

diarydiary

APRIL

- 22 Climate Change Rally - Scottish Parliament. Organised by Stop Climate Chaos
- 22 International Earth Day
- 25 'Trident Replacement and the New Disarmament Agenda' City Chambers, Glasgow. Register to attend. Contact: scnd@banthebomb.org

MAY

- 1 St Joseph the Worker International Workers Day
- 3 World Press Freedom Day
- 9 World Fair Trade Day
- 13 International Conscientious Objectors Day
- 15 UN International Day for Families
- 23 SCND Trade Union conference on Trident, Jobs and Scotland's economy.
- 19 International Day of UN Peacekeepers

JUNE

- 4 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
- 5 World Environment Day
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 14 Day of Prayer for the Arms Trade
- 14-21 Stop the Arms Trade Week
- 15-21 Refugee Week
- 20 UN World Refugee Day
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Full details and links on the events page on our website www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml

justice & peace conference 2009



Make space in your diary for this year's Conference which will be held in the Ogilvie Centre in Glasgow (next to St Aloysius church in Rose Street) on Saturday 5 September. The theme of this one day conference is Human Rights and our guest speaker will be **Charles Kennedy MP**, who is current President of the European Movement UK. We are looking to make this a special day and this requires your cooperation. Further information and booking forms will be available with the June magazine.



Sing Out For Peace! June 20th: 11am

Organised by Scotland's for Peace, the plan is to assemble in George Square and march to rally/singing in a Glasgow park (it will most probably be Kelvingrove Park). The march will make its way through Glasgow to the park. En route, choirs from across Scotland will lead the march in songs old and new from 40 years of the Scottish peace movement - don't worry if you don't know the words, song-sheets will be available! At the end of the march, there will be plenty of opportunity for joining in with the singing, as well as music, street performers, face-painting, and more. Scotland's for Peace invite you to make your voices heard in protest against the Government's decision to spend billions on replacing the Trident nuclear weapons system.

A great day out, regardless of age or musical talent!



For further information contact: Scotland's for Peace, 15 Barrland St, Glasgow, G41 1QH, 0141 433 2821, info@scotland4peace.org www.scotland4peace.org

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Our Office: 65 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 2BX. Tel/Fax: 0141 333 0238
 Email: office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk
 OPEN DAILY 10.00 hrs to 16.00 hrs Monday to Friday inclusive.



OFFICE BEARERS:

- Bishop President - Bishop Peter Moran | Chair - Ellen Charlton
- Research & Development - Tim Duffy | Campaigns - Carol Clarke
- Administration - Margaret Clarke
- Editorial Team - Tim Duffy & Carol Clarke
- Office Volunteers - Maria Madill & Sr. Agnes Bradley

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ISSUE 2: 2009



"The gates of hell shall not prevail"
 (Matthew 16:18)

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here is the news...

At the G20 economic summit, leaders of the largest economies continued to try to lie their way out of the financial crisis by smiling protestations of unity and false pledges of action. They will pretend that it was not free market policies with minimal government regulation of the financial sector that brought this mess about. Pledges (the last resort of drunks and those selling family valuables to the pawnbroker) will soon be forgotten in the subsequent protectionism of 'British jobs for British workers' (adapt nationally as appropriate).

Costing a mere £19 million – about double the cost of the G8 summit at Gleneagles in 2005 – it consisted of attempts to put a brave face on agreements largely arrived at already by diplomats. The Foreign Office could not (be bothered to) provide a breakdown of costs. 'This cost compares favourably to other international summits... And if it is the signal of restored confidence in the world economy it'll be worth every penny of it... Remember, as a national community, we've already spent more than two trillion dollars on fiscal stimulus measures' said Lord Malloch-Brown, Gordon Brown's current spin doctor, blithely. Who's this 'we', my Lord? There's an old joke that if all the world's economists were laid end to end, they still would not reach a conclusion. It's probably truer of politicians.

Protestors dressed in funny outfits and with no coherent critique to offer wandered aimlessly about inside police cordons. Meanwhile, hooligans and exhibitionists mixed with them, causing criminal damage when enough cameramen from a compliant and enthusiastic media were there to photograph the proceedings. After all, news conferences and photo opportunities are so predictable. Circus performance and throwing bollards through bank windows doesn't require intelligence and still makes the news which is now remembered largely in visual terms anyway. But at £7.5 million for security cover, it was a good week for Metropolitan police overtime.

The irony is that the destruction was put down to anarchists. True Anarchism is a legitimate political philosophy which has little to do with destruction and more to do with rooting out those who would dominate others. The real destruction on a global scale has been carried out by those who used power to license, approve and benefit from a culture of greed, which is to say most if not all of the G20 leaders for starters (whatever happened to the other G170 or so?). More importantly, it includes everyone (it's worth examining our own consciences) who put personal gain and advantage over and above the common good.

The overall cost of the US presidential campaign last year is estimated at \$1.5 billion (equivalent to the entire annual GDP of small African countries like Eritrea or Sierra Leone) with \$370 million coming from Wall Street institutions. These guys obviously want payback and so far it has been coming in at a rate of about a thousandfold in stimulus packages. Their aim is

essentially a return to business as before once they have been baled out by the taxpayers.

MPs report no great increase in constituents complaining at surgeries about the amount of their taxes being used to fund bailout schemes, despite all the evidence that such schemes are in the long term far costlier. Twenty years after the demise of command economies in the Soviet Union our government is refunding dishonest and bankrupt institutions by nationalising them, with only the sketchiest policy of accountability or control. Meanwhile the gormless watch while morons smash windows and loot from the Royal Bank, now 70% owned by the taxpayer.

I am drawn back to G K Chesterton who said the problem with capitalism is that there are not too many capitalists, but rather too few. In this Distributist economics, which drew inspiration from Rerum Novarum and was an underpinning principle for the founders of the Catholic Worker, people had an inalienable right to the property which would supply the means of life for them and their families. Inculturated aspects of this are to be found today in microcredit schemes in developing countries as well as in the policies of development agencies and ethical banking.

Many Catholic readers of Chesterton seem unaware of the subversive nature of much of what he wrote. Apart from the sheer exuberance of his style (and the kudos of having one famous Catholic writer) it is rather the cosy fortress Catholicism and quaint nationalism from which they presume he wrote that attracts them – a measure of their own nostalgic under development. Almost eighty years ago he pointed out presciently that *'The coming peril is the intellectual, educational, psychological and artistic overproduction, which, equally with economic overproduction, threatens the wellbeing of contemporary civilisation. People are inundated, blinded, deafened, and mentally paralysed by a flood of vulgar and tasteless externals, leaving them no time for leisure, thought, or creation from within themselves.'* Consumerism, he says with spiritual insight, produces faster than we can 'think and give thanks' and leaves us unsatisfied.

Elsewhere he warns against the undue deference so often paid to those who do not deserve it on account of wealth, rank or patronage. After all, it was the unquestioned prestige of Mammon that brought us to where we are. Another way of putting it would be that any system of economics that disregards original sin is doomed from the outset. But let Chesterton have the last word: *'we have to keep watch upon ourselves. The power of wealth, and that power at its vilest, is increasing in the modern world. A very good and just people, without this temptation, might not need, perhaps, to make clear rules and systems to guard themselves against the power of our great financiers. But that is because a very just people would have shot them long ago, from mere native good feeling.'*

the lockerbie bomber

Canon Patrick Keegans is currently parish priest at St Margaret's RC Cathedral, Ayr. Here he speaks of the aftermath of an event which affected him deeply.

Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi is the name of the man convicted of the bombing of Pan Am103 over Lockerbie on December 21st 1988. I met him in prison recently. We both have close connections with the bombing. He is the person convicted of the biggest mass murder in British Criminal History and I was resident parish priest in Lockerbie at the time of the disaster. I was in my house at 1 Sherwood Crescent on the evening of the 21st December 1988. My mother, Mary Keegans, was with me. At 7.04pm PanAm flight 103, destroyed by a bomb on board the aircraft, crashed into the town of Lockerbie. The darkness came. The lights went out. The house shook violently. An almighty explosion tore Sherwood Crescent apart. 270 people had been murdered, eleven residents of Sherwood Crescent and 259 passengers on Pan Am 103.

Such a crime evokes very strong emotions. The criminal investigation eventually resulted in the conviction of Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi and a prison sentence of 27 years. For some this was a cause for rejoicing; for me and many others it was a source of yet more sorrow for I believe that an innocent man has been wrongly convicted.

Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi, the Lockerbie Bomber? When I spoke with him in prison he insisted on his innocence and I believe him. He awaits the start of an appeal on 27th April 2009. Grounds for appeal were accepted in 2006. He has waited three years for his appeal to reach court and in that time he has developed terminal prostrate cancer. It is a long time to wait for an appeal!

He has a wife and five children. Due to schooling arrangements they live most of the year at home in Libya. Visits to the prison are infrequent and sporadic. His wife Aisha speaks

of the distress felt by all the family. His terminal cancer adds to their worry. In December 2008 Aisha al Megrahi, in a rare public appearance, declared that her husband was an 'innocent' and 'very ill' man who deserved compassionate treatment by the Scottish justice system. Mrs Megrahi's statement read: 'He is an innocent and very ill man who is suffering every day from both psychological and physical stress and I ask all to raise their voice in his support.'

That cry from the heart has not been ignored. A campaign has been started to give support. www.justiceformegrahi.com is the web site. The purpose of this campaign is to have Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi released from prison pending the outcome of his appeal. The campaign asks you to put aside the question of guilt or innocence. Irrespective of his guilt or innocence, we believe that Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi should be treated with compassion, that his release from prison pending the outcome of his appeal would be a great relief to his family and would better enable him to face the rigours of the appeal process which will last a year. If the appeal is not successful he goes back into prison. If the appeal is successful he is released.

'Be compassionate as your Heavenly Father is compassionate' and 'Treat others as you would wish them to treat you' are words that come to mind. If it is in your heart to hear the cry of Mrs Megrahi then please give her your support. Write to her husband. Speak to others about the campaign. Contact your MP and MSP. Get local support in your parishes. Log onto www.justiceformegrahi.com You can write to Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi at this address: Gateshead Prison, 85 Old Inverkip Road, Greenock Renfrewshire PA16 9AJ

If you would like to find out more about the background to the case and the appeal, see Professor Robert Black's website at <http://lockerbiecase.blogspot.com>



mother's day at dungavel

Yet another Mother's Day and yet another gathering outside Dungavel in solidarity with those incarcerated inside. Organised as always by Friends of Refugees Ayrshire, Justice and Peace were well represented. John Kane of St Mary's J&P group in Hamilton thanked FREA for organising the event and said there would always be a J&P presence at the gatherings until Dungavel was closed. Arthur West secretary of FREA spoke about the threat of the BNP who would have candidates at the up and coming European elections and challenged all political parties not to share a platform with the BNP.

We had two MSPs present, Christina McKelvie spoke about her concerns of the UK borders, immigration and citizenship bill, particularly about trafficked individuals being convicted of not having travel documents. She also mentioned how the soap 'River City' was challenging perceptions and prejudice with its latest storyline which featured an asylum seeker. Linda Fabiani said: 'Once again we mark yet another year when women who have come to Scotland seeking sanctuary from persecution and threats to their lives instead find themselves locked up like criminals'.

After the short speeches gifts, mostly flowers, were handed in for the detainees. CC

CAAT stop the armstrade week & day of prayer for the armstrade

This year's Day of Prayer takes place on June 14, and will focus on our government's continuing support for the arms industry. Contact the CAAT Christian Network Co-ordinator at christian@caat.org.uk to order a Day of Prayer pack. This is an ideal campaign for J&P groups to get involved with.

Stop the Arms Trade Week 14 - 21 June: In the week that British civil servants will be working hard to promote arms exports at the Paris Airshow, take action with CAAT to end the arms trade. Contact Anne-Marie at annemarie@caat.org.uk to order a Stop Week pack or to find out about actions planned in your area.

prayer

We pray for an end to our government's policy that promotes the export of arms: to countries where the huge sums of money wasted on British weapons would be better spent on education, health and social welfare, creating employment and increasing access to safe clean drinking water to countries with abysmal human rights records.

We pray for a change of heart that will lead our government to make a firm commitment to support peace and reconciliation in countries torn apart by internal strife and where oppression of the people is widespread. May we soon see a situation where we can be proud of our political leaders, rather than deeply ashamed by their actions and our complicity in them. We remember the victims of violence in so many countries throughout the world, the majority of whom are civilians, the very young and the elderly.

Part of a prayer of intercession originally written by Alun Morinan

reflections on applying for UK Citizenship

Two years ago Jill Thomson applied for UK citizenship. This is a shortened version of her reflections – the full version is available on the J&P website

People have all kinds of reasons for seeking UK citizenship – here's mine. I had a Right of Abode Certificate in my passport, which gave me a right to enter and be resident in the UK, and share the advantages of being a UK citizen apart from the right to vote or hold a UK passport. I had often encountered minor hassles at border control when coming through airports or ports. Nothing too problematic but usually I'd be kept waiting and be told to complete forms by over-zealous officials who weren't prepared to hear me when I explained I didn't need to and I would frustratingly be at the end of any queues leaving the area. Generally some other apologetic official, after checking my passport, would tell me I was right and they were sorry about the delays. So my decision for citizenship was driven by annoyances rather than necessity.

What I am left with at the end of the process is the sense that much of what was entailed in completing the application process, passing the Citizenship test and attending the Citizenship ceremony was an exercise in navigating bureaucracy at its most awkward and I can't help but suspect it is done to deter and exclude potential applicants.

I am a test-savvy person and I enjoy competition. A good robust test normally has me cheerily looking forward to the mental challenge, but this was very different. Once I found out more about the Citizenship test and bought the official recommended book from The Stationery Office: *'Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship'* (£9.99 plus postage), my usual enthusiasm was quickly dampened. To my puzzlement I found that much of the content was information that I hadn't needed to know in the years I'd already spent in the UK.

The Home Office say that:

'Studying for and taking the test will give you the practical knowledge you need to live in this country and to take part in society.'

For me this did not seem to be the reality. I was learning a whole lot of facts which I would need solely to jump through an examination hoop. The material did not have much relevance or practical application for me or in all likelihood your average new immigrant.

Without knowing exactly what will be tested the applicant must prepare to answer 24 questions on anything printed in Chapters 2 – 6 of the 120 page book. The test is taken at a Test Centre a large room full of people who are identity-checked and then logged-on to the Home Office test site. We are given three hard sample test questions. These seem chosen to be difficult and unsettling, yet are masquerading as a chance to practise the test format and computers and then when ready, we are given 45 minutes to complete the test. I had studied for weeks and was still really nervous. While waiting to get started I'd chatted with a few of those seated around me in the computer suite. Some of them had very little computer experience and were really worried about just managing the technology; add to this the fact that English wasn't their first language, then throw in a few more concerns and you have some idea of the weight of the situation.

Another piece of advice from the Home Office web page states:

'Don't worry if you don't pass the test the first time that

you try it; you can try again when you feel ready. There's no limit to the number of times you can take the test, but it makes sense to be well prepared as this will save you money.'

That note brings me onto the subject of cost. There are sizable fees entailed in applying as a first time applicant for a British passport. If a family is applying the cost could amount to well over a thousand pounds. Add to this the cost of having to take re-sits of this test at around £35 a time, not to mention the time off work required at the designated test time, not necessarily one that would suit. If you need to change test times there may be another £10 fee. I am left with the idea that again this could be excluding people on lower incomes, perhaps with less flexible work environments or with limited family support to help care for a child or assist with transport to the nearest test centre of which there are only 3 in Scotland.

The final piece of the process assuming that you are given citizenship is to attend a Citizenship ceremony. You have 90 days to do so after receiving notification to choose from a free public ceremony where groups of new citizens are welcomed together as opposed to a private ceremony staged just for me with a £60 price tag. I opted for the open event as I thought that meeting other new citizens and being part of a mixed group would be interesting and enjoyable. Puzzlingly within a day or two I was contacted by the Local Council organiser who strongly advised me to book the £60 private ceremony so as to make the event a more special day for myself. I wasn't persuaded despite being given a number of reasons why it would be 'best'.

On my big day, I must say, I had a splendid time and the ceremony at our local County Buildings was well thought out and the Provost and Registrar performed their roles with great sincerity. With the pomp that surrounded it all, the event had some gravitas. It was special and significant and for the first time in the whole process I felt that I was really being welcomed as a new citizen. But on the day, it turned out I was the only person for whom the local authority had to schedule an event. If I'd opted for a private ceremony it would have been exactly the event I had, no more or less, but they would have happily extracted £60 from me.

The whole process should be simplified, made much more user-friendly and the hidden costs should be eliminated. I was lucky that everything seemed in order with my application. Others are not so fortunate. The Home Office says:

'We may ask you to attend an interview, which could be conducted for us by the police or other representative. Depending on the circumstances, the interview may be held in your home, or you may be invited to attend an interview at our office in Liverpool. During the interview, you will be asked to give more details about your application. You will be expected to talk without an interpreter.'

The language used in this type of statement by the Home Office and in other descriptions of the process is far from friendly or encouraging, especially for those using English as a second language, the tone and the ominous messages may feel threatening.

In conclusion I think on the plight of the individuals for whom gaining status as a UK citizen may be a matter of life or death. The annoyance, discomfort and stress that I faced are nothing compared to the desperation and fear they must suffer through this mostly dehumanising and faceless process.

& here is the weather forecast...

It would seem that, in the words of Private Frazer of Dad's Army, 'We're doomed'. A recent meeting in Copenhagen of 2,500 scientists and others, in advance of the tenth anniversary review of the Kyoto Agreement, came up with some distinctly gloomy scenarios. Many of their recent predictions about climate change, it seems, have underestimated the scale of the problem. And as if that wasn't bad enough, politicians and governments are failing to act decisively enough on the limited pledges (that word again) that they have made.

A number of experts at the conference warned that global temperatures are likely to increase beyond the 2°C target set by European politicians. 'The 2°C target is gone and 3°C is difficult. I think we're heading for 4°C at least,' one said. Oxford University has announced that it would hold a conference in September to discuss the implications of a rise of 4°C or more. It has already been suggested that a 4°C rise could turn large parts of southern Europe to desert. Sea levels are likely to rise twice as fast as official estimates predict. Even modest warming could unleash a carbon 'time bomb' from melted Arctic permafrost and 85% of the Amazon rainforest could disappear.

Sir Nicholas Stern, whose report on the financial costs of ecological change two and a half years ago was enormously influential in political circles, has revised his figures and complained that politicians and others simply weren't engaging with the seriousness of the issue. For most people, a global rise of a few degrees is seen as only local: it would be pleasant to be a few degrees warmer in Britain. But globally, said Lord Stern: 'a rise of 5°C would be a temperature the world has not seen for

30 to 50 million years. We've been around only 100,000 years as human beings. We don't know what that's like. We haven't seen 3°C for a few million years, and we don't know what that looks like either.'

Climate change deniers, many supported by vested interests in CO2 industries as well as free marketers who don't want anything getting in the way of profit, met in Chicago in March. They are part of an industry which includes 15% of Washington lobbyists currently employed to prevent Congress passing limiting legislation. Their position has been well summed up by saying it is like going to 100 doctors, 95 of whom diagnose cancer, but insisting on believing the 5 who say no.

Meanwhile, academics met in Bristol in early March for Britain's first conference on the psychology of climate change. Among the views put forward were that the greatest obstacles to action are not scientific, economic or political. In fact they are denial strategies that we adopt to protect ourselves from unwelcome information, by distancing, projecting or attacking the messengers.

From the perspective of Catholic social teaching, it is a question of stewardship. *The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness* (Ps 24:1) holds priority over any notion of human 'dominion'. If recent scientific thought has taught us anything, it is that climate change has been accelerated by human activity. Some, at least, of that activity involves systemic injustice; and the effects are disturbing a natural balance arrived at over millions of years of coexistence. A useful resource is the pack *Between Flood and Rainbow*, which can be downloaded via the Justice and Peace Website.

Tim Duffy



your planet needs you!

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5 June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. The theme this year is: 'Your Planet Needs You – Unite to Combat Climate Change'.

This reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new agreement at the crucial climate convention meeting in Copenhagen in December this year, and the links with overcoming poverty and improved management of forests.

To find out what is happening in Scotland visit the Scottish Stop Climate Chaos website at www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland

prayer for today

Creator of the universe, we pray in gratitude and praise.

You were there at the beginning of all things, shaping our world, and preparing it for us.

You have provided the mountains and the trees, the waters and the earth.

Help us to be caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse, and ready to share with all in need.

Show us how to use our science and technology in creative, not destructive ways.

Deepen our awareness of our connectedness with all your creation, so that future generations will also enjoy every blessing.

Amen.

Michael Gormly, SSC,
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council Prayer Card

a new hope?

Lexi Barnett reflects on being an election monitor in the recent visit elections in El Salvador



El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Military repression and extra-judicial violence came to a head with the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in March 1980. His murder, and the carnage which ensued at his funeral when shots were fired into the crowds of mourners, led five left-wing guerrilla groups to unite and mobilise for change. The civil war began in 1980, and raged until 1992, when Peace Accords were brokered. The twelve years of fighting were characterised by disappearances, death squad assassinations, and massacres. In total, around 80,000 people lost their lives.

My first visit to the country was in April 2008 to do some research on the effects of climate change on impoverished and vulnerable communities. While it may be mainly associated in our minds with the civil war, El Salvador is also a beautiful country with lakes, volcanoes, extraordinary wildlife, and above all open-hearted and kind people. I fell in love with El Salvador then, and was delighted to be asked whether I would be interested in returning in March 2009 to help with the presidential elections as an international observer.

I am a self-confessed politics geek, and given the recent history of the country, its politics, the involvement of the US in El Salvador, the activism of the people and the sense of hope that was in the air at the chance for change, I couldn't resist. I wanted to support the people who had inspired me and to show solidarity with those living in poverty under a government that was allowing mining companies to destroy their land and diverting water away from communities to water the golf courses of the rich.

In the twenty years since the end of the war, the right-wing ARENA party has held power. After the Peace Accords, the left-wing former guerrillas – the Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) – were consolidated as a legitimate political party. Despite what seemed like blanket support for the FMLN and a strong mistrust of the ARENA party, the former guerrillas are sometimes still viewed with a sense of worry and fear. ARENA capitalised on this fear in their presidential campaign. They tried to present a dichotomy between themselves – allied with the US and economic development – and FMLN – whom they presented as 'backwards' communists, allied with Castro in Cuba and Chavez in Venezuela.

El Salvador's economy relies heavily on remittances from migrants in the US. Many people told me that ARENA were suggesting a win for the FMLN would sour relations with America and severely affect the flow of money from Salvadorans working in the States. Many Salvadorans are also employed in the export processing zones, or maquilas. Bosses told workers they would not have jobs to come back to if the FMLN gained power. Some even demanded that employees present photos of their ballot papers (marked for ARENA) on the Monday morning after the election. I was told that the mysterious blue and green

lines I saw painted on roads in the capital were to guide buses of Nicaraguans and Hondurans being paid to come into the country and vote illegally.

On election day, our group of international observers was at the polling station for 4am. Days of training had ensured we knew the procedure and what to look out for. As the stewards arrived to set up each voting table we kept an eye on everything from the t-shirts they were wearing (no red for the FMLN, and no blue for ARENA), to the time at which they opened to the queues of chanting voters outside.

In the early afternoon we heard the chant of "Fraud!" outside the building and were confronted by crowds of people surrounding a group in ARENA t-shirts. It became clear that a bus full of people from a different municipality had presented their ID cards to vote. One woman later admitted that they had already voted in their district, and had been paid twenty-seven dollars to come and vote again in San Salvador. The police tried to play it down, saying: "They haven't voted twice, so there's no problem." We mediated between the voters, who were demanding that the police detain and question the people, and the police, who didn't like it when we started taking their photos and noting their badge numbers. With one of the would-be voters in tears, and others holding their heads in their hands, I felt a deep sympathy for them. Twenty seven dollars is a lot of money in a country that is amongst the poorest in Latin America.

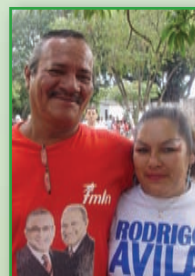
After voting had closed for the day, we were stationed to watch the counting of the ballots. As various voting tables completed their counts, we heard chants from the supporters of whichever party had won that table. Emerging on to the streets at around 9pm, we found the city full of FMLN supporters in their red t-shirts, waving flags, singing, chanting, beeping their car horns and hugging everyone they saw. Rushing to a nearby cafe to watch the official results, it was confirmed - the FMLN had won.

Waving at the people celebrating in the streets as we made our way home, we were approached by a tiny old woman. She told us that usually, no-one imagines that the electoral observers can do much good, but that she wanted to thank us because this time it was different.

I don't think the enormity of this historical moment had dawned on me until that point. For the first time in the history of the republic, here was a shift in government to the left. The people of El Salvador were brimming with hope and looking forward to a future in which they could work their way out of poverty.

I hope that the new government, when it takes office on June 1st, will be able to deliver the changes that are so desperately needed. It will be a tough job given the current economic climate, and the fact that decades of hope are on the shoulders of the new president, Mauricio Funes. But the people of El Salvador believe he can do it, and we all need to stand in solidarity with them in order to achieve it. I hope that the campaign chant I heard so often on my trip will turn out to be true: **'You can see it, you can feel it, this time it's different.'**

2 Voters - a husband and wife - with opposite political views!



newsbrief . . . newsbrief

'TOGETHER AGAINST POVERTY' LOBBY: Get Fair is a national coalition supported by over 60 organisations, working together to campaign against poverty in the UK. They are co-ordinating a constituency-based lobby of MPs on 26-27 June. Government statistics have revealed that 12.8 million people are living in poverty in the UK today - that's 1 in 5 of us. We want you to tell your MP that this is wrong, and it's time to GET FAIR. For the lobby to be successful, they need to find people in as many parliamentary constituencies as possible who are willing to act as a local organiser. Could you help? Full details are on the J&P website

CONGRATULATIONS TO GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL, they are the first local authority in Scotland to guarantee a living wage for all its workers. On 9 March, Glasgow City Council announced the launch of the Glasgow Living Wage, set at £7 an hour. (This is the rate recommended by CAP's Living Wage campaign.) The living wage will be the guaranteed minimum for all Council employees. The Council will also encourage its suppliers to pay staff working on Council business a living wage, and a Glasgow Living Wage Employer Award will be developed to encourage wider uptake by employers in the public, private and voluntary sector. The first local authority in Britain to adopt a living wage was London, in 2005.

THE BIG BANKS NEED TO BEHAVE THEMSELVES: Gordon Brown is talking tough about re-regulating the big banks to ensure that the mistakes that brought the credit crunch down on us here in the UK are not repeated again. But trade deals are being negotiated on our behalf behind closed doors by the European Union which will pave the way for the big banks to move in on developing countries. Read WDM's new report 'Taking the credit' and help stop the banks failing the poor at <http://tiny.cc/USzyR>

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY: The United Nations General Assembly declared 3 May to be World Press Freedom Day to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of the press and remind governments of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression enshrined under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More information at <http://tinyurl.com/3yhmo7>

VATICAN UN REP WARNS AGAINST RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE: Holy See permanent observer at the United Nations, Archbishop Silvio Tomasi, has expressed concern at the UN Human Rights Commission over increased intolerance against Christians, not only in countries where the religion is a minority, but also a majority. Archbishop Tomasi noted that in many parts of the world, 'religious minorities, including Christian minorities, still face daily discrimination and prejudices'. 'The Holy See expresses its concern', said the representative, 'on the increasing situations of religious intolerance and calls upon States to take all the necessary measures - educational, legal and judicial - intended to guarantee the respect of the right to freedom of religion and to

protect religious minorities from discrimination.' The archbishop noted that many States are 'increasingly siding with a new secularist policy that aims at reducing the role of religion in public life.'

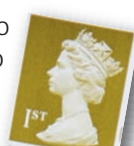
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD is marked on June 16. In Soweto, South Africa, thousands of black school children took to the streets in 1976, in a march more than half a mile long, to protest the inferior quality of their education and to demand their right to be taught in their own language. Hundreds of young boys and girls were shot down, and in the two weeks of protest that followed, more than a hundred people were killed and more than a thousand were injured. This day honours the memory of those killed and the courage of all those who marched. It also draws attention to the lives of African children today. More info at www.unicef.org

BAYWATCH THE MOVIE: Camcorder Guerillas are backing a campaign to stop Pencil Bay in Largs being concreted over by a local yachting Marina. Plans to build a huge concrete slipway and dinghy park have been vociferously opposed by locals, but are being backed by the local Council and MSP. Pencil Bay is famous for being where the Scots defeated the Vikings in 1263 and is a much loved beauty spot. It is one of only sixty beaches in Scotland to win a Keep Scotland Beautiful Award. The Guerillas have made a short campaign film and can be viewed via their website www.camcorderguerillas.net You can find out more about the campaign on www.savepencilbay.wordpress.com

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES - MAY 15: The year 1994 was proclaimed as the International Year of Families by the United Nations in response to changing social and economic structures, which have affected and still affect the structure and stability of family units in many regions of the globe. The International Day of Families, on May 15, is an occasion to reflect on the work started during 1994 and to celebrate the importance of families, people, societies and cultures around the world. International Day of Families reflects the importance that the international community attaches to families as basic units of society as well as its concern regarding their situation around the world. The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families as basic units of society and to promote appropriate action. Full details can be found at www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/IDF.html

EUROPEAN ELECTION: Visit our website for an up to date briefing from the European Justice and peace Commission.

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION: Many thanks to everyone who has renewed their subscription to the magazine. If you have still to renew please do so as soon as possible, as postage has gone up yet again.





poverty truth commission

Scotland's first Poverty Truth Commission took place in Glasgow City Chambers on a March Saturday afternoon. The hall was packed to hear what would be an afternoon of moving testimonies from those living in Poverty. Glasgow Lord Provost Bob Winters opened the proceedings. Bob like so many others had been brought up in the tenements, where there had been much poverty, but where they also had community. He quoted George Bernard Shaw 'The greatest evils and the worst of crimes is poverty'.

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Right Rev David Lunan, was host to the event, and the Commissioners who would hear the testimonies included Archbishop Conti, MSPs, Councillors, Civil Servants and others.

The request from the testifiers was simple: We want to be part of the solution, not constantly identified as the problem. We call on people to respect us as people and to learn from our wisdom and experience.

The testimonies of those living with poverty were very moving. There was the one woman who told us she was so hungry, that at age of six she had to go out and pick up and eat the bread put out for the birds, because her parents did not feed her. She thought she had found her way out of poverty by marrying young, but three weeks after the wedding she received her first black eye. Or the other woman on hand me down clothes 'long sleeves became ¾ length sleeves'; 'I was the one who didn't get to go on the school trip'.

There were the young people from Ruchazie, who felt stereotyped because they came from a scheme, 'The streets are too dangerous to walk to secondary school', so they stay at home, even though some of them are smart enough to go to university. But there is hope, some of the young people had the opportunity through the churches to go and work in Malawi. They were changed by that trip, 'I don't need the latest phones'; 'I want to stick in and achieve'; 'I can have high expectations'.

There was Loki the young rapper, whose rap was summed up in the following lines 'real poverty is in the minds and souls of all who administer our society'; 'High anxiety for I've nothing to give to society'; 'if you knew what I knew you'd be potty to'.

Then there were the Kinship carers, a group of grans and other extended family members who were bringing

up their grandchildren, whose parents were unable to do so because of substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, mental illness, teenagers not yet ready to be parents. The kinship carers get no extra money for bringing up their grandchildren, they have to buy school uniforms, etc. without any extra help. 'The system was so unhelpful and that 'no' means discrimination against these weans'; 'We receive no financial or emotional support'; 'We lost one generation to drugs and alcohol, we aren't going to lose another'.

The young man who had lost his job, 'the Sally Ally brought the children's Christmas presents'; 'it's the stigma of living in poverty'; 'the house they placed us in, the close was full of junkies we had to walk over needles every morning'.

The young man who said 'let me tell you... 'going for a job interview, the bus costs £3.20'; 'open a bank account, without a passport or driving licence it's impossible'.

We were told that there was a group living in poverty who were missing, they were asylum seekers, who were living on no support, they were too scared to speak in public.

After the testimonies the Commissioners retired to consider what they had heard. Archbishop Conti said, that for solutions to be found we need to hear from the people involved, and encouraged the Glasgow Council to re-engage with the communities. The Lord Provost said, that the Poverty Truth Commission had put the finger right on the button, whilst Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan spoke of the bravery coming through from those he had heard. 'If you bring children up in violence the cycle will continue. Nobody is safe until everyone is safe'.

The commissioners decided that there had been people missing from their panel, those living in poverty. So they would reconvene with those living in poverty, to work together on the issues that had been raised. In the meantime a couple of facts to ponder 'some people in Glasgow will go to bed hungry tonight'; 'in Drumchapel life expectancy is 63 and a few miles down the road in Bearsden it is 80'.

Much thanks must go to Faith in Community Scotland for organising this event, and I look forward to the follow up event, where hopefully some things will have moved on.

Carol Clarke

another world is possible! crosses & resurrections in el salvador

The Third Archbishop Romero Annual Lecture was given by Fr Dean Brackley SJ. Alistair Hulbert, development theologian and retired warden of Scottish Churches House gives an account of the evening.

November 2009 will mark the 20th anniversary of the deaths of the six Jesuits and two women who were murdered at the University of Central America (UCA) in El Salvador. March next year is the 30th anniversary of the death of Archbishop Romero. At the beginning of this jubilee year of anniversaries, the 2009 Archbishop Romero Lecture, organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust, was delivered at the Lauriston Jesuit Centre in Edinburgh on 12 February. The lecturer was Dean Brackley SJ, Principal and Professor of Theology and Ethics at the UCA in San Salvador.

Fr Brackley's analysis of the situation today in El Salvador was explained in terms of extremes – the country suffers from economic, political, generational and moral polarisation. It is sharply polarised around the interests of rich and poor. The ultra-right ARENA party has been in power for 20 years. But since the 1992 peace accords, the level of political fear has subsided and the political opposition has gained ground. It is likely that elections in March this year will bring to power a centre-left president from the FMLN, the Liberation Front of the former guerrillas. *[This in fact happened. Ed]*

The lecture offered a wide-ranging, disturbing, yet hopeful account of a country which is still one of the most dangerous in the world, especially for young people. Social spending is abysmal and fails to alleviate the suffering. The Church's response to the challenges and opportunities in San Salvador today draws on the life and witness of Archbishop Romero and other martyrs. These are "the crosses and resurrections of Central America", as Brackley calls them, which inspire us to respond better to our broken world. A new archbishop of San Salvador, José Luis Escobar Alas, was recently installed. And Brackley told several little stories about ordinary people as living examples of crosses and resurrections.

Alfredo, a member of Brackley's congregation, is a bricklayer and can't find work. Only 20% of the national workforce has a decent, stable job, and Alfredo isn't one of them. Now he can't pay for his electricity bill or his children's school fees. They barely scrape by on tortillas and beans and some extras his sick mother contributes. She cannot afford the surgery and medicine she needs. Alfredo is tempted to migrate to the United States, or do something more desperate. But he cannot pay the \$7,000 for 'the coyotes' who guide migrants past rapists, thieves and murderers as they trek northward through Mexico.

Brackley himself was a young Jesuit working in the

Bronx in New York when the Jesuits at the UCA in San Salvador were murdered. His response was to volunteer to teach in El Salvador and he has been there ever since. He described how in the South Bronx twenty years ago he saw how the exclusion of large sectors of the population from a decent way of life produces a threefold crumbling: of communities, families and individuals themselves. "In El Salvador," he said, "it feels like I'm witnessing the globalisation of the old South Bronx." This is why people are heading north to the USA, in droves.

But others are also coming south! Following the Second Vatican Council, many Christians in Latin America came to understand the nature of God's involvement with the poor. Faith requires of Christians in the north that they too understand this and stand in solidarity with the poor. And Fr Brackley went on – in an inspiring way – to reflect on the importance of the growing links between churches in north and south, the influence of visits of Christians from the north to poor Salvadoran communities – the impact of such pilgrimages on the Salvadorans themselves, yes, but equally on the visitors. This collaboration is a major source of hope.

For many younger visitors, he said, this is a watershed experience. Consumer society makes it difficult for them to find their way, to find themselves. But when such young visitors enter communities like those Brackley was talking about they forget their problems back home. They often experience a question welling up within them: If this is how the world is – if this is an average country – then how do I want to live my life? It's their deepest voice, frequently accompanied by joy and enthusiasm, which are signs that the Spirit is nudging them to respond to their deepest vocation.

'Vocation', said Fr Brackley in one of the most striking passages of his lecture, 'has no place in the lexicon of our consumer culture. Capitalist society might offer us a job or a profession, but the closest thing to a "vocation" it proposes is getting and spending and just having fun.' The Salvadoran poor not only evoke our deepest calling. They put us in touch with the deepest mystery of our lives. Another world is possible! And this new world has already begun and is destined to triumph.

And Fr Dean Brackley ended his lecture by appealing to his audience to see their engagement with El Salvador as part of the worldwide movement of international cooperation that has been growing exponentially in quantity, in sophistication and in effectiveness. The churches, and the Catholic Church in particular, are better positioned than anyone else to globalise international solidarity. Let us remember that and act on it!

The full text of Fr Brackley's talks may be found on the excellent *Thinking Faith* website: http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20090218_1.html



refugee week 15 - 21 june 2009

Refugee Week is a UK wide programme of events which celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK. During Refugee Week hundreds of events exploring refugee experiences take place across the UK. These range from small community and school activities to art exhibitions, political debates, film screenings, conferences, big music festivals, sports events etc... The theme is **Different Pasts, Shared Future**. Anyone

can get involved in Refugee Week either by organising or visiting an event or by just spreading the word! More information at <http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/>

news from jayyous

Fraser Ritchie from Tayport Justice and Peace volunteered for an Ecumenical Accompaniment programme in the West Bank. Here is a recent report.

Last night, 17 February, in Jayyous, a village in the West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories, at 3 am we watched as the Israeli army rounded up young Palestinian men from the village, taking them from their sleep and their families, blindfolded, into the jeeps. We did not know where. Jeeps go around the town declaring a curfew. At 8 am it is still curfew, and we learn they have taken maybe 40, they have entered the mayor's house and occupied the boys' school and we can see the jeeps in the playground. We use our status as internationals to approach the Israeli soldiers and ask what is happening and are told they are taking people engaging in disorderly behaviour and 'terrorist activities' about whom they have 'information'. As we stand, another squad bring in another 2 men, blindfolded, one about 40 the other younger, and they have a tracker dog. More are coming out of arriving jeeps.

This latest episode follows a visit in the middle of the night by the army, a few days ago, when they came in about 12 jeeps, broke into the school, took photographs and went away. This visit was watched silently by locals from their houses and was regarded as ominous. We now know why.

At 3pm the curfew is still on, the streets are quiet, shops closed and no traffic to the outside world and people are restoring their peace in their sunlit gardens. But the nightmare continues for the men arrested as another jeep passes out of the village, taking them we think to another place. When will their family find out? By 7pm the curfew is lifted.

Jayyous is an agricultural village in the West Bank of about 4000 people where the first campaign against the notorious Israeli Separation Barrier took place. For Palestinians the Barrier is a physical reality of injustice and abuse of power by the Israeli state. Six years on a new Barrier is being erected, a so called concession that will swallow up more land. Demonstrations have taken place here most Fridays since last November.

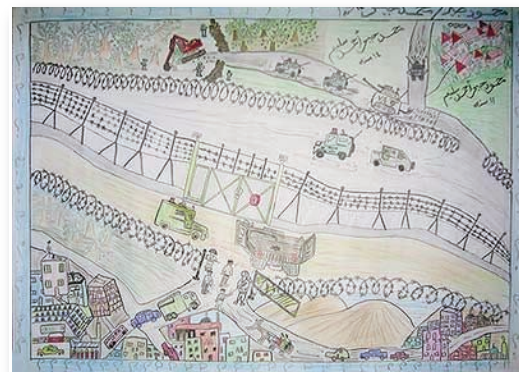
The Barrier cuts off farmers from their land. They can only pass through the few farm gates if they have a permit from the military and at times when the Israeli army of occupation allows. Where a family worked a farm, now only one gets a permit, usually only for a few months at a time. Harvest time where ripening fruits

must be picked, packed and taken to market, is made very difficult, sometimes impossible. Permits are also being arbitrarily refused. People in Jayyous are getting poorer. When the farm gates do open, farmers on donkey carts or tractors go past armed soldiers, and must return that day, otherwise they may lose their permit. But they will not have been in Israel, only on their own land, because this Barrier is at least 6 kilometres from the Green line, the 1949 Armistice Line, which is regarded as the border between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the international community. The Barrier was declared illegal by an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 2004.

Young men from 16 -35 are worst affected because they are less likely to get a permit to pass through the gates to the land and this is their source of income and employment. In frustration they hurl stones and rocks at the army who respond with sound bombs, tear gas and rubber bullets. In the 3 weeks we have been here we have seen many army incursions into the village, one right outside our door when a lad carrying his identity trying to get home was arrested, and released next day with what looked like cigarette burns on his neck. Some incursions are at night. In a neighbouring village last week, all males over 12 were ordered out of their homes while the houses were searched and they were told it would be everyone next time if more stones were thrown. These actions alarm local people, curfews are imposed, rubber bullets can cause serious injury and tear gas is very unpleasant and potentially dangerous or damaging or fatal to chickens, sheep, bees and other livestock to be found all over these agricultural villages.

There is hardly a family here without a story of at least one in the family who has been arrested, and detained, many for a short period, others for 6 or 12 months or longer. Grim stories emerge of their treatment in prison. A father says 'It is hard for a parent, you bring them up to 16, they get detained and go away for 2 years and come back broken. Your dream has vanished. It's not just about the barrier, the gates and permits and curfews. It is more. They use all the psychological techniques to get a collaborator. And they get bribed with a permit, or a job in an Israeli settlement or industrial area.'

The intelligence gatherers of the occupying forces search out the potential leaders often at the university at Nablus with ideas of resistance to occupation. We



The Gate by Mohammed, 14 and Moreed, 11
The fate of the Palestinians in Jayyous lies with the gate in the apartheid fence, which the Israeli government erected. The few (approximately 50) men who are issued permits to pass through must wait at the gate to enter and exit their land on the other side. The gate is, at best, open 3 times daily in 15 minute slots. During the olive harvest the gate was shut for three weeks. When the gates were finally re-opened, farmers were overburdened with work to collect the olive harvest in time before their crops became spoiled.

have spoken to one of these who endured 3 spells in prison. He said that in one of these spells he was questioned over 100 days about his activities, blindfold and tied hand and foot, and kept in a cell 1m by 2m without toilet. When released he could not at first walk or see.

Palestinians and Israeli human rights organisations say that the Barrier is not about giving Israel security. In this area it is well inside Palestinian territory. They say it is there to permit the expansion of the nearby settlement of Zufin. The settlement of Israeli citizens, the

population of the occupying nation, is illegal according to International Law. 460,000 Israeli citizens now live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, on land formerly occupied by Palestinians and more land is constantly being taken to provide fast roads for these settlers to their work and western pleasures in Israel.

Is it surprising that people in Palestine challenge such abuse of power while Israel is allowed to ignore International Law and resolutions of the United Nations? They throw stones at one of the most powerful armies in the world.

better together

arab & jewish women unite in justice & peace project



Hadas Lahav, left pictured with her colleague, Samia Nasser in the Hadeel Fair Trade shop with Carol Morton (centre)

Ann Davies describes a project which provides hope and cooperation for women in an embattled land

Against a background of unrelenting suffering in Gaza and the West Bank, when many ethically minded people are joining a boycott of Israeli goods, two business women have presented a sign of hope that bridges do exist between Jews and Palestinians.

Samia Nasser and Hadas Lahav were in Scotland as guests of Hadeel, the Palestinian Fair Trade shop in Edinburgh. Founders of Sindyanna of Galilee, a women's organisation set up in 1996 as a non-profit making company, they seek to build bridges between peoples while providing employment for women, the hardest hit economically. This remarkable group is run jointly by Arab and Jewish women in three Palestinian villages, with a main office in the Biblical village, Cana of Galilee. The visitors had an encouraging story to tell of working together for peace.

Their aim is to develop Palestinian farming and to secure Palestinian land from confiscation by the Israeli state. A member of the World Fair Trade Organisation, they count on support from customers of Hadeel which was set up five years ago to promote Palestinian crafts and to be an educational resource on every aspect of life in the Occupied Territories.

'Fair Trade for Long Term Solutions' was the theme of their mission in Scotland where they met Fair Trade Forum, religious and civic representatives on 6 April and spoke at a public meeting.

The Palestinian minority inside the Jewish State are the descendants of those who remained after the 1948 Nakba, some of them refugees. A range of legal discriminations has had a profound and disastrous effect on their development, culture and economy. 'We want to show that we can build another kind of community - working together,' said Hadas 'and we want to be an inspiration to others because if Arab women have opportunities, the structure of society would be changed. We feel we have a unique message - building

an alternative inside Israel.'

One face of agricultural Palestine remains - the olive tree - and Sindyanna's promotion of oil and soap was prompted by the economic need of farmers and their families, who have virtually no access to local markets. So successful has it become, while gaining international recognition for its Fair Trade principles, that Sindyanna exports to the US, Japan, Canada, Australia and other countries.

Samia described some of her own efforts at the women's advice centre, whose strategies empower women, safeguarding their labour rights as well as preserving the environment and general community welfare in the Galilee, Nablus and Jenin. Together they act in the interests of peace and a fairer world with prosperity for all, setting up drop-in centres in areas of special needs. 'Some are joining our work because they want to build bridges,' she said.

The Arab women in Galilee who produce unique Sindyanna baskets, were trained by the company and now the plan is to revive basket making commercially for the benefit of jobless Arab women as well as preserving a traditional craft so essential to the survival of Palestinian culture.

The production of carob syrup in Galilee and the West Bank and soap in Nablus assists workers and farmers, while beekeeping, taught by the group, produces the honey, which is harvested and packed by the women. Olive oil and the herb, za'atar, popular in local kitchens, is picked by Palestinian farmers in Jericho occupied territory.

Carol Morton, a founder member of Hadeel, says people may wonder why it was hosting a visit by an Israeli company's representatives. 'Sindyanna is one of the organisations in Israel which are the seeds of a future state which will live under international law among other nations of the world. The Fair Trade principle which it represents confers not only economic and social benefits but searches for political justice for Israel and Palestine. Boycott is not a black and white issue.'

Hadeel has its own web site: www.hadeel.org and can be reached on email: info@hadeel.org or phone 0131 225 1922. The shop is open Monday - Saturday 10.30 to 4 p.m. at St George's West Church Centre in Shandwick Place, Edinburgh.