

# UK General Election 2010

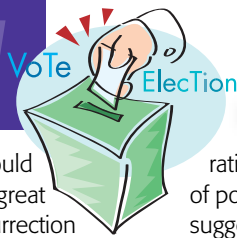


*In the democratic system, political authority is accountable to the people. Representative bodies must be subjected to effective social control. This control can be carried out above all in free elections which allow the selection and change of representatives. The obligation on the part of those elected to give an accounting of their work – which is guaranteed by respecting electoral terms – is a constitutive element of democratic representation.*

**Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 408**

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**W**e re-enact Easter once a year, but we should live it in every moment of our lives. The great liturgy of the passion, death and resurrection carries us through the cosmic significance of these events to their personal implications. At the interior level, we are moved to consider that love entails sacrifice and compassion, which as the word suggests brings suffering with it. But that is not the end of the story, even if our human experience of suffering and death seems to suggest that this is the case. The notion that we have to lose our life in order to find it needs to move beyond being a pretty paradox if resurrection is to have meaning.

Easter reminds us that the Kingdom of God is in our midst. Yet human fallibility and wilfulness constantly impede and delay its full realisation in history, misled by what people consider to be their freedom. In this process, love and compassion are twisted into their contraries. The contrary of love is not hate but rather fear; the insecurity that comes from a lack of a sense of mutual value with others. And the contrary of compassion is selfishness: the turning from outward sympathy towards others back into the snail like shell of the self.

As a result of these skewed perceptions, others are treated with suspicion, hostility rather than hospitality. Instead of the universal distribution of the goods of creation, there is a selfish greed for accumulation, regardless of the cost to others. And instead of the attempt to help others realise their God given potential, there is the oppression and violence that limits and constrains, for fear that the flourishing of others should compromise mine. In setting its priorities, Justice and Peace examines these aspects of injustice in three areas:

- turning those seeking asylum into objects of fear and hostility;
- distorting the economic dimension of the common good by greed; and
- using the threat of nuclear destruction for our own 'protection'.

This emphasis is useful when we come to consider that other great liturgy of secular society – the General Election to the UK Parliament, which we re-enact every five years or so. We shall shortly be invited to be part of a process by which the largely untrustworthy are given a mandate to govern by a mixture of the self interested and the uninformed. Thankfully, a large proportion of the uninformed cannot be bothered, so a 60% turnout is nowadays considered respectable. By then we will have been fed a mixture of propaganda, half truths and PR, in short whatever seems most likely to ensure electability, without any real accountability afterwards.

In deference to the US, this will be presented in a quasi presidential debate between some party leaders on television. These are not people who have not been voted for by the electorate; but the process conforms to the modern notion of a politics of personality rather than explaining and justifying policies. It is of course easier for people who have trouble with joined up thought.

Some of the most exhaustive recent surveys of the way people vote emphasise the non rational reasons that inform voting patterns. Our personal vote, particularly in a first past the post system, can have only the most minimal effect on the outcome of an election. Keeping ourselves abreast of the relevant information necessary for a well-informed voting decision requires considerable time and effort. Therefore, the

rational decision for each voter is in fact to remain ignorant of politics and even to abstain from voting. Experts have even suggested that this explains the ignorance of most citizens in modern democracies as well as low voter turnout. In this way, huge section of the electorate among the young and socially deprived particularly, have disenfranchised themselves.

Our own sources of information for making electoral choices are varied and depend on our context. For many of us it will be the media, discussion with others and a tradition – social, political or religious - which gives access to core values. The print media is not about purveying news: it is about selling things. It is largely bought and paid for by its advertisers and management. Much of the visual media is the same, aping the latest fashion and abiding by the rules of consumerism. The free market mentality still peddles the notion that 'We live in a moment of history when stuff, not ideas is what binds people together.'

There is something at once sad and apt when people can describe themselves as 'news junkies'; and when politicians have an unelected tribe of media directors to put the best gloss on their statements.

So the pledges are already spilling out. I have always been wary of pledges, the drunkard's promise to reform. We had them over Jubilee Debt, over HIV/AIDS, over Make Poverty History and of course on global warming. Net result: a lot less than pledged. Along comes the banking crisis and the required incalculable funds move smoothly and unaccountably to fill the gap and bale out the crooks who caused it – no pledges there.

Political discussion seems to take its cue from the media presentation: a combination of tittle tattle and unevidenced prejudice. And the rules for the substance of political discussion seem to assume the character of Alice in Wonderland's Cheshire Cat: a grinning creature that slowly disappears until only the grin is left. Politicians have only themselves to blame if voters seem suspicious or disaffected. However much one may claim nobility for a political vocation, it is ultimately about the arithmetic of possibilities: getting enough votes to be elected; and carrying enough parliamentary votes to bring policies into law. Democracy is a numbers game, a means to an end and not an end in itself. And anyone who thinks that putting a cross on a ballot paper every five years is the extent of democratic responsibility is seriously deluded.

Easter is the culmination of a part of the Christian story. We look in liturgy for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the founding of the church. To describe this church the early writers chose the ordinary Greek word *ekklesia* which means an assembly or a council. This is the place in which faith in Christ is celebrated and from which the Christian community derives identity, consolation and guidance.

Its great social principles were to become the basis of Catholic Social Teaching: the respect for the God-given dignity that is at the heart of the life of each of us; the distribution of all the resources of creation in accordance with the common good and with a special regard for the poor; and the ordering of power at the most effective level for the purpose, and for the maximum empowerment and employment of people's talents, skills and gifts. These touchstones allow us to make a decision not just about policies for election, but of the conduct of government by whoever is finally put into power by our votes.

Tim Duffy

## J&P website resources



As well as print media and radio and television, this election will find furious campaigning online. The problem is not getting enough information, but rather wading through the changing, interactive mass of opinion and propaganda for something reliable. It is useful to step back and say, 'Do I buy this? Is it anything more than a vote catcher?'

We will try to include on the J&P website some of the more useful material which bears on the J&P agenda and incorporates a faith perspective in the run up to the election. Just follow the links from the Home page. And if it is all becoming overwhelming, it is worth remembering the motto: Everything is politics, but politics isn't everything.

## the poverty truth commission one year on....

*Since their conference in Glasgow City Chambers one year ago (21 March 2009) the members of the Poverty Truth Commission have been meeting together regularly. Work groups focused on issues of violence, Kinship Care and other grass roots challenges. There were also plenary sessions of all the members, co-chaired by Tricia McConalogue and Lord Wallace of Tankerness.*

*In preparation for the up-coming election, the Poverty Truth Commission has made the following commitments and challenges others to do the same:*

### Manifesto

- In this caring and compassionate country we will not support any initiatives or legislation that have a negative effect on people living in poverty. Instead, we will promote all policies and initiatives which address the root causes of poverty and inequality in Scotland.
- We believe that the deep-set problems and far reaching consequences of poverty affect all of society and will not be truly tackled until those living this reality are seen as part of the solution - not as part of the problem. We believe that people affected should participate in the policy making process from beginning to end.
- We will actively work against the discriminating postcode lottery for jobs, benefits, loans and services of all kinds that exists for people living in disadvantaged areas and holds them fast in a de-humanising poverty.
- Kinship carers are family members who look after children whose parents are unable to provide adequate care. They play a key role in breaking cycles of violence and substance abuse in our communities, and are mostly deeply under-resourced and struggling with their own poverty. We will actively work to improve the funds and support services that are available for all children being cared for by their relatives.
- Seen as a public health issue in society and a symptom of poverty and inequality it is clear that violence cannot be dealt with by policing alone. In cooperation with local authorities and community groups, we will support initiatives to reduce all forms of violence in our communities, including interpersonal violence, youth violence, intimate partner violence, self-directed abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual violence, collective violence and verbal abuse.
- Drugs and alcohol are a central feature in the tragedies of poverty and violence. We will support all initiatives that seek to reduce the use of alcohol and drugs by people of every age and economic status.
- We will work to end predatory lending by all means including supporting legislation that caps the amount of interest that lenders may charge.

## good screenings

The Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation has joined forces with director Franny Armstrong (The Age of Stupid, McLibel), to launch Good Screenings - a new film distribution website, which allows anyone anywhere to hold their own screening of the best social justice documentary films and, crucially, to keep the profits for their own campaign.

Good Screenings went live at [www.goodscreenings.org](http://www.goodscreenings.org) on March 24th with an outstanding slate of award-winning films including the over-fishing polemic, The End of the Line, Berlin Audience winner The Yes Men Fix the World, Moving to Mars by Mat Whitecross, BAFTA winner Chosen and Franny Armstrong's own McLibel and The Age of Stupid. More titles will be added month by month.

Using the website's simple booking system, anyone can buy a licence to screen in their school, church, workplace, museum, scout hut or wherever. The license fee is calculated according to who they are, where they plan to screen and how many viewers they're expecting. For example, a school in India screening to 20 pupils would be charged £18 and a large commercial business in the UK screening for up to 1000 people would be charged £2,500. By charging for tickets, organisers can keep the profits for their own organisation, campaign or cause.

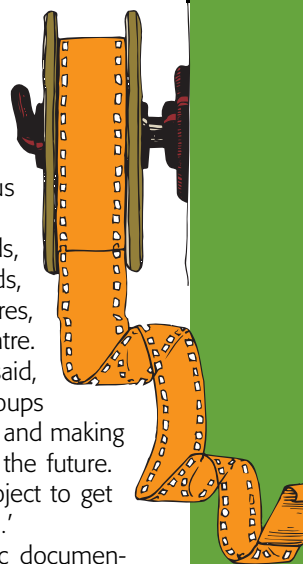
'The Age of Stupid' team pioneered this new method of film distribution in 2009 and realised they were on to a winner when more than 1300 screenings were booked in

the first six months - generating more than £100,000 for the film's 'crowd-funders' (300+ people invested in the production of the film) and many thousands more for numerous campaigns.

The film continues to play in NHS wards, church halls, Government departments, fields, offices, museums, boats, schools, art centres, British Council offices, and even at a garden centre. One organiser near Inverness in the Highlands said, 'I found myself the hub of 12 environmental groups networking, making new friends, passing ideas, and making plans for joint meetings and film showings in the future. I've since launched a new Transition Town Project to get local people to build a viable food seed bank...'

Franny Armstrong says 'Too many fantastic documentaries end up on the filmmaker's shelf as distributors don't think there's money to be made in saving the world. Good Screenings means that good films can be seen by good people, inspiring lots of good action. And everyone makes a few quid too. It's a win win win.'

Another organiser who used a suspended sheet as a cinema screen said 'The screening was a huge success. We ate popcorn hot off the barbecue and engaged in a lengthy discussion after the film, with much of the audience leaving full of inspiration to take action. We raised £125 pounds for our campaign.'



# mothers' day at dungavel



Gathering at Dungavel

## Margaret McGowan gives a brief account of an annual solidarity meeting.

The usual suspects assembled for the Mother's Day gathering at Dungavel Detention Centre on Sunday 14th March - the weather was kind, no rain only a cold wind. We met in the aftermath of the apparent death by suicide of a Russian family in Sighthill a few days earlier. Also fresh in the mind was the case of the family of two five-year-old boys and their mother detained as they signed on at Brand Street Immigration Centre in Glasgow.

Mary Macpherson, Motherwell J&P Commission representative, read out a moving poem written by Benjamin Zephaniah which brought tears to a few eyes.

As the event was progressing we noticed two cars drawing up at different times and people carrying their passports reporting to the gate. They were seen by the security guards and then returned to their cars. One member of our assembled group approached them and asked them what was going on. It transpired that they had driven up from Middlesborough to visit friends who were detained in Dungavel. Their appointment was for 1pm but they were told they would have to wait another two hours at least till 3pm to get in because the people assembled outside posed a security risk.

The authorities had been made well aware that the gathering would last from 1pm till 1.30pm. So why the extra hour and a half, unless to demonstrate that forcing people to wait is an exercise in power? Did the security people seriously fear that the people gathered would storm the centre and release the detainees? If we posed a security risk, God help them if somebody with serious intent turns up. It brought home to us at first hand the bewildering world of British bureaucracy which seems to lack not only humanity and compassion, but basic common sense.

As we handed in cards and gifts we asked the guards if the visitors might get in sooner rather than later and hoped our request did not fall on deaf ears.

## we refugees

*I come from a musical place  
Where they shoot me for my song  
And my brother has been tortured  
By my brother in my land.*

*I come from a beautiful place  
Where they hate my shade of skin  
They don't like the way I pray  
And they ban free poetry.*

*I come from a beautiful place  
Where girls cannot go to school  
There you are told what to believe  
And even young boys must grow beards.*

*I come from a great old forest  
I think it is now a field  
And the people I once knew  
Are not there now.*

*We can all be refugees  
Nobody is safe,  
All it takes is a mad leader  
Or no rain to bring forth food,  
We can all be refugees  
We can all be told to go,  
We can be hated by someone  
For being someone.*

*I come from a beautiful place  
Where the valley floods each year  
And each year the hurricane tells us  
That we must keep moving on.*

*I come from an ancient place  
All my family were born there  
And I would like to go there  
But I really want to live.*

*I come from a sunny, sandy place  
Where tourists go to darken skin  
And dealers like to sell guns there  
I just can't tell you what's the price.*

*I am told I have no country now  
I am told I am a lie  
I am told that modern history books  
May forget my name.*

*We can all be refugees  
Sometimes it only takes a day,  
Sometimes it only takes a handshake  
Or a paper that is signed.  
We all came from refugees  
Nobody simply just appeared,  
Nobody's here without a struggle,  
And why should we live in fear  
Of the weather or the troubles?  
We all came here from somewhere.*

Benjamin Zephaniah



# refugee Week 14 - 20 june 2010

*Different pasts, shared future*

Refugee  
Week



The purpose of Refugee Week is to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotypes of refugees, through arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and promote understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary.

Refugee Week was first held in 1998, and was created in response to the increasingly negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers held by the general public in Britain. During Refugee Week 2009, between 500 and 550 events took place across the UK.

This year, everyone is being asked to do a 'Simple Act'. By doing one small, everyday action that can change perceptions of refugees we can help create a society we all want to live in. Visit the simple acts website at [www.refugeeweek.org.uk/simple-acts](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/simple-acts) to find out more. For example the simple act of the Month for April is 'Do a quiz on refugees'. A quiz a great way to learn about refugees, as the answers can surprise and challenge perceptions. There is a whole bunch of brain-teasers to try your hand at, and is ideal for schools and parishes. You can also order the Simple Acts journal, which is an excellent little booklet

containing 20 simple ideas, and room for your own thoughts, it is a must have for all J&P people.

*My best friend, Mr. Gruber, who keeps an antique shop in the Portobello Road, says there are so many homeless people in the world nowadays, I would have probably ended in up in a camp along with lots of others.*

*He was a refugee himself once, and he says that although the people who run the camps try to do their best, it isn't easy, and it's particularly hard for children who are alone in the world and have no else to turn to. They, more than anyone else, need all the help they can get. That's why Refugee Week is so important.*

*The most precious thing you can give a child is your time. Every little helps and it's the thought that counts.*  
From 'Paddington Bear's Simple Act' by Michael Bond

A visit to the Refugee Week website [www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk) will give lots of ideas for celebrating the week and will let you know of events happening near you.

## campaign against arms trade's stop week 19-27 June



**With the general election fresh in our minds, and many new MPs, the months following the election are a unique opportunity to build a strong base of support in the new parliament.**

- Take action in Stop Week to put the arms trade at the top of your MP's agenda and to win their support for an end to government support for arms exports.
- Link up with other CAAT supporters in your constituency, and stand together with others across the UK to call for the closure of the government's arms trading unit.

Order a Stop Week Action pack: [niki@caat.org.uk](mailto:niki@caat.org.uk) see [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk) for more details

### day of prayer for the arms trade 20 June 2010

God, you have entrusted us with the care of each other.

Forgive us that we profit from the oppression and injury of our brothers and sisters.

Forgive us that we develop so readily the means of destruction at the expense of the things that create community.

Forgive us that when we are asked for bread we sell bombs, and that we have made the livelihood of so many dependent upon trading in death.

Enable the victims of the arms trade to forgive us.

Enable us to give ourselves in commitment to the eradication of this evil.

Enable us to help those with power to work for justice and peace.

Lord, you have given us all we need;

So now make us ready to forfeit all the hurtful things that are not needed.

God, who is against the arms trade and for the people, give us your love.

*Taken from a prayer vigil outside BAE Systems arms factory, Warton, Lancs. and reproduced, with permission, from Paynter N, Boothroyd H, Holy Ground (Wild Goose Publications, 2005), 178*

**As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in Washington last month absorbing the full wrath of the Obama administration, the Pentagon and Israel's defence establishment were in the process of sealing a large arms deal.**

- Amos Harel, writing in a news article for the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz. According to the deal, Israel will purchase three new military aircraft manufactured specifically for Israeli needs. America and Israel are still in the process of an agreement regarding the purchase of another war plane, the F-35, in a deal estimated to be worth more than \$3 billion. The deal will be covered by American foreign assistance funds. (Source: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1159155.html> )

# oscar romero: the people's saint

**Bishop Maurice Taylor preached this homily at a memorial Mass at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the assassination of Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador .**

**W**ho was Oscar Romero? How did he make such an impact on the Church in El Salvador? And why was he killed?

When Central America gained independence from Spain nearly 200 years ago, it soon split into five separate and different republics: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

Of the five, El Salvador is the smallest in area. It is also the only one whose name is a Christian name – a name that could not be more Christian: El Salvador, The Saviour – yet its people are probably the most argumentative and combative in all of Central America. Nonetheless, as if the name of the country were insufficient, its capital city is San Salvador (Holy Saviour) and many of the towns have saints' names. For example, I spent some time as the temporary priest in charge in the town of Dulce Nombre de María (literally, Sweet Name of Mary).

El Salvador, like the other independent republics of Central America, inherited from Spain a legacy of autocracy. Power and wealth lay with a minority, even an oligarchy, whose members, generation after generation, succeeded in retaining their wealth and power. The great majority of the people were poor, ill-educated, kept marginalised and without prospects. Proper reform was not on the agenda – neither political nor judicial reform, nor land reform. The status quo had to be maintained and it was maintained principally because the few had most of the land and the best of the land, the most productive land. And why should they give up such a comfortable and privileged lifestyle by allowing a more equitable sharing of nature's riches and life's opportunities?

Of course, this unjust state of affairs began to be challenged. There were some attempts at armed rising earlier last century, but they were suppressed ruthlessly and without great difficulty. In the 1970s, unrest began to grow in a serious and widespread way and the army was used for what was called counter-insurgency. In addition to the uniformed forces of the republic, officered by men from the privileged classes, there also began to exist death squads, employed by powerful and brutal elements. The result was that the poor, whether the urban poor or the peasants, were living in fear as well as in poverty and in the midst of conflict.

Gradually, those brave enough actively to fight the structural injustice coalesced into an armed organisation called the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation and usually known as the FMLN (Farabundo Martí had led an unsuccessful revolt earlier in the century). Thus, around the year 1980, civil war began in El Salvador, a war that, from the army's point of view, was waged on a 'search and destroy' basis while the FMLN fought a guerilla type of campaign.

Since Central America is in what is called the United States' sphere of influence, the US government was, in various ways, active in El Salvador. It had much financial and commercial involvement in the country and that, along with an obsession about communism in the hemisphere, ensured that the United States provided financial, diplomatic and even military support to the regime and its policies of repression.

During this time what was the Catholic Church in El Salvador doing? Rather, let me phrase that differently: What was the Church leadership doing? On the whole, the bishops supported the status quo, either by giving active encouragement or by their silence and non-intervention.

There are several possible reasons for this. Some bishops came from the wealthy sector of the population; some feared the opposition to right-wing governments was Marxist-inspired; others perhaps on the specious grounds that the Church should not interfere in politics (even when those politics are blatantly unjust).

Despite the very encouraging teachings coming from meetings of Latin American bishops in Medellín and Puebla, many bishops in that part of the world have either been hostile to those actively engaged in trying to change the unjust structures so widespread, or, at least, have shown little or no enthusiasm for such endeavours. And, since bishops are appointed by Rome and only after careful investigation into their backgrounds, opinions and suitability, one sometimes wonders. Similarly and personally, I have to say that the Holy See's attitude to liberation theology and to Small Christian Communities has often been suspicious and negative; but to say more on that would take us down another path.

When the Archdiocese of San Salvador needed a new archbishop in 1977, there was satisfaction in government circles that the Vatican's choice fell on the relatively little-known Oscar Arnulfo Romero. He was bishop of Santiago de María, a small rural diocese in the east of El Salvador. The general expectation was that he would have little to say about the injustice and violence rampant in the country. Perhaps Oscar Romero himself, when nominated to the capital, had little thought of getting deeply involved. But it is one thing to be bishop of a small diocese away from the centre of things and another to be archbishop in the capital city and very much in the public eye.

His tenure of office in San Salvador was very short – only three years, but what a heroic and inspirational leader he turned out to be. He probably knew that, as archbishop of the nation's capital and the seat of the government, he could not ignore the prevalent and intolerable situation. God gave him the wisdom and the courage that he needed and he did not fail in his duty.

The new archbishop did not have long to wait before having the opportunity to declare where he stood. The Jesuits had been particularly courageous and outspoken on behalf of the victims of the oppression and in their criticism of injustice. Soon after Romero became archbishop, Father Rutilio Grande, a Jesuit and the parish priest of a village in the archdiocese, was assassinated by a death squad. The archbishop was swift, unequivocal and public in his condemnation of the crime.

Thereafter, his weekly homilies at Mass in his cathedral were broadcast nationwide by Radio Católica. As the violence increased, as the army became more and more ruthless against the peasants, as death squads operated with impunity, the archbishop's homilies became increasingly critical and proved a much-needed solace for the oppressed and fearful people. He condemned the violence and declared that it was the consequence of the injustice in Salvadoran society. He called on the authorities in God's name to halt their policy of cruel and unmerciful repression. Each Sunday, as well as the archbishop's homily, a list of the names of the victims killed in the previous week was broadcast.

The government objected to the archbishop, denied his accusations and called on him to desist. Not for the first time nor for the last, a veritable reign of terror gripped the country. Archbishop Romero became so distressed about the situation that he even appealed to the ordinary ranks in



the army not to obey orders to kill their innocent fellow-citizens. For the archbishop's enemies, that was the last straw. He had to be silenced.

He spent Monday 24 March 1980 with a group of his priests, relaxing at the beach, an hour's drive south of San Salvador. In the afternoon he returned to the city and to his own house, a little cottage in the grounds of a hospital. He then walked the short distance from his cottage to the hospital chapel. He had arranged to celebrate an evening Mass there. Having completed the Liturgy of the Word, he had just taken the bread in his hands to commence the Liturgy of the Eucharist when a shot was fired and he fell to the floor behind the altar, dying or already dead. A hired marksman had been driven into the hospital grounds and, from the vehicle and through the open door of the church, had fired the fatal shot.

Oscar Romero's death shocked millions of people throughout the world, nowhere more so than in El Salvador. No doubt his assassination satisfied many powerful people in the military and the government. No one has ever been brought to trial for the crime. It is believed that the hired assassin and the car driver were themselves soon murdered to ensure their silence.

The archbishop's funeral in San Salvador cathedral was

attended by huge crowds, including bishops and others from abroad, which served to highlight the absence of all but one bishop from El Salvador itself. The absence of the local bishops has sometimes been attributed to disagreement with the archbishop's very public views or to apathy and indifference. It is neither our right nor our duty to judge. But unfortunately also, the lack, so far, of official Church recognition of Romero's murder as truly a martyrdom causes sadness and dismay to many. The lack of progress towards beatification and canonisation is hard to fathom, but perhaps it is unimportant. Millions of ordinary people who, after all, are the Church and provide a *sensus fidelium* do not doubt that he is a saint.

Oscar Romero had declared that, even if he were killed, he would live on in the hearts of his people. This he assuredly does – not only in the hearts of his fellow Salvadorans but also in the hearts of countless people throughout the world who venerate him. They - we - believe he is a martyr-saint and pray that we may be inspired by the faith and courage of a heroic disciple of Jesus Christ, Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador.

Rt Rev Maurice Taylor was Bishop of Galloway from 1981 to 2004.

## march against trident



### **Margaret McGowan sends a report on a recent anti Trident march**

**O**n Saturday 13th March, we joined about 1,000 protestors assembled near the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh to march against the UK government's policy to replace the Trident missile system based at Faslane in Scotland. Colourful banners of groups all across Scotland including our own Justice and Peace Banner and also Justice and Peace – St Mary's Duntocher were in evidence.

We left at 11.30 and marched up the Royal Mile along Canongate, the High Street, across the South Bridge and on to the George IV Bridge, down Victoria Street and in to the Grassmarket, arriving around 12.20pm. There were many different groups, some political in nature and some

not taking part. Many parents and children also took to the streets to support the rally in the bright spring sunshine.

An open topped bus draped with banners saying 'Cut Trident not jobs' and 'Scotland's for peace', was the platform for the rally. The first speaker was Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond who said 'There is massive opposition to dumping a new generation of weapons of mass destruction in Scotland. The Scottish Parliament has voted against the 'son of Trident', a majority of Scottish MPs reject it, and it is going to be a central issue in the general election campaign.'

The second speaker was Rev Ian Galloway who spoke on behalf of faith groups present. He said 'I do this out of a firmly-held personal conviction that nuclear weapons are wrong as they kill indiscriminately' He also remarked that we had seen the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa and the Berlin Wall and that peace is not a pious hope but a determined hope. There followed various speakers from concerned groups and political parties. Just before one o'clock broadcaster Lesley Riddoch, the final speaker argued that the day will come when we will see the end of nuclear weapons, we have come a long way in the process since the first anti Polaris marches.

The event finished just after one o'clock with songs led by Edinburgh based musician. Penny Stone. She taught the audience a simple song which has three words meaning peace, in English, Arabic and Hebrew. 'Peace, Salaam, Shalom.' The singing went on till around half past one when the rally dispersed.

# trust + integrity in the global economy

## Alec Porter continues his reflections on the moral basis of economic collapse

In reflecting on Stephen Green's book "Good Value" for the last issue of the magazine, it came clear to me that the decline of moral absolutes in the 20th and 21st centuries and our disregard of conscience or the 'still, small voice' in modern society were major factors behind the global economic collapse.

*In Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy - Stories of People making a Difference*, Michael Smith, a British journalist, takes us into the lives of entrepreneurs, farmers and social activists across the world, giving hope that the global economic system can be tempered by conscience-based decision-making. By giving snapshots of three of his fifteen stories, I hope to portray a possible human face to globalisation.

Dr Ian Robertson (originally from Edinburgh) teaches agriculture and his wife Valerie teaches microbiology at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. Having studied tissue-culture in Edinburgh, Ian developed a method of breeding disease-free sweet potato and cassava plants – two of the main foods of Africa. He trained a team of science graduates in the technique and now has formed a company Agri-Biotech. They supplied half a million small farmers with sweet potato plants in 2007. The plants make it possible for a 30m square plot to feed a family of 7, all year.

In a country where, in 2006, the Home Affairs Minister said on National Radio, 'There is no grain - our people are actually starving' it is reckoned that Agri-Biotech is helping to feed and keep alive 3 million Zimbabweans.

The Robertsons are dedicated to Africa. In 1977 they took up their university posts. They could be earning much more in the developed world. Instead their faith called them to serve in Africa.

Suresh Vazirani, one of seven children, wanted to be a doctor. His family had fled from Pakistan to India with nothing, at the time of partition in 1947. His parents urged him to accept a scholarship in electrical engineering at Nagpur University in Central India. His engineering training has stood him in good stead as he now runs a medical technology company, manufacturing blood analyzers. These can do up to 600 tests in one hour for over 200 blood diseases. They save lives. The company Transasia exports to 50 countries.

Smith sketches in Vazirani's moral and spiritual struggle along with his success in the field of technology. As a young man he accepted the challenge 'to walk the talk, to rise above blame towards responsibility.' He gave up his well paid job as a trainee in a petrochemical-plant to work with Moral Rearmament as an unpaid volunteer for a number of years.

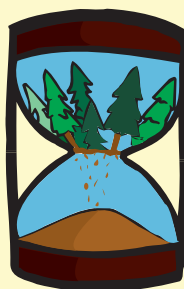
With a friend he decided to set up Transasia to import medical machines. All he had was 25 rupees (about £4). Friends and family said they would support him. A young Japanese exporter, who felt he could trust Vazirani, gave him the chance to become an importer of Japanese diagnostic machines. Smith describes the leap from

importing, to assembling, to manufacturing the machines.

Importing and exporting is riddled with demands for bribes to ease the path. Vazarani says 'corruption is a big block to progress. Because of it everything goes wrong. The intimidation leads to wrong decision-making.' Vazarani risked losing a DM 20 million sales contract to Germany because a custom officer wanted a bribe to release vital imported components. Rather than pay up. Vazarani left the components in the warehouse for 3 months. He went to the top customs officials, arguing that if Transasia didn't get this order the country would lose. 'We appealed to their sense of national pride.' The components were released just in time for Transasia to win the contract.

In all he does Vazarani is wholeheartedly supported by his effervescent wife, Mala. It was her idea to supply 35 blood analyzers at a low price to small clinics for the benefit of slum dwellers.

Lastly, Joseph Wong - a Chinese-Malaysian. After working for a Malaysian logging company in Papua New Guinea he formed his own logging company. Tragically, logging is a major driver of corruption and environmental destruction. Wong was no exception, bribing officials and



making agreements with uneducated villagers then stripping their forests for a fraction of their worth. 'I had 5 guns and my driver was a former army sergeant. If we didn't get our way by money we used force.'

With a party of others from Papua New Guinea he attended a conference of *Initiatives of Change* in Sydney. Wong recalls, 'I never realised the world is a lot better than I thought. I felt I had a real home, where I could share my pain and hurt. The way of life of love, honesty and unselfishness that was being discussed opened my heart and filled the emptiness. I felt able to talk about the way I was living. I felt purified and able to listen to the voice deep within me.'

He returned to Papua New Guinea and got rid of his guns. He calculated the tax he had defrauded to be \$600,000. It took 2 years to sum up the courage to go to the tax officials and admit his fraud. He repaid the sum in instalments over the next 2 years.

Other logging companies felt these changes exposed their methods and their corruption. They forced him out and he moved to the Solomon Islands where he became Managing Director of a Malaysian owned company. The company adopted three principles needed for viable logging: transparency, local participation and sustainable development.

It is a sad fact that our hope of achieving the Millennium Goals suffered a severe setback due to the economic downturn. If trust and integrity can be restored to the global economy through examples like these, the goals could still be met.

*Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy - Stories of People making a Difference* is published by Better Yourself Books - £5



# newsbrief . . . newsbrief

**60 children a day made homeless:** Last year, 60 children a day were made homeless, according to a new report from Shelter Scotland. The report - The facts: bad housing and homelessness for children and young people in Scotland 2010 - shows that across Scotland, 22,000 children were homeless last year - that's enough children to fill three primary one classes every day. And nearly half of homeless children (44 per cent) are under five years old. <http://tinyurl.com/y9kd2vr>

**European Year for Combating Poverty Launched in Scotland:** The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion was formally launched in Glasgow on 22 March. Over 100 people, the majority, people with direct experience of the issues, came together to discuss some of the key issues that form part of the year. Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety opened the event, and there were lively discussions about how the Year could leave a lasting legacy for the fight against poverty. For more details on the European Year and some of the activities planned visit the official UK Government website [stoppovertynow.direct.gov.uk/index.html](http://stoppovertynow.direct.gov.uk/index.html)

**Museum of Poverty Launched:** As part of their activity to mark the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, Save the Children in Scotland have launched a 'Museum of Poverty'. Launched at the Scottish Parliament on 4 March the museum contains some of the things that would be consigned to history if child poverty was abolished - fuel poverty, cheap processed food, etc. Save the Children are hoping to take the Museum on tour around Scotland during 2010, so look out for it! For more details visit the Save the Children website [www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/50\\_10792.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/50_10792.htm)

**Welcome Information Pack for Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum:** Produced by the Scottish Refugee Council. Originally launched in 2006, the welcome pack has been updated (in March 2010) to ensure details are correct and that it continues to provide relevant information for young people who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum, residing in the Glasgow area. It is also a useful reference tool for adults supporting these young people. The guide is available to download in English, Farsi, French, Pashto and Somali. Available at [www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/info/Children](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/info/Children)

**International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers 29 May:** This day pays tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in United Nations peace-keeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations Peace-keeping Forces in 1988.

**Convention against Enforced Disappearance:** Burkina Faso and Chile have now ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The good news is that the treaty now needs just two more ratifications before it comes into force. The fact that the UK Government has taken no measures to sign the Convention is a cause for great concern - this first step has to be taken before the Convention is then ratified. We need to remind ourselves that the UK was one of the first countries to call for such a Convention. You may like to bring this matter to the notice of parliamentary candidates in the forthcoming elections.

**Information about the Death Penalty:** At least 1,000 people are on death row in Iraq, which has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. In Indonesia, ACEH province has passed a new law which punishes adultery by stoning to death and imposes harsh penalties for homosexuality. The World Coalition against the Death Penalty has announced the Campaign for the autumn will focus on the United States. Source: Action by Christians against Torture

**Fairtrade Fortnight:** The Fairtrade Foundation thanks everyone who took part in 'The Big Swap' and made this year's Fairtrade Fortnight the best yet. Scotland was the biggest of swappers, registering over 85,000 switches to Fairtrade products in just two weeks, well done to all. And congratulations to Edinburgh Archdiocese, who were awarded the 'Best Fair Trade Community award' in the Edinburgh Lord Provost Fair Trade Awards.

**Global Nuclear Abolition Day:** This takes place on 5th June; thousands of people across the world will take part in coordinated local events at Government offices and nuclear weapons bases to mark Nuclear Abolition Day. The message is simple: it's time for governments to begin negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention to ban all nuclear weapons. Scotland will be playing its part at an event at Faslane, between 12noon and 2.30pm. Your presence can show the overwhelming popular support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Full details on the J&P website.

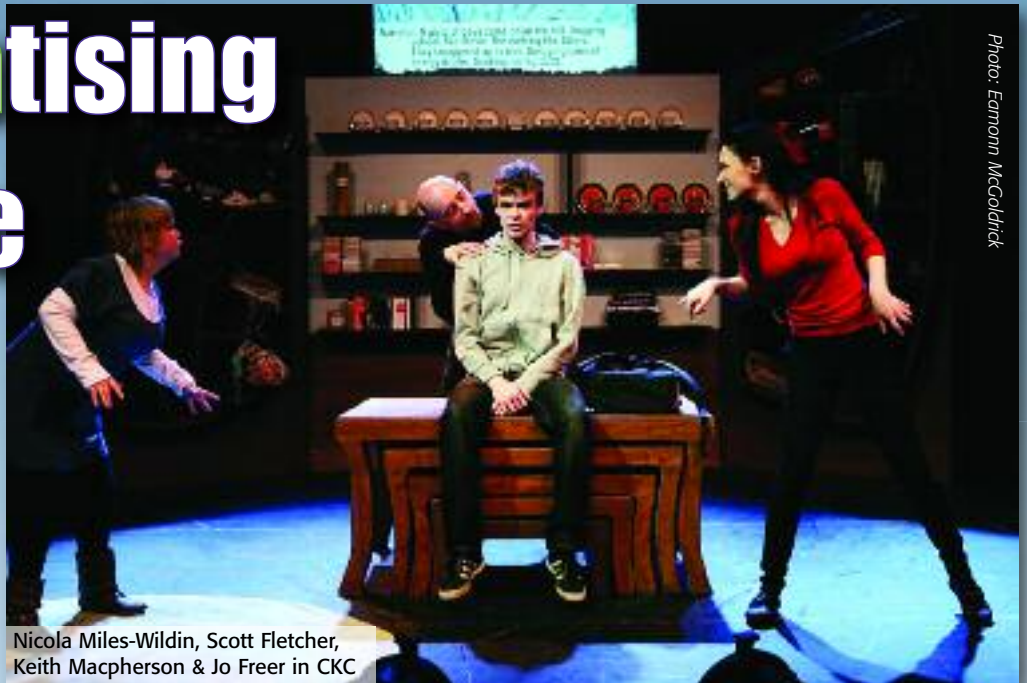
**Campaign success:** UKBA makes minor concession as asylum support rates increased by 1.1%. Crucial support for people seeking asylum will see a small increase for 2010/11. As of April 12 people seeking asylum will see a 1.1% increase in the financial assistance they receive from the Home Office. While this is only a small rise in line with inflation, and will still see those seeking asylum facing hardship, we believe it demonstrates that UK Border Agency is listening to us, our partners and supporters who backed this call. (Scottish Refugee Council)

**When will IKEA see the light?** IKEA sells not just furniture but also candles and tealights. There is, however, a reason for the low price: In order to keep candles cheap, the company increasingly relies on palm oil. Every year, IKEA uses 32,000 tonnes of palm oil for candle production alone, they know that palm oil production is unsustainable. The company has confirmed in a reply to Rainforest Rescue that they cannot guarantee the sustainable production of the palm oil which they use. Nonetheless, the company continues to rely on palm oil. Support Rainforest Rescue's protest and call on IKEA to stop the use of palm oil for candles in future and instead to use only domestic materials: More info [www.rainforest-rescue.org/index.php](http://www.rainforest-rescue.org/index.php)

**Israeli settlement goods - help take them off the shelves!** In the 43rd year of Israel's occupation of Palestine, the repression of its people is worse than ever. This must end. The Palestinians have a right to live with dignity, free from occupation. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign in partnership with the TUC aim to end the sale of settlement produce in Britain. The British government has recognised that the settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace. Yet produce from Palestine's stolen land - fruits, herbs, beauty products, DIY tools - are being sold in our supermarkets and shops, helping to economically sustain the settlements and strengthening the occupation. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/y8p2jam> to find out more.

# dramatising justice

**Morven Gregor, Artistic Director of the Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, gives an overview of the links with social justice.**



Nicola Miles-Wildin, Scott Fletcher, Keith Macpherson & Jo Freer in CKC

Photo: Eamonn McColrick

Yesterday I was sitting at the computer doing research for a future Birds of Paradise project. It took me to websites ranging from seventeenth century history to military blogs, from forgotten diaries to the Peace Pledge Union. As I read more about the effects of conflict and the reach of the arms trade I suddenly made the links not just to what I'd started out investigating, but to what I might write for the Justice and Peace magazine. I started to work out the connections between some of the work we do and issues concerning Justice and Peace.

Birds of Paradise is an inclusive theatre company, which aims to be an agent for change in the arts and education. While the company was set up in 1993 by physically disabled people who wanted to use the stage as a means of challenging preconceptions of disability, then and now the company creates work which portrays disabled people playing active roles in society and commenting on many issues. We employ professional disabled and non-disabled actors from across the UK and beyond.

In recent years, the company has created work on issues of land reform, equalities, the experiences of refugees, criminal justice, rural living, caring, inter-faith understanding and growing up. We have also created exhibitions related to many of these themes in partnership with other organisations and artists. In 2007, for example, our play *Beneath You, Spider Girls are Everywhere!* was inspired by the true story of a gang of young women in Chile who became notorious for breaking into high-rise buildings from the outside in order to finance their designer clothes habit! As well as performing inside HMP Cornton Vale, we worked on the accompanying exhibition with women from the 218 Project – an alternative to custody project based in Glasgow. The exhibition, like the production, opened at the Tron Theatre and then toured across Scotland and Ireland.

This year we have been working on another new production; *Clutter Keeps Company* by Davey Anderson.

On one level it's a bittersweet comedy thriller, described in 'The List' as, 'brilliantly energetic, with some lovely moments and lots of truly witty character-based humour', but there's something deeper happening as well. The central character, and actually all the characters, don't quite fit into standard society and so, questions about labelling each other and difference rise to the surface. Alongside the production, is an exhibition of photography by a group of visually impaired artists and an extensive programme of education activities. (Our education programme is hugely important to the company and runs all year.)

*Clutter Keeps Company* is particularly exciting for the company for a number of reasons. For one, we've worked hard to embed what we'd usually call access tools into the style and look of the play. So, for example, built into the set we have a screen where images and the text are projected, so that people who are deaf or hard of hearing can read the lines as the actors deliver them. Also the text itself is at times narrated, which not only gives the whole production a storybook feel, but also allows people who are visually impaired to hear the stage action described.

We will also be taking the production to Europe, as part of a two year European partnership project called DifferenzArt. This means that at the end of May we leave for Hungary, then Italy and later in the summer we will be hosting visitors from those countries here in Glasgow. There are a total of eight project partners, all of whom work with what can broadly be described as marginalised groups – some community projects and other professional companies.

One of the bonuses of taking the work abroad is that it allows us to tour some more Scottish venues – so if you didn't see the show in February/March you might like to consider catching it in May! We'll be in St. Andrews, Cumbernauld, Easterhouse, Banchory and Eastwood between the May 13th and 22nd – more details on our website [www.birdsofparadisetheatre.co.uk](http://www.birdsofparadisetheatre.co.uk) And if there's any other aspect of our work you'd like to know more about, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

# christian peacemaker team founder dies

**G**eene Stoltzfus, the founding director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, which aims to 'get in the way' of war and violence, has died at the age of 69, following a heart attack. He is credited with inspiring thousands of people to put their lives on the line in resisting violence and injustice and building peaceful alternatives. Stoltzfus served as CPT director from its inception in 1988 until 2004, when he retired and moved to Fort Frances, Ontario. He died on 10 March 2010.

A Mennonite Christian committed to nonviolence as a way of life, not just an 'ethical option', Stoltzfus travelled to Iraq immediately before the first Gulf War in 1991. He spent time with the Iraq CPT Team in 2003 to facilitate consultation with Muslim and Christian clerics, Iraqi human rights leaders, families of Iraqi detainees and talks with American administrators and soldiers. From mid-December 2001 to mid-January 2002, Gene Stoltzfus and the current Christian Peacemaker Teams co-director, Doug Pritchard, were in Pakistan and Afghanistan listening to the victims of bombing and observing the effects of 23 years of violence.

Stoltzfus's commitment to peacemaking was rooted in his Christian faith and experience in Vietnam as a conscientious objector with International Voluntary Services during the US military escalation there from 1963 - 1968.

Simon Barrow, co-director of the religion and society think-tank Ekklesia, which works in partnership with Christian Peacemaker Teams in the UK and internationally, said today that 'the vision Gene Stoltzfus embodied was one of genuine hope for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world... A deeply committed Christian, Gene Stoltzfus devoted his whole life to following Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and to challenging the princes of war - whatever ideological or religious garb they chose to wear.'

He added: 'In a world where religious faith is often seen and spoken of as a source of conflict, Gene showed another way - a way of deep faith in the possibilities of humanity when eternal love, not temporal rivalry and hate, is our source and inspiration. It was this brand of dissenting, thoughtful and forgiving Christianity which enabled him to welcome, rather than repel, allies from many different places: secular as well as religious, humanist as well as faith-driven.'

Gene Stoltzfus made a significant impact last year when he toured Britain and Ireland for three weeks from 16 January 2009, speaking about nonviolent intervention in situations of conflict and injustice, supported by Christian Peacemaker Teams UK, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Ekklesia and many others.

'Gene was at the heart of those who planted and nurtured the vision for teams of peacemakers partnering with local communities in conflict zones to build justice and lasting peace,' said Tim Nafziger of CPT in the USA, paying tribute.

The death of Gene Stoltzfus came on the day that marks the fourth anniversary of the murder of CPT worker Tom Fox in Baghdad. He was one of four Christian peacemakers taken hostage in Iraq in 2005-6. The others, Norman Kember, Jim Loney and Harmeet Singh Sooden, were eventually freed.

'Every one of us is impacted by a dominant culture which insists that military or police force will make things right. Every day, that culture tells us that dirty tricks, usually done in secret, are required for our survival. After all, it's argued, someone has to do this dirty work. It's called a noble work and the Blackwater mercenaries are required for the work. It will take an expanding world-wide but grassroots culture reaching beyond national borders to fashion a body of Christian peacemakers to be an effective power to block the guns and be part of transforming each impending tragedy of war. Little by little there will be change.'

*Gene Stoltzfus, peacemaker, 1940-2010.*

## *Dear Mother and Father of all Creation*

How perfect your unconditional love.  
You woke me up  
Confronting hell on earth  
Revealed the secrets of the heavens  
That place within.

How often I had wondered  
This mysterious universe  
Of your true nature -

We like babies floating in the spiritual womb,  
You never letting go of the umbilical cord.  
Like weeds  
Wrapped up in our own enslaved culture of self interest  
Choking your beautiful plans to death.

Forever you have been in Labour  
Your pain unbearable  
Your patience never ending

Your love warmer than the sun  
Your smile wider than the deepest ocean  
Your heart bigger than the highest of mountains

Lifting the dark shadow with your light  
Allowing our pollination  
Creating new characters  
Creating  
All the time creating.

Growing with your eyes  
Tasting your desires  
Our spirits dancing when we hear your tune  
Sinking in times of gloom  
Crying your tears

Our pain, sin, laughter, joy  
Each and every single one of your creation  
Touching, mingling, weaving  
Feeding us with gifts and weakness  
Making us grow stronger.

Outstretched arms waiting  
Trying to draw us closer  
Carrying us  
Picking us up when we fall over.

Caring, loving, trusting  
Always caring, always loving  
Always trying to speak to us  
Always trying to teach us  
Always walking with us.

Our spirits trying to breathe new life  
A new fragrance  
Like flowers  
Planting your seeds  
Enriching your earth.

How wonderful your harvest  
How wonderfully complex your creation  
Still in labour

May your beautiful Kingdom come!

*Cathy McCormack*



# diary diary

## APRIL

- 22 International Mother Earth Day
- 23 World Book and Copyright Day
- 26 Bishop Gerardi murdered in Guatemala, 1998

## MAY

- 1 St Joseph the Worker, International Workers Day
- 3 World Press Freedom Day
- 3 – 28 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference - New York
- 13 International Conscientious Day
- 16 World Communications Day
- 16 World Debt Day
- 22 International Day for Biological Diversity
- 29 International Day of UN Peacekeepers

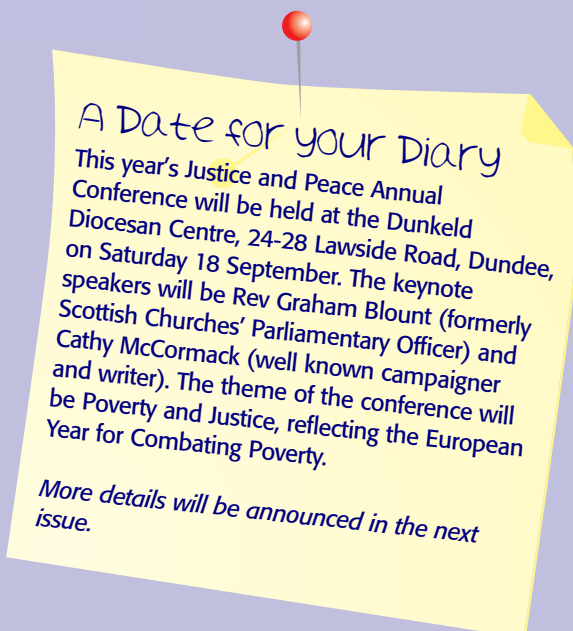
## JUNE

- 4 International Day of Innocent Child Victims of Aggression
- 4 G20 summit, Toronto
- 5 World Environment Day
- 5 Nuclear Abolition Day. Event at Faslane
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 14-20 Refugee Week
- 16 International Day for the African Child
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification & Drought

- 20 UN World Refugee Day
- 25-27 G8 summit, Huntsville, Canada
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Full details and links on the events page of our website [www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml](http://www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml)

The 2009 –10 Justice and Peace Annual Report can now be found on our website.



**A Date for your Diary**  
 This year's Justice and Peace Annual Conference will be held at the Dunkeld Diocesan Centre, 24-28 Lawside Road, Dundee, on Saturday 18 September. The keynote speakers will be Rev Graham Blount (formerly Scottish Churches' Parliamentary Officer) and Cathy McCormack (well known campaigner and writer). The theme of the conference will be Poverty and Justice, reflecting the European Year for Combating Poverty.  
 More details will be announced in the next issue.

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