



Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Newsletter - Winter 2012



Welfare Reform and Benefit cuts

You are probably aware of the changes in benefits which will affect the poorest in our communities so severely in the coming year. From April there will be an overall benefits cap on the total benefit income for any household. This will be set at the average household income, expected to be £25,000 pa for a family, regardless of size, and £18,500 for a single person. Any excess will be taken off Housing Benefit payments. It is calculated that this will leave a family with 3 children only £207pw for housing costs after they have paid for food, heating etc

This is not just a discussion about the unemployed as there are 680,000 working households claiming housing benefit.

In a letter to "The Times" Archbishop Peter Smith expressed his concerns for the thousands of families who will be affected and called for child benefit to be exempt from the benefit cap as "this would at least mitigate the impact upon families who face being forced to cut back on essentials or even losing their homes." Sadly his plea did not bring about any change.

As part of Universal Credit all benefits will be rolled together into one monthly payment made direct to claimants (from October 2013). This includes rent/Housing Benefit payments which currently often go direct to the landlord and there can only be one payee per household. One danger is that if the designated payee has their benefits cut, perhaps simply by missing an appointment, this will now affect the whole family. For many tenants the money in their hands will open up opportunities to spend their benefit rather than pay their rent but, before we become too judgemental, with the severe effects of the benefit cuts on some the temptation could be a choice between food for the family or rent.

So is there anything we can do?

Housing Justice are happy to give advice to anyone who e-mails info@housingjustice.org.uk or if you do not have internet access phones 020 3544 8094 (Tuesday to Friday). There is an excellent document, Blueprint for Action, which is primarily intended as a guide for clergy to enable them to help people in housing difficulties but can be used by anyone. This can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/v6tdKH> or available by post from our J&P office or from Housing Justice.

Parish based organisations such as the SVP will, I am sure, be happy to advise and assist as well as they can and will also welcome any financial or practical support you can offer.

Could joining a credit union be the answer? Credit Unions are financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members. They generally serve their local community so when people invest in their local credit union, they know that it is neighbours and colleagues who are benefiting, not outside shareholders; and they are not contributing to massive salaries and bonuses, in many associations much of the work is done by volunteers.

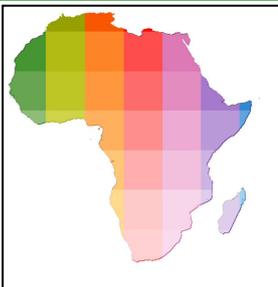
In the UK, over 400 Credit Unions provide financial services to over 400,000 members. They are regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), just like banks and building societies, and members' money is safe as it is protected by the government Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

As a member of a credit union you can have wages or benefits paid directly into your account (or a joint account), have standing orders to pay outgoings like rent automatically from your account and can get debit cards which you can top up from your account, or from an approved loan, and allow you to draw cash from cash points and pay bills as you go. APR on loans is typically around 27% a small fraction of the rates charged by Wonga and the like. **Perhaps this is an idea we can publicise locally.**

Encouraging news from the Bishops' Plenary Meeting held in November

Living Wage:

“The Bishops’ Conference recognises that fair wages are essential to the common good of our society. In accordance with Catholic social teaching, and as part of its mission to support the poor and vulnerable, the Bishops’ Conference fully endorses the principle of the Living Wage and encourages Catholic organisations and charities in England and Wales to work towards its implementation”.



African Federation on Casteism launched.

Article by Mercy Eze

A new human rights advocacy '**African Federation of International Voices against Casteism**' (AFIVAC), with its

motto: Action nurtured by conscience, has been launched. It is aimed towards lobbying the United Nations and the international community to step up policies to abolish Casteism with all its ramifications.

CASTEISM

- Breeds injustice and impedes human development.
- Poses hindrance to the equality of opportunity and limits the growth of development in a society where the system exists.

Join the global multi-million voices speaking against 'caste practice'.

E-mail: [voices@africastes .com](mailto:voices@africastes.com)

The launch took place on 10 October 2012 during a conference of International 'Human Rights Museums' held at the International Slavery Museum which is part of National Museums Liverpool.

World delegates attending the three-day conference were told to document Caste practice among other social issues encroaching on God's divine intension about freedom and equality while creating all human beings in His own image.

AFIVAC's report highlighted the growing effect of caste practice, a dehumanizing age-long system that has continued to breed social imbalance, as well as impede human development, posing hindrance to equality of opportunity in the society, against the background of all form of injustices directed against millions of people who suffered from Caste system in the countries where its exists.

Performing the launch of the caste federation, the Chairman of elders of African community in Liverpool city, Chief Angus Chukwuemeka, urged the international community to place Casteism on their agenda by integrating the issue in the human rights policies.

He cited the casteism known as [OSU] practice in his native Igboland in Eastern Nigeria as one of the worst cases in Africa, as inter-marriage and co-existence remain a huge taboo between members of the society and those classified as OSU.

AFIVAC comprises Africans and non-Africans from all walks of life who share common views and opinion about the dehumanizing effect of caste system on the victims, as discrimination and segregation remain on the rise.

Among other campaign initiatives, the advocacy body is urging world governments, NGOs, the media and human rights actors to add their voices towards influencing actions that will outlaw and make caste practice a criminal offence.

CASTEISM IN AFRICA:-

From time immemorial, Casteism has continued to occupy the strata of human existence within the society where the system is being practiced. In Africa, it is as old as the continent itself. The system dates back to olden days – about the people “used” as sacrifice to appease gods. Those who found themselves in this category were classified and down-graded as “second class” citizens. Their generations grow to suffer from this undying man-made system.



CAFOD'S new campaign, **Hungry for Change**, is calling for fundamental changes in the global food system so that power is more justly shared between rich and poor



people, and more people can have access to enough food.

Launched on November 10 it will run for 12 months, using campaigning and political moments, such as the UK's hosting of the G8 in May 2013 to highlight the issues at stake and call for further support. There are an estimated 870 million people worldwide without enough food to be healthy and live an active life. The overwhelming majority of these live in developing countries. Hunger is the world's number one health risk, killing more people every year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. The recent financial crisis has pushed even more people around the world to the brink of starvation.

The new campaign highlights the fact that a handful of supermarkets and food companies dominate the food system, making the rules that decide cost, price and standards. They often also control access to vital resources such as land, seeds and water. Yet 50% of the world's food is grown by small-scale farmers in developing countries. With little power in the global food supply chain, these farmers are often forced to agree to big companies' demands regardless of how unfair they may be.

CAFOD'S Hungry for Change Campaign is asking for:

The UK government to ensure 'empowering aid' - that helps small-farmers, especially women, speak up for their own needs and supports initiatives such as farming co-operatives - is a global priority

The UK government to include global food companies in the new statutory register of lobbyists so that we can all see how companies seek to influence government policy behind closed doors

For us all to look again at the choices we make about what we eat and buy. We are all part of the global food system and by choosing local, sustainable or Fairtrade food, reducing the food we waste, and eating less meat, we can all make a difference

To Take action: Sign a Hungry for Change action card or email Prime Minister David Cameron calling him to put the power in the food chain back in the hands of the poorest men and women. The final day for returning campaign action cards to CAFOD will be 1 October 2013.

Take the online action: <http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Take-action-today/Hungry-for-change>

Watch CAFOD's Hungry for Change film: <http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Get-clued-up/Food>



An invitation from Premier Christian Radio

Premier's Heart to Heart monthly media-rich e-send is a way of connecting the Catholic audience with news from the Catholic world. Premier wants to invite the wider Catholic audience across the country to be part of their community. Their newsletter connects you to Premier's news and views right across the Christian churches with an emphasis on what's happening in the Catholic community and with interviews with celebrities and with amazing individuals who work in our communities.

Recent issues have featured a range of programming, to include items from our "Unbelievable" show debating topics such as "Is the Catholic Church the one true church?". Bishop Draney has shared his testimony and plans for the Year of Faith, friars from Italy and Austria have recounted how their singing ability is a way of expressing and sharing their faith. Premier created a documentary in collaboration with PACT (www.prisonadvice.org.uk) on the Basic Caring Communities initiative which supports ex-offenders in our communities. This was broadcast on Prisoners' Sunday. These are just a few of the stories you can share when you sign up and tune in.

If you would like to listen to stories like these and other programming from Premier Christian Radio, sign up now for their monthly e send via www.premier.org.uk/hearttoheart

Or you can listen in live to Premier: It broadcasts on air on DAB Digital Radio Nationally, Freeview 725, 1305, 1332, 1413 MW or online at www.premier.org.uk/hearttoheart

A date for your new diary, and a new venue:

OUR SPRING ASSEMBLY

Saturday May 11th

At The Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury.

“Blessed are the Poor? – Social Justice in The Year of Faith”

We have a number of inspiring speakers already arranged and an excellent venue booked. Too far away for you? - well why not make a weekend of it in this great historic city.

January 15th - MEGACITY LONDON - ever growing, ever more unequal”

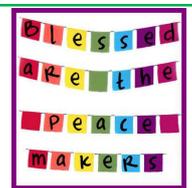
The Sheila McKechnie Foundation is holding a special networking event in from 4.30 – 6.30pm, aimed at campaigners, lobbyists, policymakers and strategists alike who are trying to tackle poverty and inequality in the capital. There will be a talk packed full of facts, figures and analysis by leading academics [Professor Danny Dorling](#) and Dr Ben Hennig, which will be followed by an opportunity to meet and network with others over a glass of wine.

The event will take place at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Rd, London N7 6PA



January 20th - Peace Sunday - “Blessed are the Peacemakers”

Pax Christi have sent out materials to every parish but it may be a good time to ask if your parish would consider taking a collection to support the work of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace. More information at www.paxchristi.org.uk or phone 0208 203 4884



January 26th to February 3rd - Poverty & Homelessness Action Week

CAN YOU CAST THE FIRST STONE?

From tenants shipped out of their local authority and to the periphery of cities because their housing benefit does not cover their rent any more, to disabled people threatened to have their benefit cut if they do not engage in work; from vulnerable women and children denied succour as a result of cuts in local services to the unemployed and people on benefits – vulnerable people are increasingly being cast in a negative light by the press, even by politicians.

This scapegoating of vulnerable groups is intolerable. With a recession that shows no sign of going away, and resulting in an inexorable rise in repossessions and homelessness, as well as untold misery for vulnerable people caused by cuts in local services, stigmatising these groups is simply appalling. Action Week 2013 calls for a stop to all form a stigmatisation of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society.

Christian teaching is very clear: we are called on to stand by the vulnerable and champion their cause. Action Week 2013 is calling on you to put an end to this BLAME GAME, that sees vulnerable groups thus vilified.

Please visit [the Action Week website](#) now and register to receive updates about the campaign.

Could you be part of Climate Week 2013 - March 4th to 10th

Organisations and churches across the UK are signing up to take part in the UK's biggest climate change campaign. Each year half a million people attend 3,000 events focusing on how people can live and work more sustainably.

To join in this event to raise awareness you could [run an event that suits your organisation](#) – this could be anything from a film screening to a bike-to-work scheme.

You could [enter the Climate Week Challenge](#) – a competition for teams of 4-6 in schools and workplaces.

Or your parish group could [run a Climate Week Swap](#) – swap clothes, books, toys and DVDs, saving money and reducing waste and you can register your event for a chance to [swap with a celebrity](#) – you could win an item from celebrities such as Andy Murray, Zoe Wanamaker and Hugh Laurie.

You can register your event on line, see other events registered so far and view the Climate Week film at www.climateweek.com or ask the office for help.

For more information e-mail info@climateweek.com or call 020 3397 2601