

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

STOP TRIDENT NATIONAL RALLY 27 FEBRUARY

CND has called a national demonstration to protest against Trident, Britain's nuclear weapons system. Join us to say No to government plans to buy a new system at a cost of £100 billion. Parliament will be voting on this in 2016. So this is urgent – we can't delay. The majority of the British people, including the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and other parliamentary party leaders, oppose nuclear weapons. They are weapons of mass destruction that can kill millions. They don't keep us safe and they divert resources from essential spending. We are committed to building one of the biggest mobilisations against nuclear weapons in a generation. We have planned a series of action days and lobbies to pressure MPs out about the demo. Can you organise an event in your area? Please contact the CND campaigns team enquiries@cnduk.org 020 7700 2393, your local CND group or one of the supporting organisations (below) to work with activists in your area. Let's get the message out loud and clear: we don't want Trident and we don't want a new Trident. <http://www.cnduk.org/campaigns/no-to-trident>

#StopTrident Thunderclap Sign up to our Thunderclap to send our message far and wide throughout social media. If you are organising an event let us know and we will list it on our web site. We can provide speakers for events. <http://cnduk.org/get-involved/events/item/2282-stop-trident-national-demo>

Pax Christi is one of the organisations in the Stop Trident coalition. **Join us on the day** for interfaith prayer at 11am at Hinde Street Methodist Church, Marylebone, London W1U. We will then join the march under the banner 'No Faith in Trident' but do bring your own peace/Church/community banner! The march will end in Trafalgar Square.

• **Supporting organisations:** CND, Campaign Against Arms Trade, Compass, Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Green Party of England & Wales, Greenpeace, International Peace Bureau, Medact, Muslim Association of Britain, Pax Christi, People's Assembly Against Austerity, Quakers, Scientists for Global Responsibility, Stop the War, Veterans for Peace, War on Want, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: WILPF. http://paxchristi.org.uk/event/stop-trident-national-rally/?instance_id=492

REFLECTION: A WEEK IN THE NORTH

Matt Jeziorski, Pax Christi's Peace Education worker, recently spent nine days working in the Lancashire and North Wales. Here he reflects on this journey made a couple of days after the terrorist attack on Paris.

On Tuesday 17 November I sat enjoying a brew at Euston station whilst I awaited a train to take me north for a little over a week working in Lancashire and North Wales. The world was still reeling from the murderous attacks in Paris a few days earlier; President Hollande had spoken of being merciless in their response and the press here was full of talk of revenge, retribution, and a military solution to the problem of Daesh. My own spirits were low – I speak often in schools about the need to support one another in our peacemaking because sometimes it can appear an impossible task. And this was one such time.

The next day I found myself in Lytham at St Bede's – a Pax Christi school – to work with some amazing young people who were endeavouring to put peace into action in their school community. This morning of thinking creatively about the challenges of day-to-day work for peace was followed by two RE classes where we addressed a question as topical as it was difficult: *Is it acceptable to use drones to bomb terrorist targets?*

I asked the same question later in the week of several groups of students at St Richard Gwyn in Flint and both occasions were uplifted by the depth of thought, the compassion, and the sense of justice that the students brought to the debate. To be sure there were a variety of answers to the question but there was an almost universal concern for the wellbeing of the innocent civilian, that any action was about justice and not revenge, and that bombs – by drone or any other means – ought to be the last resort

and not an initial response from a people wanting to do something. Considered responses far removed from the bloodlust overwhelmingly present in some parts of the press.

At other times, in Bury, Preston, and – after my return south – in St Albans I worked with students exploring more broadly the work of Christian peacemaking. We thought about *turn the other cheek* and the philosophy of nonviolence, Franz Jägerstätter and the demands of peacemaking, and how these ideas inform and inspire the work of Pax Christi. Numerous times I was asked what the principles of nonviolence would mean in response to Daesh.

My answer never came easily. I wondered how Daesh got their money and their weapons and what could be done about this, pondered how grassroots peacemakers in Syria might be supported, reflected on the powerful nations in the Middle East and the influence they might be able to wield. I spoke of Fr Ziad and recalled his words at our Pax Christi AGM earlier this year, 'we do not need any more bombs'.

As I write the UK parliament is debating a proposal for UK forces to carry out airstrikes in Syria. If my spirits were low two weeks ago as I began my journey north then it would be reasonable that they were lower still today. Yet the experience of working with these students, the thoughtfulness with which they approached difficult and complex issues, their willingness to challenge and critique ideas, and their profound compassion and sense of justice has encouraged me. In the midst of everything there remains hope.

What if we used the money the government is planning to spend on Trident on schools, hospitals and support for the elderly and the disabled.

Then once a year we have a 'Trident in need' night, and everyone who thinks we need weapons of mass destruction can chip in for that.

TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR - A NEW BILL TO GO BEFORE PARLIAMENT

By **Holly Wallis** January 14, 2016

March 2nd 2016 marks 100 years since all unmarried men aged 18-41 were deemed to have enlisted in the British Army as a consequence of the 1916 Military Service Act, which simultaneously introduced compulsory military service and the inclusive right to conscientious objection to Britain for the first time. The dedicated convictions of WW1 conscientious objectors led to this conscience clause, a milestone moment in the history of individual freedoms. The government will no doubt celebrate Britain's leading role in the lawful recognition of conscience on the centenary of this act, whilst failing to see that for many, the fight for freedom of conscience has not yet been won.

Conscience: Taxes for Peace Not War is introducing a bill to parliament during the centenary of the Military Service Act of 1916 which would allow for conscientious objection to military taxation (COMT). Our '**Taxes for Peace Bill**' would provide the freedom of conscience to those who are morally, ethically or religiously opposed to war to be able to re-direct the military portion of their taxes towards a fund designated for non-military security and conflict resolution and prevention work.

Conscience believes that the right to conscientious objection is still not fully recognised in British law, as we are still financially conscripted into military service through the taxation system. Modern wars are no longer fought with conscript armies, but with professional armies using high-tech weapons, paid for with our taxes. Before the first shot has been fired, we are already supporting the use of violence. This is financial conscription with no right to object. Since the ending of conscription into the armed forces, if the right of conscientious objection is to have any real meaning, it must be through the right not to support war and preparations for war with our taxes.

COMT, the option to divert one's taxes away from nuclear weapons, arms fairs and drone strikes on our own citizens abroad, is based on a recognised human right, not a political decision such as not wanting pay for education because you don't have children. Funding welfare in support of our citizens from 'cradle to grave' is something we can all be proud of. However, being forced to pay for early graves and intimidation through threat of death and destruction is an issue that goes further than the state.

Freedom of conscience is, in fact, a right already recognised within every significant international treaty - the European Convention on Human Rights, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the British Human Rights Act all testify that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion". Clearly, a tax system that makes big moral decisions on war, conflict and murder without consulting the individuals who pay for it, is damaging for individual liberty.

Conscience campaigns for this liberty on behalf of those who do not want to have any involvement in war and preparation for war, yet cannot legally avoid being financially conscripted into the military. For many, paying for war violates their freedom of religion. Many Quakers, for example, have been engaged in our campaign because they are a particular religious group whose faith asks them to give witness to their peace testimony, and who must therefore confront their complicity in war. But they are just one among many: Mennonites, Ba'hais, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and Haredim Jews all practice conscientious objection for reasons of faith. When discussing withholding tax, one Anglican supporter of Conscience said: "This cumbersome process is the only way I can continue to refuse to pay for other people to engage in warfare (that takes human life inevitably) in direct opposition to the Christian demand that we try to love one another."

We campaign for the right of those individuals who withhold tax or don't pay tax at all because they equate paying for deliberate killing with doing it themselves, and have no alternative means of exercising their right of conscience. In manifesting their pacifist beliefs they face prison and bankruptcy. Any system which criminalises citizens for refusing to be complicit in war is clearly in urgent need of reform.

Amongst debates about renewing Trident, leaving NATO and bombing Syria, our Bill recognises the rights of those who otherwise do not have a say in how their own security is provided. It is a government's duty to keep its people safe and secure, and that is something we should all contribute to financially. This does not mean, however, that this security can only be established through threat of violence and overseas murder. Peace-building is a more sustainable, effective and economic form of security. It would mean the UK leads in saving lives rather than ending them.

The Centenary this year provides the perfect opportunity to draw attention to the fact that the laws surrounding conscientious objection need to be updated to reflect changes in warfare, and to argue that we are still unable to fully exercise our freedom of conscience in regards to war.

For more information on ways you can get involved in this campaign, please contact me at outreach@conscienceonline.org.uk
If you object to paying taxes for military preparations, please register as a conscientious objector here:
<http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk/register-yourself-as-a-conscientious-objector/>

© **Holly Wallis**. Holly Wallis is Parliamentary Officer for Conscience, which campaigns for a peace tax.

Conscience: Taxes for Peace Not War <http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk/http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/22606>

CHRISTIAN AID WELCOMES COUNCILS' ACTION ON COMPANY TAX RECORDS

A growing number of UK councils are taking companies' tax records into account when deciding how to award contracts worth tens of billions of pounds, in a trend welcomed by Christian Aid. In December, members of Oxford City Council voted unanimously to investigate whether and how the council can include rigorous questions about companies' tax practices in council procurement procedures. Detailed tax compliance questions have already been adopted by Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh city councils in Northern Ireland, as well as by the University of Oxford. This month, Christian Aid launches its *Sourced* campaign to encourage other councils in England and Northern Ireland to follow suit.

Local authorities in England alone spend around £45 billion a year on buying goods and services from third parties.

"We hope to see more and more councils deciding that when awarding contracts, they will take companies' tax records into account and discriminate in favour of those which have been socially responsible," said Helen Collinson, Senior Public Advocacy Adviser at Christian Aid. "Councils spend tens of billions of pounds on goods and services. This is taxpayers' money, so it is only right that councils choose to work with firms which pay their fair share of tax."

The law already requires local authorities to ask potential suppliers whether they have been found guilty of tax evasion. Christian Aid wants local authorities to go further and also ask companies whether they have been found to have improperly avoided tax, in the UK or other countries.

Ms Collinson added: "Christian Aid is pleased to see a growing number of UK councils demanding that companies seeking contracts must reveal whether they have been in trouble about tax, anywhere in the world. We hope to see many more do so in 2016. "That's because companies' tax decisions have a major impact on people's lives, both in the UK and even more so in developing countries. When they use accounting tricks to pay less tax, there is less funding for public services at local and national level, including for schools and health services."

Jean Fooks, councillor for Summertown Ward in Oxford, proposed the motion that was passed by the City Council. She said: "I am delighted that the motion was supported unanimously by the City Council. At a time when councils are struggling with ever deeper cuts to our budgets, it makes sense that we use our spending power to favour companies that pay their taxes. After all, it is companies' and individuals' tax payments that ultimately fund council budgets. I hope that councils across the UK will agree."

* Regulations made in 2014 require central government departments to ask would-be bidders detailed questions about tax but these are optional for local authorities. Christian Aid's new *Sourced* campaign aims to persuade many more local authorities to choose to apply the 2014 regulations. The 2014 regulations say that companies seeking central government contracts worth £5 million or more must reveal whether they have been found guilty of tax evasion and whether their tax returns have been found to be 'incorrect' by tax authorities in the UK or other countries, including developing countries. Companies are banned from bidding for national government contracts if they have committed certain tax crimes and they can be banned for lesser wrongdoing, at the discretion of the body awarding the contract. Further regulations in 2015 require companies bidding for local council contracts to reveal if they have been found guilty of tax evasion - but not avoidance.

More about the *Sourced* campaign from Christian Aid: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/index.aspx>
<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/22578>

SARAH TEATHER APPOINTED AS NEW DIRECTOR FOR JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICES

Sarah Teather has been appointed as the Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in the UK (JRS UK). Formerly the Member of Parliament for the London constituency of Brent Central, Sarah joined the International Advocacy team of JRS in June 2015. As an advocacy advisor, she has visited JRS projects all over the world, including Lebanon, South Sudan, Uganda, Macedonia and the southern coast of Italy where so many attempt dangerous crossings to Europe over the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition to her 12 years as an MP, Sarah has had a consistent record of working on social justice issues and was previously a policy analyst for Macmillan Cancer Support. During her two and a half years as Minister for Children and Families, she negotiated the end of routine detention of children in the immigration system; led efforts to combat sexualisation and commercialisation of childhood; led reforms to improve the support of children with special educational needs and disability; and published the first UK-wide child poverty strategy. As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, she led an inquiry which looked at how children and young people are treated in the asylum process and also a high profile cross party inquiry on immigration detention.

Sarah, who has an interest in Ignatian spirituality, made her decision to leave politics and change direction while making the Spiritual Exercises during a month-long silent retreat. She has subsequently had training in spiritual accompaniment. She says she is excited to be taking on the new role as Country Director of JRS UK. "I feel privileged to have the opportunity to commit my skills to work that I care so passionately about and to work with an organisation I have long admired," she says. "In my current role with JRS International, I have seen how JRS' mission to accompany refugees through the highs and lows of their journey is truly a witness to human dignity. That perspective has never been more critical than it is now. Forced migration is the issue of our age as multiple conflicts and human rights abuses force many from their homes. JRS UK has a unique and important role to play, drawing on its domestic expertise working with the most vulnerable destitute and detained asylum seekers and the international reach of JRS into some of the most troubled areas of the world."

Sarah has also paid tribute to Louise Zanré, who is standing down from her role as Director of JRS UK after 16 years. "I am hugely aware that in this role Louise has set a high benchmark to follow," she says. "I feel inspired by her work and hope that I can contribute to JRS with even half of her generosity of spirit." <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=28954>

HOW THE FLOODS UNITED THE NORTH – FROM CHEFS BEARING CURRY TO REFUGEES WITH SANDBAGS

The impact of the floods in the north of England and Scotland has been enormous. Yet the disaster has brought together people who might never normally mix – from the armies of Sikh and Muslim volunteers to the individuals sending care parcels.

The Sikhs had been dishing out free curry in Mytholmroyd for a few days when a man in his mid to late 20s came up to them, looking emotional. He had a confession to make. "I used to hate Asians," he told one of the coordinators from Khalsa Aid, a Sikh charity based in Slough, who came up to volunteer in the West Yorkshire town after it was almost wiped out in the post-Christmas floods. "I used to be with Combat 18. But I'm so ashamed of that now, having seen how you are all up here helping us." He vowed to go and apologise to all the Asian shopkeepers he had been rude to over the years.

"These floods have changed people," says Ravi Singh, Khalsa Aid's CEO, as his volunteer army diverted resources up to Deeside in Scotland, which flooded earlier this week. "It's been incredibly inspiring to see how people of all backgrounds have come together. There was no twiddling thumbs waiting for the government or authorities to help. They rallied around and they got stuck in. I think the experience will have a long-lasting effect on these communities."

Mark Slade would agree. His riverside flat up the valley in Sowerby Bridge was destroyed on Boxing Day when the Calder burst its banks and invaded his ground-floor home. He was fast asleep in bed when the firemen banged on his door. "I threw some jeans on and prepared to give whoever it was merry hell," says the 46-year-old. "Then I saw it was the fire service. They told me I was about to get flooded. When we got outside, the water was already 5ft deep. The firefighter had to give me a piggyback." Even then, Slade didn't think his flat was in danger, so he didn't take anything with him. He left his phone on the side, assuming he could pop back later to get it. But when he did return, three hours later, the waters had completely engulfed the ground floor, right up to his ceiling. Everything he owned was destroyed.

On Sunday night, he logged on to Facebook for the first time in his life. "Hi, my name's Mark and I lost everything I own in the Boxing Day floods," he wrote. Within an hour, he'd had 80 offers of help from people he had never met in his life, prompting his second-ever Facebook post. "Incredibly overwhelmed by the response, not too proud to say tears have been shed over the well wishes and offers of support, again from strangers. I have to admit, I was a single, cynical man, living in his hometown of Sowerby Bridge, a town I barely recognise from my youth and I felt a huge disconnect. I felt no sense of society or belonging [to] the town where I was born. And it took a tragedy, at a time when most people focus [on] their own families. And yet, without request or reward, people have put their backs and hearts into helping strangers. It took a tragedy to bring a dawning of a new year with more hope for myself than I have felt in a long time, all thanks to a community I didn't believe existed. I'm ashamed to say I thought Britain was broken. I'm now proud to say the scales have fallen from my eyes and now I see."

The bank worker is still crying when he describes how the floods have changed his life for the better. "It's really, really affected me. It's almost like I've been given a clean slate. The floods have made me look at myself very, very critically, at how I interact with people, how isolated I had become." He had become so disillusioned with Sowerby Bridge that he had turned in on himself, he says. "The buildings were the same, but everything else had changed. Everywhere you go, people were swiping left and right, looking down at their phones and not saying hello. I became more and more isolated, more and more cynical, shouting at the TV and looking forward to Newsnight so I could have a good old rant. I felt totally disconnected from society. I didn't think anybody cared."

In losing everything, he has found hope and a sense of community he thought had been consigned to history, along with Sowerby's textile industry. Today, he was expecting a visit from a stranger who has promised to drop off a suit for him to wear when he goes back to work. A woman he has never met, whose own home had been flooded in Shropshire in the past, promises to send him a care parcel.

Rachel Burton, the head teacher of Riverside junior school in Hebden Bridge, is in a reflective mood as she continued a huge clear-up operation. Hebden is a "white bubble", says Burton, a former police officer. The floods may have changed that for the better, she says, after huge numbers of people from Muslim and Sikh groups arrived in the town to help with the clear-up. When the school reopens, she will tell the children that it was members of the wider community who helped pick their school up when it was down. "We will tell the children: 'The community did this.'"

In Mytholmroyd on New Year's Day, locals were stunned to see a group of Syrian refugees from Manchester turn up to shovel mud from the playground at the Burnley Road Academy, a primary school that was almost destroyed during the Boxing Day floods. When the new term starts on Wednesday, the upper school will be squatting in the sixth-form centre of nearby Calder High, while the little ones will take over classrooms in another primary. Yasser al-Jassem, a refugee who escaped Syria a few months ago, explains why they were there: "I volunteered when I was in Aleppo. I was an ambulance driver and helped with humanitarian rescue efforts when the Assad regime bombed civilian areas. Now, in the UK, I also want to volunteer, and so do many other Syrians who recognise the importance of humanitarian efforts like this one because of the destruction in our homeland." The group also filled sandbags in Littleborough, Rochdale. "It's extremely uplifting, both for us and for the community which we helped," says Al-Jassem. "With everything that is happening in our homeland, it is nice to be helping where we can."

On Sunday, a special interfaith service was held at St James's church in Hebden Bridge, attended by Muslim charities and Khalsa Aid, which dished out 6-8,000 hot meals across Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria last week. A Muslim youth charity, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association, said its 350 volunteers had worked 7,400 hours over the Christmas period, helping 10,000 people in 38 towns and villages.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/05/how-floods-united-the-north-chefs-bearing-curries-refugees-with-sandbags>

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

As part of our work to tackle food poverty, **Church Action on Poverty** has been involved in the **Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty**. Commission Chair Geoff Tansley introduces the Commission's recommendations:

Making the connections between immediate hunger and poverty and the broader issues of health, sustainability and fair working conditions was a key challenge for the Commission over the past year. We are a volunteer, independent non-party political group hosted by the Fabian Society, supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and informed by an expert panel of people living in poverty in Salford, who were recruited by Church Action on Poverty.

We focused on food *and* poverty rather than 'food poverty' because that tends to direct thinking to the immediate needs of people in acute crisis, often focused on use of food banks. In fact, the links between food and poverty are far wider and deeper than being able to afford to eat. They require us to address the need for healthy and sustainable diets, decent working terms and conditions for those working to feed us from field to fork, and sustainable food production systems – all in ways that don't harm the poorest.

We found:

- **Parents skip meals** to make sure their children get fed.
- People **squeeze the food budget** because it's the most flexible part of the household budget.
- People have to **prioritise calories** over nutrients.
- **Food banks are just the tip of the iceberg**, and often a means of last resort for people living in a continuing state of household food insecurity.

We believe five principles should underlie any action to address the issue:

- Everyone in the UK should have **secure access to nutritious, sustainable food they can afford**, and nobody should live in a state of household food insecurity.
- Food banks and other forms of charitable food provision should **become unnecessary** by 2020.
- **Decent work** is the best way of achieving sustainable food security for most households, but the **social security** system also has an important role to play for many, both in and out of work.
- The **links between low income and diet related ill health** should be broken.
- People on low incomes should be **protected from price rises** and other negative effects of addressing the long-term environmental, health and workforce challenges of the food system.

Nationally, we want the Prime Minister to create a senior minister responsible for eliminating **household food insecurity**, which should be a central criterion for evaluating Universal Credit. The minister would oversee how government respects, protects and fulfils the right to food, monitored by a civil society alliance. We must measure household food insecurity so we know how successful we are in eliminating it. And government, regulators and businesses must work together to end the Poverty Premium (where the poorest pay most for key living costs including food, utilities, housing, household appliances, and transport). More locally, local authorities need to develop food access plans with their local communities.

A range of actions are needed on **income**. We must ensure that the DWP stops benefit sanctions, delays and errors causing food insecurity. Social security benefits for working-age people need to be up-rated in a way that keeps pace with the actual cost of living. To bring everybody up to a minimum socially acceptable level of income, we must proceed with raising the 'national living wage' to 60 per cent of median wages; actively build coverage of the voluntary Living Wage; and re-establish the principle that social security benefits should be adequate to ensure subsistence.

More, though, is needed to change the **environments** that shape our food preferences and influence the health and sustainability of the food system. For long-term savings and better health, we must protect public health schemes and budgets. The Department of Health should lead a review of advertising codes to protect children from the marketing of unhealthy food and drink products, and work with the Treasury and devolved governments to pilot a duty on sugary drinks. The current DEFRA 25-year plan for food and farming needs to be broadened to reduce household food insecurity and tackle health, sustainability and workforce issues.

FEEDING COMMUNITY

Church Action on Poverty is about to start testing an innovative new way for communities to tackle the Poverty Premium: '**Your Local Pantry**'. Anna Jones from our partner organisation, the social landlord Stockport Homes, explains how they first developed the idea:

Almost three years ago Stockport Homes saw more and more people having to use food banks, and struggling to meet the costs of everyday living. As a responsible landlord we knew there must be more we could do to help people in need, and this is where the Your Local Pantry network began. The Pantry model is designed to be a sustainable resource to help those struggling to make ends meet – before they reach crisis point. Changes in the benefits system and rising food costs have all taken their toll on people's weekly budget. In some cases people have to choose between heating or eating.

Each Pantry is a community food club where local residents are invited to join up as members for a small weekly fee of £2.50. In return, residents can select their own items from a wide selection of goods: fresh milk and bread, fresh fruit and veg, and all the usual store cupboard favourites. All monies collected are reinvested straight back into the project, paying for additional supplies (we have just expanded our range to include toiletries, due to popular demand!) or essential equipment. This enables the Pantry to stand independently and to cover its overheads without reliance on funding. Although the main draw of Pantries is food provision, they provide much, much more. They offer work experience opportunities through a volunteering scheme; there are customer service roles in the Pantry shops or, more behind the scenes, working on deliveries and stock control. A Pantry training package is being developed.

In less than three years, our three Pantries have already helped over 670 households, received over 2,380 visits from their members, assisted five volunteers into full-time paid employment, and redistributed over £50,000 worth of stock! All three Pantries are well loved by their communities. Not just for the supplies they offer but for what they've done to bring different parts of the neighbourhood together. Members will often congregate outside their Pantry before it opens so they can have a catch-up with new-found friends!

With a great deal of support from Church Action on Poverty, we have recently submitted paperwork to become a fully-fledged co-operative and are developing a social franchise package where interested groups will be able to apply for a 'Pantry in a Box' so they can replicate the model where they are. It's been an amazing experience to have seen Your Local Pantry grow from one small pilot scheme into something that has appeared on national TV and garnered interest from all around the country (furthest so far is the Shetlands). I can't wait to see what the next chapter brings!

TACKLING THE POVERTY PREMIUM: FAIR PRICES FOR FOOD

Church Action on Poverty carried out a year-long survey of community-based projects which help people access affordable food, fuel and finance. Your Local Pantry was one of the most effective and exciting projects we came across. So we're delighted to be working together with the existing Pantries to find ways of enabling other communities to benefit from the idea too.

Through 'social franchising', we'll create resources to help people start their own Pantries – and test out the model in low-income areas of Greater Manchester before making it more widely available. We also have plans for an 'Everyday Essentials' brand which would make affordable credit, furniture and other goods and services more easily available.

Contact Dave Nicholson on dave@church-poverty.org.uk or 0161 872 9294 if you'd like to know more.

• Read the articles above and more in the Church Action on Poverty **SPARK** Winter 2016 Issue

SPARK is our print newsletter, circulated to all of our supporters three times a year. The winter 2016 issue includes highlights from our annual review showing the impact of our work last year, worship and reflections for Church Action on Poverty Sunday, and updates on other campaigns and actions.

Read **SPARK** online, free. <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/about-us/about-us/spark-newsletter/winter2016/sparkwinter2016pdf>

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY: NEW ADDRESS

After six happy years at Dale House, Church Action on Poverty is moving into a new home this January. **Please note our new address:** Church Action on Poverty, Unit 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park. Salford M5 3EZ 0161 872 9294
info@church-poverty.org.uk www.church-poverty.org.uk [facebook.com/churchpoverty](https://www.facebook.com/churchpoverty) twitter.com/churchpoverty

OUR GOVERNMENT IS FAILING TO UPHOLD OUR HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD

By **Bernadette Meaden** JANUARY 12, 2016

Enough is enough. We can no longer tolerate families going hungry in the seventh wealthiest nation on the planet. Their hunger is caused by government policy, and can be ended by government policy. We can no longer accept measures which result in people being denied their human right to food. We can no longer accept welfare reforms that offer people harassment instead of help and sanctions instead of support. We cannot condemn hunger being used as a weapon of war abroad, whilst accepting it as a punishment for being late for a Jobcentre appointment here at home.

Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights says, "*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*"

And yet in this rich country, two million people are estimated to be malnourished, and three million at risk of becoming so. Churches across the country have opened food banks and handed out food parcels to literally hundreds of thousands of people at risk of going hungry in recent years - but emergency food aid cannot be a long-term solution. So a new movement is rising in the churches and beyond, that will say 'enough is enough' and call for urgent action to end the scandal of families going hungry in the seventh wealthiest nation on the planet.

Church Action on Poverty Sunday - 7 February - will see the launch of a video which highlights the UK Government's duty under international human rights law to secure the human right to food for everyone in the UK. It will highlight the evidence that it is failing in that duty because of welfare reforms, benefit cuts and sanctions - and instead leaving it up to churches and charities to fill the gap. It will mark the start of a food justice campaign which will challenge the government to fulfil its obligations under international human rights law. The video will ask these key questions;

- Is the state taking responsibility for our right to food?
- How is it respecting, protecting and fulfilling that right?
- Is it acting against its obligations with the introduction of benefit conditionality and sanctions?
- What is the relationship between the state and the charities that provide emergency food?
- Is anyone being held accountable?
- If people knew they had a right to food, what difference would it make?

Martin, one of the narrators of the video, who has himself had to use a church-run food bank in Halifax to feed his family says: "Welfare reforms such as sanctions and benefit caps, and low wages, leave many people with little or no money for food. If people knew that they had a right to food, imagine what a difference it could make."

So on 7 February, hundreds of churches are planning to highlight the issue, and raise funds for Church Action on Poverty's work, with soup lunches and special services exploring the theme of **'Bread Broken for All'**.

Church Action on Poverty Director Niall Cooper says: "I've lost count of the number of conversations I've had with people in churches across the country to the effect of 'I've got involved in my local food bank because people are going hungry – but in a wealthy country like ours I don't think people should need to be going to a foodbank.' We invite anyone who feels this way to join us on 7 February, and break bread for all. Pray, give, and sign up to the campaign to end hunger in the UK."

Churches interested in taking part can download a resource pack, including prayers and preaching notes for Church Action on Poverty Sunday at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday
The Right to Food video is online at www.church-poverty.org.uk/righttofood

© **Bernadette Meaden** has written about political, religious and social issues for some years, and is strongly influenced by Christian Socialism, liberation theology and the Catholic Worker movement. She is an Ekklesia associate and regular contributor. You can follow her on Twitter: @BernaMeaden
<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/22595>

STUDY FINDS SVP HOME VISITS HAVE HUGE ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR SOCIETY

Visiting and befriending lonely and isolated people has a huge economic benefit to society, new research has found.

A study carried out by economists Oxera looked at the economic impact made by charity the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) which carries out half a million visits to isolated and lonely people each year. The study found that the SVP's befriending work generated an estimated £11 million a year in England and Wales.

The research found that the SVP's 10,000 volunteers helped isolated people improve their mental health, increase their skills and confidence, and enter or re-enter employment. This in turn equated to reduced costs to the NHS, savings to Social Services, and better quality of life both for the beneficiaries and for the volunteers themselves.

The SVP's volunteers offer weekly company, as well as practical assistance, to isolated older people at home, vulnerable families, refugees and others on the margins of society. For every £1 that the SVP spends on visiting and befriending people, the benefit to society is about £3.

Helen O'Shea, a Trustee of the SVP, said: "We see every day at first hand the benefits of our visits to isolated people, in terms of their emotional and psychological well-being. Now we have confirmation from economists that our visits also have substantial financial benefits as well. Anyone who supports the SVP can have confidence that their donation is being well used."

The study was carried out on a pro bono basis, with the support of Pro Bono Economics. The full report can be downloaded from the SVP website: <http://svp.org.uk/oxera>
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=29156>

FAIRTRADE NEWS

29 February –13 March Fairtrade Fortnight 2016 *Sit down for breakfast, stand up for farmers!*

It's not long now till **Fairtrade Fortnight 2016** and thousands of schools and communities up and down the country are busy organising their Big Fairtrade Breakfasts. It'll be a huge celebration of the connections we have with the farmers and workers around the world who grow the things we love to eat and drink every morning.

Fairtrade Fortnight is a fantastic opportunity for everyone in school to find out where our food comes from and explore global issues in class, the canteen or with the whole school community. We have all the resources you need to help your school organise a Big Fairtrade Breakfast:

- Schools packs containing an action guide, posters, stickers and decorations are flying off the shelves, but there are still some left so order yours now <http://shop.fairtrade.org.uk/schools>

- You can find loads of resources on the Fairtrade schools website, <http://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/> including downloadable packs with assembly plans, discussion ideas and tips, plus more coming soon <http://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/action/fairtrade-fortnight-2016-0>

If you've already organised your school's Big Fairtrade Breakfast, don't forget to add it to our events map and let everybody know what fantastic events you're planning <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/supporter-events-map>

Have you heard about *My Next Fairtrade Adventure*, our brand new set of films? They're all about how tea farmers in Kenya are tackling climate change and improving the sustainability of their crops and their livelihoods. You can watch the film trailer here now <http://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/resources/videos#11926>

GREENPEACE: BAN MICROBEADS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION

Polluting plastic could be in the toothpaste you innocently brushed your teeth with this morning. It could be heading from your drain, into our oceans, as we speak. [1] But it doesn't have to be like this. President Obama's just banned these tiny bits of plastic - called "microbeads" - after thousands of Americans spoke out. [2] If we turn up the heat on David Cameron while this issue is in the public eye, we can force him to do the same in the UK. There's already tonnes of plastic swirling around our beautiful oceans. When we use products with microbeads in, whether it's face scrubs or toothpastes, our plugs cannot filter them - they end up back in the ocean, and even in the bellies of fish and other marine animals. [5] Enough is enough.

Step by step, we're starting to win the fight against plastic. Campaigners in the UK won an important victory on plastic bags last year. [3] Now Obama and the Canadian Prime Minister have banned these wholly unnecessary bits of plastic from being used in cosmetic products. David Cameron wants to be seen to be green, yet he's lagging behind his peers on microbeads. [4] But there's a simple thing he could do: ban microbeads now. Please sign the petition: <https://secure.greenpeace.org.uk/microbeads-petition>

NOTES:

[1] Read more about the damage microbeads do at the Beat the Microbead website: <http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/en/>

[2] *The Independent*: Barack Obama signs ban on microbeads in cosmetic products to reduce 'plastic pollution'
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-president-obama-signs-ban-on-microbeads-in-cosmetic-products-to-reduce-plastic-pollution-a6791846.html>

[3] The Break the Bag Habit campaign secured a 5p charge on plastic bags in most UK shops: <http://www.breakthebaghabit.org.uk/>
The Daily Mail also supported the successful campaign:
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-519770/Banish-The-Bags-The-Mail-launches-campaign-clean-country---planet.html>

[4] Canadian government moves to ban microbeads:

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/07/31/canadian-government-moves-to-ban-microbeads.html>

[5] This short video explains the journey of a microbead: "*Microbeads - The Story of Stuff*":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAiiGd_JqZc

PETITION SUCCESS

Women should be more visible across the curriculum, say campaigners who successfully fought plans to leave feminism out of A-level politics. Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced a change of heart after an outcry over the lack of female thinkers in the draft politics syllabus. In a House of Commons debate on 11 Jan, he admitted the government had not properly recognised the role of female political thinkers in its draft plans for politics A-level. He said the final content of the A-level politics course would give students "the opportunity to study the core ideas of feminism" and exam boards were already making changes to the final syllabus.

The original proposals, announced late last year, included three core political ideologies: socialism, liberalism and conservatism - but feminism was dropped as a named topic. Education Secretary Nicky Morgan, who is also equalities minister, intervened personally to make the change after a consultation on the plans revealed widespread opposition, said Mr Gibb. Mary Wollstonecraft - author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* - had been the sole feminist voice in the draft proposals but the final content would include names such as Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt and Rosa Luxemburg. "We recognise that the work of female political thinkers was not given due weight. The final content will set out clearly those female political thinkers whose work should be studied."

Science campaigner Jacquelyn Guderley said: "This should act as a springboard for more female role models." Ms Guderley, co-founder of the Stemettes group, which encourages girls into science, maths and engineering careers, said there should be more female representation "across the board, particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths. You can't be what you can't see, which is why including varied female role models across all subjects is of crucial importance." TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said there was still a long way to go before women were fully represented across the curriculum. "Women's achievements are under-represented and undervalued in a wide range of subjects from history to English literature," said Ms O'Grady.

Opposition to the original plans was kick-started by a petition set up by student June Eric-Udorie on www.change.org which gained more than 46,000 signatures. She said: "Removing women and feminism from the syllabus would have been an insulting move. Women have and will continue to contribute to their societies and their contributions must be recognised and seen for how valuable they are. I am pleased to say that they will be returned to where they rightfully belong. As Helen Lewis noted in the *New Statesman*, when you erase women, 'you only get half the story'".

In December a separate campaign to include women composers in the music A-level syllabus resulted in exam board Edexcel adding compositions by female composers including Clara Schumann, Rachel Portman and Kate Bush to the final syllabus. The draft new syllabus had not included "even one female composer", according to student Jessy McCabe, who set up the petition. A Department for Education spokesman said recent updates to the curriculum had boosted the number of women being studied, particularly in history, music, politics and science, while citizenship education also included sections on feminism. "It is vital pupils are exposed to a curriculum and qualifications promoting equality and the achievements of women," said the spokesman. "Our new curriculum sets out the essential knowledge and frees teachers to develop lessons that will excite and inspire pupils about key figures such as the Suffragettes, Rosa Parks, Jane Goodall or Marie Curie."

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35291963?utm_source=change_org&utm_medium=petition

See the petition: https://www.change.org/p/add-more-female-thinkers-to-the-politics-a-level-syllabus/u/14943954?utm_source=petition_update&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=featured_news&tk=mFBM4_XEE3NB1LqCN9wIt7FDTMpM12alNOKgNhfVicU

JONNY BENJAMIN'S JOURNEY FROM SUICIDAL DESPAIR TO MENTAL HEALTH ENVOY

On a January morning in 2008 a young man from south London approached the edge of Waterloo Bridge and prepared to throw himself off. Jonny Benjamin had just been admitted to hospital and diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, a combination of schizophrenia and depression. Struggling to come to terms with his diagnosis and battling to keep his sexuality under wraps – Benjamin is gay – he felt he could no longer bear to be alive.

He did not take his life that day; the kindness of a stranger who stopped to talk saved his life. After convincing him not to take his own life, the stranger continued on his way.

Six years later Benjamin embarked on a campaign to track down the passer-by he believed was named Mike to thank him personally. The "Finding Mike" campaign became a global phenomenon and eventually led Benjamin, now a filmmaker and mental health campaigner, to the man who saved his life, a former personal trainer called Neil Laybourn. *Finding Mike: The Stranger on the Bridge*, an award-winning documentary which aired on Channel 4 last year, captured the pair's emotional reunion.

Now, aged 28, Benjamin is about to launch a new scheme to tackle the "appalling" suicide prevention strategy in the UK. His initiative, **ThinkWell**, launched on 11 January, is designed to educate young people about mental health and break down the stigma surrounding mental illness and suicide through school workshops. Each session will be delivered by a trained workshop leader and a qualified therapist.

Benjamin, who developed the idea with Pixel Learning, which runs interactive workshops incorporating film and education, is determined to demystify mental illness and provide young people with the "vital" information and help which they are not being offered elsewhere. "My passion has always been young people, mainly because of what I went through when I was younger," he said. "We developed the workshop and piloted it in a few schools. The reaction was really positive – the young people we spoke to really wanted to talk about this subject. There were a lot of young people that needed to talk. It was great to watch them engage, but it was worrying to see how much there was a need for it."

Parents and teachers had a "really positive" reaction to the workshops as well, he added. "Teachers need support," he pointed out. "They're not trained in mental health and how to look after young people's wellbeing. They want us to come in. Parents realise it is an important subject that needs to be spoken about from a young age – it makes sense to go into schools." He added: "I get really frustrated, particularly around suicide prevention strategy in this country. It's just appalling. We need to be tackling this now. I just see mental health provision getting worse."

The activist has the ear of key policymakers in the mental health sector and in the Government – he's held meetings with both Sam Gyimah, the Education and Childcare Minister, and Alistair Burt, the Social Care Minister – and is determined to push the issue up the agenda. Mr Gyimah said: "We are at a turning point in how we tackle children's mental health issues and I am determined to ensure we get it right – putting young people and children at the heart of this process is vital. Initiatives like Jonny's can play a huge role in helping schools find the right way to support good mental health."

Benjamin said: "Mental illness is so isolating. For so many years I struggled alone – to be able to talk about it is such a relief. I find it really sad that people aren't being given the help and support they need," he added. Things could be quite different."

For more information about *ThinkWell* visit pixellearning.org

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/jonny-benjamin's-journey-from-suicidal-despair-to-mental-health-envoy-a6803316.html>

NICOLA ROBERTS CALLS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

15 January 2016

Singer and former Girls Aloud star Nicola Roberts joined the BBC's *This Week* to talk about mental health. In a discussion with Andrew Neil, Michael Portillo and Jess Phillips, she said this "huge" issue was not promoted enough in schools, saying better education would lead to less bullying of young people.

In a segment of the programme that also featured Jonny Benjamin's new schools initiative (see above) the singer and Barnardo's Ambassador spoke passionately about the need for better mental health care for young people.

"We're taught about how our bodies work, how our hearts work, but there's nothing about the brain," she said.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35320141>

Watch the 8 minute clip: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fjbxr>

CATHOLICS & OUR HOME: CTS PAMPHLET by Sr Margaret Atkins

What people need today is an "ecological conversion": 'Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience' – Pope Francis. Regarding the environment, Pope Francis identifies two groups of Catholics: the critical and the indifferent. A third group might consist of those who are willing, even enthusiastic, but who feel discouraged about the possibility of making any real difference. By unpacking Church tradition and teaching, and bridging the gap between theory and practice, this booklet will challenge the first, stir up the second, and encourage the third. Cost £2.50 and available to order from <http://ctsbooks.org/catholics-and-our-common-home/>

REFLECTION: *A SEAMLESS GARMENT OF MERCY*

Posted on January 18, 2016 by **Scott Wright Director, Columban Center for Advocacy & Outreach**

"The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Today we celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was assassinated on Holy Thursday, April 4, 1968. He was a pastor, a prophet and a martyr who shared a deep compassion for the poor, the oppressed, the excluded; a deep passion for justice and commitment to defend and protect the vulnerable; and a deep love for the Gospel, the Beatitudes, and the Church.

Dr. King often spoke of the Beloved Community, by which he meant "a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth." He often spoke of "the giant triplets of poverty, racism and militarism" as barriers to the Beloved Community and urged us to replace all forms of racism and exclusion with an inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. Today, as we commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we have become ever more aware of the challenges we face as a people to bear witness to God's mercy and justice in the world. A seamless garment of mercy and compassion embraces victims of gun violence in our cities, refugees fleeing gang violence in Central America, and refugees fleeing war in Syria.

This past year, we have witnessed gun violence in our cities and hundreds of unarmed citizens, primarily African Americans, being killed by police officers. We have witnessed millions of Syrian refugees flee a war which has already displaced half the population and killed hundreds of thousands of people. And we have witnessed tens of thousands of unaccompanied children and families fleeing the violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and asking for asylum. In each of these places of suffering, the face of a child holds up a mirror to our complicity and our silence. Twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, the African American child gunned down by police in a Cleveland park; three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, the Syrian child whose body washed up on the shore of a Turkish beach; and immigrant children being detained and deported by ICE agents in early morning raids on their homes just after Christmas.

Nearly 50 years after his martyrdom, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination continues to provide a challenge, an answer and a model for what we can and must do. On the evening before his death, to an overflowing crowd in Memphis who had come to support the strike of African American sanitation workers, Dr. King reminded them of a Biblical parable: the Good Samaritan. In that parable, the priest and the Levite see the victim by the roadside, but go on their way. Only the Samaritan, an outcast and an enemy, stopped to help. "The first question that the Levite asked was, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" That is the question, and that is our challenge today.

Clearly, we can do more. We can call for an end to gun violence in our cities. We can call for an end to the immigrant raids and the deportation of mothers and children. We can open our borders and communities to many more Syrian refugees. We are all part of a single garment of mercy, woven in many colors. We all live in a common home.

In Pope Francis' words: *"Whenever any minority is persecuted and marginalized because of its religious convictions or ethnic identity, the well-being of society as a whole is endangered."*

Dr. King concluded his retelling of the parable of the Good Samaritan with a challenge of his own, words which were among his last on that fateful evening in Memphis in 1968, words which we would do well to heed: "Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be."

That is the task at hand to which we are called: to oppose the giant triplets of racism, poverty and militarism, to stand with the victims, the refugees and the immigrants, and to form that Beloved Community to which the Gospel, the Beatitudes and our faith invite and call us.

Reprinted from *Weekly Reflections on Justice, the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach.*

<http://paxchristiusa.org/2016/01/18/reflection-a-seamless-garment-of-mercy-the-beloved-community-of-dr-martin-luther-king-jr/>

NEW RESOURCE

TEACH PEACE revised 2016. In *Teach Peace* you will find ten assemblies, follow-up activities, resources, prayers, and reflections on peace and peacemaking for 5-12 year olds. Whether we are Remembering for Peace (11 November), flying a kite for Nao Roz (21 March), or reflecting on the witness of Austrian peacemaker Franz Jägerstätter (21 May) the school year is full of opportunities to use this pack. The entire resource is free to download here <http://peace-education.org.uk/teach-peace>. Paper copies of **Teach Peace** are available from the Pax Christi Office for £5. education@paxchristi.org.uk

SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

The Assemblies website from SPCK provides hundreds of new, high quality assemblies, ready to deliver, for you and your school! A wide range of topics to suit primary and secondary students linked to National Curriculum Key Stages.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/search.php>

LAUDATO SI' RESOURCES AND LINKS FOR PARISHES AND SCHOOLS

The **Columban missionaries** have compiled a comprehensive list of *Laudato Si'* resources for parishes and schools.

Laudato Si', released on 18 June 2015, is the first encyclical in the history of the Church to address environmental concerns. In it Pope Francis highlights issues of "integral ecology," namely concerns for people and the planet. He addresses both the degradation of the environment and the challenge of climate change, along with how this is impacting the poor and most vulnerable.

Social and economic justice is an important theme along with care for Earth and for present and future generations. Pope Francis calls for "ecological conversion". This encyclical could serve as a motivating force for the over one billion Catholics of the world, and many other people of spiritual and environmental conviction, to build a sustainable future.

To access the resources visit: <http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/laudato-si-resources-and-links-for-parishes-and-schools/>

CAFOD has issued a study guide with four sessions, each on a key theme within the encyclical with a set of leader's notes and a DVD. <http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/26268/190849/version/4/Laudato%20Si%20study%20guide-%20final.pdf>

NEW BOOK - *THE HAMMER BLOW: HOW 10 WOMEN DISARMED A WARPLANE*

On 29 January, **Peace News Press** is marking the 20th anniversary of the historic *Seeds of Hope Ploughshares action*.

We're proud to be publishing Andrea Needham's gripping inside account of how ten women disarmed a Hawk jet bound for genocide in East Timor - and were acquitted.

'The heroic actions of this small, but determined, group of women is told brilliantly in Andrea Needham's fascinating account... You can sense just how much human life matters to each and every one of these women. They spent six months in jail for acting upon their consciences - but were eventually, and rightly, found to be innocent. Anyone interested in social change, or campaigning for peace, should read this book and take inspiration from the brave actions of these amazing women.'

- Caroline Lucas, Green MP for Brighton Pavilion

'The Seeds of Hope East Timor Ploughshares action was one of the most imaginative and successful direct actions in modern-day Britain. It demonstrated that principle and courage are natural, crucial allies. Andrea Needham was part of that action, and her eagerly awaited book is now here. Read it and learn how to change the world.'

- John Pilger

Andrea writes:

'There were ten women in the Seeds of Hope group, some of us taking part in the action and others forming the support group. All of us were crucially important to the whole, and each of us could tell a different story about that momentous year. This is simply my story. I disarmed the Hawk because I had done everything else in my power to stop these weapons being delivered to Indonesia. Together with thousands of others, I had written letters, signed petitions, handed out leaflets, marched, attended rallies, organised peace camps, taken part in nonviolent direct action.

Nothing had worked, and the planes were about to be delivered to Indonesia for use in East Timor, a tiny country where one third of the population had been killed in a campaign which Noam Chomsky has described as "the worst slaughter relative to population since the Holocaust".

In that situation, with our government aiding and abetting genocide, what else could we do but disarm the weapons ourselves?'

<http://peaceneeds.info/node/8253/hammer-blow-how-10-women-disarmed-warplane>

LANCASTER FAITH & JUSTICE JANUARY BULLETIN

Included in the January e-bulletin: articles from Sr Margaret Atkins on "*Joy in Enough*" new ideas on economics; from members of our diocese who visited Iraqi Latin Christian Refugees in Jordan; *Welcoming the Stranger* from Steve Atherton of Liverpool J&P; Dr Paul Kelly & Fr Hugh Pollock on their experience at the climate talks in Paris; as well as courses, resources, events and campaigns.

Available at: <http://www.lancasterfaithandjustice.co.uk/newsletter/>

EXHIBITION BROKEN LIVES: *Slavery in modern India*

International Slavery Museum Albert Dock, Liverpool Waterfront, Liverpool, L3 4AX 17 26 June 2015 to 24 April 2016 Free entry

Slavery still exists. Even though it is illegal throughout the world today, contemporary forms of slavery can be found in almost every country. Up to half of the victims of modern slavery globally are in India, most of these are 'Dalits'. The word 'Dalit' means broken, crushed or oppressed. Dalits used to be known as 'untouchables', indicating how many others avoided physical contact for fear of tainting their religious purity or social superiority. Many still experience marginalisation and prejudice, live in extreme poverty and are vulnerable to human trafficking and bonded labour.

Broken Lives: slavery in modern India provides a window into the experiences of Dalits and others who are being exploited and abused through modern slavery in India. Delivered in partnership with the Dalit Freedom Network, this powerful and moving exhibition reveals stories of hardship, survival and hope for broken lives mended.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/exhibitions/broken-lives/>

JUSTICE AND PEACE CALENDAR

7 February Church Action on Poverty Sunday *Bread Broken for All*

Food is a gift from God. But in the UK today, thousands of people are denied access to that gift by injustices that leave them destitute. Churches play a vital role in sharing food with those who need it – and speaking out to ensure that nobody goes without.

Break bread with us on Church Action on Poverty Sunday!

Give: hold a collection or soup lunch to raise funds for our work.

Act: speak out for the right to food.

Pray: use free resources to plan a worship service that gives thanks for the gift of food, and celebrates the work being done to tackle hunger and poverty in the UK.

Church Action on Poverty Sunday takes place each year on the last Sunday before Lent and was part of Poverty & Homelessness Action Week until 2014. **Resources and info:** <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday>

29 February –13 March Fairtrade Fortnight 2016 *Sit down for breakfast, stand up for farmers!*

As Martin Luther King famously said, 'before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world'. Despite our dependence on farmers and workers for the foods, drinks and products that we love, about 795 million people are undernourished globally.

It's a scandal that the people who grow the food we take for granted can't always feed their own families. We can support farmers and workers to put food on the table for their families by harnessing the power of a Fairtrade breakfast. When people are paid a fairer price, they can have more control over their lives when times are hard, and worry less about how they will feed their families. Whether it's the extra cash in their pockets or being able to expand their farms to grow more food to eat, Fairtrade means many farmers and workers are able to fulfil a basic human need – to put enough food on the table for the people they care about, all year round.

During Fairtrade Fortnight, we will be encouraging campaigners to inspire a multitude of Fairtrade breakfasts in their community – and wake others up to the challenges facing farmers and workers. Will you help us get as many people as possible to eat a Fairtrade breakfast in your community during Fairtrade Fortnight?

Find out more: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight-2016>

PALESTINIAN GOODS FOR YOUR EVENT

John Logan writes: as people who I know have an interest in the Israel / Palestine situation or have had Palestinian crafts, etc. from me in the past, I thought I would just check out with you whether you are planning any event for Fairtrade Fortnight, when I could supply you with a variety of Zaytoun (Palestinian Fairtrade) items (and others if you wish) on a sale or return basis. By the end of January I would like to have contact from all those who are thinking of asking for some, so that I can put in a realistic order, to receive in time to get everything delivered. Perhaps you can reply by return or make a note of this, so you remember to do it in the next 2/3 weeks.

In addition to crafts, I usually have: Various sizes of Olive oil from 250ml to 1litre; olive oil soap; dates; Zata'ar; Maftoul (couscous); Freekeh. Almonds are not available at the moment. As you know there are sometime problems over the shipping of products, so unless they are in stock at the warehouse in the UK their delivery cannot be guaranteed.

Thanks, John Logan logan-j@btconnect.com

MARCH

4 Women's World Day of Prayer *Receive Children, Receive Me prepared by the women of Cuba*

Although discriminated against in the past, Cuban women today play an important role in society, family and church although there are still some elements of a patriarchal culture in all levels of society.

After the revolution in 1959, women were active in building up a new society and improving their education and professional training. In 1961, the Federation of Cuban Women was formed, to demand the rights of women, children and the family. Today more than 46% of persons employed in the public sector are women; women constitute 68% of the technically and professionally qualified labour force and 39% are managers. . According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Cuba occupies 4th place in the world on the scale of countries with the most women in their Parliament. Nevertheless, it is still primarily men who occupy key positions in economy, politics and religion.

For more information on Cuba see our magazine '*Together in Prayer*' and our CD Rom containing a Powerpoint presentation on Cuba with script. All our resources are available to purchase at your local preparation day or direct from the office. 01892 541411 <http://www.wwdp.org.uk/day-of-prayer/>

8 International Women's Day *Pledge for Parity*

International Women's Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The theme for 2016 is *Pledge for Parity*. The World Economic Forum estimates that a slowdown in the already glacial pace of progress means that it will take until 2133 for the world to entirely close the economic gender gap. On International Women's Day each of us can commit to take action and together help accelerate the achievement of gender parity worldwide.

Internationalwomensday.com

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

24 Homeless Sunday Info and resources: **Housing Justice** <http://www.homeless-sunday.uk/>

27 Holocaust Memorial Day: *Don't stand by* Info and resources:

<http://hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/hmd-2016-dont-stand#sthash.4QXCGBtv.dpuf>

28 Live Below The Line Can YOU live on £1 a day for 5 days? The Archdiocese of Liverpool and PROGRESSIO are offering this challenge for Lent 2016. **Campaign Launch with Archbishop Malcolm McMahon 6.30-7.30pm** at LACE Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool. L17 1AA. Introduction to campaign plus video of LACE chef making cheap 50p meals.

30 Sharing Visions of a Good Society Church Action on Poverty's annual conference. Stoke-on-Trent Civic Hall in Stoke city centre. The building is fully accessible, and well connected to public transport links. Maps and directions on booking. Churches and communities across the UK are taking part in Good Society conversations – exploring what must be done to build a Good Society, listening especially to voices from poor and excluded communities. At the conference, participants from those conversations will join Church Action on Poverty's supporters to share our visions of the Good Society – and discuss how we can work together to make those visions real. Book online at <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/conference> or call 0161 236 9321

FEBRUARY

2 Climate: Reflections On The Paris Conference Negotiations And Outcomes Talk by Rob Elsworth, Climate and Policy Analyst at CAFOD. Jointly arranged by CWDF and the Department of Geography and Development Studies. 7-9pm University of Chester, Chester Campus, Chester CH1 4BQ

7 Church Action on Poverty Sunday Bread Broken for All <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday>

10 Pax Christi's 34th Ash Wednesday witness against Nuclear Weapons

* London, Ministry of Defence, Opening prayers at 3pm in Victoria Embankment Gardens, Whitehall Section.

http://paxchristi.org.uk/event/ash-wednesday-witness-to-nuclear-war-preparations/?instance_id=513

*Liverpool: TBC Contact Jan Harper, Pax Christi Liverpool janharper1@yahoo.co.uk

13 NJPN Open Networking Day with Church Action on Poverty The Right to Food - a chance to explore the new campaign from Church Action on Poverty plus opportunities to network and get updates from justice and peace activists and national agencies. 10.30 - 4.00 Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ For more information contact Ann at admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

19 CAFOD Lent Fast Day cafod.org.uk

27 Stop Trident National Rally. Pax Christi is part of a coalition of organisations leading the campaign to see this country's nuclear weapons scrapped and the money re-invested education and other public services. Join us on the day. We are organising a gathering for interfaith prayer at 11.00 am at Hinde Street Methodist Church, Hinde Street, Marylebone, London W1U. The March will end in Trafalgar Square. We will walk together behind a 'No Faith in Trident' banner.

http://paxchristi.org.uk/event/stop-trident-national-rally/?instance_id=492

27 Stop Trident Decision Time, London Rally. Chester CND Group is hiring a coach with **Liverpool CND**. It will leave Chester at 7.20 am and return around 5 pm. ticket prices to be settled, but they encourage anyone keen to come along not be put off by the price of the ticket. Contact Allison Challen 07873 125051 chestercnd@gmail.com Please contact Allison as soon as possible to say if you could be interested in joining a coach.

29 February - 13 March Fairtrade Fortnight 2016 Sit down for breakfast, stand up for farmers!

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight-2016>

MARCH

4 Women's World Day of Prayer Receive Children, Receive Me prepared by the women of Cuba wwdp.org.uk/day-of-prayer/

5 Fairtrade Breakfast 9.30 – 11.30am Quaker Meeting House, Union Walk, Frodsham Street Chester, Cheshire CH1 3LF

All arrangements to be confirmed. Contact Ann McCarthy 01244 375606 for further details.

8 CWDF Forum Meeting: a Fairtrade theme 6.45 - 9pm The Unity Centre, Cuppin Street Chester, CH1 2BN. Heather Swainston, Director of CDEC will be joining us for a talk: "Engaging young people and communities in Fairtrade across Cheshire West and Chester – some success stories and plans for Fairtrade Fortnight 2016". Contact 01244 350323 www.chesterwdf.org.uk

8 International Women's Day Pledge for Parity Internationalwomensday.com

12 - 13 "Fairtrade Fundays", Grosvenor Park, Chester Advance notice from Heather Swainston of her plans for activities with young people at the newly-developed Activity Zone in Grosvenor Park. Watch out for more information! 01244 347880.

www.cheshiredec.org NB: Heather will be looking out for volunteer helpers for both these days.

13 36th Annual Romero Mass Celebrant Fr Dave Heywood, St Benedict's, Rhode St, Warrington WA1 2NS 10am Family Mass

CAFOD QUIZ NIGHTS

February 12 and March 11 at 7.30 pm.

Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre.
Entrance: £3.00 (children £1) Quizmaster Mr. Mike Ives
All money raised will go to CAFOD's Connect2 Ethiopia fund raising project. Fair Trade stall and Fair Trade refreshments provided at the interval.

For further details contact Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419.

Arranged by Ellesmere Port LPA J & P group

TIME OUT ON TUESDAYS

February 9 and March 10

An ecumenical quiet day for everyone

10am - 4pm at The Convent of our Lady of the Cenacle,
Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 6TW

Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection.

Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. Cost £10

For more information or to book :

Tel 0151 7222271 email: winniecenacle@mail.com

A POOR CHURCH FOR THE POOR?

'I want a Church which is poor and for the poor.' How can we respond to Pope Francis' challenge?

A one-day conference in Leeds on Saturday 5 March 2016.

An opportunity to explore the vision and challenge of Pope Francis in relation to the structural reality of poverty in the UK today.

How can we deepen our awareness and action, individually and as communities, and change ourselves and our churches to become a poor Church, with and for the poor?

Where: Leeds Trinity University, Horsforth, Leeds (transport available from Leeds station).

When: Saturday 5 March 2016, 11am–5.30pm Arrivals and coffee from 10.30am.

Cost: Free entrance. Donations welcomed.

Organised by the Dominican Las Casas Institute, speakers include Michael Czerny SJ from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Julia Unwin from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Martin Houghton-Brown, CEO of Depaul UK and Timothy Radcliffe OP.

All are welcome.

For more information, go to www.LasCasasInstitute.org or book a place via bit.ly/1NLBqi0

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-poor-church-for-the-poor-tickets-19846404129>

or email lascasas@bfriars.ox.ac.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 for comprehensive 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