

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

SILAS MARNER IN KABUL

by **Henrietta Cullinan** 6 January 2017

Raveloe, London, Kabul, we cling to our 'way of life' even though it makes us sick, obsessive and lonely. Governments cling to policies that cause harm to ordinary people. In this article, begun while staying in Kabul, I ask what George Eliot's Silas Marner has to tell us about our own 'pile of gold'.

I recently travelled to Kabul, where I teamed up with the **Afghan Peace Volunteers** and Kathy Kelly of **Voices for Creative Nonviolence**. I took with me, to read under the covers when I couldn't sleep, *Silas Marner* by George Eliot. Marner, estranged from his home town, sets up as a weaver in the small village of Raveloe. Through weaving he accumulates a pile of gold coins which he counts obsessively every night, until one day it is stolen. The plot turns when he adopts a small girl, the daughter of a drug addict, who wanders into his house. He mistakes her gold curls for his gold coins, miraculously returned to him. As he determines to look after the child he has to ask others in the community for help and so his life is transformed.

As a group of women in one Kabul refugee camp recounted their experiences of war, their injuries, the indignities they have suffered since being forced to leave their homes, Kathy Kelly asked at one point, 'Did you know that the US has just committed 617 billion US dollars to military spending?' The women implied by their gestures, 'What do we care?' One woman said, 'I wouldn't know the difference between one side of a dollar and the other, whether a dollar is black or white.' It was at this moment the image of Silas Marner counting out his pile of gold coins, popped into my head. As well as a literal analogy with the 'pile of gold coins' devoted to military spending, there are political lessons for policy makers, for example the western governments whose migration policies cause such hardship amongst refugees.

In Europe, chances for Afghan refugees to claim asylum have grown slim, since the EU now considers Afghanistan to be a safe country, even though there were 5,600 casualties of armed conflict in the first half of 2016 alone. The EU plans to deport 80,000 Afghan asylum seekers. At the time of writing, Germany and Sweden have already started the deportations. This is at a time when Pakistan and Iran are also pressurising Afghan refugees to return. The refugees face homelessness and destitution when they return to Kabul, where there is not the infrastructure to support them. 'A man-made humanitarian catastrophe could be the end result of these governmental policies' writes Ahmed Rashid, a journalist in Lahore. [1]

At the Borderfree Centre in Kabul, Kathy Kelly and I spoke to Abdul Gafoor, of Afghanistan Migrants Advice and Support Organisation. He says every day twelve deportees arrive from Norway, as a result of its cruel deportation policy. Young boys call him, not knowing where to go. Very often, as soon as they have the opportunity, they will leave again, for Pakistan or Iran. They are given \$1200 from the Norwegian government, so they use this money to move on as it is too difficult for them to reintegrate. There is nothing they can do in Kabul; there is no work.

Kathy Kelly, Nematullah Ahangosh, who is an Afghan Peace Volunteer, and I visited the 'Police Camp' an unofficial camp for IDPs and refugees. We took a long taxi ride, through heavy morning traffic, into an area of new development, where private hospitals with tinted curtain walling and new apartment buildings, some already clad, others just slabs and columns, lined the broad, unsurfaced road. Opposite a petrol station, where gaily painted lorries were filling up, we were let out onto the edge of an open sewer, the size of a small river, its grey white waters swirling with scraps of rubbish. Salim, from the Jesuit Refugee Service, soon fetched us and led us down a narrow path between mud shacks, to a place where we took off our shoes, stepped inside a small room, with red carpet, whitewashed walls, a stove in the middle, a plastic sheet for a window. Soon the elected camp leader, Raz Mohammed, came to tell us about the camp. Of the 700 families resident in the camp, one third have come because of recent conflicts, such as in Kunduz in the north east of the country and one third are refugees who have been forced to return from Pakistan and Iran. Sometimes educated people, this latter group already sold all their property when they left Afghanistan, so now they are homeless and destitute. Refugees can only earn three dollars a day. Men work as porters in the market. Other jobs include washing cars, and selling *boloni*, pastries stuffed with potato and spinach. Others, despite the danger, send their children out to work in the street, cleaning shoes and windscreens or selling windscreen wipers, tissues and sweets.

Those who work in the market can bring home potatoes or turnips but not enough for regular meals. The rest of the time they have only bread and tea. Some don't even have tea. For fuel they burn plastic bottles, shoes and old clothes. Every winter twenty-five people die of cold. Water has to be bought at 10 Afs for 20 litres. On the way in we saw a single pump. Raz tells us that a woman who runs a beauty parlour noticed the women walking to buy water so she donated the pump but the water is not 'sweet'.

After speaking to Raz Mohammed we went to visit a group of women who were finishing a class. They sat round the edges of the cold classroom. A teenage daughter ran in to drop off a baby to be fed. The women told us that all ethnicities are represented at the camp: Tajiks, Uzbeks and Baluchis living together. They said they felt safe in the camp, but conditions are dangerous to health, especially in cold weather, and there is no access to health care, despite the private hospitals next door. 'If only we had had an education we wouldn't be in this situation,' they said.

One woman, feeding her toddler under her black scarf, says she used to have a job in Kunduz. She made *boloni* and her husband sold them. Another woman told us how she had fled from Kunduz, almost leaving her child behind. Another, from Laghman province, showed us the injuries to her upper arm she had sustained when she escaped. She said that she had no food for lunch. After the class she would cover her face and go and beg at the bakery.

The leader said he gathered people together and went to the government for help. The government only provides food. He thinks they should provide education, buildings. He said the UN had been to visit the camp, even the US ambassador. But nothing has changed. Eighteen months ago, during Ramadan, the authorities attempted to clear the camp, with armed police, but the refugee inhabitants responded with stones. Without sufficient food, fuel, education or health care, the women concluded, 'No one cares about us. The government doesn't care.'

Another group of women I spoke to were seamstresses at the Borderfree Centre. They embroider scarves which are sold in the US and the UK to raise funds for the centre. All having between five and seven children each, their main concern is to feed their families. Despite their husband's disapproval, they have to go out to work outside the home. Even so the wages are not enough to pay the rent, to buy clothes for their children, food and books for school. 'The government doesn't care about us,' they said, echoing the words of the women in the refugee camp. They said, 'If you want to help, you must give money to us poor people'. The seamstresses said they saw all the huge construction projects, and concluded the government was spending money on these projects and not on alleviating the problems of the poor.

Government ministers just use aid to buy each other 'a cow or a hen'. I asked if they had any means of making their voices heard, which was translated literally I realised. They said their husbands wouldn't like it if their voices were heard outside the home. Not able to read or write, their only option would be to join a protest. They didn't dare go on a demonstration, they said, because the government might come after them, or there might be a bomb.

Back in London this week, I did my regular shift in the local winter night shelter. Many of the homeless I encounter at the shelter suffer from poor physical and mental health, and even have mobility problems, which should be reason enough for the authorities to house them without delay. Many were caught between losing their job and waiting for benefits to come through; a gap of six weeks is enough time to lose your flat. Surprisingly some guests are actually working. Holding down a job while sleeping in a shelter must be almost impossible but one man I spoke to was doing just that. His car was parked outside, he wore the uniform of a building servicing company and over breakfast he was giving his mobile phones a last minute boost, checking the location of the first job of the day.

The residents of the refugee camp in Kabul and the guests at the London night shelter are all at the mercy of government policies. Worse than that, our government is unwilling to correct the very policies that made people homeless. As John Berger wrote, 'The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied ... but written off as trash. The twentieth-century consumer economy has produced the first culture for which a beggar is a reminder of nothing.'

Collectively, whether in the UK or Afghanistan, we must turn to the poorest, most helpless members of our society and learn, just as Silas Marner did, from experiencing community again. Marner, once he accepts his loss and turns to another, a helpless child, builds relationships with the other members of his village community. It is when he turns to another helpless being, and becomes helpless himself, that healing begins. Our governments, and therefore we, are addicted to unsustainable policies that keep many displaced and homeless. When we accept our own weakness, our own loss and turn to look after the poorest there is hope.

George Eliot also asks us to reflect on the nature of work. Silas Marner sits at his loom day in day out, even on Sundays, weaving linen for the well-to-do of the neighbourhood and collecting gold coins to no end other than to be counted and hidden. US taxpayers are paying nearly \$700 million dollars a week for the military in Afghanistan, money which the US government spends without attempting to avoid corruption.

Reading this you might ask what do all these things have to do with each other. Visiting Kabul, not somewhere people normally visit for a holiday, gives a heady ride into geo politics, but mainly the opportunity to see the effect of government policymakers on the lives of the poor. You might think it odd I would use *Silas Marner* as a way to reflect on lessons from Afghanistan. George Eliot chose novel writing as a medium to comment on social conditions in her time and the novel has a lot to tell us now. [2] If you haven't read *Silas Marner*, or not since school days, I would recommend a visit.

[1] Ahmed Rashid *Viewpoint: Why Afghan refugees are facing a humanitarian catastrophe*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-37607785>

[2] *In Our Time: Silas Marner*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00q4310>

• **Henrietta Cullinan** is a peace activist and writer. She was born in London. She studied Architecture and then Philosophy before raising a family and working in Further Education teaching adult literacy and English. She recently visited the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul, Afghanistan as a member of a peace delegation with Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK.

Personal blog: <https://henriettacullinan.wordpress.com> **Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK:** <http://vcnv.org.uk>
Afghan Peace Volunteers: <http://ourjourneytosmile.com/blog/>

A SALESIAN VOLUNTEER REFLECTS ON THE FINAL DAYS OF THE CALAIS JUNGLE

Danny Sweeney writes: All jobs come with unexpected days – however there was nothing in the 2 ½ years I had worked in the Civil Service which prepared me for the first week of November 2016. On the Monday evening a phone call from my manager told me that I was to be deployed, along with a few hundred others to Calais in France. Over the last few years the growth of the migrant camp in Calais has become a symbol of several trends; the war in Syria, the butchery of Islamic State in the middle east, global poverty, and the failure of European states to offer a coherent, co-operative, or compassionate system of asylum, or safe migration.

The previous week I had been in Glasgow interviewing for the job I now have. At the time of my interview it felt strange to speaking of social justice, and the need for the church to welcome the stranger, when at breakfast I'd been watching the footage of the French authorities razing the camp to the ground after several weeks and months of discussion and threat.

That week the majority of the camp had been cleared, and the remains burnt. Between 1500-1700 young people (unaccompanied asylum seeking children), and families remained in two sections of the camp; the white UNHCR cabins seen on the news, and the buildings of an old summer camp next door. An agreement between the French and British governments had been reached, that those still in the camp would be taken to reception centres across the country, those eligible to come to the UK under either the Dublin Regulations (concerning those with family in the UK), or the amendment to the Immigration Act proposed by Lord Dubs (to take in vulnerable children from Europe) would have their cases considered and bought to the UK, the others would be considered for asylum in France. The purpose of my visit was as one (of many) who were there to show a presence of the British government; to reassure those who were being transported that this was not a trick by the French authorities, and that the British government had not forgotten them.

My team and I were used on the Thursday; various logistical problems meant that not all the camp's residents left on the Wednesday when the operation began. For me it was a strange feeling to be going to a place which I had seen and read so much about. The graffiti on bridges calling for access to the UK, or freedom to travel remained, but the rest of the camp was all but gone; all that remained when we travelled in was debris, and the Eritrean church which had been built. The church had become something of a symbol within the camp of hope, but also safety; on Tuesday evening several young Eritreans had taken shelter there when tensions between the Afghan and Eritrean teenagers had erupted. (We witnessed the church being demolished as we arrived.) The smell of burning, be it from the fires that the camp's residents had been using, or the recent destruction I couldn't say – but it was all-pervading through the area.

Within the summer camp the graffiti was of a different kind; murals for peace, flags from the countries and nations the families had come from. A colleague shared a regret with me: that we were not able to photograph any of it before it is removed (I suspect that this destruction has now taken place). The logical and informed part of me knows how unsuitable the camp at Calais was for anyone to remain in. The residents living in some desperate situations, vulnerable to attacks, bad weather, the increasingly hostile local population and police, and the "agents"; the term used for people smugglers who exploit the desperation of the migrants, offering the chance to enter the UK, but using threats, violence and extortion to profit on the misery of others. However, there were others in the camp; the volunteers who have put themselves at the service of the poor, offering language classes, legal assistance, and the support which the state refused to offer. On board our coach waiting for the families we were to travel with I witnessed the tearful goodbyes between volunteers and migrants. Whatever greater safety we were taking them to – a community of people was being broken up over these few days.

During our journey, Wais, a young Afghan man a few years older than me with his wife, and Abeel, their 2 ½ year old son, told me that the camp was like being in England; "everyone spoke English, all the kids speak English rather than French". On our journey Wais told me about his life; the disappearance of his mother, and kidnap of his sister many years ago, then the events that had led him to leave Afghanistan with a new-born child. He also told me about how he'd spoken with his mother, a refugee safe in the UK for the last 7 years, who had long believed him to be dead. They had not met; she was unable to afford to travel to France, but he was hoping to be reunited with her soon.

On our coach were 4 Afghan families. Jamal, a 14 year old, the oldest of 6 children travelling with their mother; his youngest sister was 5 weeks old, born in the camp. On the journey he was telling me about his time in the camp, his hope to see his father in the UK; but would grow silent when I asked about certain times in the camp before the family had been able to move to the more secure accommodation in the old summer camp buildings. When packing the night before we left I had grabbed my rucksack – still containing my things from volunteering on Salesian Youth Ministry summer camps. The playing cards and juggling balls (although these had to go away after going too near the driver and French officials at the front of the coach), along with the gloves from our first aid kit which after inflating and drawing on became "chicken-balloons", provided some entertainment on the 16 hour journey. The biscuits and chocolate we had purchased for our team's return journey instead became part of a midnight snack, and a small bridge of trust with the young people we were accompanying. Our arrival at the families' new home came a little after 2am. I helped Jamal move his family's belongings to their new bedroom, and, tired as we both were pulling suitcases (donated by one of the charities), he chatted about wanting to come see Manchester, my home city and especially Man United.

Saying goodbye and leaving to let all the families settle in, I found myself speaking with an employee at the site, another part of which functions as a care home for children with learning difficulties. He was telling us that there was some anger amongst locals; fears that the people being brought in were terrorists. Outside the centre I had observed several handmade banners in red and black; we had assumed (wrongly) that these were in protest about the children. The banners were actually in opposition to staff cuts, organised by their trade union.

However, it was undeniable that the reporting on French TV had us on edge, and all coaches travelled under police escort when leaving Calais and for several miles before their final destinations. We had also heard accounts of other coaches where people had refused to board, refused to leave, and in one case, where the centre had refused to admit the coach at all. The reactions of some people in the service stations we stopped at on the way hadn't helped; at one stop the arrival of our group had prompted staff to pull the security shutter across the wide, open entrance, leaving a single file channel next to the till.

I travelled back from France after a few hours sleep, to the Salesian Youth Ministry meeting. Trying to reflect on what I had seen and heard. (I think that is also why I felt the need to start typing this). For me it is a lack of compassion and humanity which led to the growth of the camp at Calais. Whatever our country's legal obligations, seeing people living in misery, and throwing themselves under the wheels of trains and lorries in attempts to reach safety has been drowned out by the hate-mongering of the press. The decision to accept vulnerable children into the UK should be praised. But for me a question which remains unanswered is: who decided to make the first groups brought over not the children I travelled with, but 17 year olds, bought over in the eye of the press, who were then subjected to the ignorance of the media and out of touch politicians making baseless demands for dental exams?

The day we travelled was 3 November – the Feast of Martin de Porres - patron saint of those who work for social justice. When I discussed our trip to Calais with several colleagues I was surprised, but pleased, to hear that they had gone for the same reason; this was a humanitarian effort, and it isn't often you get to be the good guys working for Immigration. I don't doubt that those who volunteered to go believed we were assisting with improving the situation for those we travelled with, and all the stories I have heard since show the compassion and charity of my colleagues in difficult circumstances. However, I cannot ignore that it is the policies and prejudices of our government which contributed to the situation in Calais, and that there remains a fear of what will come next. The camp in Calais will almost certainly be re-established despite all the extra fencing and barriers which have been put up in the area, as we have so far failed to address the causes of the current migration trend. I also fear the politicisation of migration and asylum in this country following the events of last summer and the increasing tensions in our society.

I pray for Jamal, Wais, Abeel and their families; for others who are seeking safety, and for our compassion as a country and continent during these times. Morning Prayer for 3 November, taken from Common Prayer for Ordinary Radicals, struck me when I read it on the coach: 'Lord, when we open our hands and hearts to the poor, your kingdom is at hand. Remind us that there is always enough to give to those who are in need. Make us generous today with the goods you have entrusted to us. Amen.'

• **Danny Sweeney** is a volunteer with Salesian Youth Ministry, and the Social Justice Co-ordinator for the Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. Last modified on Friday, 6 January 2017

<http://www.salesians.org.uk/news-articles/featured-news/a-salesian-volunteer-reflects-on-the-final-days-of-the-calais-jungle.html>

ALARMING NUMBER OF TRAFFICKED CHILDREN GOING MISSING FROM CARE

Trafficked and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are going missing from UK care at an "alarmingly high" rate, leading charities **ECPAT UK** and **Missing People** have said in a new report released Tuesday 15 November 2016. The report, titled **Heading back to harm: A study on trafficked and unaccompanied children going missing from care in the UK**, has found that more than a quarter of all trafficked children and over 500 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children went missing at least once in the year to September 2015, while 207 have not been found.

Data collected from 217 local authorities across the UK reveals a "deeply concerning" inconsistency in identifying and recording information on these vulnerable children, with many unable to report on overall numbers of trafficked and unaccompanied children in their care. These serious data collection flaws, along with the high numbers of trafficked and unaccompanied children going missing, suggest that the UK's wider child protection response is inadequate, leaving children vulnerable to re-trafficking and abuse. The report calls on national and local government to reform the child protection system by immediately introducing child-specific training on child trafficking, unaccompanied children and missing; urgently rolling out the national independent child trafficking advocates scheme; resourcing safe and appropriate accommodation with victim-centred safety planning; improving data recording on trafficking and missing; and implementing a coordinated national, regional and local response to this startling trend.

Chloe Setter, Head of Advocacy, Policy & Campaigns, ECPAT UK, said: "For too long, children who are at risk of exploitation, or who have been trafficked, have gone missing from care – sometimes repeatedly, sometimes forever. It is a national disgrace that this problem has remained neglected and these children rendered invisible by poor data collection and national coordination. **Heading back to harm** has attempted to shine a light on this problem and, in doing so, has unearthed an alarming trend of our most vulnerable children disappearing; hundreds of them never to be found. We must not accept this as a reality any longer. Every child that goes missing is a failure in our duty to protect them from harm. The government must listen to the voices and experiences of young people, and urgently redress the gaps in our protection systems that allow traffickers to flourish and children to suffer."

Heading back to harm: A study on trafficked and unaccompanied children going missing from care in the UK analyses Freedom of Information request data from 217 local authorities on trafficked and unaccompanied children going missing from care in the year to September 2015.

Click here to download the report: http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/hbth_report2016_final_web.pdf

WELCOMING THE STRANGER: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO REFUGEES

Pope Francis' appeal for solidarity with refugees is as challenging now as it was when we first heard it: "Faced with the tragedy of thousands of refugees fleeing from death from war or hunger, heading for the hope of a new life, the Gospel is calling us and asking us to be 'neighbours' to the littlest ones, the most abandoned ones. To give them real hope. Not just to say, 'Be strong, be patient...!' Christian hope fights with the tenacity of someone aiming for a definite goal. I am appealing to the parishes, religious communities, monasteries and shrines of the whole of Europe to show how real the Gospel is by welcoming a family of refugees ... Every parish, every religious community, every monastery and every sanctuary in Europe ought to host a family..."

At archdiocesan level here in Liverpool, our first response was to produce the booklet ***A guide: Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants. Welcoming the Stranger*** which aimed for clarity over the language and terminology being used and to tell stories of refugees. Thanks to close cooperation with colleagues and friends in the Anglican diocese, it was beautifully produced with photographs and infographics. About 1,000 copies remain of the 20,000 copies printed. The booklet has proved very useful and has spread across the country. **Email:** s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk **Tel:** 0151 522 1080 Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission, Liverpool, L17 1AA. http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/userfiles/files/Justice_and_Peace/aguide-welcomethestranger.pdf

Our context is that the North West has for years been the UK's main 'dispersal area' destination for Asylum Seekers and, seeking to be practical, we have held meetings across the diocese with existing groups and with others who are responding to the increase in number of areas as the initial areas are declared full, having reached the statutory 0.2 per cent of the indigenous population. We have done this in groups based on local authority boundaries rather than on our deaneries and have joined Local Authority (LA) planning groups where possible. We have supported local initiatives as they have arisen. Throughout all this we have worked ecumenically.

When the UK Government announced the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) to accept 20,000 Syrians over four years, LAs were asked to organise the process. Many of us were sceptical of the government's motivation since it meant more expense for the LAs at the same time as massive cuts to budgets. Understandably, LAs are reluctant to take on more responsibility without adequate extra resources and are holding out for guarantees. We feel the need to respond to the situation but have no wish to be part of any ideologically driven attack on local democracy. Our response to this dilemma is to promote the Community Sponsorship Scheme to run alongside the main SRP as a Year of Mercy Legacy project. We organise on a deanery level and are expecting to work with Green Pastures, a housing organisation run by the Evangelical Shoreline Church in Southport. We have begun to plan for this and hope to make progress.

Just before Christmas, I met a small group of volunteers at a church near Wigan who don't want to be identified and definitely don't want any praise. They would be embarrassed to be called the face of Christ but I am certain that is what they are. Their story is of how they responded to a situation that presented itself to them. Resolutely throughout the last year, this anonymous group have cared for asylum seekers who are temporarily lodged in a hotel close to the motorway near their parish. The hotel is one of those places beloved of the tabloid press where asylum seekers are reportedly housed in luxury apartments with all the benefits of hotel living, from where they are reported as emerging to be a threat to local people. The reality, of course, is very different. It suits SERCO to house their clients near the motorway network while they are in transit, waiting to be dispersed to somewhere in the region. It suits the hotel company to have a steady stream of paying guests who will never complain about anything. The accommodation is cheap, with no facilities other than a bed, a sink and a toilet. The food is basic. The asylum seekers are supposed to be there for a few days and certainly not for more than three weeks. One man who was there for three months was given fish fingers and chips every day.

The group from the parish visit the hotel and meet the new arrivals. Theirs may well be the first friendly faces the asylum seekers have seen in the UK. Everyone is welcomed and greeted with a smile and practical help. People are offered toiletries and warm clothes suitable for our climate. Young mothers are offered baby clothes and, whenever possible, buggies for their children. A basic English class is offered every Wednesday afternoon and the parish makes its internet available so that people can contact their families back home. SERCO now contact the parish volunteers when there are emotional problems that they – the professionals – can't deal with. One of the volunteers has even been a 'birth companion' to two women asylum seekers. All this work is done with no funds other than that which the parish and the volunteers provide out of their own resources.

At the other end of the Asylum Seeker/Refugee journey, a group of people in Liverpool are preparing to set up a night shelter for those who have disappeared into the murky world of destitute 'failed' asylum seekers. Estimates of the numbers in this group vary. It is thought that up to a hundred new 'refused' asylum seekers stay in Liverpool every year rather than return to a place that they think is dangerous. Whatever anyone thinks about the legalities of their decision, these vulnerable people are in danger and the local community has a problem on their streets. The proposed shelter is a limited attempt to keep some of these people safe and at the same time bring them back into the system so that they either get leave to remain or are helped to return home.

I began with inspiration from the Pope and will end with some words of Dom Christian Chergé on why we are compelled to try to be part of the solution rather than the problem: "I have lived long enough to know that I am an accomplice in the evil which seems to prevail so terribly in the world." (***A Theology of Hope***)

© **Steve Atherton, Justice and Peace field worker for the archdiocese of Liverpool.**

Steve sees adult faith formation as part of his role. <http://www.eklesia.co.uk/node/23677>

THE CASEY REVIEW

6 December 2016: A spokesman for the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales made this comment on *The Casey Review* - a independent review commissioned by the Home Office into integration and opportunity in our isolated and deprived communities: "*The Casey Review* is a thorough investigation into the challenges facing migrant communities as they seek to play their rightful part in British society and Dame Louise (Casey) has identified clearly many of the barriers those communities face. Integration is a major challenge and something with which the Catholic Church is familiar because of its own history in this country.

"Today, the Church, through its parishes, social agencies, and especially its wide network of schools, serves to bring together a wide range of people from many different countries and backgrounds into the mainstream of British life. An example would be a recent schools census which shows that more than 26,000 Muslim pupils are enrolled in Catholic schools in England and Wales. Building unity and cohesion is critical if the United Kingdom is to be truly a home for all its peoples and the Catholic community will continue to play its part in that mission." <http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/News/Casey-Review>

Read the report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/people>

VINNIE PACKS HELP PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREETS

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster has teamed up with the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) to help people on the streets struggling to keep warm this winter. With the number of people experiencing homelessness growing year on year, the Cardinal is backing the distribution of 12,000 Vinnie Packs to provide a practical way the public can help the homeless keep warm. Each Pack contains essential items including thermal hat, socks, gloves, toothbrush and toothpaste and information sheet with advice on where to get more support. Cardinal Nichols said: "Vinnie Packs are a practical way of showing care and concern for homeless people in our midst. Every time we extend a helping hand to those who are most profoundly in need, we share with them the embrace of God's mercy."

The idea for the packs was suggested by SVP member, Siobhan Garibaldi and Catholic journalist, Jo Siedlecka. Siobhan introduced the initiative to the SVP who organised the logistics and provide some funding together with the public. Siobhan says: "We want every penny to go on the packs. The project has no administration or staff costs, no office and the storage and packing area is provided us free of charge by the Diocese of Westminster." While the project is coordinated by the SVP and its members, it has attracted a large amount of vital support from other organisations including the Diocese of Westminster. Mosques, Christian churches of other denominations, charities and even Community Support Officers have all been involved, together with a number of private companies such as Nationwide Building Society whose staff spent four days making up 5,000 Vinnie Packs in the Autumn.

Two dedicated SVP members hired a van and delivered the packs up and down the country over 48 hours. Siobhan says: "They took the packs up one side of England and down the other, setting off at 7am, and returning nearly two days later at 4 in the morning." The packs are distributed in shopping centres, hostels, cold weather shelters, church presbyteries and outreach teams. Members of the police force have also been doing their bit to give out the packs in Hayes, West London. There are times in our lives when we all need help, and to be offered something that hopefully will have some practical benefits and help people feel valued and more loved is what the Vinnie packs are really about. As a charity combating loneliness and material poverty, the SVP's support, together with the Cardinal's backing will hopefully inspire the sustainability of Vinnie Packs for the homeless long into the future."

To donate text VINP33 followed by the £[amount] to 70070 or online at: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/svpvinniepacks>

To read more about the SVP, visit <http://www.svp.org.uk>

INITIATIVE BY 11-YEAR-OLD SVP SUPPORTER WILL HELP THOUSANDS

by Anya Tobin December 20, 2016

A kind-hearted and thoughtful 11-year-old boy, who wanted to do something to help the homeless cope with the cold this winter, has come up with a great idea. Finn Collins, from Whitstable in Kent, was looking through SVP cold weather packs - known as Vinnie Packs - which his mother was distributing to the homeless when he noticed that something was missing. "I had really dry lips at the time and it was making me really uncomfortable," he said. "I thought about homeless people who must get really sore lips as they are outside all the time and decided it would be nice if the Vinnie Packs had lip balms in them." Finn started raising funds for the idea and collecting money from school, from friends, from his local church and he even did a radio interview to tell people about his idea. He has now collected over £250 and motivated the manufacturers of Blistex to donate 6000 lip balms to support his mission.

Finn's mum Angela says her son suffers from anxiety because he has Asperger syndrome. But she says doing this has really boosted his confidence and helped him realise he can help to change other people's lives. "I'm a very proud mother", she says. Vinnie Packs have been produced by volunteers from the charity, the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) since 2011. Each pack contains cold weather essentials including a thermal hat and gloves, socks, a toothbrush and toothpaste, pen and information sheet. This year 12,000 of the packs will be distributed to homeless people across England and Wales. SVP organiser Siobhan Garibaldi said what Finn has done is fantastic. "There's been a lot of doom and gloom in the press recently so to hear a story of a young lad who of his own volition decided to raise money for a good cause was very touching." She says his actions show that "with some determination and a kind heart we can achieve a lot." Finn hopes to continue his good work and do more fundraising. He has already made a YouTube video about homelessness. Next on his agenda is the refugee crisis. He says "it would be really great if other young people decided to do something to help people in need. It's not difficult and it's fun."

http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=31591#.WFkzJi6_2zM.facebook

HOUSING CRISIS: 'IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR CHRISTIANS TO PROVIDE FOOD BANKS'

by Jo Siedlecka 12 January 2017

A group of campaigners held a protest in the Old Palace Yard, outside Parliament on Monday as MPs returned after the Christmas break, ringing a bell to raise the alarm over the housing crisis. 3.5 million adults in the UK are homeless, 73,000 household in temporary accommodation, evictions are rising dramatically and the housing needs of the disabled are often ignored. Working people as well as those on benefits are struggling to pay rents in a chaotic housing market with unfair caps on housing allowances, benefits and the bedroom tax.

The group which included members of Housing Justice, Taxpayers Against Poverty, Unite Community, DPAC, Defend Council Housing and others are calling for an immediate rent freeze for a year in all sectors private, registered social landlords and councils, while rent regulations are brought in. They also want landowners to pay an annual ground rent to the government, to force the use of unused land and empty property. Builders' land banks own 600,000 plots of unused land. They cannot put land in an overseas tax - free Bank - with the abolition of council tax, business rates, stamp duty and the gradual reduction of VAT and income tax.

Rev Paul Nicolson a retired vicar, long-time anti-poverty campaigner, and founder of Taxpayers Against Poverty told ICN: "The poorest citizens of the UK are caught in a vicious trap between shredded benefit incomes and rising rents which inevitably create, debt eviction, homelessness, hunger and ill-health. It's not enough for Christians to provide food banks. Our faith requires us to engage in efforts to change the unreasonably harsh and unjust laws which fail to provide adequate incomes and affordable housing and therefore make people ill." <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=31714>

Watch Rev Nicolson's address outside Parliament here: <https://vimeo.com/198834248>

See the address by Fred Harrison director of the Land Research Trust here: <https://vimeo.com/198902735>

Read more about Taxpayers Against Poverty here: <http://taxpayersagainstpoverty.org.uk/>

MANCHESTER SETS OUT ITS OWN AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEFINITION

by Sophie Barnes 10 January 2017

Manchester City Council has set out its own definition of affordable housing which is based on an average household's income. The council's housing affordability framework has been published today and states the cost of housing should not exceed 30% of an average household's gross income. A report to the council's cabinet meeting said the term 'affordable housing' is "very widely used and misunderstood". The framework also sets out an aim to replace social housing lost through Right to Buy and demolitions. There are currently more than 68,000 social rented homes in Manchester and the council aims to maintain this number.

In the past five years there was a net gain of 921 new affordable homes following the development of 2,721 homes but the loss of 1,800. The framework has set a target to increase affordable housing delivery to between 1,000 and 2,000 homes a year across the city. These will be an equal split between homes to rent and to buy. The affordable housing definition for the city will include social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, shared equity and rent to purchase. It follows the Greater London Authority (GLA) setting out a new grant programme and affordable housing definitions along similar terms. Labour's candidate for Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, has pledged to use a £300m pot of development funding to build affordable housing for rent across the region.

The council has estimated 14,000 homes will be built over the next five years and it has already submitted bids to the Homes and Communities Agency to build 1,650 affordable homes up to 2021. This breaks down to 172 social rented homes, 730 affordable rented, 654 shared ownership and 94 rent to buy. Local housing associations are working with the council to review the existing social housing stock and look at ways to move out residents who are able to buy a home to free up stock. The council is also working with housing associations to create "incentives" for people who are under-occupying social rented homes to move out to free up these homes for families, the report said. It follows outgoing chief executive, Sir Howard Bernstein, questioning whether people in work should live in social housing throughout their lives. The council wants to "make better use" of its adapted housing and "where possible allocate these to residents who need this type of home". It will work with public and private sector partners to access funding such as the government's National Productivity Investment Fund, announced in the Autumn Statement. It will also "take advantage" of the newly relaxed Affordable Homes Programme, a spokesperson said.

Local housing associations are working with the council to review the existing social housing stock and look at ways to move out residents who are able to buy a home to free up stock. Bernard Priest, deputy leader of Manchester City Council, said: "Manchester is leading the way to ensure the city can deliver decent and secure housing that meets the needs of residents that are below the average income for the city."

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/7018299.article?mobilesite=enabled>

REJECTED IN LONDON, 'HOMELESS JESUS' FINDS A HOME IN MANCHESTER

A "homeless Jesus" sculpture is to find a new resting place in the centre of Manchester after planners ruled it could be installed there. Manchester City Council has approved plans for the sculpture, by Canada's Timothy Schmalz, to be sited outside the historic St Ann's Church at the heart of the city. The church wants the sculpture outside the Grade I listed building to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people in the city, the Manchester (Anglican) diocese said. The near life-size bronze sculpture, with pierced feet, is titled '*Jesus the Homeless*'. Other copies are already sited in Madrid, Dublin, Washington DC and Vatican City, although not in London. There is also one outside the Office of Papal Charities in the Vatican.

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/rejected.in.london.homeless.jesus.finds.a.home.in.manchester/102728.htm>

BUILDING A 'CHURCH OF THE POOR'

Church Action on Poverty Sunday 2017 26 February, Transfiguration Sunday. We are asking: if our churches are to be communities that put the poorest first, how must we change? What must we let go of? What sacrifices are we called to make? How can we allow God to transform us into what Pope Francis has called a "poor Church for the poor"?

You call us, God
You call us out of a harsh land and into freedom
You call us out of despair and apathy
You call us into a vision of another way of living
 You call us, Jesus
 You call us into hope and friendship
 You call us to build your kingdom
 You call us to break bread with you and with the hungry
You call us, Holy Spirit
You call us to transformation
You call us to shine into the darkness
You call us into the world to change it
Give us the strength to follow where you call. Amen. (*Marie Pattison*, Katherine House)

Click here for more worship resources, and to find out how you can raise funds to help build a 'church of the poor':
<http://action.church-poverty.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=128&ea.campaign.id=60020>

POVERTY IS MANY THINGS

Poverty is not entertainment, it's not noble or romantic.
Poverty is... heavy. It's heavy hearts and heavy legs. It's sore skin and hollow eyes.
It's upset and downhearted.
It's hunger. Malnourishment. It's always thinking about the next meal.
Poverty is bailiffs, it's food banks, it's queues and lists,
it's never being told what you're entitled to but always being told.
Poverty is being shown up then put down.
It's missed payments and mistrust.
It's always answering questions but never answering the door.
Poverty is hiding in plain view. It's hiding.
Poverty is high bills and low pay.
It's higher costs and lower self-esteem.
It's invisible scars and visible pain.
Poverty is living next door, it's living on your nerves, it's not living, it's... barely surviving.

Poverty is... everywhere. With... nowhere to turn.
It's a gut-wrenching silence, screaming.
Poverty is depressing, demotivating and dehumanising.
It's degradation, desperation and despair.
Poverty is feeling... worthless, it's feeling anxious, it's feeling excluded,
it's feeling rejected, it's feeling ashamed, it's feeling trapped, it's feeling angry,
it's feeling frustrated, poverty is.... exhausting.

It's not feeling anything. It's... numb.
Poverty is... crushing. Empty. Lonely.
Poverty is cold. It's damp. It's ill health. Bad housing. Sadness, fear and human misery.
Poverty is ignored and abandoned. It's sanctioned and sectioned.
It's late payments and early deaths.

Poverty is not something that happens to... "others".
Poverty is our old people, our young people, our sick people, our disabled people, our mentally ill people, our homeless people.
Poverty is people seeking asylum, it's people who are refugees, people who are migrants.
Poverty is overworked, underpaid everyday people. Poverty is people. It's children. Babies. Not... "them". Us.
"Poverty is the worst form of violence." (Mahatma Gandhi)
Poverty is growing in our country. In 2016.
Poverty is many things, but it is not acceptable.

● Poem taken from **Church Action on Poverty's magazine SPARK**, written by members of the **Powerlines project** which brings together people affected by poverty in Salford with professional writers.
<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/about-us/about-us/spark-newsletter/winter2017/sparkwinter2017pdf>

REVEALED: BRITAIN'S SECRET ARMS SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

by **Cahal Milmo** The *i* newspaper online Friday December 16, 2016

The Government is concealing the true extent of Britain's sales of weaponry to authoritarian regimes – including Saudi Arabia – by encouraging a sharp rise in the use of secretive arms export rules, it is claimed today. Ministers are under increasingly intense pressure to halt arms sales to Saudi Arabia after Washington this week announced it was cancelling a consignment of precision-guided bombs previously destined for use in the oil-rich kingdom's heavily-criticised campaign in Yemen.

Britain has licensed more than £3.3bn of weaponry to its most lucrative Gulf ally since a Saudi-led coalition began bombing rebels in Yemen in March. According to a United Nations estimate, some 60 per cent of at least 4,000 civilian deaths in the country have resulted from the coalition's air strikes. But figures shown to *i* suggest that far from scaling back sales, Britain is selling multiple consignments of military equipment without declaring its value to countries with questionable human rights records such as Saudi Arabia. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson insisted two weeks ago that the "threshold has not been crossed" for Britain to halt weaponry sales to Saudi Arabia, despite demands from at least one select committee to do so. In a little-publicised move, the Government agency overseeing the export of military and other sensitive equipment last year asked manufacturers to seek more "open" licences which allow multiple consignments to be sent to a single destination over a period of five years without the value of the goods being publicly declared.

MPs criticised the development, saying it would "inescapably reduce" the transparency of Britain's arms exports and increase the risk that inappropriate sales would be waived through. They have demanded that ministers produce quarterly figures for the value of these licences, known in Whitehall jargon as Open Individual Export Licences or OIELs. No such figures have been forthcoming and the *i* newspaper can now reveal that hundreds of items, including components for Saudi combat aircraft and riot control devices to be used by Egyptian security forces, have been cleared for export since new rules to simplify the OIEL process and encourage their use were brought in 22 months ago. By definition the value of the sales is unknown but experts have told *i* that the equipment – ranging from crowd control ammunition and sniper rifles to parts for jet fighters and combat helicopters – is likely to be worth a minimum of tens of millions of pounds.

Data obtained from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BIES), which oversees arms exports through the Export Control Organisation, show that the number of OIELs increased by nearly a third from 1,439 in 2014 to 1,866 in 2015. For the first six months of this year, 1,100 OIELs were granted, making it likely that 2016 will see the highest ever number of "open" licences granted. Saudi Arabia alone is the subject of 32 OIELs covering more than 150 different categories of hardware.

Andrew Smith, of Campaign Against Arms Trade, which obtained the data, said: "Open licences only exacerbate the lack of transparency in the arms trade. UK arms are playing a central role in the devastation of Yemen, and this means the scale of arms exports could be even higher than we already thought. Arms exports aren't just numbers on a spread-sheet, they can have deadly consequences and send a message of support to some of the most abusive regimes in the world."

Westminster sources have told *i* that MPs on the influential Committee on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) are likely to join demands for weaponry sales to Saudi Arabia to be halted. A draft CAEC report, leaked earlier this year, said: "The weight of evidence of violations of international humanitarian law by the Saudi-led coalition is now so great that it is very difficult to continue support Saudi Arabia." BIES did not respond to a request to comment.

Read more at: <https://inews.co.uk/essentials/news/revealed-britains-secret-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-authoritarian-regimes/>

UK-MADE CLUSTER BOMBS USED IN YEMEN, MICHAEL FALLON CONFIRMS

19 December 2016: Cluster bombs made in the UK have been used in the conflict in Yemen, the government has confirmed. Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said Saudi Arabia had confirmed munitions bought from the UK in the 1980s had been dropped. Since 2010 it has been illegal under British law to supply the bombs, which put civilians at risk by releasing small bomblets over a wide area. Labour said it was "deeply worrying" cluster bomb use had been confirmed.

The UK is supporting the Saudi-led coalition which is fighting the Houthi rebel movement in Yemen. In a statement to MPs, Mr Fallon said the UK had not supplied any cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia since 1989. But he added that Saudi investigations had concluded that some UK-made cluster bombs had been dropped. The BL-755 bombs will no longer be used by the coalition, he added. The Convention on Cluster Munitions prohibits all use, stockpiling, production and transfer of cluster bombs. The convention has 108 signatories and became binding international law in 2010. Cluster bombs pose particular risks to civilians because they release many small bomblets over a wide area. During attacks, they are prone to indiscriminate effects especially in populated areas. Unexploded bomblets can kill or maim civilians long after a conflict has ended, and are costly to locate and remove. **Source: United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs**

Amnesty International, which says it has documented the use in Yemen of a cluster bomb manufactured in the 1970s, has called on the UK to trace weapons made and sold before the ban. Earlier the Saudi state news agency reported a coalition spokesman saying cluster bombs were only used against "legitimate military targets". He added: "It has become apparent that there was limited use by the Coalition of the UK-manufactured BL-755 cluster munition in Yemen." "This munition was used against legitimate military targets to defend Saudi towns and villages against continuous attacks by Houthi militia, which resulted in Saudi civilian casualties."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38364694>

TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Tony McNicholl writes: A few weeks ago I went to listen to Sr Annie Demerjean from Aleppo, who is supported by Aid to the Church in Need. She was fresh from Aleppo and spoke of the difficulties people faced there. I had the chance to speak to her afterwards, and was quite taken aback when she spoke strongly in favour of the government and the Syrian Army. She said we are not getting the true picture of what the rebels were doing. I found this difficult to match up with the images we get on TV. However since then I have seen a couple of reports online that do make me question what we hear.

● **Go to this site and watch listen to the press conference video.** You can skip the first bit, go to about 13 minutes in when the main speaker, Eva Bartlett starts her talk. She is an independent Canadian journalist who has visited Syria a number of times.

<http://handsofsyriacoalition.net/>

● Also, **watch the video** on the same page by Vanessa Beeley, an independent British journalist.

● Finally, **check out the Facebook page** of Andrew Ashdown, a Church of England priest who is in Syria at the moment.

<https://www.facebook.com/andrew.ashdown.9>

I leave you to make your own judgement, and whether to share my concerns more widely. Let us all pray that this dreadful conflict ends very soon.

VETERANS CALL FOR END TO 'BRUTALISATION' OF CHILDREN

9 January 2017: Today a group of armed forces veterans handed in a letter to the MoD calling for an end the recruitment of children aged 16 and 17 into the British Army. The policy has long term harmful effects on young people, argues the letter by **Veterans for Peace UK**. Veterans are appealing to ministers to recognise that military training is a brutalising process that no 16 year-old should be put through. Training 'is a brutal form of psychological conditioning designed to fundamentally alter the way your mind works, leaving the army in control of what you value and how you react, the letter says. These values and reactions are very difficult to switch off and cause all sorts of problems later on in civilian life'.

The British army's child recruits are more likely than adults to be given jobs in the frontline infantry, which has the toughest training and faces the greatest risks once soldiers turn 18 and are sent to war, according to research by the human rights organisation Child Soldiers International. Infantrymen were six times as likely to die in Afghanistan as soldiers in the rest of the army, according to research by **ForcesWatch**, the military watchdog group.

Members of Veterans for Peace UK have fought in every conflict in which Britain has been involved since the Second World War. 'We have seen friends crippled for life right in front of us, and civilian families traumatised by the actions that we carried out under orders,' said Ben Griffin, a former SAS soldier and now Coordinator of Veterans for Peace UK. 'But recruiters still go into schools and show kids pictures of scuba-diving to get them to join up. That's misleading and it should stop. Recruiters don't even have to meet with parents – they just send out the consent forms by post,' continued Griffin. 'Parents can feel a lot of pressure to sign, but are given very little specific information of what they're sending their child into. Army marketing material is designed to conceal the true nature of military service and warfare, not to give a balanced view of all the risks and consequences.' The UN criticised the UK's parental consent arrangements as 'insufficient' last year.

Also today, **Child Soldiers International** releases a series of short films which give a frank and graphic account of the experiences of a young soldier who spent seven years in the army. Wayne Sharrocks describes as 'traumatic' the intensely violent training he went through at 17, which was designed to produce an 'insane amount of aggression', he says, so that he could kill another person at close quarters once he was sent to war. Child Soldiers International has produced the films to give young people and their parents a frank counterbalance to the sanitised image of army life provided by official recruitment materials. Wayne, who is a member of Veterans for Peace, was severely injured in Afghanistan by an IED, which also ripped the legs off a colleague ten days after another of his colleagues was killed directly beside him. He is currently making a film about the experiences of veterans once they leave the armed forces, in **'Life after war'**.

<http://vfpuk.org/2017/veterans-call-for-end-to-brutalisation-of-children/>

FORGIVENESS CEREMONY UNITES VETERANS AND NATIVES AT STANDING ROCK CASINO

The Huffington Post 7 December 2016

On Monday, 5 December, Native Americans conducted a forgiveness ceremony with U.S. veterans at the Standing Rock casino, giving the veterans an opportunity to atone for military actions conducted against Natives throughout history. In celebration of Standing Rock protesters' victory Sunday in halting construction on the Dakota Access Pipeline, Leonard Crow Dog formally forgave Wes Clark Jr., the son of retired U.S. Army general and former supreme commander at NATO, Wesley Clark Sr. Clark's apology to the Natives read as follows:

"Many of us, me particularly, are from the units that have hurt you over the many years. We came. We fought you. We took your land. We signed treaties that we broke. We stole minerals from your sacred hills. We blasted the faces of our presidents onto your sacred mountain. When we took still more land and then we took your children and then we tried to make your language and we tried to eliminate your language that God gave you, and the Creator gave you. We didn't respect you, we polluted your Earth, we've hurt you in so many ways but we've come to say that we are sorry. We are at your service and we beg your forgiveness."

This was a historically symbolic gesture forgiving centuries of oppression against Natives and honouring their partnership in defending the land from the Dakota Access Pipeline. Chief Leonard Crow Dog offered forgiveness and urged for world peace, responding that *"we do not own the land, the land owns us."*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/forgiveness-ceremony-unites-veterans-and-natives-at-standing-rock-casino_us_5845cdbbe4b055b31398b199

WHY I WILL NOT BE AT TRUMP'S INAUGURATION AND WILL BE MARCHING WITH WOMEN

10 January 2017 Press Release

Republican. Luis V. Gutiérrez (District-Illinois) took to the House floor this morning to explain why he is not going to attend the inaugural ceremonies on January 20. "The reason I am not going is that I cannot bring myself to justify morally or intellectually the immense power we are placing in that man's hands," he said of Donald Trump. Rep. Gutiérrez said he would join his wife Soraida in participating in the Women's March on January 21 in Washington. The Congressman cited Trump's caustic rhetoric and outrageous past behaviour, saying:

I could not look at my wife, my daughters or my grandson in the eye if I sat there and attended as if everything that candidate Donald Trump had said about The women, about The Latinos, or The Blacks, The Muslims or any of the other things he said in his speeches and Tweets – that any of that is OK or erased from my memory.

We all heard the tape when Donald Trump was bragging – bragging! – about grabbing women by their private parts without their consent. It is something I can never un-hear... Sorry. That is never OK. It is never just locker room talk. It is offensive and, if he ever actually did it, it is criminal.

He went on to say: I am calling on all of my progressive allies to come march with the women as well. If you care about a living wage, come join the women. If you care about the environment, come join the march. We know as a society, when women win, we all win, so I plan to be there. It is deeply personal and deeply patriotic to march, to make my opinions known by walking with my allies arm-in-arm.

Read the full text here: <https://gutierrez.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/why-i-will-not-be-inauguration-and-will-be-marching-women> **A video from the House floor of the Congressman's remarks is here:** <https://youtu.be/0DYNCLHjed0>

STOP TRASHING THE RAINFOREST FOR COFFEE PODS!

Coffee pods are fast becoming a fashion statement: European market leader Nespresso chooses only the most exclusive city-centre locations – with neighbours like Apple, Cartier and Porsche Design – for its "boutiques". George Clooney has been the glamorous face of the Nespresso brand for more than a decade. "Many consumers associate coffee pods with an upmarket lifestyle and day-to-day luxury," notes Germany's coffee trade association with pride. Nespresso is only one of around twenty companies that market coffee pods. The "luxury product" can also be found at discounters such as Aldi and Lidl. Even organic coffee is available in pods.

Consumers who swear by coffee pods don't seem overly concerned by the flood of waste they generate: In 2013, US market leader Keurig Green Mountain produced 8.3 billion non-recyclable plastic K-Cups, enough to circle the equator 10.5 times. While Nespresso and other manufacturers pay lip service to recycling, they put the responsibility on their customers, who for the most part simply drop the used pods in the trash – unsurprisingly, considering that convenience is their biggest selling point.

Pods are more than a local waste disposal problem, however. Bauxite, the raw material used to make aluminum, is extracted in open-pit mines. Vast rainforest areas are being cleared in Brazil and other countries to make way for the mines. The smelting of bauxite is also extremely harmful to the environment and energy-intensive. In the Brazilian Amazon, rivers are being diverted and dams built to generate electricity for the smelters. Rainforests are being cleared or submerged in reservoirs and indigenous people are being forced off their land.

Tell the coffee producers to put an end to this needless waste of resources.

Sign the petition: <https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/petitions/1066/coffee-doesn-t-need-aluminum-pods?mtu=201331158&t=2457>

NEW CAFOD VOLUNTEERS GROUP FORMED

The first Network of CAFOD volunteers in Liverpool and Shrewsbury Dioceses has been formed. CAFOD Parish and Education Volunteers are committed to working in their parishes together to support, inspire and encourage one another to Give, Act and Pray with CAFOD and raise awareness of our work.

A small Core Group with Chairperson (Julie Johnson from Blessed John Henry Newman), Secretary (Margaret Ord from St Joseph's), and Mary Glennon (St Monica's) and Christine Sherif (St Lewis', Croft) as Communication Officers.

The parishes represented were St Benedict's and St Oswald's, St Joseph's, St Lewis', St Monica's, St Peter's as well as Blessed John Henry Newman. Having decided unanimously a while ago that we wanted to work across the town and its surrounding villages, 19 volunteers and supporters met with Ged Edwards from Liverpool and Bridget Fenwick from Shrewsbury Dioceses in the beautiful surroundings of at Blessed John Henry Newman Parish Centre and after careful discernment, agreed to form a self-sustaining Network. Ged and Bridget will continue to advise the group and offer support as it requests too.

The CAFOD Warrington Network will next meeting on Tuesday 25 April at 7.30pm at St Monica's Appleton. To find out more contact Ged Edwards (Liverpool) Liverpool@cafod.org.uk or Bridget Fenwick (Shrewsbury) bfenwick@cafod.org.uk

PROMOTING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, with Prince Harry, spent 19 December at a Christmas party in support of **Heads Together**, as well as other mental health charities. Prince Harry joined in a talk about suicide led by Ged Flynn and Heather Dickinson, of **Papyrus** a suicide prevention charity. The talk focused on ways that young people can better open up about any suicidal thoughts they might have.

Afterwards, Ged Flynn said: "I sometimes use the phrase 'may your life be as happy as social media pretends it is', because there is a veneer, a pretend life going on for a lot of young people." The phrase Prince Harry used was 'lift up your heads', because a lot of young people are spending their time looking down at apps and so on. He said that his father's generation used to go out and talk to each other, and now young people are not getting that face-to-face contact."

Around 1600 people under the age of 35 commit suicide each year, making it the leading cause of death in young people. Ged Flynn added: "What is killing young people more than anything else is themselves. If it was a disease that was causing all of these deaths there would be an outcry – if one person catches Ebola it is all over the news – but suicide doesn't get mentioned very much."

Claire McCann, who works as a counsellor in London schools for the charity **Place2Be**, said Prince Harry was passionate about improving the nation's mental health and breaking down the stigma that surrounds it. She said: "He feels there should be a collective of mental health charities, a less complicated system for people to access so that they don't get lost along the way. At the moment there are an awful lot of organisations that are not connected to each other."

PAPYRUS WINS AWARD

Papyrus the national UK charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide <http://www.papyrus-uk.org/> is thrilled to announce we've been awarded funding by the AVIVA Community Fund for our Suicide Safer Communities volunteer project! A massive THANK YOU to everyone who voted – this vital funding means we can support more young people experiencing thoughts of suicide. #community #communityspirit #charitytuesday

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: FIGHTING THE MISUNDERSTANDING AND STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS

by **Giles Fraser** 29 December 2016

Carrie Fisher was more than a princess. At the age of 24 she was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder – or manic depression as it used to be called. And throughout the rest of her life she fought to demystify this condition from misunderstanding and stigma. She called her illness "an opportunity to be a good example to others", talking about her condition without shame, and encouraging others to do the same.

Which is why I thought it appropriate for me to say a few words about my own episodes of depression. Mine are different to those Carrie used to have, without the same up and down mood swings. For me, it's extended periods of feeling dark and empty, like being submerged in cold black water. They are bleak desperate times when no one can reach me and when, at extreme moments, I have struggled with the most self-destructive of thoughts.

And when I have been overtaken like this, people telling me it's all going to be OK feels like an insult. Even worse are those who want to proscribe Jesus to make all things smiley and well. During these periods I feel that God is absent, uninterested or even non-existent. And whilst I know this sounds a lot like atheism – and indeed often feels like it too – it's not really the same at all. For despite the experience of the absence of God, there is something important that orthodox Christian theology has to say to me when I am trapped in this darkness – and that is: that we as human beings are not supposed to be self-saving creatures. That was the ancient heresy of the Scottish monk Pelagius – he thought that human beings were capable of saving ourselves from the darkness, that we are able to pull ourselves up from our own boot-straps. The church officially disagreed. We are dependent creatures, the church insisted, fundamentally reliant on that which is outside our control. Which is why much of the religious life, like depression itself, is constituted by the quality and courage of one's waiting. Faith is often a determination to sit in the darkness without cheap consolation and to wait it out, to wait for the dawn to break.

Like the story in Luke's gospel of Simeon and Anna who hung around in the Jerusalem Temple for years, with little idea of what they were waiting for. Eventually they found their light in the appearance of a baby boy, recently born in a Bethlehem shed, who was being taken to the Temple for the very first time.

My favourite Christmas reading comes from the prophet Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them have the light shined."

And when I hear those words read out in church I often cry. And then whisper a quiet prayer of "thank you" that I too have been rescued from the dark.

• **Giles Fraser is vicar of St Mary's Newington, near Elephant & Castle in south London.** This text is taken with permission from his Thought for the Day on BBC's Radio 4 and published in **Resistance and Renewal**. <https://resistanceandrenewal.net/2016/12/29/light-in-the-darkness-fighting-the-misunderstanding-and-stigma-of-mental-illness-by-giles-fraser/>

SO LONG, LEONARD

Anne O'Connor writes: I was privileged to see Leonard Cohen (who died on 7 November 2016) perform twice. First, in 1970 at the start of his career, at the Albert Hall, London, and more recently at the Opera House, Manchester in June 2008, when he was obliged to resume touring having been swindled out his money by his manager - a lucky turn of events for those of us who witnessed a superb concert in an intimate venue that suited him well. A highlight was hearing him recite *A Thousand Kisses Deep*, a reminder that he was first and foremost an acclaimed poet, winning awards in his native Canada. On the day of the US election that propelled Donald Trump to power there were rumours that the Canadian website had crashed with the volume of Americans hitting the application button for Canadian citizenship. A light-hearted Facebook entry gave the lead question on the form as 'Do you like Leonard Cohen?' Cohen spoke to many people in many different circumstances. Like David Bowie he was always willing to embrace the new and reinvent his musical style, returning in later years to his Jewish roots. For me, in these dark, uncertain days of 'hard' Brexit, isolationism and Trump, there is comfort in these words from *Anthem*: 'There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in'.

RABBI LIONEL BLUE

Rabbi Lionel Blue, the first openly gay British rabbi and a regular on BBC Radio 4's Thought for the Day, has died aged 86. Rabbi Blue, from London, was known for his liberal teachings and supporting other gay members of his faith. He had struggled with his sexuality through his teens, leading to a nervous breakdown that saw him leave the Army. But after attending university, he rediscovered his faith and was ordained in 1960. Soon after, he came out publicly and throughout his life lent his support to organisations including Liberal Judaism UK and the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews.

Representatives from the liberal synagogue Beit Klal Yisrael described him as "an inspirational man." Announcing his death on the synagogue's Facebook page, it said: "Lionel spoke with such wisdom and humour whose words reached out far beyond the Jewish community. He was a friend and mentor to many and his courage in coming out as gay in the 1970s paved the way for many other Jews, including many Rabbis." The President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Arkusha, said he was "a pioneer in many senses. Lionel brought his Jewish view of the world to a mass audience with signature warmth and wry self-deprecating humour."

Many have paid tribute with fond memories of his contributions to Thought for the Day - something Rabbi Blue took part in for more than 25 years. BBC religious affairs correspondent Martin Bashir, said: "Who can forget that combination of common sense, humour and biblical wisdom? He once said that he had no time for the solemnity and stiffness of religion. He said he preferred the people who stumbled honestly into their faith. He was almost like an agony uncle on behalf of the Almighty on the serious issues, but then, of course, he was hilariously funny too."

Rabbi Jonathan Romain of Maidenhead synagogue said of Rabbi Blue that he was "God's best PR man in Britain. For several decades Lionel Blue became the indispensable Monday-morning wake-up call for millions in Britain, mixing religious insights with honesty and humour," he said. "He never pretended that life was easy, or that religion solved everything; instead, he shared his own failings and foibles, and showed how to get through the rest of the day."

A former pupil of Rabbi Blue's, Rabbi Charley Baginsky, said: "Lionel was the archetypal rabbi's rabbi - always there for us as individuals, helping us understand our own personal and spiritual journeys. And he leaves a legacy like few others. As the first British rabbi publicly to come out as gay, in the 1970s, Lionel paved the way for many others, including clergy of all faiths."

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CAROLS

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP led the first ever Dementia Friendly Carol Service in Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King on Wednesday 14 December. The Archdiocese of Liverpool became aware of the needs of people living with dementia through parish visiting and began to run Dementia Awareness sessions in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Society in many different parishes and other venues. As part of this journey the **'Songs we Remember'** Dementia Friendly Choir initiative came into being and now the choir of 45 people rehearses fortnightly at the St Thomas of Canterbury church hall in Waterloo, where the archdiocesan Irenaeus Spirituality Project is based.

All parishes within the archdiocese received an invitation to send people to join the Choir and were encouraged to invite all the Care Homes in their area to bring their residents to the Carol Service. Rehearsals for the service are proving to be animated and lively with everyone playing their part. Students from St Teresa of Lisieux Primary School, Norris Green, English Martyrs Primary School, Litherland and Great Crosby Primary School took part in the service alongside the **'Songs we Remember'** Choir. English Martyrs also presented a nativity tableau.

Maureen Knight, who chairs the archdiocesan Dementia Working Group, said 'The response from Care Homes has been amazing. They are so pleased that we are providing this service and we're looking forward to seeing the Cathedral filled with people.' The Carol Service was open to all, especially those living with dementia, supporting someone living with Dementia, or anyone of any age who just enjoys singing carols. The service was not just a 'one-off' event for the Choir and other events are being arranged in care homes and other venues in the coming months as part of the ongoing work of supporting people living with dementia in the archdiocese. <http://catholicnews.org.uk/dementia-friendly-carol-service-051216>

RESOURCES

BOOK: *DEMENTIA: HOPE ON A DIFFICULT JOURNEY*

by Dr Adrian Treloar, Published by Redemptorist Publications 2016 ISBN: 9780852314715 RRP: £9.95

During my previous nursing career, I was one of many who dedicated a considerable amount of time and energy to the care of men and women with dementia. Sometimes those with dementia included Sisters from my own community. Some were dearly-loved friends. I therefore approached *Dementia: hope on a difficult journey* with a certain amount of practical experience, sharing with countless others the ups and downs of what really is a "difficult journey" - in fact, a frequently very difficult journey. The book's author is not addressing a readership which is, as it were, a blank slate. Instead, he speaks to people with a certain degree of familiarity and know-how in caring for people with dementia; who, whatever their understanding and proficiency, need some reassurance and concrete support.

Dr Adrian Treloar is a consultant and senior lecturer in old-age psychiatry with more than twenty years' experience in his field. He is a committed Catholic, but he has written in such a way that *Dementia: hope on a difficult journey* is accessible to all, regardless of religious belief or its absence. The book can be read within a couple of hours. It also deserves to be read and re-read, chapter by chapter, as one inevitable question after another raises its head. It is a genuine sharing of thoughts and experience in the hope of generating fresh ideas and caring behaviours. The book is a stepping stone, not the solution.

Here, at last, is a book which is full of information, delivered in simple language and in a style which is both gentle and personal. Its very directness helps the reader to feel that Dr Treloar is engaging with them in conversation, offering support in situations which can be very trying. There is a lovely sense of equality and dialogue as he delivers what are sometimes hard facts and offers immensely practical ways of dealing with the challenges that occur. Nobody wants, for instance, to think about drawing up an agreement for Lasting Powers of Attorney or of restricting the movements of a wanderer who regularly loses their way. Yet these are genuine needs which Dr Treloar confronts with an empowering sensitivity and realism offering valuable support, not only to the carer, but also to the person who has received the diagnosis and wants to understand more about their present and future.

Loss of memory and the ability to recognise loved ones are two painful aspects of dementia. Dr Treloar offers strategies which can help to maintain meaningful conversations even at a fairly advanced stage of the disease. He highlights the fact that someone's spiritual awareness stays with them for a surprisingly long period - even to the end. Praying together can be an enormous source of peace and unity for both the carer and the person with dementia, who might have surprising and inspiring insight into what is happening in their life. To one who has been a regular churchgoer, the sacraments often remain an important anchor even as they cope with their increasing disability.

Throughout the book, Dr Treloar inserts brief quotes from carers. These help to create a sense of solidarity: the dementia of a loved one is something which does not need to be faced alone. There are others who have "been there, done that" and are willing to share what they have learned in the process. Reading this book, I mused that a copy needs to be in the community room of every religious house, presbytery, doctor's surgery, medical school, school of nursing, care home, hospice and library. It is a small book, but one which deserves to be a best seller.

Review: Sister Janet Fearn

BOOK: *EAST WEST STREET: ON THE ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY*

Philippe Sands Winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction 2016 Publisher: Orion Publishing Co ISBN: 9781474601900

"I encountered a city of mythologies, a place of deep intellectual traditions where cultures and religions and languages clashed among the groups that lived together in the great mansion that was the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The First World War collapsed the mansion, destroying an empire and unleashing forces that caused scores to be settled and much blood to be spilled."

In what Daniel Finkelstein in *The Times* described as 'a work of great brilliance... everything that happens is inevitable and yet comes as a surprise... in places I gasped, in places I wept,' *East West Street* is both a history of atrocity and a relentless, brilliantly-pitched search for the truth. By seeking out the decimated past of his own family, Sands unearths the then-controversial origins of international human rights itself.

An invitation to deliver a lecture in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv sets international human rights lawyer Philippe Sands on a profound quest that will both unearth the origins of international law and fill the terrible gaps in his own family's decimated history. In the process, he both wrestles with the outcome of the laws created at the time and delineates the death machine built to destroy an entire people. Sands exhumes layer after layer of hidden detail, revealing the extraordinary story of two Nuremberg prosecutors who ultimately realise the man they are prosecuting may have been responsible for the murder of their entire families in Nazi-occupied Poland, in and around Lviv. These two remarkable men - Hersch Lauterpacht and Rafael Lemkin - sit at the heart of Sands' exploration, whilst their quarry, Hitler's personal lawyer Hans Frank, proves himself an equally compelling character. It is through Lauterpacht and Lemkin that the words 'crimes against humanity' and 'genocide' - at the time controversial notions - became part of both the judgement at Nuremberg and our lexicon of hate. The deeper Sands digs, he finally traces the grim events that overcame his own family during the Second World War.

A Professor of law at University College London, Philippe Sands QC has written widely on the subject of international law as well as participating in major legal cases with global implications, including taking part in the 1992 Climate Change Convention and legal cases concerning the Belmarsh and Guantánamo detainees.

HIVE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Bone Sparrow: A Refugee Novel

This is a beautiful, vivid and deeply moving story about a refugee boy who has spent his entire life living in a detention centre.

This novel reminds us all of the importance of freedom, hope, and the power of a story to speak for anyone who's ever struggled to find a safe home. '...a special book' - Morris Gleitzman, author of the acclaimed *ONCE* series. Born in a refugee camp, all Subhi knows of the world is that he's at least 19 fence diamonds high, the nice Jackets never stay long, and at night he dreams that the sea finds its way to his tent, bringing with it unusual treasures. And one day it brings him Jimmie. Carrying a notebook that she's unable to read and wearing a sparrow made out of bone around her neck - both talismans of her family's past and the mother she's lost - Jimmie strikes up an unlikely friendship with Subhi beyond the fence. As he reads aloud the tale of how Jimmie's family came to be, both children discover the importance of their own stories in writing their futures.

Zana Fraillon lives in Victoria, Australia with her husband and three sons. She worked as a primary school teacher before having children, and has had picture books and middle grade fiction published in Australia. Her debut UK novel, *The Bone Sparrow* was shortlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2016 and nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2017. Zana felt compelled to write *The Bone Sparrow* because she could not ignore the millions of people who were being forcibly displaced and the millions of children missing out on a childhood. She comments, "The Bone Sparrow was written so we remember the people behind the statistics. Those 65 million stories waiting to be told, those 33 million children wondering if their futures will ever be realised. It was written so we can find the courage to stand for humanity, and the wisdom to imagine a different world. It was written so we may all live in hope."

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BOOK: STATIONS OF THE CROSS THEN AND NOW

Fr Denis McBride CSsR Redemptorist Publications, December 2016 ISBN: 9780852314722 RRP: £12.95

"The way of the cross is not confined to a lonely road in Jerusalem two thousand years ago: it is a busy highway winding through every village, town and city in our modern world."

...and so the cover of Fr Denis McBride's new book highlights German artist Curd Lessig's tragic image of Mary, weeping over her crucified Son, newly taken down from the cross. However, the cover also shows a photograph which pierced the hearts of millions: that of a Turkish policeman lifting three-year-old Syrian Alan Kurdi from the shore on which his little body had been washed up. Both Jesus and Alan were innocent victims of someone else's abuse of power. The difference is that we are accustomed to seeing images of the Pietà: countless pilgrims have clustered around Michelangelo's serenely peaceful masterpiece in St Peter's. Although Lessig has tried to convey the tragedy and the horror of the Way of the Cross, his art still falls within a recognised artistic genre. The same cannot be said of a policeman carrying a drowned child's body, unable to look the little one in the face.

Take another example. It takes little effort to imagine Jesus' relief as Simon of Cyrene lifts the weight of the cross from his shoulders. What about a man who wades out of the sea at Lesbos, his two children clinging to him? They are safe at last. Relief is etched into his facial expression. Nothing will ever obliterate the terror and insecurity of the migrant family's journey from North Africa, but in reaching the small Greek island, the father's burden of responsibility is lifted and shared with people who only wish them good, not harm.

For every station of the cross, there is a modern parallel.

So it is that Fr McBride, in *Stations of the Cross Then and Now*, does not limit himself or the reader to events of two thousand years ago. Instead, he brings the Via Crucis into the twenty-first century and into our own experience. He reflects on each event of the traditional fourteen stations, so familiar to us all, but, in the same breath, brings those situations into the here and now, reflecting on parallel occasions in the lives of people of our time. Some of those stories and even the photographs, are also well known to us: Blessed Oscar Romero, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Alan Kurdi, Abu Ghraib, Costa Concordia, the Twin Towers... In following the media reports, did we make the link with Jesus' journey to Calvary?

Stations of the Cross Then and Now is a powerful book. Fr McBride writes, in his introduction: "I did not write these stations for public performance, but for devotion: anyone can make the way of the cross at home. After all, it is there, for many people, that they live out their own suffering."

For each station, Fr McBride presents a passage from scripture, reflecting on its meaning with the help of a Curd Lessig painting. He then uses a modern photograph to bring that station into the reader's personal world, finally bringing together the "then" and "now" in prayer. These prayers have their own poignancy and relevance, coming as they do from such sources as the Psalms, the Song of Songs... and the Buchenwald concentration camp.

As Fr McBride says: "The Gospel comes alive best when the story of Jesus and our own story meet and merge: we learn not only that the story of Jesus throws light on our own, but, paradoxically, that our own story can throw new light on the story of Jesus."

Review by Sr Janet Fearn

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=31663#.WG1sOK0iFJE.facebook>

CARITAS WESTMINSTER LAUNCHES CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING PROGRAMME

2 December 2016

Yesterday, 1 December, Caritas Westminster launched ***Love in Action***, a programme aimed at introducing the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to parishes and schools. Designed to be used with a variety of groups, the resources offer a programme to educate, inspire and help parishes to discern the needs of their local area, and to focus on how to put love into action. The launch at Our Lady of Victories in Kensington, gave participants a chance to look at the resources as well as interact with them through a series of activities. Chair of Caritas Westminster Bishop Paul MacAleenan, introduced the launch by explaining that ***Love in Action*** is the 'perfect expression of Caritas'. He went on to say that the programme provides accompaniment for parishes 'walking' them through Catholic social teaching.

The author Danny Curtin gave the background and inspiration for developing the materials and Fr Shaun Middleton from St John Fisher North Harrow explained how the scheme unfolded in his parish and school.

The resources are free and available for download on the website: www.stepforwardinlove.org

Parishes and schools requiring support to use the materials can contact the Caritas team using the following link: caritaswestminster@rcdow.org.uk

The resources have been developed with the help of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) and other Caritas agencies.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=3147>

WATCH: ADDAMEER FILM ON JERUSALEM CHILDREN

Addameer's new film ***Precarious Childhood: Arrests of Jerusalemite Children*** concerns the arrests of Palestinian children in Jerusalem. You are welcome to view and share. The film addresses the process of arrest, interrogation, and the policy of house arrest and their effects on children. It provides accounts of children who were arrested in order to highlight a larger policy of persecution and targeting of Palestinian children in Jerusalem.

The Youtube link can be found here: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0uDPeED_RPk

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, P. O. Box: 17338, Jerusalem, 3 Edward Said Street, Sebat Bldg. 1st Floor, Suite 2, Ramallah, Palestine. Tel: +972 (0)2 296 0446 / 297 0136. Fax: +972 (0)2 296 0447 Email: info@addameer.ps
Website: www.addameer.org

"All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers". In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. "Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace".

Pope Francis' Message for Peace Sunday 2017

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 2017

17 CWDF Forum 6.45- 9pm The Unity Centre, Cuppin Street Chester, CH1 2BN. Our regular bi-monthly meeting at The Unity Centre, the first of the New Year. Speaker TBC. Please note: this date is a departure from our usual pattern of Forum dates - this is the 3rd Tuesday of the month rather than the 2nd. Contact 01244 350323

18 *Climate Change—Lessons from the Past and Options for the Future* Dr Colin Fenwick Langley Methodist Church 7.45 pm. For more details contact Keith Taylor SKeithTAYL@aol.com

18-25 *Crossing Barriers* Week of prayer for Christian Unity <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2017/>

19 *Can you do development without faith?* 7.30- 9pm Best Building, University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ
A talk by Dr Nick Henwood, who works for Community Health Global networks and is seconded to Tearfund. He will look at the effectiveness of various aid agencies / aid delivery and draw from his working at a Community Health and Development programme and then an HIV / TB project in Nepal. He also has experience of a network charity and Slum health work in Kampala and partnering with various agencies engaged in health and social work in rural Kenya.

20 Do you enjoy wine? Then come along to St Michael and All Angels Church, Ashton-on-Ribble for a Fairtrade tasting evening. We hope to see you there! Fairtrade Foundation Preston, Lancashire

22 Homeless Sunday www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/homeless_sunday.html

27 Holocaust Memorial Day - For info on NW events please contact Mandy Penellum, NW Regional Support Worker, Holocaust Memorial Day Mandy.northwest@hmd.org.uk or go to <http://hmd.org.uk/events/find/North%20West#sthash.Pi0PyrBl.dpuf>

30 *Do you know where your money goes?* 18:30-20:30 Samuel Alexander Building, Manchester, M13 9PL #TheBigShift
<https://t.co/aHUID30eTr> Christian Aid North West

FEBRUARY

- 14 Time out on Tuesdays** 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 722 2271 email: winniecenacle@mail.com
- 17 Ellesmere Port LPA Justice & Peace Group CAFOD Quiz Night** 7.30 pm Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre. Entrance fee: £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. Details: Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419
- 18 NJPN Open Networking Day** 10.30am – 4pm '**Towards A Listening Church**' With Leeds J&P Commission, Leeds. Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk; Tel : 0207 901 4864 www.justice-and-peace.org.uk **Book via:** leedsjp.org.uk
- 25 The North West Gathering for the Environment - Friends of the Earth** the Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT. Morning session 10.30 -13.00 for Friends of the Earth members and affiliates only, Afternoon session 13.00 – 16.45 - open to anyone interested in environmental and social justice issues. Please bring food for shared lunch. **Register at:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-north-west-gathering-for-the-environment-tickets-29604719513?aff=efbnreg>
- 26 Church Action on Poverty Sunday *Poor Church, Transfigured Church.*** www.church-poverty.org.uk 0161 872 9294
- 27—12 March Fairtrade Fortnight *It's time to put Fairtrade in your break*** www.Fairtrade.org.uk

MARCH

- 1 Ash Wednesday Witness against nuclear weapons** London and Liverpool: Pax Christi 0208 203 4884
- 1 Housing Justice Roadshow Wrexham** housingjustice.org.uk 020 3544 8094
- 3 Women's World Day of Prayer** prepared by the women of the Philippines www.wwdp.org.uk/
- 8 International Women's Day** internationalwomensday.com Postcards from paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884
- 10 CAFOD Lent Fast Day** on Zambia cafod.org.uk
- 10-12 The Things That Make for Peace Fellowship of Reconciliation/Methodist Peace Fellowship Conference** in Manchester anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk 0794 272 595 (Tilly)
- 11 Listening to Refugees** Rochdale christiansaware.co.uk 0116 254 0770
- 12 Fairtrade Fortnight event** All Saints Parish Centre, Carrington Lane, Ashton-on-Mersey, M33 5WL 2-5pm. Traidcraft Big Brew with tea, coffee, cakes and savouries for sale. Displays, videos & children's activities. **Speakers** from India and from Palestine at 3pm who will explain the importance of fairtrade and how much our support means to them. Traidcraft and Zaytoun products on sale.
- 14 Time out on Tuesdays** 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 722 2271 email: winniecenacle@mail.com
- 18 Romero Week 2017** Wrexham, St Mary's Cathedral 12.00 Sr Martha Zechmeister CJ ***The Secret of Romero: Passion for God and Compassion for the Poor.*** romerotrusted@gmail.com romerotrusted.org.uk
- 19 Romero Service** Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral 11.00. Celebrant: Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk 0151 953 9811
- 20-21 Africa-Europe Faith & Justice Network Networking Meeting** Wistaston, Crewe aefjnuk@yahoo.co.uk
- 22 World Water Day** unwater.org/
- 24 CAFOD Northern MP Correspondents Training** Manchester marana@cafod.org.uk 020 7095 5417
- 24 Ellesmere Port LPA Justice & Peace Group CAFOD Quiz Night** 7.30 pm Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre. Entrance fee: £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. Details: Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419
- 25 Romero Service** Colne, Lancs, Sacred Heart 14.00 faithandjustice@ymail.com
- 30 Pax Christi Liverpool** will host a public meeting with a returned Ecumenical Accompanier serving in The West Bank. Venue Central Liverpool, to be confirmed Contact janharper1@yahoo.co.uk 07746919915

APRIL

- 18 Global Day of Action on Military Spending** demilitarize.org.uk paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884

MAY

- 6 Revitalising the Tools of Active Nonviolence** Liverpool. Booking essential: janharper1@yahoo.co.uk paxchristi.org.uk
- 13 NJPN AGM & Open Networking Day** 10.30am – 4pm CAFOD 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB. Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk; Tel : 0207 901 4864 www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

JULY

- 21—23 NJPN Annual Justice & Peace Conference** The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. ***'A Sabbath for the Earth and the Poor: The Challenge of Pope Francis.*** Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk; Tel: 0207 901 4864 www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com or from Ekklesia www.ekklesia.co.uk both invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles. 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