

Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR E-Bulletin – June 2013

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

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1. The Big IF G8 Rally – We got world leaders listening!

On Saturday 8 (June) a staggering 45,000 people flooded through the gates of Hyde Park for the Big IF G8 Rally in London to call for an end to global hunger. It was an amazing day, full of inspiration, creativity and action. And our voices were heard. During the rally, we heard that world leaders had pledged £2.7bn to tackle child malnutrition, an historic breakthrough in the fight against hunger.

And that fight continues. Over the next week, world leaders could really get to the root of the hunger crisis, tackling issues of transparency, tax and land grabs. So this is just the beginning. We've had taste of what can be achieved when we come together to speak with one voice, and we hope you'll continue on this journey with us.

Clare and the CAFOD Campaigns team <http://www.cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/Film-Big-IF>

2. The sacrament of the teapot: resolving conflict in York

'I'll get you a nice cup of tea.' There can be few people in these islands – particularly in England – who have not heard these words at a time of distress. In shock or bereavement many of us will have smiled through our tears at being gently offered the national sacrament of solidarity. If a sacrament is understood as an outward sign of an inward quality, the action taken by the mosque in York last week was a powerful sign of the graces of hospitality, non-violence, dialogue and peacemaking.

In the aftermath of the horrifying murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich on 22 May, far-right groups have been seeking to divide us by demonstration and hate-filled rhetoric. Too many who oppose them have displayed similar tendencies and the result has been an ugly and frightening polarisation. So when the English Defence League turned up at the Bull Lane Mosque last Sunday, the situation would not have appeared promising. But against all the odds, a space was created in which dialogue could take place and the utensils of grace were a teapot and a plate of biscuits. The offering of hospitality, in being an element of the unexpected, removed that instinctive hostility which feeds upon the expected response.

Mohamed El-Gomati, an Elder of the Mosque said, 'We realised that we did not fully understand the EDL stance in

York and, from what we could make out, that they did not fully understand us either. Assumptions are dangerous, untested assumptions can be lethal. They were surprised, and they understood. The day ended in a game of football.'

While rejoicing in the vision and willingness to take the risk of reaching out which was shown by the mosque, it is also important to acknowledge that the EDL members - who had come with hostile intent - responded with grace. The outstretched hand – perhaps because it was bearing a teacup - was accepted and each party was left pleasantly surprised at the response of the other.

Tea is of course, not a native crop in the UK. This most 'English' of refreshments has been absorbed into our culture from the Indian sub-continent and China. It is a reminder of the diversity of languages, foods, customs and skills which have become part of our national life. The division which seemed to be on the edge of erupting into disorder and confrontation in Bull Lane was turned into hope by tea and sealed in football. You really can't get much more 'English' than that.

Maybe faith groups, civic organisations and anti-racist activists will reflect on what was done in York. If we would learn from one another and seek a way forward in listening and sharing, the sacrament of the teapot might be just the symbol of hope that we need.

© **Jill Segger**, Associate Director of Ekklesia and freelance writer who contributes to the Church Times, Catholic Herald, Tribune, Reform and The Friend, among other publications. Jill is an active Quaker.

<http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/18467> See: <http://www.journalistdirectory.com/journalist/TQig/Jill-Segger>

3. Petition to award George Medal to three women for outstanding bravery

On 22 May after Fusilier Lee Rigby was killed in an horrific attack in Woolwich, three women passers-by confronted the attackers and went to his aid. Amanda Donnelly and her daughter Gemini Donnelly Martin comforted the soldier as he lay on the ground (they said later that they couldn't leave him to die alone: they wanted him to know that he was loved) and Ingrid Loyau-Kennett calmly spoke to the attackers until police arrived. The fact that no other bystander was hurt in the incident is testament to the courageous actions of these women.

Rev. Jesse van der Valk writes: 'As the Rector of Woolwich I saw how the tragedy hit this community hard, but the actions of Gemma, Amanda and Ingrid has been an inspiration to all of us. Instead of running away when they saw danger they went straight to the heart of it. As the people of Woolwich comes to terms with what happened here coming together to honour the heroines of that day will send a positive message of unity and peace. The George Medal can be awarded to civilians for acts of great bravery. This is one of those acts. Please sign the petition to ask the MOD to award Ingrid, Gemini and Amanda the George Medal.'

To date (10/6/13) over 71,000 people have signed this petition

<https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/ministry-of-defence-defencehq-award-the-george-medal-to-the-woolwich-heroines>

4. Catholic Women of the Year for awards

In this Year of Faith, the theme for the annual Catholic Women of the Year awards focuses on upholding and passing on the Catholic Faith. Details of this year's inspirational Catholic Women of the Year are given below:

Mary Maguire, of Bury, Lancashire, who with her husband Kevin has built an orphanage and school for children in Kenya. They raised the money, built the house, and now care for 60 children, spending half of each year in Kenya. When in Britain, they work full-time raising the £70,000 required to run the orphanage and the new school that they have recently opened for 350 children alongside. The Good Life Orphanage has transformed the lives of some of Africa's poorest children.

Mary Cahill, of Jersey, Channel Islands, who founded Jersey Catholic Youth, establishing a youth ministry that ranges from 'Praise and Play' for toddlers to Confirmation groups, and a 'Spirit on the Rock' Festival for people in their teens and twenties. She has taken groups to World Youth Days in Cologne, Sydney and Madrid, to Taizé, and to Pope Benedict's visit to mainland Britain. She and her husband David run the Oasis House of Peace retreat house, and this Autumn will be helping to run a Mission to the whole of Jersey with the Sion Youth Team.

Rosaline Egan, from London, who is 93 and still active hosting a weekly tea for people who need company, taking home-made soup to those who cannot cook for themselves, making toys and clothes for new babies, and being an active supporter of the Union of Catholic Mothers in the Westminster diocese. She makes young people welcome, encouraging them to read and to share her passion for literature and poetry, and has given talks in the parish about her work in Churchill's wartime headquarters in London.

Marjorie Parker, from Leeds, who has worked as a Head Teacher and as a parish catechist, and also given her time as a street pastor helping to keep local streets safe, and as the organiser of regular events and lunches for elderly people. She has helped with the establishment of bereavement counselling and projects for refugees and vulnerable people, and has opened her own home as a refuge for people in need. Marjorie was nominated by the Family Life ministry of the diocese of Leeds, who said that her life is one of 'conscientious and cheerful abundance as she evangelises wherever she is, by living the commandment to love'.

5. Report shows more than half a million people in UK rely on food banks

A new hard-hitting report from Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam warns of Britain's 'hidden hungry', and highlights the scandal of food poverty in 21st-century Britain. The two charities, with the backing of the Trussell Trust, are calling for an urgent Parliamentary Inquiry into the relationship between benefit delay, error or sanctions, welfare reform changes, and the growth of food poverty. They are asking their supporters to speak out in support of the call.

Niall Cooper, Church Action on Poverty CEO and the report's lead author, said: 'The safety net that was there to protect people is being eroded to such an extent that we are seeing a rise in hunger. Food banks should not be replacing the 'normal' safety net provided by the state in the form of welfare support.'

Mark Goldring, Oxfam's CEO, said: 'The shocking reality is that hundreds of thousands of people in the UK are also now reliant on food aid. Cuts to social security have gone too far, leading to destitution, hardship and hunger on a large scale. It is unacceptable that this is happening in the seventh wealthiest nation on the planet.'

The report, '*Walking the Breadline*', highlights causes of the increase in use of food banks: changes to the benefit system, unemployment, increasing levels of underemployment, low and falling income, and rising food and fuel prices. Changes to the benefit system are the most common reasons for people using food banks; these include changes to crisis loan eligibility rules, delays in payments, Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions, and sickness benefit reassessments.

The Trussell Trust, which is the biggest provider of food banks in the UK, reported last month that more than 350,000 people turned to their food banks for help in the last year, almost triple the number who received food aid in the previous year. However, this new report warns that the actual figure of those receiving food aid could be more than half a million people, as there are many non-Trussell food banks, and hunger is not being monitored properly by the Government.

The report recommends that:

- The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee conduct an urgent Parliamentary Inquiry into the relationship between benefit delay, error or sanctions, welfare reform changes, and the growth of food poverty.
- The Department for Work and Pensions publish data on a regular basis on the number and type of households deprived of their benefits due to benefit delay, error or sanctions; the numbers leaving and returning to benefits after a short period of time, and the number of referrals from Jobcentre Plus staff to local food banks.
- The Department for Work and Pensions commission independent monitoring of the roll-out of Universal Credit, to ensure that there is no unintentional increase in food poverty.
- All referrals to food banks/emergency food aid provision, made by government agencies, be recorded and monitored in order to establish more accurate numbers on people experiencing food poverty in the UK.
- HM Treasury make tackling tax dodging an urgent priority, including promoting robust and coordinated international action at the forthcoming G8 meeting in Northern Ireland in June – to reduce the need for future cuts in benefits.

The report is freely available to download, and a simple e-action will allow you to send a message to your MP in support of the call for a Parliamentary Inquiry. www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodfuelfinance

6. Campaigners disappointed by MPs' rejection of decarbonisation target

The vote on 4 June by MPs against setting a decarbonisation target in the Energy Bill was 'deeply disappointing and a missed opportunity' said Christian Aid.

The defeat of a cross-party amendment undermines the growing low carbon energy sector and hampers efforts to tackle climate change which hits the world's poorest hardest. The amendment to include a decarbonisation target could have put the UK on course for a near carbon free power sector by 2030.

Christian Aid's Senior Climate Change Adviser, Dr Alison Doig, said the impact would be felt both in the UK and in the developing world. 'By voting to omit a decarbonisation target for our electricity sector MPs have increased confusion for the industry, destabilised investment across our energy sector and put into question the government's commitment to the UK's climate change target. There are no winners, just continued uncertainty,' she said.

'Christian Aid is part of a wide coalition of 55 organisations, including major trade associations, industry, investors, church groups and NGOs calling for MPs to act to put the UK on track to become a world leading low-carbon economy.

'We believe this is too important to give up on. There is time for this decision to be put right and for clear signals to industry to be put in place.

'The impacts of climate change and our unsustainable thirst for fossil fuels is already threatening some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people through increasing drought, floods and climate disasters.'

For further information please contact Joe Ware on 0207 523 2418. 24 hour press duty phone – 07850 242950

Source: Christian Aid <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/jun-2013/mps-rejection-of-decarbonisation-target-deeply-disappointing.aspx>

7. Fed up with Google? All the publicity about tax avoiding, but not yet got round to doing anything about it? There is an alternative, and one which enables you to contribute to a charity of your choice at the same time! Go to www.everyclick.com make this your home page and nominate the charity you wish to support, then for every click you make your nominated charity will receive a minute donation - but they all add up. So far over 200,000 charities have received a total of over £3.5 million at no cost whatsoever to the people who signed with everyclick.

8. Pope Francis denounces the 'culture of waste' in an increasingly consumerist world

His words came on the day the United Nations launched an anti-food waste campaign to mark World Environment Day (5 June). According to data provided by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, approximately 1.3 billion tons of food — one third of the world's total food production — are lost or wasted every year.

"Consumerism has made us accustomed to wasting food daily and we are unable to see its real value," Francis said, comparing this attitude to the frugality of "our grandparents" who "used to make a point of not throwing away leftover food."

In his speech, the pope also warned that a "culture of waste" and consumerism have dulled the moral sense of humanity to the point that when "some homeless people die of cold on the streets, it is not news. In contrast, a 10-point drop on the stock markets of some cities, is a tragedy." Focusing specifically on hunger, he says: "the food we throw away is as if stolen from the table of the poor, the hungry."

He added: "when we talk about the environment, about creation, my thoughts turn to the first pages of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, which states that God placed man and woman on earth to cultivate and care for it (cf. 2:15). And the question comes to my mind: What does cultivating and caring for the earth mean? Are we truly cultivating and caring for creation? Or are we exploiting and neglecting it?" He urged us all: "to make a serious commitment to respect and protect creation, to be attentive to every person, to counter the culture of waste and disposable, to promote a culture of solidarity and of encounter."

9. Progressio launches ClimatePro environment initiative

In a move to coincide with World Environment Day on 5 June 2013 Progressio has launched ClimatePro, a new initiative 'designed to tackle climate change in a fair and effective way.'

ClimatePro is a two-pronged approach to tackling climate change. It invites and supports individuals, businesses and communities here in the UK to reduce their own carbon emissions and provides funds for communities overseas having to adapt to the effects of climate change. Building on its long history of working alongside people in poor countries, as they adapt to a number of challenges, Progressio says that it is encouraging more people in the UK to take action and reduce their contribution to climate change whilst helping others.

In return, UK partners will get updates and stories about Progressio's adaptation projects, tips and advice on reducing their contribution to climate change and the knowledge that they are working alongside some of the most marginalised communities around the world to help them become more resilient and thrive.

Mark Lister, Progressio's Chief Executive, commented: 'We all need to do our bit to live in a more sustainable way. So this is about more than just giving money; it's about all of us working together.'

<http://www.climate-pro.org/>

10. First Black Children's Laureate

Popular teenage fiction writer Malorie Blackman has been chosen as the eighth Children's Laureate. She is the first Black person to be awarded this role and is a forceful advocate for black and ethnic minority children's needs and rights. Perhaps her best known series of novels, *Noughts and Crosses*, features an alternative modern society in which the ruling class is the black Crosses, who have all the power, status and money, while the miserable underclass of former slaves are the white Noughts.

She hopes to use her role as Laureate to encourage reading, especially among teenagers, to celebrate diversity in our multicultural society and to raise the profile of black role models.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/jun/05/malorie-blackman-childrens-laureate-interview>

RESOURCES

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God: Catholic moral & social teaching.

Westminster Diocese Faith Matter series of talks with presentation given by Pat Gaffney on *Pacem in Terris* - **50 years on have we put words into action?** <http://rcdow.org.uk/faith/faith-matters/>

Other presentations on ecology, peace and justice from Mary Colwell and Jesuits Patrick Riorden and Michael Kirwan

Drone warfare: Prof Tina Beattie's talk at Pax Christi's AGM on 18 May, reflecting on the ethical/moral issues of drone warfare <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/documents/Tina%20Beattie%20WS310401.mp3> and download the talk <http://bit.ly/13zgpeW>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JUNE

22 Visit of Rev Shou Hui and her Mandarin Student Choir to Marple at the Ridge Methodist church 11am- 3pm arranged by Churches Together J & P group. More info from Marian Thompson 0161 427 7254

23 Fairtrade Stall St Bernard's Ellesmere Port

28/29 Fairtrade Stall St Saviour's Ellesmere Port

JULY

12 CAFOD Social St Werberg's, Birkenhead

19-21 National Justice and Peace Network Conference *Breaking Open the Word* with Megan McKenna - booking forms and further info from: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk