



Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Newsletter - Winter 2010



Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT) - Christmas Card Greetings List

Prisoners need our support all year and we can all take the opportunity at Christmas of telling them that they are not alone or forgotten. A card can mean such a lot to them. Please join us in bringing a little light into a prisoner's life. More information about ACAT's work can be found at www.acatuk.org.uk. Their full list for Christmas 2010 can be downloaded from our website www.southwarkjanp.co.uk or printed copies obtained from the office.

Catholic Social Teaching Web Site

Stories, reflections, prayers, resources, videos and podcasts with the theology, ideas and actions you need to connect your faith to the wider world. November 29th marked the launch of the LiveSimply website www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk a valuable tool for schools, parishes and beyond. The site will provide a resource for people to work with in deepening their understanding of the faith. Once described as the Church's best kept secret, the social teachings offer a blueprint for those working for justice both inside and outside of the Church. The site focuses on the six themed areas of human dignity, community and participation, care for creation, life and work, peace, and solidarity. Contributors include South African Archbishops Desmond Tutu and Kevin Dowling, Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of York John Sentamu, Ellen Teague, Mary Colwell and Bruce Kent. The launch of the site comes at a timely moment with Pope Benedict recently stressing the urgent need "for commitment to educating Catholic laity in Church social doctrine"

How have some 150,000 individuals raised over £1,536,022.41 (at the time of writing) with no cost to themselves and little effort?

The answer is that they logged on to Every Click www.everyclick.com made it their home page and search engine in place of Google or whatever they were using and then registered themselves and named their favourite charity. The result is that every internet search they make - "every click" - results in a very small sum being donated by Every Click to the charity of their choice. A very small sum each time but as you can see from the total raised in time they add up to a considerable sum. I use it myself and have no problems with it.

Solar Panels on your Church roof?- A way to raise funds and help the environment.

British Gas is suggesting that religious buildings, such as churches and mosques, could take advantage of their south-facing roofs to harness the power of the sun. It claims that religious buildings could raise £34 million a year across the UK using solar panels.

In a press release British Gas outlines the latest findings of its Green Streets programme. It believes that solar panels on Britain's religious buildings could generate over £29 million a year through Feed-In Tariffs, a scheme which pays households and organisations for generating "green" electricity. They could also make further savings of nearly £5 million a year by not having to buy electricity, as their energy needs would be met through the solar panels.

As well as improving their finances, Britain's religious buildings could also do their bit to help protect the environment, as the CO2 savings could also be significant - up to 42,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year, which is equivalent to the carbon emitted by over 600 transatlantic flights.

Religious buildings are particularly well suited to solar power as they tend to have large south-facing roofs which receive direct sunlight for the main part of the day.'

There are lots of schemes offering to put solar panels on your roof at no cost to you. Some are good, some not quite so good. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has produced an excellent download on what to look out for if Greeks come bearing solar panelled gifts! See the CSE website www.cse.org.uk/news/view/1471

Of course you can always raise the fund or raid the parish savings to fund the panels and get full payment sent to the parish.

More Than Gold have a free DVD available.

To help your Church capture the potential of the Games. Fast-moving and with music by "Delirious?", the creative production shows what's been done at past Games and what churches like yours could do here. To watch, order or download go to www.morethangold.org.uk/dvd

The office is always happy to print and post web site information or obtain materials if required.

Housing Justice? *By Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice and a member of our Steering Group.*

The poor will be priced out of inner London; the capital's councils will have to block-book bed and breakfast accommodation at the coast to house ousted families; another generation of young people will spend their early adulthood sofa-surfing. These are some of the predictions made in the past week after the Coalition Government announced that it would be reforming housing benefit, by calculating it at 30 per cent of median rents instead of 50 per cent and capping it at no more than £400 a week. The critics were not confined to the Opposition benches; the Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson upped the ante by claiming that he would not tolerate "Kosovo-style social cleansing of central London".

The proposed changes to housing benefit are just one part of a set of welfare reforms that will change how the poorest are dealt with by the state. The most daring of these reforms is the plan of Iain Duncan Smith, now in charge at the Department for Work and Pensions, to simplify the whole welfare benefit system and introduce a single universal benefit. This system, which will be implemented gradually over the next five years, is planned to be cheaper than the old one, especially if it achieves its aim of getting more people into work. However, making the change will bring additional costs, and some of the extra money is being taken from current benefit recipients in the form of cuts.

Cutting housing benefit – or to put it more accurately, reducing Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit), is the second part of the Coalition's welfare strategy and is justified by ministers on grounds of fairness – a family on benefits should not be able to pay more in rent than a family in work is the usual example offered. According to a government impact assessment, around 774,970 UK households will be affected and will lose an average of £9 a week. The difficulty that people receiving the benefit, who are either unemployed or low earners, will face is that they have to pay the same rent, meaning they either make up the difference or they move elsewhere. Then there are the young people who will no longer be thought to need their own home; the age threshold for being deemed to need only shared accommodation will go up to 35, affecting more than a quarter of a million young adults.

Yet the third aspect of the Coalition Government's welfare strategy is that it seems intent on withdrawing from the provision of social housing. One of the starkest cuts in the Comprehensive Spending Review was the reduction by 74% of the budget for building new affordable housing. The Coalition's proposal of 150,000 affordable homes over four years is, according to Shelter, less than a third of what is needed.

The universal benefit will be a good thing once it finally arrives providing (and it is an important proviso and one we need to watch) it is sufficient to cover reasonable living and housing costs, and sufficiently flexible to



be able to cope with the different circumstances of claimants. Most people who claim Housing Benefit are working in low paid and/or part time jobs, or they are pensioners or they are sick or disabled. Many are themselves paying income tax and national insurance contributions. Only 22% are in households where no one is in work. Very few people, even in expensive areas of London, are living in luxurious five star accommodation. The vast majority are in ordinary properties, often in areas where they have lived all their lives. Some have suffered a temporary blip and will be back on their feet again in a short time, some have fled from a violent partner, some are refugees still dealing with the trauma of war. The cuts will come upon people, all of whom have little or no savings (one of the requirements of eligibility for the benefit) quite suddenly, starting with the introduction of caps on weekly rent in April.

Those of us who work in housing are fearful that we will once again be seeing homeless families on the streets of London as well as an increase in the general street homeless population. In fact the things that have not been cut – the Homelessness Grant for example – suggest that the Government may well be concerned about these outcomes. So social divisions between and within London boroughs will increase, the economies of the bed and breakfast destination towns will suffer as they struggle to handle an influx of poverty stricken Londoners, and rents in London are unlikely to fall while there remains a ready supply of students and young professionals who can afford them.



Is there any alternative scenario which could help both provide badly needed affordable housing and help London and other cities remain economically as well as racially and culturally mixed? If there is no more public money for housing, and affordable housing does not make sufficient returns for commercial investment, the only solution seems to be private philanthropy or non-government initiatives.

Could the Church play a role? Parishes will continue to provide rudimentary food and shelter but there is more that can be done. The dioceses of Leeds and Birmingham, for example, are using empty presbyteries to house asylum seekers. Has the time come to extend this to local families priced out by benefit cuts? Is there land or buildings owned by dioceses or religious orders that could be used for affordable housing? (Housing Justice's Faith in Affordable Housing project can help)

Winter in India *By Charles Wilkinson*

My wife and I have recently returned from a 3 month visit to India spent mainly in the State of Andhra Pradesh in Southern India. The wonderful opportunity to do this came about as a result of a chance conversation with a friend in May 2009 about her involvement with a children's home and education centre for orphaned and destitute children. We were told that the children there were able to read and write English quite well but it was difficult to impossible to understand what they were saying when it came to speaking English. It was then suggested that what was needed was someone to spend some time with the younger children to enable them to hear English being spoken by an English person. When asked if perhaps this was something with which we might be able to help, the idea was seized with alacrity.

As neither of us are trained teachers, there was a degree of trepidation and uncertainty about what might lie ahead. On arrival we were met by the smiling Menorah who took us to Mangalakara (the name meaning 'one who makes prosperity and goodness') a 2 hour drive north of the recently completed and magnificent Bangalore International Airport. The residential children's home and education centre is 10 kms from the nearest town, Puttaparthi, which is dominated by the ashram and home of a guru, who has attracted devotees from India as well as Westerners from many parts of the world. While Puttaparthi has grown and continues to grow the terrain is generally rocky with low fertility and poor agricultural yields. The prolonged drought conditions in recent years have also contributed to the extreme poverty and children being orphaned or abandoned by desperately poor or sick parents who cannot even look after themselves.

Mangalakara is situated on an attractive and beautifully maintained site with lovely flowering shrubs and excellent educational, residential and domestic buildings with amenities for over 200 children, aged from 5 to 16, as well as for some of the teachers.



After being shown round the complex by one of the Trustees on our first morning, it was proposed and agreed that we would start our English project the following day with the 90 youngest children aged 5 to 8. This entailed four periods, five mornings per week, with Reception Class and Classes 1, 2 and 3. Next day we were collected at 7.30 am from our fifth floor apartment. We were then joined on our way to Mangalakara by the tailor and four dhobies, the latter being responsible for washing and ironing all the children's clothes each day. After breakfast (curry!) with the children we started our classes rather nervously. We had been advised not to talk about families as many of the children were orphans and others had come from very difficult and tragic situations.

The method of teaching in India is very structured and there are no teaching aids such as would be normal in the West apart from a blackboard for the youngest children. The children sat on the floor, boys on the left and girls on the right with a slate and chalk. Their immaculate uniforms are made by one man who also uses every scrap of material, mostly provided by visitors and well wishers, for their play and sports clothes. We were amazed to find that even the five year olds were learning three different languages (English, Hindi and Telegu) with three different scripts.

Our brief was to talk and read to the children to help them with their spoken English (their local language, Telegu, makes English pronunciation particularly difficult). After the initial period of familiarisation on both sides, (I am afraid we never mastered all their names) the breakthrough came with "The Wheels on the Bus..." !! We read stories about selfish crocodiles, lonely giraffes, Snow White and The Jungle Book amongst others. We all enjoyed playing *Hangman* and *Simon Says*. We talked about Christmas which they celebrated in spite of the majority being Hindu.

We taught them to march to the Grand Old Duke of York to provide a little fun and variety for the children. By the end of our eleven weeks the children had become much more confident in speaking and responding to our questions. On our final day we felt very sad to be saying goodbye to the children and staff but we felt our time had been worthwhile judging by the most unexpected, exuberant and heart-warming send off. This entailed going round all eleven classes and being presented with wonderful letters from every child.

The children at Mangalakara are happy, well fed, secure and cared for with love. Somebody said that these were the children who had won the equivalent of the lottery for now they will have the prospect of proper employment and a life of fulfilment. The enthusiasm and determination of the children in their approach to their studies and the excellent results achieved resulting in many gaining places at colleges and universities, despite their traumatic backgrounds, is truly remarkable.

Mangalakara Education Trust is a private independent Trust run with scrupulous integrity with every rupee accounted for and nothing wasted. The Trustees work full time in a voluntary capacity. The Trust receives no government support for the Children's Home & Education Centre which provides food shelter and clothing for the children completely free. It is, therefore, dependent on the goodwill and financial support of a number of benefactors aware of the poverty and dreadful local conditions.

For more information about Mangalakara Contact Charles Wilkinson. Telephone : 01233 758316
E-mail : charles.wilkinson@btinternet.com

December 13th - First screening of 'Monseñor' subtitle 'El Último Viaje de Oscar Romero' - in the Spanish language version.

December 14th - the English language version.
7.00pm in the Amigo Hall, adjacent to the Catholic Cathedral in Southwark, SE1

The evenings are organised by Archbishop Romero Trust in conjunction with St George's Cathedral, Southwark, and CAFOD. The film lasts for 87 minutes and will be followed by refreshments. There is no charge for entry but a collection will be taken up for the Archbishop Romero Trust. All are welcome.

January 14th SMK 'Introduction to Campaigning' workshop

Do you want to make your voice heard by people in power? Do you want to influence decisions made by the council, UK government, the health service or other bodies that affect your community? This introductory level campaign workshop is for individuals and voluntary organisations and will be held at CVA Resource Centre, 82 London Road, West Croydon, CR0 2TB from 9.30 am - 4.30 pm.

To book your place e-mail Mustafa Korel

mustafa.korel@smk.org.uk. or contact our office.

Cost is £10 per individual. Lunch and refreshments are provided on the day.

January 21st Peace One Day - UNA Putney & Roehampton

Filmmaker Jeremy Gilley will talk about this international movement which he launched in 1999 with the aim of achieving the cessation of all conflicts across the world for one day each year. Start time: 7.30 pm. Venue: The Community Church Hall, Werter Road (opposite Sainsburys), Putney, London SW15 2LL Contact: Rob Storey 020 3072 0087 or 07776 356 334 - storeyrw@aol.com

January 22nd - A Call for Action: Together we make a difference

A&B Justice & Peace Assembly at Christian Education Centre, Crawley

Registration from 9.30am Day closes at 4.30pm

Main Speaker **Oliver McTernan**. An established writer and broadcaster on conflict resolution and interfaith relationships.

March 5th - 'End of the Age of Thorns: Surviving consumerism',

CEL day conference, St John's Church, Waterloo, London SE1 8TY with Peter Owen Jones and Prof. Tim Cooper. For more details and a booking form visit <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/thorns>

Starting Justice & Peace from the Grassroots

Stephen Kearney and Julia Olsen from RE:generate explain a tried and tested approach renewing our parish witness to Social Justice

A one day seminar for Brentwood,
Southwark and Westminster parishes

Wednesday 26th January
11 am to 4 pm

at Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral SE1
(nearest tube Lambeth North)

RE:generate is a community renewal organisation tackling issues of poverty and deprivation in the UK and abroad.

Come to learn new ways to renew faith in practice

Tea, Coffee and Lunch provided. Suggested donation towards costs £10.

To book a place contact Southwark JPIC office. Details below

