabia rose to become the second largest importer of major weapons worldwide and increased the volume of its arms imports four times in recent years. Several GCC states, specifically Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, are significant suppliers of weapons, mostly unofficial and clandestine, to some of the warring factions in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen. These states have rapidly modernized their militaries, primarily with arms from the USA and Europe. The GCC states, along with Egypt, Iraq, Israel and Turkey in the wider Middle East, are scheduled to receive further large orders of major arms in the coming years.

Pax Christi International is concerned that the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union will provide ready markets for more arms transfers. Therefore, we call for more effective diplomatic efforts and political peace processes in dealing with these ongoing hot spots on our planet. We are convinced that, given political will, by reducing funding for the military sector, significant amounts of money could be made available for social and environmental projects, first of all domestically, but also in other countries, especially the poorest. The re-allocation of funding from the production and trading of arms is essential to social and ecological justice.

The disparity of resources between situations dedicated to human development or environmental protection and those dedicated to armaments is a fundamental injustice in the global political order. Re-allocation of resources from wasteful and dangerous weapons programs to the constructive and peaceful purposes of global human development and protecting the integrity of creation would undo shameful imbalances in public funding and institutional capabilities. Governments should decrease their military spending and put peace and development at the centre of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Although efforts have been made to promote a human security approach, there are still gaps between rhetoric and reality. Political authorities should do more regarding preventive diplomacy by investing in disarmament for development. Pax Christi International has been advocating for demilitarisation and disarmament since its creation and keeps being active with different coalitions concerning conventional and non-conventional weapons. Military investment is a significant global problem which is frequently ignored.

*"Why is it that giving guns is so easy, but giving books is so hard?
Why is it that making tanks is so easy, but building schools is so difficult?"*

Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

LIVERPOOL BISHOPS ISSUE JOINT EASTER MESSAGE

The leaders of the Catholic and Anglican Churches in Liverpool have released a joint Easter message urging Christians to speak up for the poor. The Archbishop of Liverpool, Malcolm McMahon, and his Anglican counterpart, Bishop Paul Bayes, insisted that the Christian faith was relevant to the struggle against economic injustice, even though "it doesn't bring a wage packet in or fix the NHS." Rather, they argued, a relationship with "a God who opposes injustice" should motivate Christians to offer themselves in service to those on the edge of society. The letter recalls the joint witness of Archbishop Derek Worlock and his Anglican counterpart, Bishop David Sheppard, in the 1980s. Archbishop McMahon and Bishops Bayes said they wanted human dignity at the heart of society through fair wages and care for the vulnerable.

CHURCHES TO PLAY VITAL PART IN TACKLING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING NEED

More than 70 people from churches, homeless charities, and others working with people at risk of homelessness met on Saturday 18 April in Manchester at the **Housing Justice Roadshow**. The event, Your Church and the Housing Crisis, was held at Salford Cathedral Centre, in partnership with CARITAS Salford and The Booth Centre.

In his welcoming remarks, the Bishop of Salford, John Arnold said: "The gulf between the richest and poorest of our communities becomes ever more evident. This speaks loudly and clearly of a fundamental injustice which needs to be addressed. Housing and the security of having a home must be among our priorities. It is an urgent need."

Alison Gelder, CEO of Housing Justice, said: "Homelessness is increasing and, as a country, we are not building enough new homes to meet our needs. Whatever the outcome of the general election next month, Churches have resources of buildings, land and volunteers - and a Christian duty to bring them to bear to tackle the problems in their communities. Today has been about letting people know what can be achieved and firing them up to go out and make a difference."

Amanda Croome, CEO of the Booth Centre, spoke of the growing need in Manchester: "Street homelessness is increasing across Greater Manchester at an alarming rate and with more funding cuts to vital services in the pipeline the numbers are likely to increase further. We cannot rely on local or central Government to solve this problem on its own. Every community needs to work together to help to try and prevent and alleviate homelessness in their local area. This event has shown that this is possible in Manchester and we are looking forward to seeing the difference we can make when we all work together."

As well as people from churches of all denominations from Manchester and other parts of the country there were representatives from local and statutory authorities as well as national Christian charities including Church Action on Poverty, Green Pastures, Hope into Action and the National No Accommodation Network. Delegates heard about the depth of the housing crisis and increasing poverty in the community from: Mark Wiggin of Caritas Salford; the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford, the Rt Revd John Arnold; Alison Gelder of Housing Justice; Amanda Croome of the Booth Centre and Chair of Manchester Multi-agency Homeless Forum.

Workshops were held on: Church and Community Night Shelters; Using church property and land for affordable housing; Mentoring and befriending formerly homeless people; responding to the humanitarian needs of the growing numbers of people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action on homelessness and housing need. The Manchester Roadshow is one of a series of events Housing Justice is organizing around the country to encourage and support churches to be part of the housing solution and to work in partnership with others. If your organisation is active in or near Manchester and you didn't get to attend or talk to us, why not get in touch about the next steps? Please contact Alastair Murray at info@housingjustice.org.uk

To view the press release, the picture gallery as well as the presentations, please visit our Roadshows page <http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/hj-roadshow.html>

MANCHESTER CABBIES BOOST STUDENT-RUN FOODBANK

The Central Manchester Foodbank run by students of Manchester Universities' Catholic Chaplaincy has been boosted by collaborating with a local taxi company. Shoppers and other passengers using one of Cresta Cars' fleet of 350 vehicles in Greater Manchester are being encouraged to leave an item of food in the cab at the end of their journeys, as part of the Taxi Tin Appeal. "Many of our taxi drivers live and work in the local community and see local families struggling," says Cresta Cars' Derek Brocklehurst. "It's important we help these families where we can - even if it's just in a small way." The Manchester taxi firm already supports local initiatives by collecting toys for children at Christmas, sponsoring sports teams and supporting a dogs' home that was damaged in a fire.

Father Tim Byron SJ, the Jesuit Chaplain at the Catholic Chaplaincy, has welcomed the taxi drivers' involvement. He says changes in people's circumstances - such as an unexpected bill, redundancy or a family crisis can often present people with stark choices. "We've seen a steady increase in the number of people using the Foodbank," he says, "especially families. We've been operating now for 18 months and in the first year alone we supplied food to 2,500 people, including 900 children. They often don't have the resilience to cope and turn to the Foodbank as a last resort. It's not an easy choice and many feel humiliated when they cross the threshold. But it is a need that the students are responding to; and to have the cooperation of local taxi drivers as well can make a tremendous difference."

Donations to the Central Manchester Foodbank tend to be quite seasonal - especially at Christmas. But it needs to maintain a stock of at least five tonnes of food to cope with the weekly demand. Derek Brocklehurst says he hopes the food donated by shoppers picked up from stores by Cresta Cars drivers and other passengers who go through their kitchen cupboards at home will be delivered to the Trussell Trust (which runs more than 400 Foodbanks across the UK) in their fleet of 25 mini-buses.

SOME SAY 'IT'S NEVER BEEN SO BAD'

Three papers presented at a pre-election event held by Liverpool J&P Commission on 18 April to help formulate questions for General Election candidates with a focus on housing and the living wage:

1. Opening Comment

Fr Michael Fitzsimons writes: The first thing is to say that this issue is not about housing, about bricks and mortar. The issue here is about homes. Home is more than somewhere providing basic shelter; it is where we feel secure, where we can take control over our lives. These stories we have heard today highlight this. We must remember that access to decent and appropriate shelter is a right – a basic human right – it is not a luxury! Housing is different depending on where you are. Housing need is different in the cities compared to rural communities, and there are major regional differences. In parts of the country there is a vast housing shortage, in other areas housing stock needs renewal and regeneration. It is clear that we do need more houses to be built. BUT they need to be the right houses in the right places. Affordable and accessible and good quality. Particular focus is needed on young families and the needs of single people. Luxury housing developments in the green belt cannot be sanctioned when the need for accessible and affordable housing and social housing is so high.

Housing and Home Ownership

Since the 1980's and possibly before we have seen a much greater emphasis on home ownership. The desire to own your own home and be able to pass this on to your children has become a great aspiration of many if not most people. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this but this same period has also seen a growth in homelessness and in housing insecurity. It was refreshing to hear Natalie Bennett of the Green Party talk in these terms during the leadership debates. So a significant issue is the emphasis placed on home ownership. Are the major policies orientated merely to helping people buy their homes or are they about social housing and the private rented sector. This is fundamental.

Conservatives

Headline here is the Conservative promise to extend the right to buy to housing association tenants – worth noting that this has been met with near universal condemnation from the housing sector- The Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation, The Confederation of British Industry and housing developers themselves and even Boris Johnson, Mayor of London expressed doubts! More positively the Conservatives also promise brownfield fund (£1billion) to unlock new housing on brownfield sites and encourage protection of the green belt. Help to Buy scheme extended until 2020 and support 120,000 homes, and by 2020, 275,000 affordable homes will be built. Still a very strong emphasis on home ownership.

Labour

Bedroom tax will be abolished! Labour legislation to make three year tenancies the norm. National register of private landlords, and all private rented properties will need to meet a decency standard which will include warmth standards. All this is positive for poorest and most vulnerable tenants. Again a commitment to building 200,000 new homes by 2020 with particular focus on brownfield sites. There is still much emphasis on home ownership with particular help for first time buyers again. There is a promise to tackle homelessness by addressing underlying causes.

Lib Dems

Lib Dem perhaps the most comprehensive of major parties on housing in terms of its manifesto. Local authorities permitted to borrow to build new social housing and given full control over right to buy. There will also be a complete review of the support and services offered to single homeless people. They promise a whole raft of developments in the private rented sector aimed at promoting responsibility in landlords, including promotion of energy efficiency and family friendly tenancies – multi-year and agreed rental increases 300,000 new homes and the development of 10 new Garden cities in areas of greatest need

The Reality

There is a real housing shortage – we do need to be building more houses, but affordable and accessible homes. Rents are increasing in the private rented sector in most parts of the country. In the last decade the number of people in the private rented sector experiencing poverty has doubled to over 4million people. Almost half of households aged 25-34 are in the private rented sector. Welfare and housing benefit reform has hit poorest of families significantly. The quality of the housing stock has improved but still 21% fails to meet decent homes standard. Homelessness including rough sleeping is on the increase again! Official figures for rough sleeping are up 14%. Significantly higher in London.

KEY issues

Housing security for both home owners and renters. Promotion of Responsible landlords AND Protection for tenants. Tackling issues of housing inequality and homelessness. Reversal of the trends that sees housing in purely fundamental economic terms – buy to rent; housing bubble and burst; obsession with house prices. We need a truly mixed housing solution which includes good access to home ownership but not at the price of effective social housing or turning the private rented sector into a get rich quick scheme for landlords presiding over a Cinderella section of housing for the young and the poor. Sadly very few of our political parties are promising this.

Fr Michael Fitzsimons is parish priest of St John's, Kirkdale and Chair of trustees at Nugent Care

2. Who is without a home?

Many people only associate homelessness with sleeping on the streets but it includes far more groups of people than this. So what is a home? It is more than a shelter. It is a place that also provides security, privacy, links to a community and a support network. It provides access to services such as health, education, employment. It needs to be affordable. A high proportion of homeless people suffer from mental health problems. This can contribute to a person becoming homeless and is exacerbated once homeless. There is a spectrum of poor health among the homeless and the worst end - rough sleepers - rate higher for mental health problems and drug and alcohol additions than do the other groups.

Those without a home fall into these groups:

Rough sleepers - More men are rough sleepers, some are ex-prisoners or ex-forces. They can become entrenched and resistant to change. Once a rough sleeper it can be easy to be drawn into a cycle of drugs or alcohol. More women are becoming homeless and have serious additional problems which exclude them from hostels housing families as they could present a risk. Services have traditionally been geared up for men but women's problems, including prostitution, can be much more complicated than men's.

Households in temporary accommodation - hostels or B&Bs; can be a mother and four children eating/sleeping in one room.

Those in overcrowded households - eg families wanting to move out of the parental home.

The hidden homeless - Most of these are single adults but families also move around among friends. Many are desperate to work but unable to do so. It is a very stressful way to live. A high proportion has more complex problems including mental ill health and addiction.

Households on Local Authority waiting lists

Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and Travellers.

A report from St Mungo's found that:

- 73% of homeless people report a physical health problem
- 80% report a mental health problem
- The average age of people who die while homeless is 47 for men; for women it is only 43.3.
- They estimate the annual cost of hospital treatment for homeless people is at least £85m a year. There is evidence of a number of early health interventions that can bring significant financial savings as well as helping the person themselves.

Why are people homeless?

There are personal and structural issues - though they are not totally clear cut: changes to the benefit system and unaffordable and the shortage of housing; unemployment; lack of both jobs and skills. Other issues are poverty and debt. The main personal reason is relationship breakdown with family, partners or spouses. I saw an increased demand for the 'Room at the Inn' in Warrington over the Christmas period due to relationships falling apart. Other factors contributing to homelessness are lack of life skills, and the resilience to deal with life's problem; poor mental health; substance misuse and migration from the EU and other places. When a person or family is homeless they are struggling with a lot of problems. With the right support they could overcome these, but all too often they are left to cope alone.

Mary Hallam is a member of Liverpool J&P commission with the brief on homes and homelessness and a regular at Housing Justice events. She volunteers at a homeless shelter in Warrington.

3. Living Wage

"Let's put our money where our theology is, and stand up for the vulnerable in society. It really is a no-brainer."

(Mark Russell, Chief Executive, Church Army)

What is the Living Wage?

- It is a voluntary undertaking by employers to pay their lowest paid staff more than the statutory minimum wage, which is currently £6.50 per hour for workers aged 21 and over. This covers contracted and sub-contracted workers, as well as directly employed staff. For a 40 hour week, the national minimum wage for a year = £13,742 minus £1,300 for tax and national insurance. Current living wage is £7.85 an hour (£9.15 London) Currently 4 out of 5 low paid workers are in the private sector.

Why is paying less than a living wage morally wrong?

- For reasons of human dignity and the dignity of work. We need to recognise that all people are created in the image of God and value the gifts and talents every person brings to us. It is morally unacceptable to treat people as commodities that are bought and sold in the market or as economic units to be exploited. We need to recognise the limits of the market and that people's lives cannot adapt indefinitely to market forces.

What are the effects of low paid work?

- Often people have to do multiple jobs and work long hours and yet still live in poverty. (see *Getting By? A year in the life of 30 working families in Liverpool.*)

- Low pay is a problem for the whole community. When people are stressed by working long hours with little reward, they do not have the time or resources to spend with their families or to participate in communal activities.
- It is a drag on local economies because if people have less in their pockets, local shops and businesses are likely to suffer.
- Nationally, there is a very high economic and social cost to poverty as a result of poor health, high crime and educational failure.
- The state is subsidising low pay employers because of need for top-up benefits.

What are the benefits of paying the living wage?

- *It is good for families:*
 - It gives people the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families.
 - 75% of employees reported increases in work quality as a result of receiving the Living Wage.
 - 50% of employees felt that the Living Wage had made them more willing to implement changes in their working practices; enabled them to require fewer concessions to effect change; and made them more likely to adopt changes more quickly.
- *It is good for society:*
 - It gives people more time for family life
 - It is part of the solution to tackling poverty
 - HM Treasury benefits because income tax receipts and national insurance contributions rise, while spending on tax credits and in-work benefits fall.
- *It is good for business:*
 - Employers report that paying decent wages improves staff morale and increases productivity. KPMG and Barclays, for example, have seen the turnover of their cleaning staff fall by half. An independent study examining the business benefits of implementing a Living Wage policy in London found that more than 80% of employers believe that the Living Wage had enhanced the quality of the work of their staff, while absenteeism had fallen by approximately 25%.
 - Two thirds of employers reported a significant impact on recruitment and retention within their organisation.
 - 70% of employers felt that the Living Wage had increased consumer awareness of their organisation's commitment to be an ethical employer.
 - Following the adoption of the Living Wage PwC found turnover of contractors fell from 4% to 1%.
 - There is very little evidence that living wage policies lead to job losses.

Are there arguments against the living wage? No but:

- There are arguments against state compulsion of living wage (in contrast to minimum wage) – it is understood that there could be negative side effects for employment if small firms in particular were forced to pay it immediately.
- There are implications for public sector bodies and difficult choices involved. A recent report found that at present around 200,000 care workers – 1 in 5 of the workforce – are paid below the *minimum* wage, which is illegal as well as morally unacceptable. In other words, the costs of moving to a living wage will be high in some areas, particularly social care. Campaigns for the living wage therefore are insufficient on their own: there needs to be attention too to funding settlements for particular services and funding arrangements for service users. This underlines the complexity of the issues and the need for national leadership in setting a policy environment in which a living wage is feasible.

What are the implications for the Church?

- It is important for the Church to lead by example in the way it treats its own staff. In the last few years, all the major denominations have formally endorsed the Living Wage.
- But the national churches do not necessarily have control over parish practices and therefore there needs to be local commitment.
- Paying a living wage directly is not the whole story. In procuring services, it is necessary to look at the pay practices of suppliers.

Professor Hilary Russell, author of 'Poverty Close to Home' (1995)

NEW FAIRTRADE RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The **Fairtrade Foundation** has launched a brand new resource for young people aged 5-12 in class, after-school club or youth groups. It's an activity pack full of fun and engaging learning opportunities, as well as a huge map with stickers to use in class, helping learners discover where their food comes from.

Download at: <http://shop.fairtrade.org.uk/schools-activity-kit>

MANCHESTER: OVERNIGHT VIGIL IN SUPPORT OF IRAQI CHRISTIANS

An overnight vigil in support of persecuted Iraqi Christians and others who suffer oppression took place at Holy Name Church, Oxford Road, Manchester on Saturday 18 April. Organised by Aid to the Church in Need and hosted by the Jesuits at the Holy Name, ONE NIGHT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM has received support from large sections of the community in a city now home to 18,000 people with Iraqi origins. Event organiser Caroline Hull, ACN UK's Manager for the North West, said: "ONE NIGHT is a chance for all of us to stand together in solidarity with the thousands of suffering and persecuted Iraqis now living in camps in Kurdish Northern Iraq, as well as in neighbouring countries like Lebanon and Jordan. While many displaced and refugee Iraqis are Christians, there are substantial numbers from other religious minorities, notably Shi'a Muslims and Yazidis. ONE NIGHT offers a chance for all to come together with the goal of more open discussion, increased understanding and greater tolerance of different faiths." She added: "I am thrilled at the positive response that ONE NIGHT has had from so many people in Manchester and beyond who clearly want to support the vigil." Manchester-based journalist Hussein Al-alak, from the Iraq Solidarity Campaign UK, said: "For us, supporting ACN's work for Iraqi Christians is a natural step in helping the Iraqi people overcome the trauma, displacement and bereavements which result from war and other conflict."

ONE NIGHT was devised within a Christian, Catholic framework, but open to people of all faith backgrounds and none. Mass was held both at the start and at the end of the vigil and in between there were talks on religious minorities in Iraq and ACN's work in support of Iraqis and Syrians fleeing persecution and other violence. Devotional hours for Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Ukraine ran throughout the night ending with an Iraqi-themed breakfast. Broadcast during the evening were recorded messages from Catholic bishops in the North-West region and ACN partners who coordinate the charity's projects for displaced Iraqi Christians. A chapel within the Holy Name, dedicated to the persecuted Church, housed the ONE NIGHT Icon, an image of the Madonna and Child which has recently toured churches throughout Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. It was painted in Russia and once belonged to Maggie Fleming, a Manchester aid worker who helped run an orphanage in Romania until her death in 2002.

A DIVERTING EVENING IN CHESTER

Bernard Payne writes: **Chester Asian and Minority Communities Council (CAMCC)** has for the past few years arranged a big get-together to celebrate the diversity of cultures in the Cheshire and Flintshire area. These gatherings have evolved but tend to follow a similar pattern: a series of short messages of support from a panel of local dignitaries, followed by a more substantial keynote speech from someone further afield. The gathering then continues with food and entertainment – Tandoori-style buffet, Indian-style dancing displays, etc.

CAMCC has good relations with the University of Chester and the gatherings take place somewhere within the University's expanding campus – this year at the Riverside Innovation Centre, previously part of County Hall. Recent keynote speakers have included Yasmin Alibai Brown, and Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali. This year we heard from Sir Peter Fahy, previously Chief Constable of Cheshire, but since 2008 Chief of the Greater Manchester Police. He plays a prominent role with ACPO, both on workforce development and race and diversity issues. Born and brought up in London, Sir Peter referred to his Irish background and his growing up in a strongly Irish Catholic community, thus being immersed in the idea of different cultures in big cities. Now, he felt privileged to be working in the cultural diversity of Manchester. It is said that no fewer than 200 languages are spoken in the Greater Manchester area - this diversity being something to be celebrated. He is a strong believer in the idea that a proud feeling of being "British" can co-exist with a full expression of one's background culture – and in this connection he is very uneasy with France's contrasting approach to being "French" – banning the veil, etc.

He gave a candid assessment of the challenges of terrorism and radicalisation, citing 9/11, the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich and the Paris attacks as varied examples of terrorist action which fundamentally affected our outlook. The current challenge was represented by ISIS and the issue of "home-grown" terrorism. Earlier, radicalisers had targeted already vulnerable and persuadable people, but now with the chilling but skilled use of social media we were seeing "brainwashing in bedrooms", in other words, young people having easy access to images and messages on social media, and being seduced by a misconception of Islam, and into believing that Jihad was much like joining an adventure holiday. The evil side of social media presented a real challenge for parents, schools, youth organisations – not least to understand the technology, what's happening with it, and how young people might be better safeguarded from its extremism. He was concerned at the way right-wing extremists were spreading fear among certain minority communities, his own experience in Greater Manchester showing that this was a real feeling amongst Jewish and Moslem communities – particularly in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris. He referred to the recently-launched campaign "**We Stand Together**" which aimed to counter hate crime and strengthen community cohesion, and to the longer-established programme on counter-terrorism, "**Prevent**" which worked to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorists. [*See the next article for more on this initiative – Ed.*]

He gave a local example of how contacts between different communities can improve understanding and raise awareness of common ground: people from his local church in Northwich had met Muslims at their Manchester Mosque and acknowledged similarities between the five a day Muslim prayers, and the Christian prayers marking the different times of day. Concluding, Sir Peter declared his own outlook to be that of "live and let live". Greater understanding between different communities will not eliminate tensions, but will help us to have "difficult conversations" in an atmosphere of trust.

'PREVENT': MUSLIM COMEDIAN HELPS COUNTER THE RADICALISATION OF TEENAGERS

A British Muslim YouTube comedian is playing an influential role in the UK's counter terrorism operation to prevent the radicalisation of teenagers. South London-born **Humza Arshad** is currently touring more than 40 schools across London, including Quintin Kynaston - the school attended by Mohammed Emwazi, better known as Jihadi John - delivering sessions in partnership with police officers from the London Metropolitan Police's anti-radicalisation programme, '**Prevent**'.

His 15-minute film, *Think for Yourself*, stars his popular 'Badman' character - a pastiche of a 'streetwise' young British Muslim - and explores the issues of extremism and the opportunities that exist to exploit feelings of alienation among that demographic. Following its showing, students take part in open discussions with Arshad and the police about the issues of radicalisation and extremist views on the use of violence. The aim of the film is to highlight the dangers of associating with questionable groups or individuals, safeguarding oneself from extreme messages on the internet and how people can play upon grievances. There's been increasing concern about the radicalisation of young British Muslims as several groups of teenagers have either travelled to Syria to join Islamic State (ISIS) or been stopped en route. The government estimates that 350 Britons are fighting for jihadist groups in Syria.

Chief Superintendent Terri Nicholson of the MPS Counter Terrorism Command says the approach is effective. "The way Humza approached issues, such as association with radical groups and extreme violent content on the internet, resonates with young people and he delivers it in a way they can relate to," she says. "The police are always looking for ways in which we can effectively communicate important messages, and because young audiences identify so well with Humza, this makes the project extremely powerful."

Arshad's management agency go so far as to call him the UK counter terrorism police's "most effective tool at preventing the radicalisation of young British Muslims". The 'Badman' series, which takes a comic view of many issues of lifestyle and faith for young Muslims, always concludes with a thought-provoking message - or Hadith - from the Qur'an for viewers. Humza Arshad says: "There would have been a disconnect between a young Muslim boy and, say, a middle-aged white man. The police wanted to work with me because they knew that the children would know me, and that I could engage with them. This a great way of addressing a very serious issue and I'm really pleased to have been able to take part in the project. As a proud Muslim and British citizen, and someone who is becoming well-known through new media, I feel I have a duty to help raise awareness of extremist views on the internet and within our communities and the dangers they can present. I want to show that as Muslims we are about peace - and not as we are portrayed. I want to show the world that we are just like everyone else."

The concern surrounding the radicalisation of British youths has grown over the years, with reports of British Muslims joining rebel forces, or the Islamic State in Syria. And social media is thought to be one of the methods through which such organisations gather new recruits. But Arshad's keen on providing a grassroots antidote -- or some comic relief -- to what he calls the "hateful messages" coming from a few "misguided individuals." "Social media is one of the ways that these people reach kids, and we want to prevent kids going online from being radicalised," says Arshad. "You can easily access extremist videos online these days and they can change people's minds as it's propaganda. We want kids to be careful when they're online, to think for themselves and to not be easily brainwashed."

Watch the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvn7YQethaI>

The film was premiered at Crown Hills Community College in Leicester on 13 October 2014, following a discussion among a group of around 30 Year Nine students at the school about the issues of radicalisation and extremism. Meanwhile, young Muslims in Leicester signed a declaration against the Islamic State. A scroll with the words "Not in My Name" was organised by Mu-Hamid Pathan and taken to schools, colleges and organisations in the city. "We want people to come together and say we don't agree with Isis and their practices, and they don't represent us or stand for anything to do with Islam," he said. "It is up to the average Muslim like me to educate people and say this is nothing to do with anything we believe in."

Chief Inspector Karl Mortimer, who is the East Midlands' lead officer for the **PREVENT** strategy, said: "We are continually looking at how we engage with our communities. It has led to a number of novel and inventive ways of ensuring we have that dialogue, and this film is an excellent example of that innovative approach." PREVENT is one of four elements of the Government's CONTEST strategy to reduce the threat of terrorism and extremism to and within the UK. It aims to:

- Respond to the ideological challenge we face from terrorism and aspects of extremism, and the threat we face from those who promote these views.
- Provide practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support.
- Work with a wide range of sectors (including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, online and health) where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be dealt with.

A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE SOUTH

By Fr Henry McLaughlin, a priest of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh who has been a volunteer missionary in Latin America for 34 years. Here he offers a perspective from Mexico on the debate prompted by the shortage of priests in St Andrews and Edinburgh. (This first appeared in the April edition of the Scottish Catholic Journal **Open House**. Thanks to Mary Cullen, editor of *Open House*, for permission to publish).

In 1995 I arrived in Southern Mexico. I knocked on the door of the diocesan offices of San Cristobal de las Casas. A lady opened the door and, confident she was the bishop's secretary, I requested to see the bishop. He wasn't there but I explained that I wished to see him with the purpose of volunteering to work in the diocese. I left happy that through the secretary I should soon be able to see the bishop. In the next ten days I had a few visits but never found the bishop in. However she introduced me to the vicar general, and also the vicar in charge of the pastoral work and it was good to talk to them. About a week later the secretary informed me that the bishop was still not around. He had been bitten by a dog and because of his diabetes the healing was slow. However she said I had been accepted to work in the diocese. It was quite a while afterwards that I learnt that I was mistaken in thinking she was his secretary. She was a nun and in May the Diocesan Assembly had voted her in as chancellor of the diocese for three years. Likewise Fr Felipe Toussaint was voted in as vicar general, again for three years. Bishop Samuel trusted the Assembly and the Holy Spirit and ratified the choice of the Assembly. Three years later, Maggie, a member of a Lay Institute, was elected as the new chancellor.

There was a low intensity war being waged, and the Bishop had many more serious matters than me to concern him. I suspect I was a priest in his diocese for months before the chancellor and vicar general informed him that I had been accepted. Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia was a close friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and like him also a great prophet and defender of the poor. Not only did he allow the Assembly to choose the Vicar General and other members of the Curia, but he also trusted the people they chose. The diocese has over 8,000 very active catechists. A number have no schooling but got friends to teach them to read so they could read the Word of God. The average level of academic studies is probably at primary four. Some are exceptionally intelligent, the vast majority are very good people and many extremely wise. They receive no payment, and many have to meet their own expenses such as transport. There are also a number of married Indian deacons and laity delegated to administer sacraments of baptism, marriage and Communion. Most here are denied access to a weekly Eucharist. However in spite of that, there is a strong vibrant Catholic faith nourished by the breaking of the Word. The eyes of the people sparkle when they divide up into small groups and share their understanding of the Gospel.

By and large we in Scotland have missed a great opportunity to implement Vatican II and really allow and encourage the participation of the laity. Every Sunday we have, to a very large extent, missed a wonderful opportunity of nourishment by not adequately sharing the Word of God. In this South Mexican Diocese, we had a wonderful diocesan synod. From 1995 to 1999 there was a two way non-stop consultation and communication between the diocesan offices and our 2,500 mainly Indian rural communities. Bishop Samuel Ruiz returned inspired from the Vatican Council. "The collegial Council spirit gave rise in our diocese to a search for structures of communion (in our Assembly, pastoral teams, councils and coordination), as being closer to the spirit of the gospel than top down structures... Visitors have noticed that here authority rather than being the domain of power, is shared and exercised as a service which takes into account the view of the humblest and most distant community... This is due to the option for participation, the ecclesial co-responsibility and the pastoral work of the gospel." (*cf Foreword of Third Diocesan Synod*). More than once I heard people saying that no bishop in Mexico delegates his power like Bishop Samuel. And no bishop in Mexico has such moral authority.

CAFOD FILM CLIP

CAFOD Chair Bishop John Arnold looks at the key issues facing the suffering millions overseas - clean drinking water, poverty, poor distribution of wealth - and how we have a responsibility to the global community. <https://vimeo.com/123625797>

Depression Awareness Week 20-26 April *Time to Change: Let's end mental health discrimination*

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in Britain, according to the **Mental Health Foundation**. Find out more at: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics/> Mental health is a very real illness, and debilitating symptoms might include feelings of helplessness, crying, anxiety, low self-esteem, a lack of energy, sleeping difficulties, physical aches and pains, and a bleak view of the future. Depression shows itself in many different ways, but it typically interferes with a person's ability to function, feel pleasure or take an interest in things.

Find out about symptoms, treatments and tips for managing it on the following websites:

NHS <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Rethink Mental Illness <http://www.rethink.org/diagnosis-treatment/conditions/depression>

Mind <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/#.VTe6RCx0x-U>

Time to change <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/category/blog/depression>

Go to <http://bit.ly/1Dh9dWq> for personal stories on living with depression and challenging stigma.

JUSTICE AND PEACE CALENDAR

10-16 May Christian Aid Week

Held every year since 1957, Christian Aid Week is Britain's longest-running fundraising week to support projects in developing countries with a focus on tackling poverty. House-to-house collections raise almost £9m across the UK every year - a perfect opportunity to get your church out into your community while demonstrating God's heart for the poor. Download films, prayers, sermon notes and Sunday school activities at: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/christianaidweek/index.aspx>

15 May Conscientious Objectors Day

This day raises awareness of those who refuse to participate in armed conflict for moral or religious reasons. There were about 16,000 conscientious objectors in World War One. The Peace Pledge Union has produced an information briefing about conscientious objection and peace activism in the First World War: ***Opposing World War One: Courage and Conscience.*** <http://www.ppu.org.uk/OpposingWorldWarOne.pdf> <http://www.coproject.org.uk/>

11-15 May Walk to Work Week

Walk to Work Week is part of National Walking Month, an annual campaign run by **Living Streets** which promotes walking for all. Living Streets is a national charity that stands up for pedestrians, working with local communities to create safe, attractive, enjoyable streets where it's great to walk. Every May we encourage people to feel the benefits of walking: burn calories and get fitter; blow away the cobwebs and relieve stress; go for a stroll together or walk the kids to school; make new discoveries in your area; save your travel fare; cut your environmental footprint. Create your online profile now to be a part of our free workplace walking challenge week starting Monday 11 May. Join or create a workplace team and get competitive with colleagues using our live totalisers and leaderboards to motivate you. Log any walking you do to see how many calories you are burning and how much CO₂ you save. Complete our challenges to feel the benefits of walking more and earn badges for all your achievements.

<http://www.walktoworkweek.org.uk>

18-22 May Walk To School Week

Every year Walk to School Week brings together nearly one million schoolchildren, teachers and parents. This year is all about the health benefits of walking. During the week, Walk to School mascot Strider will be encouraging pupils to take his 5-Day Walking Challenge – supported by our classroom-focused pack.

- 1. Healthy body** - Daily exercise has numerous physical health benefits including helping to reduce the risk of childhood obesity and medical conditions in later life such as cancer and heart disease.
- 2. Health and happiness** - Regular walking helps to keep young minds healthy and alert ready for their arrival at school.
- 3. Healthy habits** - Getting into the habit of an energetic walk at the start of the day will also encourage healthy eating habits such as having a nutritious breakfast every morning.
- 4. Healthy friends and family** - The walk to school is the perfect opportunity for some quality family time or a good chat with friends helping to develop strong, happy relationships.
- 5. Healthy environment** - And don't forget that walking rather than taking motorised transport means less pollution and cleaner air – a benefit for everyone! -

<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school/walk-to-school-week-18-22-may-2015#sthash.VMZdqMfS.dpuf>

23 May Celebrating Archbishop Oscar Romero's beatification

On 23 May (Pentecost Saturday) the beatification of Archbishop Romero will take place in San Salvador at a ceremony in the 'Salvador del Mundo' Plaza presided over by Cardinal Angelo Amato, who heads the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. It is scheduled to take place between 09.00 and 12.00 hours local time which is 16.00 to 19.00 British Summer Time. It should be possible to watch the service on-line but as yet we have no details. Bishop John Rawsthorne will represent the Bishops' Conference in San Salvador.

It is hoped that the diocesan CAFOD offices and all of us in diocesan Justice and Peace groups will celebrate this event. Soon-to-be-Blessed Oscar Romero has for ages been our J&P 'patron-saint-in-waiting' and we should ensure that the thanksgiving really is a celebration of a martyr killed in hatred of the faith, a martyr to an authentic option for the poor, a martyr for a faith that does justice, a martyr to the social teaching of Vatican II and the magisterium of the Church.

<http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/>

24 May World Day of Prayer for the Church in China

In May 2007, Pope Benedict XVI released a Letter to Chinese Catholics, in which he asked that May 24 each year be dedicated a World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. He chose May 24 because it is the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, who is venerated at the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai. In honour of the first celebration of the World Day of Prayer for China, in 2008, Pope Benedict composed a prayer to Our Lady of Sheshan and asked that Christians throughout the world recite it on May 24.

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/document.php?n=1017>

4 June International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

On 19 August 1982, at its emergency special session on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly, "appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression", decided to commemorate 4 June of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression ([resolution ES-7/8](#)). The purpose of the day is to acknowledge the pain suffered by children throughout the world who are the victims of physical, mental and emotional abuse. This day affirms the UN's commitment to protect the rights of children.

www.un.org/en/events/childvictimday

5 June World Environment Day *Sustainable Consumption and Production*

The well-being of humanity, the environment, and the functioning of the economy, ultimately depend upon the responsible management of the planet's natural resources. Evidence is building that people are consuming far more natural resources than what the planet can sustainably provide. Many of the Earth's ecosystems are nearing critical tipping points of depletion or irreversible change. By 2050, if current consumption and production patterns remain the same and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our ways of living and consumption. Living within planetary boundaries is the most promising strategy for ensuring a healthy future. Human prosperity need not cost the earth. Living sustainably is about doing more and better with less. It is about knowing that rising rates of natural resource use and the environmental impacts that occur are not a necessary by-product of economic growth.

<http://www.greeningtheblue.org/event/world-environment-day-5-june-2015>

12 June United Nations World Day Against Child Labour

According to the International Labour Organization statistics, it is estimated that in 2013 alone, 2 million children were subject to child domestic labour. On this day, the ILO encourages governments to undertake legislative reforms and the implementation of policies that guarantee the elimination of child labour.

<http://www.vercalendario.info/en/event/days-unitednations-12-june-2015.html>

15-21 June Refugee Week *Different pasts, shared future*

Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events and activities that celebrates the contribution of refugees to the UK and promotes better understanding of why people seek sanctuary.

Refugee Week was first held in 1998 and developed in response to the increasingly negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers held by the general public in Britain, fuelled by persistently hostile media coverage of the asylum issue. It is the only UK-wide event that attempts to counter this negative climate, defending the importance of sanctuary and the benefits it can bring to both refugees and host communities. Refugee Week provides a platform where positive images of refugees can be promoted in order to create a culture of welcome throughout the UK. Our ultimate aim is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to the UK.

The aims of Refugee Week are:

- To encourage a diverse range of events to be held throughout the UK, which facilitate positive encounters between refugees and the general public in order to encourage greater understanding and overcome hostility
- To showcase the talent and expertise that refugees bring with them to the UK
- To explore new and creative ways of addressing the relevant issues and reach beyond the refugee sector
- To provide information which educates and raises awareness of the reality of refugee experiences

Refugee Week is a unique opportunity for us all to experience and celebrate the rich diversity of refugee communities through theatre, music, dance, film & other events which take place all over the UK. Through Refugee Week we aim to provide an important opportunity for asylum seekers and refugees to be seen, listened to and valued.

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk>

26 June United Nations Day for Victims of Torture

Action by Christians Against Torture ACAT(UK) was formed in 1984 by the then British Council of Churches, with the active support of Amnesty International and Society of Friends. ACAT(UK) is affiliated to the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT) in Paris, and is a Body in Association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). We seek to increase awareness in the Churches and among Christians of the widespread and evil use of torture and the need, for reasons of Christian faith, to campaign for its abolition. Torture is totally banned in international law under ALL circumstances, including war, civil war, internal conflict and terrorist attack (Article 2 of the UN Convention Against Torture.)

www.acatuk.org.uk/

FILM EVENTS ON REQUEST

1: *Days that shook the world – The Christmas Truce*; 2: *Harry Patch – military hero or man of peace?*; 3: *Romero – a true story*; 4: *Monseñor – The last journey of Oscar Romero*. These 4 films can be borrowed from the Liverpool J&P office or brought to you with projection equipment and a team who will provide an introduction and lead follow-up discussion. All you have to do is book a room, advertise the event and provide refreshments. 0151 522 1080 s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

35.8 MILLION PEOPLE ARE BEING HELD IN MODERN DAY SLAVERY. HOW CAN WE AS TACKLE THIS?

Rhema theatre company have partnered with **International Justice Movement (UK)** and **Stop The Traffik** to educate, challenge and equip audiences to be part of the solution to present their new 2015 National Tour of **'The It's Not Fair!'** an engaging, eye-opening blend of theatre, storytelling, puppetry and music telling stories from around the world about human trafficking – and those who fight against it. **Watch the trailer:** <https://vimeo.com/119597741>

Enquiries: becky@rhematheatre.org 07970 965 216 www.theitsnotfair.co.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MAY

5 Monseñor – The last journey of Oscar Romero St Monica's Dingleway, Appleton. WA4 3AB Mass 7pm. Film 7.30-9pm

7 General Election – MAKE SURE YOU VOTE!

10-16 Christian Aid Week www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/christianaidweek/ Watch out for local details.

11-15 Walk to Work Week <http://www.walktoworkweek.org.uk>

12 CWDF AGM 6.45-9pm The Unity Centre, Cuppin Street Chester, CH1 2BN. Following the business part of the AGM we will be hearing from our guest speakers, VSO volunteers Tricia Atherton and Margaret Park, on the theme VSO Education in Rwanda.

12 Embrace the Middle East Annual Lecture by Rowan Williams London embraceme.org/events

15 International Conscientious Objectors Day paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884

16 NJPN AGM & OPEN NETWORKING DAY 10.30am-4pm CAFOD 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB. Speaker Nick Dearden from Global Justice Now on **TTIP: A Charter for Big Business?**

16 Inauguration of new Marian Trail St Austin's school, Thatto Heath, St Helens WA9 5NN 2- 4pm Refreshments afterwards. Schools, churches and community groups in St Helens have created a trail (dedicated to Mary) between Thatto Heath and Sutton Heath in St Helens. As not all the groups are Catholic, the others being of Methodist faith or no designated faith, the purpose behind the trail has widened into celebrating the women in our lives who do so much for us, whilst retaining Mary as an overall inspiration. Each group taking part has made a garden shrine: connecting the spiritual with the natural.

18-22 Walk To School Week <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school/walk-to-school-week-18-22-may-2015#sthash.VMZdqMFS.dpuf>

20 Chester Friends of Palestine AGM 7.30-9.30pm, University of Chester, Riverside Building, Castle Drive Chester, CH1 1SL Contact Katy Rowe 01244 674448 katyrowe@gmail.com

23 Beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero <http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/>

JUNE

4 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression www.un.org/en/events/childvictimday

5 World Environment Day <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/event/world-environment-day-5-june-2015>

12 UN World Day Against Child Labour <http://www.vercalendario.info/en/event/days-unitednations-12-june-2015.html>

15-21 Refugee Week <http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk>

17 Climate Change rally & lobby Parliament Square, London. Mass lobby of MPs in Westminster, Climate fete: food, stalls, fun & games for all the family in a local community-feel Fair on Parliament Square. Evening rally in Trafalgar Square with high profile speakers. Simultaneous local community events www.theclimatcoalition.org/

20 Liverpool J&P Commission Annual Assembly 'Who is my neighbour?' 10-4 at LACE Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool L17 1AA. Coffee/registration from 9.30am. Prayer, speakers, discussion, action plans. Stalls: J&P, Nugent Care, CAFOD, Progressio, SVP, CND, MARCAP, CAP, Church Credit Champions, Traidcraft foods and catalogues. Book a place on 0151 522 1080/1081 or email s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

26 UN Day for Victims of Torture www.acatuk.org.uk/

JULY

17-19 The Things That Make For Peace. NJPN annual conference at Swanwick to identify the real threats to human security and how we can work together to create a world without war. 020 7901 486 admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

OCTOBER

3-4 COME & SEE 2015 Conference at Southport. Keynote speaker **Sr Helen Prejean**. Sunday Mass with Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP. Booking forms with sae: Irenaeus, 32 Great Georges Rd, Liverpool L22 1RD. 0151 949 1199 jenny@irenaeus.co.uk

• Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news and events. Sign up too for weekly e-bulletins from National J&P Network 020 7901 4864 admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN