



Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Newsletter – Autumn 2014



Justice – “Defending the Safety Net” This was the topic of one of the workshops, run by Liam Purcell from Church Action on Poverty and Alastair Murray from Housing Justice which I attended at this year’s excellent National Justice & Peace Network annual conference.

Poverty is mentioned 3000 times in the Bible and so should be at the forefront of all Christian thought but even in this, the world’s seventh richest country, 1 in 5 of the population is living in the official definition of poverty.

The Trussell Trust have carried out research in the primary causes of food bank referrals to them in the period 2013-14. They say that 30.91% are caused by benefit delays, 20.29% by low income (of those in work) and 16.97% by benefit changes and issues caused by sanctions being applied and benefits stopped—often unjustifiably and sometimes for lengthy periods.

Since 2010 there has been a massive increase in use of food banks, even from those in employment but on poor pay, and a 36% increase in the number of people sleeping rough. For those under 35 housing benefit is limited to the shared accommodation rate and such accommodation is not easy to find.

A government-commissioned analysis on the impact of the bedroom tax, published by DWP finds 60% of the UK’s 523,000 social housing tenants have been unable to meet housing benefit shortfalls and are cutting back on food and energy or running up unmanageable debts as a result. The suggested solution of downsizing is an option only for a tiny minority of tenants as there is insufficient one-bedroom housing stock available and this will often be in the private sector which is generally more expensive and less secure. The figures from DWP prove the bedroom tax is not working so is it not time for the government to admit they got it wrong and repeal this destructive policy?

The perception, that some promote, of us living in a welfare dependent country are not born out by the figures. Under 5% of government benefits go to the working age unemployed and whilst benefit fraud sadly does exist, the government claims at a cost of £1.5bn per year in total, the estimate of taxation avoided by companies is around £70bn

So what can we do? With the General Election in May next year there will be opportunities to raise these issues at hustings or directly with candidates. We should be encouraging Ministers, MPs and candidates to visit food banks and soup kitchens so that they can get a better picture of what is actually happening.

On a practical level perhaps we could do more in our own communities: volunteering at food banks, joining your parish SVP or even starting one if none exists, working with CAB or assisting at local projects helping those in need. “Go to the poor: you will find God” (St Vincent de Paul)

With wage rates failing to keep pace with inflation we should be campaigning for at least a substantial increase in the minimum wage but even more vehemently for companies to pay the Living Wage.

The Living Wage (contributed by Rosa Shea)

How many of us love to shop at John Lewis perceiving it as a business with good ethical standards? But not for the team of cleaners who work in John Lewis and Waitrose! They have been outsourced and do not receive the Living Wage (£8.80ph in London and £7.65ph outside) or any bonus payment normally paid to directly employed staff. The minimum wage is £6.31ph.

650 companies are committed to the London Living Wage Foundation including KPMG, Royal Opera House, Tate and Lyle London offices and Nationwide.

Considering the impressive profit levels of John Lewis Partnership it is shocking that they refuse to show moral leadership and pay their cleaners the Living Wage.

There is a Change.org petition which can be accessed by an internet search for ‘John Lewis and the Living Wage’ or you can write to Andy Street, Managing Director, John Lewis Partnership, Carlisle Place, London. SW1P 1BX. For more info. go to www.citizens.org.uk or www.jrf.org.uk the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Peace: In these troubled times, when you turn on the 10 o'clock news more in fear than interest or anticipation, we can only really pray that those of all religions speaking out and working for peace will be heard and understood.

A recent statement from Pax Christi states: *"Pax Christi members regret that religion is being misused in this crisis. Faith should not be used to demonise people of other faiths. Religious beliefs should nurture justice, human dignity, compassion and solidarity. Pax Christi supports urgent recent appeals from Patriarch Louis Sako in Iraq and echo the call made by Pope Francis: "War is not to be waged in the name of God!"*

Gaza: At the time of writing there is a new peace accord in Gaza and I pray that this is still in place when you are reading this. It is difficult to understand why Hamas was launching rockets into Israel when the inevitable outcome would be a devastating death toll for their own people, but they are in a dreadful predicament. Jewish Voices for Peace www.jewishvoicesforpeace.org an organisation inspired by Jewish tradition to work together for peace, social justice, equality, and human rights recently stated: *"The key Palestinian "demand" is a basic right. In the formal negotiations in Cairo as well the courts of public opinion worldwide, the key sticking point is the Palestinian demand that Israel lift its 7-year siege of the Gaza Strip. But the blockade shouldn't even be on the negotiating table. The siege is patently illegal, and so lifting it isn't a concession- it's an overdue obligation".* The other side of the coin of course is that if there is ever to be a lasting peace Hamas must recognise the right of the State of Israel to exist.

The situation in Gaza has deflected attention from the situation in the West Bank where the dehumanising effect of the separation wall and daily humiliation for many at the checkpoints together with the damage caused to Palestinian communities by the illegal Israeli settlements are creating a situation where a two state solution for a lasting peace is looking less and less likely. There is an excellent publication "Time for Action" which is well worth reading, it can be ordered or downloaded from www.kairosbritain.org.uk

Iraq: Again there are voices speaking out for peace. Religions for Peace, www.religionsforpeace.org.uk a multi-religious platform, has promoted and supported the various declarations from Muslim Organizations in UK, in condemning the heinous acts of what they call "a deluded group, calling itself the Islamic State".

To quote from a recent statement: *"We deplore their actions against individuals and groups, their cowardly murders of unarmed men, women and children.*

We denounce their concept of no freedom, no liberty no justice for anyone other than themselves. Their actions against humanity cannot be justified by any scripture or have the blessing of the One who has many names.

During this difficult period in our world history we need to stand together and show ISIS and their ilk our unity, our humanity. It is time to look beyond our religious and national interests, and confront together this threat to all civilised societies". Jehangir Sarosh OBE, Executive Director, Religions for Peace UK

Recently Two of the leading voices in the Muslim world denounced the persecution of Christians in Iraq, at the hands of extremists proclaiming a caliphate under the name Islamic State. The most explicit condemnation came from Iyad Ameen Madani, the Secretary General for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the group representing 57 countries, and 1.4 billion Muslims. In a statement, he officially denounced the "forced deportation under the threat of execution" of Christians, calling it a "crime that cannot be tolerated." The Secretary General also distanced Islam from the actions of the militant group known as ISIS, saying they "have nothing to do with Islam and its principles that call for justice, kindness, fairness, freedom of faith and coexistence."

Meanwhile Turkey's top cleric, the spiritual successor to the caliphate under the Ottoman Empire, also touched on the topic during a peace conference of Islamic scholars. In a not-so-veiled swipe at ISIS, Mehmet Gormez declared that "an entity that lacks legal justification has no authority to declare war against a political gathering, any country or community." He went on to say that Muslims should not be hostile towards "people with different views, values and beliefs, and regard them as enemies."

And where has it all come from? John Bird writing Big Issue 1114 stated *"Without Europe's political leaders of the 1920s trying to pay for the war they had just gone through, by cutting up the Ottoman's treasures to Europe's advantage, you could not have the tortured and troubles Middle East that we now have".*

War creates and preserves power, profit and privilege or, as Socrates said "All wars are fought for money"

There is one thing we can do - Pope Francis invites us to pray for peace
"Lord help us! Give us your peace, teach us peace, guide us towards peace. Open our eyes and our hearts and give us the courage to say: "never again war!" with war all is destroyed! Give us the courage to perform concrete gestures to build peace. Make us available to listen to the cries of our fellow citizens who ask us to transform our arms into instruments of peace, our fears into trust, our tension into forgiveness. Amen".

Introducing the National Estate Churches Network

The National Estate Churches Network is an ecumenical charitable organisation established over ten years ago. It serves Christian lay people and ministers who are concerned about life and ministry on poorer Housing Estates across the country. They keep in touch and learn from one another so as to strengthen our local ministry and have a platform to speak at national level. You can find more information from the website: www.nationalestatechurches.org



Their annual conference: Farewell to Welfare!?

1st October St James Church Thurland Rd, Bermondsey, London SE16 4AA
or 15th October St Michael in the City Upper Pitt St, Liverpool L1 5DB

This year's annual conference explores the effect that the Cuts are having on the people of our poorer housing estates. Keynote speaker at both venues is John Battle the brilliant long-time campaigner and advocate for those who are marginalised. As well as high quality input, there will be time to share and reflect together. What does our Christian Faith demand of us who live and work with those who really feel the impact of benefit reform? Can we make the system better or is it really 'Farewell to Welfare'?

The conference runs from 10am-3.30pm at a choice of venues and dates. The cost is £20 which includes a sandwich lunch and hot drinks.

You can book on line or download a form: www.nationalestatechurches.org or you can phone or text 07933 438304 for a form.

The Human Rights Act at Risk! by Rosa Shea

In April I attended the 80th Anniversary AGM of Liberty and The Civil Liberties Trust (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties) a membership organization at the heart of the movement for fundamental rights and freedoms in the UK. Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty, leads a highly skilled team of lawyers, researchers and campaigners.

Plans for 2014 include Defending the Human Rights Act, which this government wants to replace with a UK version if it wins the General Election 2015

When the political parties produce their manifestos we need to be very alert to such proposals and to raise these issues both individually with our parliamentary candidates and also at local hustings.

See www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk and watch these newsletters for further information.

Autumn Assembly 2014

Saturday 18th October

10.30 to 4.00 (tea, coffee & registration from 10.00)

at Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral, SE1

one Climate - one world

Organised in conjunction with

CAFOD
Just one world

one CLIMATE
One WORLD

Climate change: tricky questions - Explore the facts, debunk the myths and build your confidence in speaking to others about climate change and about CAFOD's new campaign.

Gaining the livesimply parish award - Learn how Petts Wood parish embarked on a journey to live more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor and how your parish could gain a livesimply parish award.

The theology of climate change - What does campaigning on climate change have to do with loving your neighbour? How does our faith underpin our response to climate change?

Motivating the next generation of Campaigners - Ideas, resources and fun activities to get your parish youth or confirmation group involved in campaigning for justice.

Choose any two of the above workshops. For more information or to book a place e-mail office@southwarkjandp.co.uk or phone 020 7928 9742 and leave a message.

ALL WELCOME NO CHARGE TO ATTEND Tea and coffee provided - please bring own lunch

September 14th - Racial Justice Sunday:

The theme this year is 'Combating Human Trafficking' and the day is being organised this year by Catholic Bishops Conference. www.cbcew.org.uk for more information.

September 15th - Peace Building in the 21st Century

London peace conference, part of the UN International Day of Peace. From the crises in the Middle East to reducing conflict in our homes and streets this timely conference explores conceptual frameworks governing peace and dialogue. 9.30 to 3.30 at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate EC2N 4AG. www.fbrn.org.uk . £15

September 17th - Should Economic Growth be the Primary Goal of Economic Policy?

A JustShare debate in partnership with St Paul's Institute. Keynote speaker Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England. 6:30pm St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside. Register growtheconomics.eventbrite.com.

September 19th - Pontifical Council for Culture cricket match

St Peter's Team, mainly seminarians from Rome, will be playing a Justin Welby XI at Kent County Cricket Ground. This is to give publicity to the joint churches' campaigning on people trafficking.

September 20th - NJPN Open Networking Day

10:30am-4pm, St William of York, Forbury Road, Reading, Berks RG1 3HW including presentation by St John Bosco parish on Becoming a LiveSimply Parish www.justice-and-peace.org.uk for more information

September 20th - Inter Faith Walk in Lambeth

10.15 am - 4pm starting from Holy Spirit Church, Narbonne Avenue, SW4 9JU and visiting six centres. Full details at: <http://faithstogetherinlambeth.org/about-us/events>

September 21st - Destitute Refugees and Migrants - What can I do?

An Open Space event to seek solutions. 10 to 4 at Praxis, Pott St, E2 0EF organised by Housing Justice, JRS and others <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/open-space-conference-tickets-12272107203?aff=eorg>

September 21st - Global Day of Action on Climate – Westminster march

12:30 – 2:30pm meeting at Temple Place with a short procession to the Houses of Parliament & Victoria Gardens showing solidarity with people around the world and emphasising the need for action and ambition on climate change. More information on CAFOD website www.cafod.org.uk

September 21st - International Day of Peace

The UN invites all nations and people to commemorate the International Day of Peace through education and public awareness on issues related to peace. The theme for 2014 is "The Right of Peoples to Peace,"

September 21st – 27th - World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel (WWPPI)

The theme of this year's WWPPI is, "Let My People Go!", and will focus attention on the critical issue of child prisoners. Resources at: <https://pief.oikoumene.org/en>

October 8th - Progressio: Joining the Generations: together for people powered development.

6.30 to 8.00 pm at 24 Greencoat Place, SW1P 1RD. Drama, spoken work and live links from volunteers in the developing world, followed by refreshments. Preceded by AGM at 5.30 pm.

October 11th - Peace History Conference

Alternative Voice of World War One: the courage of their convictions.

Organised by the Movement for Abolition of War. 9.30 to 5.00 at The Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road SE1. More information and you can book on-line at www.abolishwar.org.uk

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