

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

The work for peace and justice in our world is a constant challenge.

Hardly has one campaign or project been completed or run its course, and another one takes its place. It is easy to be overstretched and disheartened at the lack of progress or success. Our work is the work of the Kingdom which comes about through patience, constant effort and a close following of the path of the Master who gave his all for us.

I hope you will be able to have some summer break, and the chance to recharge batteries and find new energy and inspiration for the work.

I look forward to seeing you at our next Assembly Day on October 17th, details below.

Fr Gerard Murray.

5th Birmingham Diocesan Justice & Peace Assembly

Saturday 17th October 2009

10.30am to 4.30pm

St Peter's Catholic School, Whitefields Road, Solihull, B91 3NZ

“God or Mammon ?”

The Economy and Gospel values at global, local and individual levels

Speakers:

George Gelber: Senior Policy Adviser, CAFOD

**Clifford Longley: Author, broadcaster and journalist
on religious affairs**

with Workshops led by Justice & Peace organisations

Cost: £10, low income and students £5

Includes refreshments and sandwich lunch (for those that book in advance)

Applications can be downloaded soon from our website above, or requested from the Administrator

Brushstrokes Community Project

Brushstrokes is a Catholic foundation charity in Smethwick, near Birmingham. It is a partnership project of Father Hudson's Society, St. Philip's Parish and the Infant Jesus Sisters, founded 10 years ago by Sister Margaret Walsh who is still closely involved. Smethwick is an area of high social deprivation where large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees are accommodated. Our mission is to seek out and help the hidden poor, and we do help many others, but asylum seekers and refugees are the bulk of our work. We currently have over 1,000 from more than 70 countries.

This project is based at St Philip's Church where there are two missionary priests from Nigeria. There are paid staff as well as many volunteers from the Midlands and elsewhere including several religious sisters and Jesuit novices. Asylum seekers and refugees are also volunteers.

Asylum seekers have a very difficult time and the Catholic Church has long championed their causes. They live on £35 a week, often in very poor premises. They may receive supermarket vouchers not cash so they cannot even buy a bus ticket. They may often have family at home in war zones or living under repressive regimes. They may be traumatised by what they have seen and experienced. Many live in fear of deportation and destitution if their case fails - and many do. Their cases can be unresolved for many years and the whole process is full of uncertainty and anxiety. To take one example, there is a young woman who left Eritrea to escape appalling ethnic violence. She was 15 when she arrived alone and unable to speak any English. She is now 25, but her case is still pending. During these 10 years she has been moved around England approximately 20 times, so she has lost these vital years when others settle into neighbourhoods, become qualified, establish careers and maybe marry. Currently she shares low standard accommodation above a derelict supermarket and cannot work .

Meanwhile, she lives with the knowledge that the Red Cross could not trace a single living relative in Eritrea so that if she is deported there is no-one to take care of her. There are many like her as well as a stream of new arrivals and they often become severely depressed, isolated and marginalised.

We offer friendship, classes, social events and material support to benefit people through practical support and helping them to develop their potential. Our activities include:

- Supplying food, clothes, small household items and accessories for babies. This year we have provided food for 145 destitute people, many repeatedly, as well as helping those with severely restricted incomes.
- Giving English lessons and providing courses such as I.T, healthy living, exercise and numeracy.
- Visiting homes to provide friendship, help and advice if necessary and signposting to specialist agencies.
- Befriending the most vulnerable and welcoming them into our centre.
- Providing expert immigration advice and careers advice for those who obtain permission to remain.
- Obtaining , wrapping and delivering over 1000 Christmas presents

Like other charities, we now find increased demand in a climate where donations are falling. Volunteers are needed to:

- Join the team who visit homes, seeking those in need and then helping and befriending. Training is given and we always visit in pairs.
- Help with English (ESOL) classes as tutors or learning assistants or help provide other classes or activities.
- Sort and distribute donations of food, clothes, household items and Christmas presents .

Volunteers all say they gain immeasurably more than they give from this opportunity to meet people from all over the world and to work with them. They find their faith renewed and strengthened.

We would find it invaluable to be adopted by any interested justice and peace groups who could help by fundraising and /or collecting donations of food and other items. Visits from interested groups or individuals would be most welcome.

If you can help or would like to know more about our work, please contact the manager Teresa Clements, Brushstrokes Project, Messenger Road, Smethwick B66 3DU. Tel: 0121 565 2234. Thank you.

CAFOD Humanitarian Disaster in Pakistan

Joe Andrew

We seem to be living in very difficult times. Many of us remain troubled by the possibility of losing our jobs, or worse - and all of us know friends, family or neighbours who have been touched by the recession. Following the scandal of MPs' expenses, there seems to be a very uncertain future on the political front.

Yet we should always keep a sense of perspective. Whatever our troubles may be in the UK, sadly, these are dwarfed by the enormity of what befalls many people in the developing world, as is demonstrated all too painfully by the escalating humanitarian crisis in North West Pakistan, and the terrible situation in northern Sri Lanka. CAFOD and its partners are active in both regions. Let us today consider the suffering that the situation in Pakistan is causing.

The conflict there has resulted in a humanitarian disaster on a massive scale. Families have fled with little more than the clothes on their backs. So far CAFOD has pledged £100,000 to help the 1.5 million people in Pakistan forced from their homes because of fighting.

Our partners in the conflict area have responded rapidly to the escalating humanitarian crisis by providing clean water, temporary shelter, bedding and kitchen equipment, as well as trauma counselling, to nearly 150,000 people so far. Their efforts will expand as the crisis grows. Renewed fighting in the Swat valley in the North West Frontier Province could mean up to two million people will be displaced and not knowing when they will be able to safely return to their homes.

Robert Cruickshank, CAFOD Pakistan programme manager, says: "Reports are that the 26 official camps that are housing 262,000 people are hundreds of kilometres away from their homes and are overcrowded. The elderly in particular are suffering from the excessive heat in temperatures as high as 53 degrees. Women are also traumatised and confused at the situation they find themselves in as many have never left their homes before and are facing major difficulties surviving alone. Hundreds of thousands of people have sought shelter in schools and mosques or living with families, creating a huge additional burden for the already poor host families. Our partners will be concentrating much of their efforts on supporting those living with extended family members, although they are spread far and wide in small groups."

CAFOD and its partners will be following the situation closely to ensure that displaced people are treated with dignity, that their rights as displaced civilians are respected and that when the time comes for their return they are supported to re-establish their lives in and with their communities.

And we can all help CAFOD in this work, by making a donation to help the poorest people of Pakistan. By donating, we help thousands who have fled to escape from intense fighting - many have only the clothes they stand up in. Our gift can make a life or death difference.

Please give generously. Donations may be made online at www.cafod.org.uk; to donate by phone please call 0500 858 885. The CAFOD diocesan office is, as always, available for local support, on 01922 722 944.

Joe Andrew

GET FAIR

Constituency Lobby 26/27th June

Government's own statistics have revealed that 12.8 million people in the UK live in poverty. We want you to tell your local Member of Parliament that this is 100% unfair, and its time to Get Fair.

We are co-ordinating a constituency - based lobby of MPs around the country to ensure that ending poverty in the UK is a shared objective, and in the manifestos of all major political parties.

We want you to ask them to commit to measures that will help bring an end to poverty in the UK. As well as raising specific local concerns, there are three policy areas we are asking MPs to support:

- An income that meets minimum living standards
- Affordable housing and decent neighbourhoods
- Fair access to services, without discrimination

GET FAIR is a coalition of over 60 children's and older people's organisations, refugee and disability groups, housing organisations, faith and community groups. Get Fair campaigns for a just and fair society, free from poverty in all its forms. There is no single issue that will bring an end to poverty in the UK. However, there is strength in our collective voice, taking a stand 'together against poverty'. With the economy in recession and rapidly rising unemployment, we must:

- Protect the poorest in our society, who did not get a fair share during the more prosperous years and who are badly hit by the impact of the recession.
- Correct the weaknesses in the economy that mean even during the previous boom years 1 in 5 in the UK population still lived in poverty.

Contact www.getfair.org.uk/lobby for more details.

Diary Dates

June

26th UN Torture Victims Day

27&
28th International Prayer Vigil for Torture Victims
Details: uk.acat@googlemail.com

July

4th CAFOD Call of Creation Training Day Workshop at Manresa House, Harborne. 10 to 3.30pm.
Tel. 01922 722944 or Email birmingham@cafod.org.uk

3-5th Fellowship of Reconciliation Residential weekend for 18 to 30's. "Nonviolence: A (practical) tool for change", in London. Flyer attached.

11th "Understanding CAFOD" Morning workshop 10am-1pm. at CAFOD Office Walsall. As above.

12th Sea Sunday
www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

17 to
19th National J & P Network Annual Conference, Swanwick "A-mazed by Migration"
Leaflet & Application Form attached.

August

6&9th Anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, first use of atomic weapons. Pax Christi & CND

28th to
31st Greenbelt Festival
Cheltenham racecourse
www.greenbelt.org.uk

Sept.

13th Racial Justice Sunday
CARJ tel. 020 8802 8080

21st Global Ceasefire Day
www.peaceoneday.org or
tel. 020 7456 9180

October

2nd CAFOD Harvest Fast Day

17th Fifth Annual Diocesan J&P Assembly. World Economics: "God or Mammon?" 10.30-4.30pm.
St Peter's School, Solihull
Speakers, discussion groups and workshops.

17th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

18 to
25th One World Week "Hungry for One World" and Week of Prayer for World Peace
Details from: 0208 968 4340

24th United Nations Day
www.unmeditation.org

31st CARJ Birmingham Local Event Details soon.

Nov.

8th to
14th National Ethical Investment Week

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

The Birmingham Justice and Peace Newsletter is sent to everyone on our mailing list free of charge. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please send your address, including EMail details, to the Administrator.

Also, if you have an event you would like advertised in the Autumn newsletter please send details to:

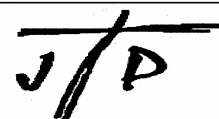
David Jenkins, Administrator,
Birmingham Justice & Peace Commission,
Home: Yew Tree Cottage, Hailey, Witney OX29 9UB
Email: jenkins@woxon.freemove.co.uk
Tel: 01993-702654 (home), 07919 325203 (mobile).

Autumn 2009 Edition: Last date for entries 18th August.

More information about the Commission can be found on our website: www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

The views expressed in this newsletter are the views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission or the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.

**The Birmingham
Diocesan Justice and
Peace Commission
website.**



Birmingham Diocese

For information on the J&P calendar and links to J&P organisations...

For downloads from the J&P Resource Pack and much more...

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk