

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2017**SPEAK UP WEEK OF ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE: – 01-09 July 2017**

The Climate Coalition are organising a week of action on Climate Change for the first week of July.



Despite a few ‘alt facts’ that are circulating, the vast majority of people know that Climate change is the single biggest threat to the people and places we love, both here

in the UK and overseas. The Climate Coalition comment:

“We know that most of the UK public want to see progress on tackling climate change. And we know that many politicians are unlikely to take action unless they realise how much we care, and how many of us care.

With the Week of Action just three weeks after the General Election, it’s the perfect time to get newly elected MPs on board.

Beautiful things happen when we Speak Up together. Thanks to people like you speaking up in 2015 and again during the Week of Action in October 2016, hundreds of MPs joined us in encouraging the government to produce a strong plan for shifting our economy to a low carbon footing.

And it didn’t stop there. Millions more spoke up during the landmark Paris climate talks in 2015, and the government ratified the agreement last year, turning it into UK law. Agreed by 195 countries, the deal commits governments to cut their emissions and endeavours to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.



Now it's time for MPs to champion what their constituents are doing to tackle climate change and to ensure that UK policies are helping to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.

However you decide to get involved, you’ll be showing your elected politicians that climate change is something their constituents really care about. This, in turn, will encourage them to act.

CAFOD are a key partner in the Climate Coalition and below we describe their new campaign about using renewable energy to help the world’s poorest communities

CAFOD’S POWER TO BE CAMPAIGN

One of CAFOD’s contributions to the Speak Up Week of Action is to encourage parishioners up and down the country to join in their ‘Power to Be’ campaign.

This is a very specific campaign which is targeted at the UK’s World Bank Representative Melanie Robinson. The World Bank spends large amounts of money each year in supporting projects to provide energy in developing countries across the world. However, only 3% of the total amount of that budget is used to support the kind of renewable energy projects that we know benefit the poorest communities. Local, renewable energy is usually the cheapest, fastest and most efficient solution to bring power to the poorest communities. It can help families to lift themselves out of poverty, without harming the world we share.

Why focus on the World Bank? – Here is what CAFOD has to say about this:

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“The World Bank is an international organisation with a mission to end poverty around the world. It is jointly owned by the governments of 189 countries, but shareholder countries like the UK hold greater power in making decisions. The UK is one of only five countries which appoints its own executive director to the Board of the World Bank. The rest of the 25 directors are elected, often by many countries. The UK has a strong voice.



Through “Power To Be”, we are asking Melanie Robinson, UK Executive Director at the World Bank, to use her voice at the board level to ensure the Bank invests in providing safe, reliable, affordable and renewable energy for poor communities.

Most people in energy poverty live in rural areas. This means that connecting to the electricity grid, however it is powered, would be expensive and slow.

For most households, particularly in rural areas where most energy poor people live, the cheapest and quickest option for electricity access is usually a solar home system, or a mini-grid, often powered by renewable energy.”

CAFOD have some high quality resources available now – follow the link. Getting people to sign up to this at the end of Masses is a really straightforward action that most parishes could undertake. See their website for more details

<http://cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/Power-to-be-Q-A>

LIVE SIMPLY WORKSHOP: ST BENEDICT’S PARISH CENTRE 24 June 2017

Fifty five people from across our Diocese and beyond came along to the Workshop that we organised about **Live Simply** – with the financial support of **CAFOD**.

The event ended with a mass signing by all those present of ‘Power to Be’ petition cards addressed to Melanie Robinson-as discussed above.

Whilst this was an easy action that everyone could take straight away, there were many different ideas thrown up during the course of the workshop about how we could live more sustainably and live more in solidarity with poor communities across the world.

The award scheme (run by CAFOD) may not be for everyone, but the ideas provide a focus for individual and parish action. In so doing they represent a real 21st century approach to the concepts of ‘Parish Renewal’ in that they challenge



Joe & Patrick explaining about the ‘Power to Be’ campaign

us as individuals to think about our own behaviours and also about our behaviours in our church communities.

The last part of the event was a shortened form of an Emmaus meal where we heard stories from different world communities:



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Malawi, East Timor, Lebanon and Sri Lanka. We were fortunate to have people who could talk first-hand about their experiences – such as Benson Taylor (A CAFOD Ambassador), Patrick (the CAFOD campaigns volunteer for the Leeds Diocese) who was brought up in Malawi and Germano from East Timor who now lives in the parish of Our Lady of Kirkstall.

St Benedict's is the only parish in the Leeds Diocese to have actually gained the award. The opening liturgy was conducted outdoors so that people could stand on the piece of land that has been developed into a smallholding, growing flowers for use in church, vegetables for people to take and eat, and walkways for people to walk amongst the plants and reflect on God's creation. This was all developed as part of their journey towards obtaining the award. But, as parishioner Trish Sandbach pointed out, it is not a journey that stops once you have gained the award and there is still a Live Simply group operating within the parish

The discussions were enriched not only by the participants from St Benedict's but also by Paul Kelly, from Lytham St Annes – the first parish to pilot the Live Simply Award scheme - and Regina Schwarz who had travelled from her parish in Walthamstow to share their experiences with us.

As well as signing the Power to Be cards, we asked everyone to think of one personal action and one action that they would discuss with others in their own church communities. The result was an 'Actions Board' crammed with Post It notes.

It was a packed agenda but everyone engaged enthusiastically and there was much laughter throughout the workshop.



For more information about the Live Simply Award go to <http://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/How-to-campaign/Livesimply-award>

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP TO DATE – BUT WE NEED MORE MONEY!

We have no direct financial support from the Diocese and are slowly running out of funds.

We know that people in the Leeds Diocese are generous for all sorts of charitable giving. The role of the Commission is different to direct giving – but it is equally important. Please help us. Compassion is vital, but without understanding unjust structures, and taking action against them, how will lasting change come about?

We are fund-raising by applying for grants but we also need to demonstrate that we have a supporter base who can provide financial support, especially for our ongoing activities.

Could you consider giving a regular amount to the Commission through a Standing Order?

Since we started our appeal we are getting an extra £100 per month in regular contributions. This is great – it means we are getting close to being able to fund half of our ongoing activities. We need another 50 people giving £5 a month to the Commission to fully fund them. Can you help?

<http://www.leedsjp.org.uk/donate/>

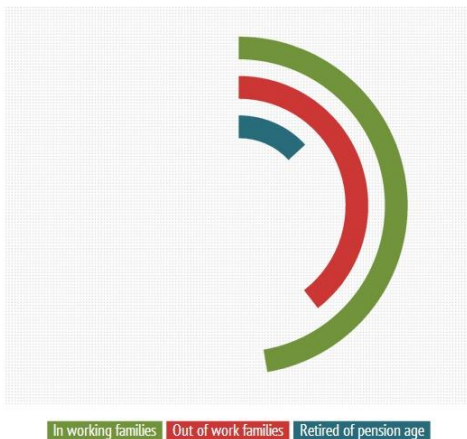


AUSTERITY IS STILL WITH US - by John Battle

At the ecumenical Thornbury Centre in Bradford, a recent conference organized by the Bradford Churches Welfare State group assessed the post-election position. What was clear from the contributions of the participants is that media and political announcements that 'austerity is over' are at best wishful thinking. While the newspapers declare that the election result has meant that austerity proposals to means test pensioners fuel grants have been dropped, the main impact of the major benefit system changes and the built-in reduction in the welfare budget of £12 billion, remain in place and for many families are just starting to kick in.

Working families remain the subject of reductions in their income each week as a result of benefit and tax credit changes. Already the removal of the "spare room subsidy" (the "bedroom tax"), has led to hundreds in Bradford and Leeds suffering a 14% cut in their housing benefit rent support. The main impact has been tenants falling into serious rent arrears, some having to move out of their home and, as a poignant case spelt out, one 'weekend Dad' not only losing access to his young children but ending up on the street homeless.

Poverty numbers by work status



The poor are more likely to be in work or pensioners, rather than the image of being on the dole.

courtesy of the Joint Public Issues Team

The recent introduction of an overall lower total benefit 'cap' limiting benefits (regardless of rent costs) is now hitting families with more than two children hard. Already only the first two children now get what used to be called "child benefit". It is estimated that this reduction alone will push over 200,000 children nationwide into poverty as their families will not have enough income each week to get by. Already 3.5 million children in Britain are accepted as officially living in poverty. That is projected to rise to 5 million in the next three years as a result of benefit changes.

The combined effect of the reduction in benefits and tax credits is plunging working families on low incomes, on zero hour contracts and in part time jobs into debt.

Challenged about the detrimental impact of the 'benefit cap' the Dept. of Work and Pensions issued the standard sentence; "Work is the best way to raise living standards and many more parents with young children are in work. The benefit cap incentivizes work even if it is part time". Yet, as nearly a million are on zero hours contracts and many thousands cannot get enough part time hours to make ends meet, ***not only is the basic truth the poor are actually working and not getting enough money but there is a worrying rise in personal indebtedness to credit cards, high cost money lenders and illegal loan sharks.***

In Bradford average wages are well below the national average of £28,000. One family with a father working in a low paid job in engineering and a mother working as a part time carer with two school children, their monthly income is £1,365 plus £58 child benefit but they are short by £59.49 a week when they have paid out all absolutely essential family outgoings including rent. UK personal debt now stands at a record high of £1.4 trillion, an extra £445 per person over the last twelve months and debts are a particular problem for lone parents. Furthermore as a result of lack of support for high rent costs, there are now 373

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home repossessions every day. More and more working people and families are having to call on food banks. The comment that people only go to food banks for “a cash flow problem episodically” made by a Government MP ignores the facts for example that if a person loses their part time job under the new rules they can get no help from the state for at least six weeks. **Increasingly it is the working poor turning up at food banks.**

I recall a discussion with a tenants’ association in which one lady demanded of politicians present, (and particularly one who said he found the whole business of tax and benefit issues too complex and a matter for CABs); “those of us who have to pay the price can do the arithmetic. Why can’t you?”

The cuts in ‘working age benefits’ are the price of the real austerity budget in place (not proposals to cut back pensioner benefits). The case studies of the Bradford conference can be replicated in Leeds and throughout the Leeds Diocese in West Yorkshire. To some extent it was the condition of the poorest in our society who were ignored in the recent General Election campaigns for votes. The voices of the poor and now the working poor and the weekly experiences of their families need to be moved to the forefront of public debate. For them ‘austerity’ is really beginning to hurt.

For regular updates, case studies and analyses see the Church Action on Poverty website and share their information in your parish.

NONVIOLENCE: THE WITNESS OF OSCAR ROMERO AND THE NONVIOLENCE INITIATIVE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg in South Africa spoke in Leeds on 26 April 2017, along with Pat Gaffney from Pax Christi UK. He gave a powerful address – powerful because it was clearly rooted in his reflections on the Gospel in the light of his lived experience of violence.

It was March 2005. During a week-long commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, I visited the memorial wall in El Salvador with thousands of names of the murdered and disappeared during the long years of oppression and violence, and the civil war. I struggled to find the name of Archbishop Oscar Romero – but eventually I did. It was because his name is the same size as the name of everyone else on the wall – Oscar Arnulfo Romero – a moving testimony for me that every one of those people was equal and special.



a small section of the memorial to the 'Disappeared' in San Salvador

On another day I also sat quietly in a little church. Around me were some of the faithful people who come to pray every day at this special, peaceful place. In front of me were 3 simple sets of tiles in the floor: the graves of the little boy, the old man, and the close friend of Oscar Romero, Father Rutilio Grande, who had served the people in that parish....all three brutally shot to death by the Salvadoran military.

I could not help thinking of what was going on in the mind and heart of Oscar Romero when he was called out and saw the bloodied bodies of those 3 people. What does such violence do within one’s spirit especially when it is very personal, as it was for Oscar Romero? And what does it continue to do to so many innocent people in our world where atrocities, wars and mindless violence have become an almost everyday experience?

Violence can indeed be something very personal for many millions of people. I have had several such experiences in South Africa, e.g. last



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September when I was attacked by two men, landed in hospital for 6 days and was very ill for over 2 months. On March 21, 1991, just seven weeks after my ordination as bishop I led a peaceful protest march with a few pastors at the request of all the people's organisations. The people wanted to protest at the deportation of the revered Queen Mother of the Bafokeng tribe by a power hungry leader of one of the so-called homelands created by the apartheid regime.

Behind me were some 6000 ordinary people, and I will never forget a young woman with the message on a piece of cardboard: "Police don't shoot; we are unarmed."

But, they did shoot. As I came up to the armoured personnel carriers near the Queen Mother's home, and heavily armed soldiers, the command rang out: "Shoot the priests". They jumped down and at first shot directly at me with high-speed steel gas grenades which, if they had hit my head, I would surely have been killed (I picked one up afterwards as a memento). I ducked and weaved because I could see the gas grenades speeding towards me, fell to the ground, but then heard the staccato sounds....and I remember saying to myself: "O my God, that is live ammunition". A young student was killed, another took a bullet in the shoulder, the soldiers went berserk shooting into the homes of people, beating up women – it was mayhem. I was dressed in my white cassock, brand new after my ordination – and that was the end of that cassock.

The church on the mission where I live was severely damaged by a powerful bomb in November, 1992, when I refused the demand of the same homeland leader to cancel a meeting of the people and their organisations. They were banned from meeting anywhere in that homeland, but the people could come to the mission every weekend under our protection as Church to discuss their issues and the ongoing crises. It went on and on for 4 years even as we prepared for the historic 1994 elections by giving the people voter education in our own churches, always under the threat of being attacked, or having tear gas lobbed into the churches by the soldiers. Which is why Oscar Romero was and still is my mentor, an inspiration and a witness who has been central to my life and ministry especially for the past 26 years as bishop, and in my work for peace in various countries as a member of Pax Christi International.

This is only a small part of the presentation that Bishop Dowling gave. The full text is available as a pamphlet download from our website. See the 'News' article from 28 April 2017 with the same title as this article

REFLECTION

With the *Speak Up* Week of Action on Climate Change upon us, here are some reflective quotes from "*Laudato Si*". The # numbers indicate the paragraph in the document.

(#21) The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (#9) The problems require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change in humanity: Otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms

(#74) The God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible. (#80) The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knot of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable.

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(#95) 'Thou shalt not kill' means when "20% of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive."

(#139) We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature. (#158) In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the Common Good immediately becomes logically and inevitably a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.

(#164) Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. (#217) We need an ecological conversion. (#219) Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds. (#219) The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion

(#222) Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.

**'LOVE HAS NO ALIBI': POPE ANNOUNCES WORLD DAY OF THE POOR**

On June 13th Pope Francis officially announced the first World Day of the Poor to be held on 19 November 2017 – and in subsequent years on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

His message announcing this uses the direct language that we have come to expect from him:

"Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18). These words of the Apostle John voice an imperative that no Christian may disregard. The seriousness with which the "beloved disciple" hands down Jesus' command to our own day is made even clearer by the contrast between the empty words so frequently on our lips and the concrete deeds against which we are called to measure ourselves. Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to take the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor."

So, plenty of time to start preparing some way of celebrating this in your church community.









Here is the link to the full message

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/papa-francesco_20170613_messaggio-i-giornatamondiale-poveri-2017.html



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EVENTS

 Sat 01 Jul – Sun 09 Jul	SPEAK UP WEEK OF ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE See the articles in this newsletter giving more details about this. Take part in some way!
 Fri 21 Jul – Sun 23 Jul	NATIONAL JUSTICE & PEACE NETWORK CONFERENCE: A SABBATH FOR THE EARTH AND THE POOR – The challenge of Pope Francis <i>The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> Speakers at this weekend conference include: Dr Ruth Valerio who is Global Advocacy and Influencing Director for Tearfund, Fr Peter Hughes SSC. has spent most of his life as a missionary in Peru, working in some of the most impoverished communities in Lima. He is an advisor to the <i>Instituto Bartolome de las Casas</i> , working in programmes of leadership and social justice. Kathy Galloway is an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland and was leader of the Iona Community from 2002-2009. She is currently head of Christian Aid Scotland. She is also a published poet, author and hymn writer. Lots of other elements to the weekend and there is a completely separate programme of activities for young people. See their website for full details and booking arrangements:- http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/
 Sun 06 Aug – Wed 09 Aug	HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI DAY This year Hiroshima Day (06 Aug) falls on a Sunday. Could you get something suitable included in the prayers of intercession of that day? – As usual, Pax Christi have some suggestions for what can be done : http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/prayer-and-seasonal/
 Fri 01 Sep – Wed 04 Oct	CREATION DAY AND CREATION TIME Originally set up in 1989 by the Orthodox church, Pope Francis joined in in 2015 and the day was extended into a season ending on the feast of St Francis on Oct 04. A real opportunity to reflect on God’s creation and how we care for it and to include such sentiments in our liturgies. For ideas about what to do see http://seasonofcreation.org/
 22 Oct – 29 Oct	ONE WORLD WEEK The theme for 2017 is “Good Neighbours – my world depends on us”. More information and ideas for action and prayer from http://www.oneworldweek.org/v2/
 Fri 03 Nov – Sat 04 Nov	RESURRECTION OF HOPE: DIGGING DEEP FOR A JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL To mark the year of the 3 big anniversaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 years since the Balfour Declaration • 50 years Occupation of Palestinian Territories • 10 years Blockade of Gaza Hexham Kairos and Peace and Justice in the Holy Land in partnership with Minsteracres Retreat Centre have organised this event on Nov 3rd/4th to coincide with the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration and the arrival of the Walk for Justice in Jerusalem.
 Sun 19 Nov	FIRST WORLD DAY OF THE POOR A newly instituted day by Pope Francis. He says “I invite the whole Church, and men and women of good will everywhere, to turn their gaze on this day to all those who stretch out their hands and plead for our help and solidarity.” How will you celebrate this day in your community?
 Find us on Facebook	‘Like’ our page on Facebook and ‘follow’ us to help keep up to date with the key campaigns that the Commission is supporting.

Please forward this E-News to anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.