

Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR E-Bulletin – April 2013

www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

Vision: *A diocese fully engaged with the call of God to be a people of justice and peace*

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1. Year of Faith

To celebrate the Year of Faith Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR Commission is holding a **study afternoon and discussion** on Saturday 18 May from 2.15 -5.30 at St Columba's, Chester. Entitled '*Drawing Inspiration from Vatican II*', the afternoon will be led by **Brian Davies**, former head of education at CAFOD. Hall open from 1pm to socialize – please bring a packed lunch, tea and coffee will be provided. All welcome – please invite others.

2. Resources

J&P Calendar for the Year of Faith 11 October 2012 – 24 November 2013

As we move through the Year of Faith the calendar will start at the current time to make dates easier to locate www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk (go to 'Year of Faith' page)

3. Positive Alternatives to Arms Spending

The **Campaign Against the Arms Trade** (CAAT) are looking for support for their campaigns this year. In late 2013, CAAT hopes to launch a campaign calling for positive alternatives to arms spending. CAAT will also be running campaigns which will challenge sales and promotion of arms to repressive regimes. This will involve lobbying MPs; challenging the London arms fair, (due to be held in London in September 2013); highlighting the involvement of local arms companies; and promoting the **Christian Network Day of Prayer on 8 September**. Please go on the CAAT website and sign up to support their campaigns: www.caat.org.uk

The arms trade can be challenged because Governments have to listen to ordinary people. We can stop the trade if enough of us speak out. There are hundreds Justice and Peace groups in England and Wales. This is an appeal to all of these groups to support the work of CAAT and add to your programme for this year an activity to oppose the arms trade. The CAAT Christian Network provides resources, both written materials and speakers, which can help. www.caat.org.uk/getinvolved/christian

Single voices can tell us when change is necessary but most change is created by small groups of determined, well organised people. Please help to make this the year when the arms trade is successfully challenged in the UK. If you want to know more, please call John Dowling on 0191 2362703 johnandbarbara10@hotmail.co.uk

4. Support Bruce Kent on his Scrap Trident Tour

This is a great opportunity for Pax Christi members (and others) around the country to come out and support this important tour. Take a look at the events page of CND website www.cnduk.org for listing of the towns to be visited

and think of what you can do! Bruce plans to be in **Birkenhead** and **Liverpool** on 23 April and in **Manchester** on 24 April. Writing about the tour Bruce says:

It seems to me that we, as a country, are moving towards replacing – at vast expense – ‘our’ present Trident submarines and their murderous missiles and warheads with a new generation, planned to last for another 30 years.

Despite majority public opinion against, there is no clearly articulated political opposition to replacement, except from CND and other disarmament groups. So the Government is just attempting to go ahead with its project through a series of small steps – all of which will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to say NO when a vote comes in 2016.

Yet many many groups and organisations strongly oppose the cuts that will make humanitarian work of all sorts so much more difficult. The cuts will hit the poorest hardest. But the connection between the £100 billion to be spent on Trident and these savage cuts is not being made even by charities and NGOs that work in hardest-hit sectors. Nor is any link being made with our obligation, as a country, to negotiate the elimination of all nuclear weapons. If we replace Trident, in any shape or form, other countries will take the message from us that we think nuclear weapons improve our security. It’s an open invitation to get their own.

I want, through this Tour, to help to make the connection. I hope the petition will go around the country and not only to the places on the Tour. I hope that in the places I will visit there will be opportunity for outdoor speaking and petition signing; opportunity to meet local opinion formers and the media; perhaps a visit to a sixth form college; plenty of advance publicity; an exhibition in a library; a church gathering or trade union meeting; an indoor meeting at which there will be lots of time for questions and forward planning - the possibilities are endless. I also hope that others will plan their own No to Trident campaigns this spring or perhaps at some other time this year.

Full text: http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/briefings/trident/Bruce_Kent_letter_web.pdf

Resource

Pax Christi has produced a **10-minute DVD** exploring the **alternatives to military spending** featuring CAFOD Director Chris Bain, David Lammy MP, Vandana Shiva, Dannie Grufferty, Jane Grey, Billy Hayes and Jim Sikorski. Clearly and simply they put the case for investment in their area, they offer an alternative model of security and they remind us of the impact of conflict globally and here in the UK - an ideal discussion starter for use with all ages. DVD available from the Pax Christi office price £5 including p&p - or on the website www.paxchristi.org.uk

5. Statement from National Justice and Peace Network

In the light of redundancies of several diocesan workers in Shrewsbury, Portsmouth and Leeds dioceses, including the Justice and Peace Fieldworker in Leeds, the National Justice and Peace Network Executive has issued the following statement:

Members of the National Justice and Peace Network Executive very much regret that lay people employed by the Church in a number of dioceses are faced with the prospect of redundancy or have already been made redundant. This calls into question the acknowledgement of the role of lay members of the Church as well as priorities for the future. In times of social and economic difficulty for many it would seem that areas of real concern should be social justice, family relationships, pastoral formation and community building in an atmosphere of mutuality.

Many lay workers have given years of dedicated service to their Church communities and possess skills and experience not necessarily available to those within the ordained ministry. We are concerned that there be both justice and transparency in dealing issues of employment.

NJPN will continue to support justice and peace activist within the dioceses.

* Since the above statement was issued the Faith, Justice and Peace Worker for Wrexham Diocese has been let go after a lengthy consultation process, despite submissions on her behalf attesting to the importance of the role.

6. National Justice and Peace Network 35th Annual Conference 19-21 July

This year's theme for the **NJPN Conference** is **Breaking Open the Word** with inspirational keynote speaker **Megan McKenna**, Theologian, Storyteller, Pax Christi Ambassador for Peace (see below next paragraph) - booking forms and further info from: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk The Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR Commission may be able to offer a bursary for a family or individuals to attend. Applications will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please contact Tony Walsh, 54 Underwood Drive, Ellesmere Port CH65 9BL tonywalsh3@btinternet.com

Megan McKenna: Weaving Catechesis into Social Action

There is the story told of a man who sat for hours weaving at a loom. Day after day he toiled, throwing the shuttles back and forth, straightening the threads and following the details of the pattern. But he had not been the one to set the loom up, or begin this particular weaving and he had no sense of what it would look like—he saw only the pieces that he was weaving. He found the work tedious and boring and he would drift often, losing his concentration and dropping portions of the tapestry. And so one day the man who was in charge of all the weavings took him aside and took him on a tour of the weaving room—showing him all the pieces of the tapestry, as each person worked on their piece and then he showed him the whole design in its magnificence. The man was stunned and amazed—and looked immediately to see where his small piece would fit into the overall pattern. The tapestry told a story, gave a history of a people and brought the telling up to the present day so that it could continue through the weavings of others on into the future—and they would be free to change the story, add to it, and alter it as they chose. That break from his work changed everything. Now he was not just working on his small piece, he was part of a masterful and amazing piece of history, art and a communal endeavour. He no longer just toiled. Now he worked and he dreamed and he hoped for wholeness and possibilities for the future.

This story describes the relationship between catechesis and social action. We have a tendency to separate them out, and think of them as two separate realities that might impinge on each other, through chance, at certain vectors. But the Gospel is the whole story, the entire tapestry and justice, or social action—often called hands-on-justice are the threads that are woven throughout the whole. When we work, each labouring in an area of social action, charity, community organizing, justice, research or a project we tend to see only what we are working on, rather than see our piece, our story, our chapter in the larger telling. There are a number of ways to integrate catechesis and action for justice.

The first one is to connect daily to the larger structure and community of the universal church through the daily Lectionary. The Church worldwide reads the same texts of the earlier and the New Testament, reflecting upon the whole story of God's weaving in and out of our lives, individually and as a people bound to him in a covenant of justice/compassion and truthfulness. We need to singularly read these portions of the Scripture and together, weekly, study and pore over them in a small group that draws us deeper into the larger reality of the Kingdom of God that is already among us. We need to remind one another of where we fit—and that what we are doing is not an end in itself, but a way to witness to the reality of the presence of God in our world. And we need to remember that it is our honour and privilege to be a part of this work.

Catechesis is woven through the way we work, revealing the heart of what we believe. What we do and its results matter little if we have not shared our belief with those we have worked with and those we serve. Catechesis, in Greek, means the source of the answers that a catechist asks a catechumen—and the source of all our work, relationships and hopes is our faith and its practice—being the graceful presence of Jesus the Crucified and Risen Lord in the world. No matter what we do for a living, we live in the presence of the Son of Justice and the God of compassion and truth, revealing that reality. And as Francis of Assisi was fond of saying to his brothers and sisters: You must preach the Gospel daily, incessantly, passionately, without fail; but only as a last resort use words."

We are the Gospel, the Good News of God (catechesis) that the world longs to hear proclaimed in their midst. Come, let us go forth to be what we proclaim: the Good News of God.

7. Together for the Common Good

A year-long ecumenical initiative backed by leading figures from the Catholic, Anglican churches has been launched, to explore how faiths can work better together for social justice amidst unprecedented economic crisis and inequality. The **Together for the Common Good** initiative will draw on the Anglican, Catholic and Free Church traditions of social justice to highlight effective strategies for faith-led social collaboration. The inquiry will take inspiration both from current examples of joint working and from the legacy of Bishops David Sheppard and Derek Worlock. During the 1980s they, with Free Church leaders, acted as advocates for communities in Liverpool and as 'honest brokers' between those communities and government.

Together for the Common Good will:

- Deliver a landmark conference that will draw together church leaders, practitioners, policy makers and faith-based agencies involved in social action from across the country
- Closely examine the role played by faith groups in working for social justice by commissioning and presenting research on past and present collaborations

- Show how faith groups can work better together, side by side with communities, to engage with some of the biggest social issues facing us today

As the central event in the Together for the Common Good inquiry, a **major national conference** is taking place in **Liverpool 6-8 September 2013**. Aiming to explore how faith groups can work better together for social justice, the conference will bring together up to 200 leading figures drawn from two distinct groups – those with first hand working experience of the Sheppard/Worlock partnership and those who are involved in faith-based social justice activity today.

The Together for the Common Good inquiry's research process, launched this week, runs to the end of the year. The Together for the Common Good research team is appealing for contributions and case studies. A spokesperson said "Thousands of people from the Christian traditions and other faiths are working up and down the country to make life better for their communities - we want to hear from them."

For more information see: www.togetherforthecommongood.co.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

18 Heald Green Churches Together Justice & Peace Group are organizing a talk to be given by **Niall Cooper, National Coordinator of Church Action on Poverty: *Closing the Gap: Tackling Poverty in an Age of Austerity*** at Christ Church Hall, Finney Lane, Heald Green, SK8 3DY 7.30 pm. All welcome.

19 CAFOD Quiz Night 7.30pm Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre. £3 (Children half price)

23 Bruce Kent's Scrap Trident Tour in Birkenhead and Liverpool (see item 4)

24 Bruce Kent's Scrap Trident Tour in Manchester (see item 4)

25 Eco-Chic Fashion Show at **West Cheshire College, Ellesmere Port Campus, Off Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port CH65 7BF 7.30pm**. Tickets: £6 adults, £2 children over 16, £2 students, £10 family including refreshments - from Susan Flynn 01244 381490 sflynn@waitrose.com

26 Christian Aid Concert 7pm at Ellesmere Port Civic Centre with the a capella community choir, Kaboodle and the award winning Dee Signers. More information and tickets at £5 from Ricky Montgomery, 0151 355 0108.

MAY

9-16 Photographic Exhibition *Children of Palestine and Liverpool* St Mary Magdalene Church Alsager. Liverpool Friends of Palestine have been twinned for 4 years with the West Bank village of Bil'in in the occupied Palestinian territories. The photos show the everyday lives of children from both areas. Open weekdays 10am-4pm and on Sunday 1-4pm. Admission free.

11-28 *Poverty Over* Sculpture & photographic exhibition for Christian Aid, Chester Cathedral, 9am to 6.30pm each day. The exhibition, which is in the middle of a two-year tour of the country, includes a specially commissioned sculpture by West Sussex artist Mel Howse, which aims to challenge our response to those living in extreme poverty. The sculpture is accompanied by a photographic display of Christian Aid's work in several countries including Niger, Nicaragua and Haiti.

12-18 *Bite back at Hunger* Christian Aid Week 2013 www.caweek.org

13 Chester World Development Group Forum AGM 6.45 for 7pm at St Peter's Centre, The Cross, Chester. AGM business will be followed by a talk by Terry Green ***Investing in an Ethiopian Village*** – drawing on his recent visits.

18 Christian Aid Chester Concert, Eva Warren and Friends. 7.30pm at St Peter's Centre, The Cross, Chester.

20-25 Telford Homeless Action Week (THAW) will begin on **Monday 20 May** with a FIREWALK and end with Wrekin activities on **Saturday 25 May**. There are many ways to get involved – something for EVERYONE so please show your support. To find out how call 01952 291904 or email: kaybennett@staytelford.co.uk