

Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR E-Bulletin – December 2012

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. Open Commission Meeting '*The Way Forward*'

A full report of the October Open Commission Meeting has now been sent out to all participants. Please contact Anne if you were unable to attend the day but would like a copy of the report anneoc980@hotmail.com

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

Don't forget to check the calendar for updates – (last revised 9.11.2012) www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

3. 'Tsunami of suffering' expected with UK government cuts reports Ellen Teague

"A tsunami of suffering will swamp hundreds of thousands of families in the UK, the like of which we have not seen in recent times", warned **Niall Cooper**, the **Director of Church Action on Poverty (CAP)** at a National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) quarterly meeting on Saturday 24 November, held at CAFOD's London headquarters.

"The need for the option for the poor in UK has never been greater" said Niall, whose stories included a woman in Hertfordshire with four children who has just been informed that her benefits will be capped and is "scared stiff" that she will only have around £10 a week left for food after other expenses. "She is not alone" he said, pointing to the mushrooming of food banks as proof of widespread hardship, suggesting that although a humanitarian crisis needs a humanitarian response the churches need to be active in addressing the underlying causes. He knew Justice and Peace activists would be familiar with Jim Wallis of the Sojourners Community in the US who said that, "the churches are fantastic at pulling drowning people out of the river, but a part of the churches' task is to go upstream and see what is driving them into the river".

Niall highlighted CAP's '**Close the Gap**' campaign, pushing for change through fair taxes, fair pay and fair prices. He also flagged up the recent '**Tax Justice Bus**' initiative, where a red bus toured the country giving the message that tax dodging hurts the poor. "We spent 53 days hosting thousands on the bus and speaking to more than 50 MPs" he said, pointing out that 98 of the top 100 FTSE companies have subsidiary companies in tax havens. "This is costing our country at least £35 billion per year" he added, "and we wouldn't need austerity programmes if companies paid their taxes". The Church Investors Group, which has significant investments in the corporate world, is being lobbied to use its power for promote justice. He was delighted that the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales and the Church of England have now signed up to the **Living Wage**, which CAP has pushed for several years. Niall was one of four speakers addressing around 50 diocesan J&P workers, religious orders and Catholic organisations from around England and Wales on the theme of '**Option for the poor – what options now?**'

Alison Gelder, the **Director of Housing Justice**, focused on homelessness and welfare reform. Cuts to housing benefits started soon after the Coalition government came to power. She suggested that “the poor are bearing the brunt of the government strategy to reduce the deficit”. Alison felt next April’s **‘Bedroom Tax’** will “attack people in social rented accommodation” and force thousands into homelessness. Housing Associations are very worried because they don’t want to evict people but theirs and council tenants will see benefits cut if they are deemed to have spare bedrooms. Alison highlighted Poverty and Homelessness Action Week 26 Jan-3 Feb 2013, which aims to raise awareness of the forces at play behind hardship.

The other two speakers were **Tim Jones** of **Jubilee Debt Campaign** and **Fr Michael Kirwan SJ** of Heythrop College. Tim spoke about the on-going campaign to tackle global debt and a quick survey showed that two-thirds of the people in the room had been involved for more than two decades, having attended the ‘Hands around Birmingham’ lobby of the G8 in 1998 and the ‘Make Poverty History’ lobby of the G8 in Edinburgh in 2005. “The need for a Jubilee on debt is still there” Tim stressed. Michael underlined Catholic Social Teaching as providing “the matrix of criteria” for acting on the ‘Option for the Poor’.

NJPN members undertook to look into tackling the huge number of empty homes in Britain – around 750,000. Perhaps empty presbyteries or underused ones could be part of ethical letting schemes. The government could be encouraged to save money by cutting arms budgets, particularly abandoning plans to spend at least £70 billion on renewing Britain’s Trident missile system. The media should be challenged over labelling people as ‘scroungers’ (see item 4 below) and NJPN members will use social media more to change negative perceptions regarding people receiving state benefits. NJPN Chair Anne Peacey and administrator Ann Kelly said the ideas would be typed up and circulated to the hundreds of people who now receive and appreciate the NJPN weekly e-mailing. Please contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk to receive weekly updates.

For more information see:

www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/

www.church-poverty.org.uk/

www.housingjustice.org.uk/

4. Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 26 January – 3 February 2013 *Can you cast the first stone?*

Are people to blame for being poor or homeless? Media stereotypes make huge assumptions - benefit claimants don't want to work; homeless people are addicts or alcoholics; they have big families to milk the state.

Politicians - who should know better - repeat these distortions as if they were the whole truth. The public swallows them; it seems we need an 'us against them' world. But we want to show the other side of the picture.

Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2013 tells stories that don't suit the press agenda: the people who don't work because there are no jobs in their area; the people turned away by landlords because of benefit changes; the communities that are building strength through organising.

Jesus was being tested by the Pharisees when they brought him the woman 'taken in adultery'. Jesus never said she was blameless. He simply showed that condemnation will not change her ways. We won't tackle poverty and homelessness by casting the stone of blame at these people. Please join us in Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2013 and call for an end to this blame game. We've prepared some great resources to help you:

- Worship guides, including readings, sermon ideas, prayers and hymns
- Ideas for fundraising
- Online prayer calendar with a video for each day of Action Week showing the real stories of those experiencing poverty and homelessness
- Action Week DVD
- Action Week prayer card
- Promotional posters

<http://www.actionweek.org.uk/html/home.html>

- The Bishops of England and Wales have added their voice to the Living Wage Campaign, alongside other Christian Churches.
- The National Justice and Peace Network have asked all J&P Commissions to contact their bishop to request a pastoral letter on the theme of poverty in the UK to mark the start of Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2013.

5. Day of prayer and action on Climate Change

The day of prayer and action on Climate Change on 1 December saw Christian campaigners pray for the success of the United Nations climate conference in Qatar 26 November – 6 December (report of talks in item 6 below.)

First, an ecumenical prayer service, hosted by **Christian Ecology Link (CEL)** and **Operation Noah** at the Grosvenor Chapel in Mayfair, was led by Rev Chris Polhill. In her talk during the service, Catholic journalist Ellen Teague stressed that Climate Change is a development problem. “Living within the carbon budget that the scientific community has set is a difficult paradigm shift for economists and politicians working within the prevailing economic growth model” she said. She welcomed the new **LiveSimply parish award** for Catholic parishes, pointing out that the first parish to achieve the award – St John Bosco in Reading – has installed solar panels on the roof, organises an annual liturgy to appreciate God’s Creation and does advocacy work on Climate Change.

Pat Gaffney, Director of Pax Christi, said afterwards that thinking 'out of the box' in order to wake the world up to the urgency of action on climate change was a key message in the service. “In her sermon, Ellen Teague challenged peace and development agencies to do more to highlight the links between poverty, militarism and climate change” she said; “this might be the impact of climate change on food shortages or defence policies that tie us into nuclear defence programmes”. Pat Gaffney felt, “such thinking will help us all understand the real threats to security in our world and use our respective skills and knowledge to work together for deep change”.

The service was “well planned and very moving” said Roger Wright, whose parish of St James, Petts Wood, recently started working towards the award, “and it is reassuring to know that Christians do have an interest in this most pressing problem facing humanity and were well represented on the march”. He was delighted to see support for the Campaign Against Climate Change and the enthusiasm of the young activists was uplifting, reflecting that “such protests may fall on deaf government ears but they are morale boosters for those who take part”.

Sr Louisa Poole, of the Board of Operation Noah, highlighted key points from the Organisation’s Ash Wednesday Declaration. In it, church leaders have called for repentance over the prevailing 'shrug-culture' towards climate change. The Declaration is framed around seven biblical themes and argues that, to be a Christian is to accept the call to radical discipleship and to work through the implications for church life of a real change in lifestyle. Operation Noah believes that avoiding our duty to substantially reduce emissions is immoral, shirking our responsibilities both to those suffering as a consequence of climate change now and to future generations.

For more information on the campaign see: <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk>

and <http://www.operationnoah.org>

For further reports and a film see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20568469>

6. CAFOD: 'Rich countries turned their backs on poorest at Doha climate talks'

At the close of the UN climate summit in Doha, governments took only the smallest of steps towards a global deal on cutting the emissions causing climate change, while no progress was made on funding to protect the world’s poorest communities that are hit hardest by a changing climate. CAFOD climate change analyst Dr Sarah Wykes said: “Against the backdrop of the hundreds of thousands of families in the Philippines hit by the destructive force of Typhoon Bopha, rich country governments collectively turned their backs on those who have nowhere to hide from extreme weather.”

In advance of the talks, CAFOD, as a part of the CIDSE and Caritas Internationalis networks representing 180 Catholic development agencies, called for all countries to take responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through reaching a global agreement by 2015. Dr Sarah Wykes added: “Developed countries, primarily responsible for the problem, should lead by ensuring the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol. This is the only legally binding agreement on cutting emissions currently in place, even though it only covers around 15 per cent of global emissions.”

At Doha, some governments agreed a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol running to 2020, but others did not sign up and those joining set targets too low to prevent dangerous levels of warming. CAFOD and CIDSE also called for developed countries to clarify what funds they will provide from 2013 onwards to help poorer countries impacted by climate change. Governments will need to increase current levels of financing steadily from 2013 to meet their previously agreed commitment to deliver \$100 billion-a-year by 2020.

At Doha, there were welcome announcements on climate finance from the UK and some other EU countries but no collective agreement. This leaves the poorest exposed to the dangers of a changing climate, with no guarantees of future help. The talks also failed to discuss the importance of tackling the increasing impact of a changing climate on agriculture, particularly on small-scale food producers.

CAFOD Head of Campaigns Clare Lyons said: "One in eight people worldwide go hungry every day. Yet the lack of progress on agriculture at these talks means that small scale farmers who feed most of the world's population will receive no further support, even though droughts, floods and erratic rain are making it increasingly difficult for them to put food on the table."

For more information on CAFOD's climate campaign see: <http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Get-clued-up/Climate-and-environment>

7. Manchester refugee project wins major award

The Boaz Trust - a volunteer placement of Jesuit Volunteer Community (JVC) in Manchester - has been named as one of the winners at the Guardian Charity Awards 2012. The Awards give a much needed boost to organisations which are often overshadowed by the big players in the voluntary sector and who struggle to get the profile and funding they need to move forward.

The Boaz Trust was founded in 2004 in response to a growing number of asylum seekers attending a destitution project in Manchester. Workers and those they have helped describe how it provides safe and secure accommodation for those affected, as well as bringing a positive effect for the local community.

Caroline Diehl, a judge of the awards and chief executive of The Media Trust, described the Boaz Trust as "very worthy winners"; and JVC's Programme Manager, Clare Lewis, said they are really proud to be able to supply volunteers to such 'a highly respected project' that works with destitute asylum seekers.

JVC has been placing volunteers with the Boaz Trust for the past two years and Vicki Ledwidge at Boaz says they have been impressed by the JVC volunteers who have been placed with them. "The volunteers have brought a huge amount of skill and empathy to the role, and have been able to support us immensely in our work with destitute asylum seekers. In times where charities are struggling, it is invaluable to have partnerships with organisations like JVC and we hope it will continue for many years to come," she said.

Dave Smith, director and founder of the Boaz Trust said: "We are delighted with this Award, it is a real honour. It is also an exciting and welcome platform for us as we seek to raise support for our work and inspire others to join us in serving some of the most vulnerable, marginalised and oppressed individuals in our society."

The Jesuit Volunteer Community is celebrating its Silver Anniversary this year. It provides fully funded, full-time programmes for young adults to volunteer and live beside some of the poorest and most marginalised in Britain today. Each volunteer seeks to live out the core JVC values of simple lifestyle, community living, Ignatian spirituality and social justice.

"It is so heartening to see good work being recognised, especially in such tough times," says Clare Lewis. "We are really proud to work with this organisation."

For more information on the Boaz Trust see: <http://boaztrust.org.uk/>

8. Peace Sunday - 20 January 2013 "Blessed are the Peacemakers"

The theme for the 46th World Peace Day fits very well with the aim of the Year of Faith. It is taken from the seventh of the nine Beatitudes (Mt. 5.9) which begins Jesus' public ministry.

But what does it mean for us today? To understand the Beatitudes properly, it's important to see that they aren't instructions. Rather, they are descriptions of 'Kingdom People': poor in spirit, compassionate, gentle, thirsty for righteous, merciful, pure in heart, peace-making ... oh and (uncomfortably) persecuted and spoken ill of. Seeking the Kingdom gets them into trouble. But signs of the Kingdom of God Happen if (and only if) people dare to live that way.

http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/peace_sunday1.php

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER

27 CAFOD Fun Run at **Bollington** near Macclesfield. **Warm-up at 10.45am for 11am start.** Details from Keith Taylor 01625 429915

JANUARY 2013

9 Haiti + 3: Building back better? Highlighting a past of deep poverty, the earthquake also showed the need for systemic change that protects the poorest. So, after 3 years and many millions of pounds pledged and spent, how's the reconstruction gone, what's left to do and have poor peoples' lives been changed for the better? Join us to celebrate the role of UK churches in the reconstruction and Progressio's special work in Haiti with Fr Francis Kawas SJ, the head of aid monitoring organisation and Progressio partner Cerfas. Talk starts at 7 pm St John's Powell St. Wigan WN1 1XD

14 50 Years of the Baha'is in Britain Speaker Joan Bowers 6.45 for 7 pm at St Peter's Centre, The Cross, Chester. Chester World Development Forum

18 CAFOD Quiz Night 7.30 pm Our Lady's Parish Centre Ellesmere Port Town Centre. £3 (Children half price) All money raised to CAFOD'S 'Food for Thought ' Campaign

20 Peace Sunday. Theme for 2013 *Blessed are the Peacemakers* resources: Pax Christi www.paxchristi.org.uk

20 Annual Memorial Lecture 'Vatican 2 and us' Sr Christine Anderson FCJ In 1987 Sr Christine founded the Craighead Institute in Scotland. She currently heads Praxis FCJ which works for faith formation in Africa. 2-4 pm LACE conference centre, Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park Liverpool L17 1AA

20-26 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

27 Holocaust Memorial Day

27 Homelessness Sunday

29 'From Poverty to Power' Duncan Green Senior Adviser at OXFAM visits Chester to talk about issues raised in 2nd edition of his book. 7.30 pm, Best Building University of Chester

6 Jan-4 Feb Poverty and Homelessness Action Week

FEBRUARY

4 Poverty Action Sunday

11 World Day for the Sick

12 Ash Wednesday

15 CAFOD Quiz Night see Jan 18

22 CAFOD Lent Fast Day

25 Feb-10 March Fairtrade Fortnight