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**Pope Benedict XVI at Westminster Hall**

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# editorial

The visit of Pope Benedict turned out to be a greater success than anticipated. It certainly dispelled a creeping campaign of vilification organised by sections of the media, self appointed social prophets like Polly Toynbee, professors of other subjects like Richard Dawkins, and Stephen Fry, the voice of Direct Line Insurance and much else. The Papal visit overcame claims that Catholicism is the interest of a minority which were made by the likes of the British Humanist Association (membership 'more than 9,000') and the British Secular Society (estimated membership more than 2,000). It was almost reassuring against this background to hear the Rev Ian Paisley's perennial chunterings about the 'Man of Sin'.

The Pope's opponents believe that the world would be a better place without religion which has been the cause, in their view, of much of the world's misery, violence and repression. This is rather a lot to foist on an abstract concept. One might as easily say that politics has caused much of the world's misery and violence and should therefore be done away with. But religion as a catch all concept is useful in making simplistic arguments: some Christians did bad things during the Crusades; the Crusades were a religious thing; therefore the Christian religion is a bad thing. And this works for a generation whose knowledge of history is largely derived from *The Da Vinci Code*, and for whom ignorance has made 'medieval' no more than a term of abuse.

Much of this modern anti religious outlook rests on the assertion that we have outgrown the need for God in a world where science, psychology and technology provide the answers. This is what Benedict spoke about in his first address at Holyrood, when he asked for 'respect for those traditional values and cultural expressions that more aggressive forms of secularism no longer value or even tolerate.' This kind of secular atheism also forgets (if it ever knew) two thousand years of Christian social and cultural welfare and social justice that gave us hospitals, schools and universities; as well as legal, moral and charitable structures that sustained society in much harsher times – and still do.

Yet the God we are supposed to have outgrown is usually presented as such a caricature that Archbishop Rowan Williams has commented, 'I do not believe in the God that Richard Dawkins does not believe in'. Theologically, Archbishop Williams and Pope Benedict could have these New Atheists for breakfast and still have room for a plate of porridge. And many who claim to be atheists have simply got rid of one god and brought in others. Science, Darwin, the Market, National Security, political parties, consumerism, self image, sport, celebrity... we've got more gods than the Roman Empire. In popular opinion, these gods are the objects of unwavering faith a good deal less justified than the faith of the religious they criticise.

A central focus of anti papal protest was the issue of child abuse. Such was the shrill and relentless nature of the criticism that one might be led to believe that child abuse had only ever been committed by Catholic clergy. One case is too many and damnable; and local churches have responded with different levels of diligence and concern for the victims. But one has to wonder about the motives for this sudden concern about the institutional Catholic Church in particular by self professed atheists and political liberals who, on principle, could never belong to it. Perhaps Catholicism is a softer target than Judaism or Islam. Much is no doubt due to the distortions of ignorance. A recent Angus Reid Public Opinion poll (since the visit) suggests that more than a third of Britons (37%) believe the sexual abuse scandal is limited to a few priests in a few locations, while about a quarter (27%) think the scandal is considerable and affects about half of the Catholic Church. One in five (21%) claim the sexual abuse scandal is widespread and affects practically the entire Catholic Church. Such uninformed thinking provides easy jokes for lazy comedians, where it is deemed to be 'edgy'. It also goes towards forming a climate of popular opinion, especially when you can make up the facts to suit your prejudice.

There does seem to be a view current in society that child sexual abuse is so uniquely appalling that in some fashion all our other deceits, betrayals and violence are of a lesser order. Repellent as it is, however, the sexual aspect covers up the deeper abuse of power and the betrayal of trust which demean our fellow humans and which lie at the root of so much institutional wickedness.

Many of us probably know good and active people who pursue all sorts of valuable work, apparently without the need for God or a basis in faith. It can often seem like a challenge to our faith. In an excellent article prior to the papal visit, Dominic Lawson, son of Nigel and brother of Nigella, spoke of being brought up in a home where God was never mentioned. When he married a Catholic and had children, his wife became responsible for their spiritual upbringing. He reflects on the paradoxes and contradictions which in theory should make life unworkable; but in fact it is wonderfully harmonious. He comes up with an answer which would no doubt be shared by Pope Benedict: love.

Thus two of the aspects of the Pope's visit come together. It is rarely so simple, but I would rather have a loving atheist than an unloving believer. St Paul says as much in his great hymn to love. For love puts abuse and betrayal out of the question; just as it puts forcing my ideas of God on to someone else out of the question. Yet, notwithstanding the mysterious roots of faith, I remain convinced that love is the litmus test of the presence of the divine, even where we do not or cannot acknowledge it: *ubi caritas et amor, deus ibi est*.

Tim Duffy

# FOOTPRINTS FOR PEACE

Here are two reflections from the recent Scotland's Peace Walk

For thirty days I was part of a moving community of twenty seven (sometimes more and sometimes less) peace walkers tramping the routes taken across Scotland by the nuclear convoys. We were telling our story in the communities we passed through.

We saw the destructive effect of this over-priced entourage dragging its deadly cargo along our crowded roads and potholed streets, past our primary schools without any evacuation programmes; next to our homes without our knowledge; by the food and animals growing in our fields; and close to the understaffed hospitals and closed down workplaces.

This was a group of global citizens drawn from four continents, with divergent cultures, ages and lifestyles, and between our encounters with the communities we walked through, we had to build peace with each other, while living in a simple way, sharing our food, foot balm and sleeping space and often our umbrellas.

One of the Life Rules of the walk meant that when we were offered hospitality in a hall or centre, we agreed to leave the place cleaner than we found it. And so, after breakfast (7.30) and before our morning circle (8.30) the whole group would work together, cleaning light switch plates, scrubbing toilets, polishing the back of kitchen taps and the windows of obscure cupboards. This felt absolutely wonderful, like being one of the shoemaker's elves, and working together in such a simple way really felt as though we were learning an important step in making peace.

Janet Fenton

*Ellen Charlton reflects on the visit from the Peace walkers, and points to the crucial role of hospitality as a part of peacemaking.*

On Wednesday 4th August 25 walkers from 'Footprints for Peace' arrived at St. Joseph's church hall, Blantyre. They were tired, hungry and somewhat bedraggled having completed 18 miles that day. This was the fifth

day of their walk which had begun at Gretna and would end in Edinburgh, following the routes of the nuclear convoys which travel through Scotland on a regular basis. The entire walk would take some 30 days to complete. Some of the participants would do the whole route; others joined in as and when possible.

It had begun to rain as the group walked the final stretch that day through the main street of Blantyre, raising a few eyebrows from the 'natives' as

they carried their colourful banners, posters and flags. It was a pleasure to be able to offer rest, food and accommodation (not to mention showers in local homes). Thanks are due to all who contributed to a most enjoyable stay – the walkers themselves with their stories and experiences, Fr Lamb, PP of St. Joseph's Church, Blantyre and all the parishioners and friends who made and served some really delicious vegetarian food.

The group represents a global community of friends from many nations whose aim is to create change through peaceful actions resulting from a deeper understanding of spiritual, cultural and environmental issues. It was a privilege to be a part of their journey.



Walkers prepare to leave Blantyre

## help jubilee scotland say *'debt's not done!'*

To many people, the problems of Third World debt were solved with the Make Poverty History March in 2005. Unfortunately, although progress was made, millions of people across the world are still being denied their basic human rights because of global debt injustice. People in poor countries are still having to pay back vast amounts of money to service debts which, in many cases, were incurred by those who used to oppress them.

It remains a startling and sad fact that for every dollar that goes to poor countries as aid, 5 dollars flows back to the west in debt repayments. Jubilee Scotland believes this money should be spent on projects which benefit the poorest, not fuel the greed of the richest. As vital members of the Jubilee movement, Justice and Peace groups across Scotland have been doing amazing work to fight for the human rights of people suffering because of unfair debt,

and have already achieved some phenomenal successes, for example the banning of 'vulture funds', which buy up and exploit the debts of poorer countries.

There is still much to be done though, and Jubilee Scotland would love to help your local group take positive and effective action to help the world's poorest. The 'Debt's Not Done' project is all about reminding people that the problems of debt aren't over yet, and training groups in the skills needed to spread this message across Scotland. Whether your group is interested in holding an event, linking up with other groups in your area, or you'd simply like to find out a bit more about the problems of unfair debt, Alys at Jubilee Scotland can help. Email [alys@jubileescotland.org](mailto:alys@jubileescotland.org) or give her a call on 0131 225 4321. She'd love to hear from you.

# justice and peace annual conference

**They unhooked the West Port and they got in for free  
At the J&P Conference in Bonnie Dundee...**

**A**dvanice planning: it's a great thing usually. The basics were booked for this year's conference when it was announced that the Pope would visit at about the same time. We went ahead anyway and folk still got to see the Pope. The Dunkeld Pastoral Centre in Dundee was full, with the reassuring need of having to go and find extra seats.

The theme this year was *Poverty in Scotland? A Challenge for Justice and Peace* – likely to be an ongoing theme for a number of years. The poor - the least of my brothers and sisters - as Matthew puts it, are the benchmark of our action as Christians.

This was the basis of the first keynote address by Rev Dr Graham Blount, until recently post doctoral fellow at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues; and formerly Scottish Churches' Parliamentary Officer. The Churches in Scotland initiated parish relief, forerunner of welfare state. It was the Churches who built the basis of education service in Scotland; and it was the Rev Henry Duncan, the minister of Ruthwell parish in Dumfriesshire who invented the first commercial savings bank two hundred years ago.

It is obvious then, in spite of suggestions to the contrary, that faith continues to have something crucial to say about 'big issues'. The issue is more one of how that voice can be expressed. Graham reflected on his own recent experience in a variety of forums in the parliamentary, NGO and church settings. And while work with big organisations is very important, it is no less important to be engaged with local projects involving faith communities. Here we are far more likely to encounter the need for the common good. This sense that 'we are all in it together' can combat the reductive vision of the human person which so often underlies poverty, disheartening those who find themselves trapped in it. What may best achieve this is the 'wee community of faith with a big heart', working with people to raise hope out of low self esteem.

At the root of poverty and its associated evils is social inequality. This has been amply documented in Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level* which provides overwhelming evidence that poverty and inequality damage the whole of society, something noted by St Paul (1Cor 12:14). As an example Graham noted that in 1970, a chief executive earned on average ten times as much as his workers; by 2008 he earned one hundred times as much. The proposed cuts in benefit will affect most those who are at greatest need.

Graham concluded by considering what our response might be. He invoked the story of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). Jesus did not walk in with a ready made solution; rather he asked 'What do you want me to do for you?' Compassion is not about our answers to the problem of poverty, but rather the capacity to feel in sympathy with those in the situation.

Cathy McCormack's approach was to set the problem of poverty in the context of her own life as an anti poverty



campaigner, mainly in the east end of Glasgow. She began with a startling statistic. When she started her work in the early 1980s, a child born in Easterhouse could expect to live 10 years less than a child born in nearby Lenzie. Within twenty years, the child born in the deprived area can expect to live 28 years less. Her own experience of campaigning arose out of finding her young children continuously ill as a result of damp housing. Initial attempts to take this up with the local authority met with the accusation that this was a result of people's lifestyle. Not only did we have to put up with poor conditions, said Cathy: we were told that we were responsible for them. This strategy of blaming people for their poverty has come up time and again, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, such as a UN survey which showed that dampness was due to poor construction. If you are living with little if anything to spare, however, the resources – material and human – for campaigning are more difficult to come by.

Nevertheless Cathy continued campaigning at local and parliamentary level. Her beliefs were also reinforced by visits to South Africa and Latin America, where she found the same basic issues of disempowerment. Poverty is like apartheid, Cathy maintains. The difference is that those who are poor are the same colour as those who are not. Yet the elements of social division and exclusion are no less real. The absence of access to decent health and housing, to reasonable education and job opportunities are the basis of cycles of inequality and deprivation which are passed down through generations. There is a need for a 'Truth Commission' which will not only bring the effects of poverty into the open, but will expose the complicity of the rest of society in sustaining this poverty.

No bare account can capture Cathy's unique voice (for that it is worth reading her book, *The Wee Yellow Butterfly*). Nevertheless, it provided a valuable counterpoint to Graham's talk; and the two fitted together well in the joint workshop presentation in the afternoon. Other workshops on related topics were offered, including *Using the Media* led by the journalist Marian Pallister; the challenges of *Living Simply* led by Fr Chris Boles SJ; and a consideration of the work of *Faith and Community Scotland* in Dundee, led by George Gammack. This allowed those attending a chance to participate. The conference concluded with Mass.

Justice and Peace Commission Chair Ellen Charlton said: 'This has been successful and valuable conference on a vital topic for our society and faith. The next step is to increase the ways that we involve ourselves with those neglected by our society, remembering that we are all part of the one body.'



# MIND (AND CLOSE) THE GAP



*Michael Martin of St Joseph's J&P has sent in this account of their experience using a resource from Church Action on Poverty*

**R**esources to help groups campaigning on the issue of poverty in Britain can be hard to find. However, at St. Joseph's in Clarkston we have found a very useful resource, though until now we have made limited use of it. The resource is the "Mind the Gap" Income Chart\* produced by Church Action on Poverty.

The chart is printed on sheets of A4 where each sheet represents £100,000 of income. Symbols represent people at different levels of income. While 90% of the adult population only earn enough money to get halfway up the first page, the richest earners are 30 pages away! The chart illustrates in a dramatic way the gap in our society between the richest and poorest, and brings home the scale of the (widening) gap in income.

Does this gap matter? Well, the chart ends with a quote

from the English and Welsh Bishops conference: *There must come a point at which the scale of the gap between the very wealthy and those at the bottom of the range of income begins to undermine the common good. This is the point at which society starts to be run for the benefit of the rich, not for all its members.*

How have we used the chart? We displayed it at one of our own group meetings so that we ourselves would appreciate the scale of the problem. We also displayed it at our local ecumenical Peace and Justice Forum for the same purpose. We have thought of using it at Sunday Mass so that parishioners generally get the message. So far, however, we haven't completely sorted out the logistics, but it does help to focus people's minds.

\* <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/campaigns/closethegap/closethegapchart>

## december 10 - human rights day

### 10 point plan for human rights

#### 1 Accept personal responsibility for change, no matter how small

Don't assume that someone else will do it. Don't be complacent. Even small things like refusing to laugh at a racist joke can make a difference.

#### 2 Reflect on your own behaviour

Reflect on the cultural practices or beliefs that you find confronting or difficult. It is healthier to name and discuss the issues that you find difficult than to try and be saintly.

#### 3 Identify what you have got to give

It may be time. It may be specific expertise. It may be a shoulder to cry on or a sympathetic ear. It may be money. Everyone can do something and this may change at different times in your life.

#### 4 Act in your own context

For example, has anybody in your workplace raised the desirability of a workplace code of values and ethics? If not, perhaps you could do it. Once people have discussed desirable ways in which people should treat each other in the workplace, it is a short step to raising human rights more broadly.

#### 5 Collaborate

There is strength in partnerships and strategic alliances.

#### 6 Join. Network. Lobby. Advocate.

Tell politicians what you think. To recycle an old slogan: 'Keep the sods honest.' Sign petitions. Write letters. If you can, make use of the internet and email to reach people.

#### 7 Treat everyone with respect

Respect is more important than compassion or sympathy, because respect is based on familiarity and understanding. And respect ensures that people retain dignity.

#### 8 Be inclusive

Once you have a good relationship with people, it is easier to think about how social justice and human rights issues can be raised.

#### 9 Maintain your rage

Also maintain your hope, your optimism and your sense of humour.

#### 10 And finally, celebrate your successes

This makes you feel good and it also energises you for more work.

Lowitja O'Donoghue: [www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/resources](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/resources)

## deadly coal comes to europe

*Highlighting coal impacts in Indonesia, building international solidarity*

**I**ndonesia is the world's largest exporter of thermal coal - supplying power stations and generating electricity in India, China, Europe and many other countries around the world.

This has brought wealth for a small political and business elite. For ordinary Indonesians, however, living in the main coal mining zones of Kalimantan, the 'coal rush' means damaged livelihoods, ruined farmland and fisheries, conflict over land and resources, plus health and social problems. Indonesian mines are among the most damaging and least regulated anywhere in the world.

UK companies include: BHP-Billiton, Churchill Mining plc, Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), HBSC, Standard Chartered, Barclays and International Power. Public money funds coal project through international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Two Indonesian activists – Siti Maemunah and Kahar – will be visiting England, Scotland, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany to tell Europeans about the deadly impact of the coal business in Indonesia. They want to forge alliances with local campaigners and build international solidarity to campaign against the socially and environmentally damaging mining and energy projects. The employment and food security of millions of people are currently linked to coal mining and carbon-fuelled electricity. Nonetheless, the creation of more sustainable livelihoods is possible – so long as there is the will to do so.

For more information about the deadly coal tour please contact [indonesiandrew@yahoo.com](mailto:indonesiandrew@yahoo.com)

# pope benedict at westminster hall

**The central section of the Pope's recent address is a mini social encyclical. It is included here as a useful discussion tool for groups.**

**B**ritain has emerged as a pluralist democracy which places great value on freedom of speech, freedom of political affiliation and respect for the rule of law, with a strong sense of the individual's rights and duties, and of the equality of all citizens before the law. While couched in different language, Catholic social teaching has much in common with this approach, in its overriding concern to safeguard the unique dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and in its emphasis on the duty of civil authority to foster the common good.

Each generation, as it seeks to advance the common good, must ask anew: what are the requirements that governments may reasonably impose upon citizens, and how far do they extend? By appeal to what authority can moral dilemmas be resolved? These questions take us directly to the ethical foundations of civil discourse. If the moral principles underpinning the democratic process are themselves determined by nothing more solid than social consensus, then the fragility of the process becomes all too evident - herein lies the real challenge for democracy.

The inadequacy of pragmatic, short-term solutions to complex social and ethical problems has been illustrated all too clearly by the recent global financial crisis. There is widespread agreement that the lack of a solid ethical foundation for economic activity has contributed to the grave difficulties now being experienced by millions of people throughout the world. Just as 'every economic decision has a moral consequence' (*Caritas in Veritate*, 37), so too in the political field, the ethical dimension of policy has far-reaching consequences that no government can afford to ignore. A positive illustration of this is found in one of the British Parliament's particularly notable achievements – the abolition of the slave trade. The campaign that led to this landmark legislation was built upon firm ethical principles, rooted in the natural law, and it has made a contribution to civilization of which this nation may be justly proud.

The central question at issue, then, is this: where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found? The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, prescinding from the content of revelation. According to this understanding, the role of religion in political debate is not so much to supply these norms, as if they could not be

known by non-believers – still less to propose concrete political solutions, which would lie altogether outside the competence of religion – but rather to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason to the discovery of objective moral principles. This "corrective" role of religion vis-à-vis reason is not always welcomed, though, partly because distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism, can be seen to create serious social problems themselves. And in their turn, these distortions of religion arise when insufficient attention is given to the purifying and structuring role of reason within religion. It is a two-way process. Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person. Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise to the slave trade in the first place and to many other social evils, not least the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization.

Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation. In this light, I cannot but voice my concern at the increasing marginalization of religion, particularly of Christianity, that is taking place in some quarters, even in nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged, in the questionable belief that it might somehow offend those of other religions or none. And there are those who argue – paradoxically with the intention of eliminating discrimination – that Christians in public roles should be required at times to act against their conscience. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. I would invite all of you, therefore, within your respective spheres of influence, to seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason at every level of national life.

# how fair is britain?



**A** landmark report released 11 October 2010 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission paints a picture of a largely tolerant and open-minded society, in which some equality gaps have closed over the past generation.

But, *How Fair is Britain?* the most comprehensive compilation of evidence on discrimination and disadvantage ever compiled in Britain, also shows that other long-standing inequalities remain undiminished; and that new social and economic fault-lines are emerging as Britain becomes older and more ethnically and religiously diverse. The Review also identifies recession, public service reform, management of migration and technological change as major risk factors in progress towards a fairer society.

The first in a series of reports laid before Parliament every three years, *How fair is Britain?* draws on a range of major datasets and surveys, as well as the Commission's own research reports, to build a portrait of Britain in 2010. The 700-page report provides the independent evidence and benchmarks for reviewing the state of social justice.

And it identifies five critical 'gateways to opportunity' which the Commission says can make the difference between success and failure in life: Health and Well-being; Education and Inclusion; Work and Wealth; Safety and Security; and Autonomy and Voice

Equality and Human Rights Commission's findings cover all seven areas of formal discrimination set out in law: age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender status. For the first time, it analyses the gaps in treatment and achievement of these seven social groupings beyond solely economic outcomes - by including factors such as personal autonomy and political influence ('voice') alongside education, health, standard of living and personal safety.

The three yearly assessment in the Review, mandated by the Equality Act 2006 will:

- provide an evidence base to ensure that action to tackle inequality and ensure fairness is properly targeted
- ensure that scarce resources are used in order to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged from the worst effects of recession, deficit reduction and public service reform
- set objective benchmarks to assess the 'fairness factor' in public policy.

The report finds that over recent years, public attitudes have become much more tolerant of diversity, and much less tolerant of discrimination. This can be seen in relation to most of the major equality characteristics, including race, gender and sexual orientation.

Opposition to working for an ethnic minority boss or inter-ethnic marriages has dropped; stereotypical views about the roles that men and women should play in family and society have become less prevalent. Evidence suggests that the public is strongly in favour of the generic principles of equality, dignity and respect for all. This consensus was reflected by each of the main political parties, which went into the 2010 General Election with some form of explicit commitment to equality.

However, the Review also highlights areas of anxiety. There is evidence that the public thinks that both racial and religious prejudice are on the increase, though this may reflect heightened sensitivities. British people are broadly positive about the economic contribution of many immigrants, but the 'immigration paradox' remains: about three quarters of the public say that they are concerned about the scale of immigration at a national level - but about the same proportion feels that immigration is not a problem for their own communities.

Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission said:

*'This Review holds up the mirror to fairness in Britain. It is the most complete picture of its kind ever compiled. It shows that we are a people who have moved light years in our attitudes to all kinds of human difference, and in our desire to be a truly fair society - but that we are still a country where our achievements haven't yet caught up with our aspirations.'*

*Sixty years on from the Beveridge report and the creation of the welfare state, his five giants of squalor, disease, ignorance, want and idleness have been cut down to size, though they still stalk the land.*

*But in the 21st century we face a fresh challenge - the danger of a society divided by the barriers of inequality and injustice. For some, the gateways to opportunity appear permanently closed, no matter how hard they try; whilst others seems to have been issued with an "access all areas" pass at birth. Recession, demographic change and new technology all threaten to deepen the fault lines between insiders and outsiders.'*

The complete Report along with other material can be accessed at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

# recent meetings



Late September early October was a busy time for conferences, meetings and AGMs Carol Clarke gives a brief report on some that she attended.

**L**aunch of the **Scottish Campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Convention** was held on Tuesday September 21. It was appropriate and deliberate that this event was held on 21 September as it is the UN International Day for Peace. The event was held in the evening at the Scottish Parliament and well over 100 people, including many MSPs packed into a committee room for the proceedings. Rosanna Cunningham MSP Minister for the Environment welcomed everyone to the event, which was chaired by Marlyn Glen MSP one of the co conveners of the Cross Party Nuclear Disarmament Group.

The first speaker Bill Kidd MSP, another co convener of the group, spoke about the book by Commander Rob *Green Security without Nuclear Deterrent* which puts the case for not having a nuclear deterrent. Bill spoke about how the peace movement were very good at organising marches etc, but the threat to humanity cannot be put away in a box till the next march. The other speakers included former New Zealand disarmament minister Marion Hobbs, Rebecca Johnson, Vice Chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and a representative from Mayors for Peace. Enclosed with the magazine is the pamphlet *The Case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention* which sums up much of what was said at launch, with one exception. During the question session someone asked, 'why if the Scottish Parliament is opposed to Nuclear Weapons, is it not double standards for all the political parties to be supporting the retention of the building of the Aircraft Carriers on the Clyde and Rosyth. I have to say both the co Conveners looked uncomfortable at this, Bill Kidd admitting that by their nature Aircraft carriers are offensive ships and not defensive. But both said they could not back the loss of jobs in Scotland. It was pointed out by Patrick Harvie MSP, the third co convener of the group, that not all the parties were in favour of retaining the aircraft carriers, the Greens

had not supported this and saw a better future for the shipbuilding industry in renewable energy forms.

This brings us on the CND/STUC conference on Wed 6th October, which was the Scottish launch of **Trident, Jobs and the Economy**, the recently published CND report of the same name. The report found that rather than protecting jobs, Trident replacement will destroy many more jobs in conventional defence and jobs and services across all areas of public spending. Alan McKinnon the chair of Scottish CND spoke about the report and pointed out among many things that in the absence of further naval shipbuilding orders, the yards could be adapted, with some investment to build equipment to harness wind and marine power. A similar transformation took place in shipyards all over Britain in the 1970s and 80s with the boom in building platforms for the North Sea gas and oil industry.

**The AGM of Positive Action in Housing** took place on Friday 1 October. This was the 15th AGM of the Charity perhaps something not to be celebrated, since the need which brought it into being still exists. After the main business of the AGM, Robina Qureshi Director of PAIH took us through the annual report. The annual report is 100 pages long and is inspiring, taking us through the last 15 years (copies are available from PAIH). The highlight for me was the work that they do with destitute asylum seekers. There were over 15 speakers including MPs, MSPs, directors of other refugee organisations, who all wanted to congratulate PAIH on the last 15 years. For me the most moving speaker was a lady who took destitute asylum seekers into her own home. She had started over 4 years ago, nervously waiting for her first guest, only to find that her guest was just as nervous. She felt she had to do something and this for her was something she felt able to do. She warned that it was not always easy, some of it had been hard, but for her being able to help was worth it, and made me think about what am I doing.

## action requests from stop climate chaos scotland

### The Big Climate Connection is coming...

**T**he UK general election has been and gone, there are more than 200 new MPs in Westminster, and David Cameron has said this will be the 'Greenest Government ever'. It's time for us to meet our MPs and show them we expect them to live up to their promises and deliver real action on climate change.

The Big Climate Connection on 5th and 6th November will be the next step in the growing movement to stop climate chaos.

Across the country, people will be connecting in their communities, connecting the issues of environmental protection, fuel poverty and climate justice, and connecting with their MPs by setting up lobby meetings with them on 5th and 6th November.

As part of The Big Climate Connection, people from all walks of life will meet with their MPs to tell them that:

- They want to see the UK play their part in ensuring there is significant progress towards a fair, ambitious and binding global climate deal at the Cancun climate talks at the end of November.
- They want the upcoming UK Energy Bill to be as strong as possible, including a minimum emissions performance standard for new power stations.
- Westminster should follow Scotland's lead by committing to reduce the UK's emissions by over 40% by 2020.
- How these issues affect us all in many ways on a local level.

Sign up to take part or find out more about the Big Climate Connection at

[www.stopclimatechaos.org/big-connection-scotland](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/big-connection-scotland)



# newsbrief . . . newsbrief

**Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2011.** Enclosed with the magazine please find a flier and order form for this week which will run from 29 January to 6 February. The theme will be 'Who Counts?' The 2011 census will try to list all of the people who live in the country - but chances are there are many it won't include - such as the 'hidden homeless' and destitute asylum-seekers. God's own son was born into poverty in a stable, in the year of a great census. Scripture tells us that in God's kingdom, 'the least shall be the first'. Does the way we live bear witness to this truth? Are we living in true solidarity with people who are poor, homeless and excluded?

**Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland 2010:** The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a report called 'Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland 2010' which provides a comprehensive analysis of trends and differences between groups. It includes a broad review of relevant Scottish policy, using the framework of 'Achieving our Potential', the key Scottish policy document on poverty. Read the full report on the resource page of our website.

**Scottish Fairtrade Forum Annual Campaign Day:** Takes place on Saturday 6 November, in Paisley Town Hall. There will be speakers, discussions, information, performances, workshops and a Fair Trade marketplace. More details of the day's programme will be available soon from [www.scottishfairtradeforum.org.uk](http://www.scottishfairtradeforum.org.uk) If you want to come along on the day email: [info@stff.org.uk](mailto:info@stff.org.uk) and they will keep you updated on plans for the day. This is a chance for people from across Scotland who support Fair Trade to come together and plan action for the next year.

**At Long Last!** - Genocide Tribunal Indicts Khmer Rouge Leaders: The trial of four top surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime held to be responsible for 1.7 million deaths in the 1970's, is due to start in mid-2011. The four include Nuon Chea, 84, the Khmer Rouge's ideologist, Khieu Samphan, 79, former head of state, Ieng Sary, former foreign minister and his wife, Ieng Thirith, ex-minister for social affairs, both in their 80's. All face charges including crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and a combined charge of murder, torture and religious persecution. They deny the charges. (Source: Action by Christians Against Torture)

**Forthcoming UN Report:** A 600-page investigation by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to be published shortly will accuse Rwanda of wholesale war crimes, including possible genocide during years of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This followed the defeat of the Hutus by the Tutsis, after the Rwandan genocide. It will cover the period following the invasion into the DRC aimed at clearing the UN refugee camps of armed Hutu soldiers and others and two years later the invasion which led to a regional war. The Report will catalogue seven years of murder, rape and looting during which hundreds of thousands of Hutus were targeted. This will be the first time that the UN will have published such forthright allegations against Rwanda, a close ally of the US and the UK. It accuses Rwandan forces and local allies of rounding hundreds of men, women and children at a time and butchering them with hoes and axes. On other occasions Hutu refugees were bayoneted, burned alive or killed with hammer blows. The UN report describes 'the systematic, methodical and premeditated nature of the attacks on the Hutus which took place in all areas where the refugees had been tracked down'.

**International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment: (November 6)** This day invites us to consider that damage to the environment in times of armed conflict impairs ecosystems and natural resources long after the period of conflict, often extending beyond the limits of national territories and the present generation. It also recalls the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which emphasised the necessity of working to protect our common environment. (This is also the weekend of 'The Big Climate Question' - have you signed up yet? See page ....)

**Two Edinburgh Fringe shows about human rights issues received rave reviews and won numerous awards.**

**Roadkill:** Cora Bissett's hard-hitting play about child trafficking, has won several awards, including a Herald Angel. It will be back at the Tron theatre in Glasgow in November for another sell-out run. Tickets are by going on a waiting list only. The Scottish Refugee Council will host a post show panel discussion on Roadkill and Child Trafficking in Scotland, on 5 November at the Tron, details and booking at <http://tinyurl.com/32v8atm>

**Do we look like refugees?** This verbatim piece of theatre won both a 'Fringe review outstanding theatre' award and the 'Stage award for acting excellence (ensemble piece)'. It was created from interviews with people who lost their homes after the 2008 Georgian-Russian war. The interviews were recorded in a refugee camp which is evolving into a permanent small town. It is the result of a workshop collaboration between the Rustaveli Theatre in Georgia, the National Theatre Studio, the British Council and Beyond Borders Productions Ltd. Further details at [www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/arts/](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/arts/)

**December 2 is the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery:** The slave trade is probably the human tragedy that affected the greatest number of people for the longest period of time in history. However, it is only an episode of slavery, which is a larger phenomenon that dates back to ancient times. Today, it persists under new forms of massive violations of the human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in 1948, for example child labour, bonded labour, forced labour and prostitution.

**The 2011 Housmans Peace Diary:** As ever, this 58th edition includes a World Peace Directory listing almost 2,000 national and international peace, environment and human rights organisations in 150 countries. It also has a special feature celebrating the first 75 years of Peace News, sister publication of Housmans. Housmans Peace Diary is a non-profit service to movements around the world working for peace, social justice and the environment. Pocket format, with a week to a view, giving notable dates and anniversaries and a weekly quotation. More info and ordering instructions [www.housmans.com/diary.php](http://www.housmans.com/diary.php)

Make a Will this November and help raise more than £1.3 million for charity. Will Aid solicitors all over the UK are ready to use their professional expertise to write basic Wills in November to raise vital funds for charity. To locate a participating solicitor go to: <http://www.willaid.org.uk/find> This campaign provides the perfect opportunity for people to put their affairs in order by writing a basic Will with a qualified solicitor and, instead of paying the solicitor's usual fee, making a donation to Will Aid. The donation income is shared by nine participating charities.

# christmas giving

Last year we printed an article by Ruth Grayson, an economist who advocates Christmas spending on a 50/50 basis. For every pound spent on Christmas gifts she suggests a pound given to charity. As well as benefiting charities, it reminds us as Ruth says, whose birthday it actually is.

Since last year, Ruth has put in place a website called CASC-aid. CASC-aid stands for 'Campaign Against the Secularisation of Christmas by promoting charitable giving'. The name originates from Amos 5:24, in which the prophet voices God's concern that justice and righteousness should 'cascade' like rivers and prevail against the excesses of religious feast days.

The website has a number of ideas to consider. There is a very sobering account of the amount we spend over Christmas; as well as sermon ideas; reflections on personal lifestyle; references to further reading and much more. If it does nothing else, it should shake us out of the

complacency of seeing Christmas as a retail opportunity in which we feel obliged to exchange tat with those who don't need it without making at least similar efforts for those truly in need. As Ruth points out, only about 2.5% of Christmas spending is directed to charity. She also suggested to me that this year in particular, we might consider in particular the needs of those displaced by the floods in Pakistan.

One sometimes hears the objection – can't we just enjoy the feast of Christmas in peace without dragging in poverty and misery to make us feel guilty. The message of the gospels is that God embraced the human condition of poverty and misery at the nativity; and feasts with Jesus usually included a fair measure of the poor and the socially outcast. What's more they don't seem to have been miserable affairs: quite the contrary.

The CASC-aid website may be found at <http://www.casc-aid.org.uk/home> There will be a link on the Justice and Peace website.

## action by christians against torture - christmas greetings campaign

The list should be available by the first week in November. It will include names and addresses of prisoners, persecuted Christians and human rights organisations. Full instructions of how to use the list will be given. This list is available upon request for a small donation, to individuals and churches who are not ACAT subscribers direct from ACAT. We would advise that you get the list direct from ACAT as they are a small charity and any donations are welcome. This Campaign also gives ACAT a great opportunity to reach out to Christians and church congregations, with little or no knowledge of their work. Information about the campaign will be on the ACAT website [www.acatuk.org.uk](http://www.acatuk.org.uk) To order the lists, email: [uk.acat@gmail.com](mailto:uk.acat@gmail.com) Post: ACAT UK, 8 Southfield, Saltash, PL12 4LX.

## advent

Advent provides us with a waiting space and a time of preparation for Christmas. During the journey towards Christmas, many people, events and symbols invite us to pause and remember the ongoing presence of God in our lives.

- With Mary, we can give birth to Jesus and carry him into our world.
- With the shepherds, we can glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen.
- With the Wise Men, we can search for a deeper understanding of Jesus and follow the star that leads us to him.
- With the angels, we too can be messengers of God, singing the Good News.

## prayer

*Creator God,  
Your image is alive in every human person giving to each of us an  
inviolable dignity.  
Create in us a desire to act in solidarity, an energy to work together,  
and a willingness to share with others our time, our energy,  
our skills and talents and our wealth.  
As we share and enjoy the fruits of your creation,  
restore in us your vision of a world made whole,  
and inspire us to commit ourselves to the common good.  
Gracious God, give us ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to love,  
so that we reflect you in our way of life,  
and in our choices, words and actions.  
Jesus is the good news to the poor.  
As his followers, may we recognise the call to be the same. Amen*

*Australian Catholic Social Justice Council*

## 2011 world day of peace

The theme chosen by Pope Benedict XVI for the celebration of the 2011 World Day of Peace, celebrated since 1968 on the first day of every year is 'Religious freedom, the path to peace'. The World Day of Peace will be therefore dedicated to the theme of religious freedom.

As is well known, in many parts of the world there exist various forms of restrictions or denials of religious freedom, from discrimination and marginalisation based on religion, to acts of violence against religious minorities. Religious freedom is rooted in the equal and inherent human dignity of all peoples. It is oriented toward the search for 'unchangeable truth', and thus can rightly be presented as the 'freedom of freedoms'. This notion of religious freedom offers us a fundamental criterion for discerning the phenomenon of religion and its manifestations. It necessarily rejects the 'religiosity' of fundamentalisms, and the manipulation and the instrumentalisation of the truth. Since such distortions are opposed to human dignity and to the search for truth, they cannot be considered as religious freedom. Rather, an authentic notion of religious freedom offers a profound vision of this fundamental human right, one which broadens the horizons of 'humanity' and 'freedom', allowing for the establishment of a deep relationship with oneself, with the other and with the world. Religious freedom is a freedom in this respect for human dignity and life.

The vocation to believe in God, recognised as a fundamental human right, is a pre-requisite of integral human development (Caritas in Veritate, 29), and a condition for the realisation of the common good and the promotion of peace in the world.

As Pope Benedict XVI affirmed during his visit to the General Assembly of the United Nations: 'Human rights, of course, must include the right to religious freedom, understood as the expression of a dimension that is at once individual and communitarian – a vision that brings out the unity of the person while clearly distinguishing between the dimension of the citizen and that of the believer' (Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 18 April 2008).

Today there are many areas of the world in which forms of restrictions and limitations to religious freedom persist, both where communities of believers are in a minority, and where communities of believers are not a minority, and where more sophisticated forms of discrimination and marginalisation exist, on the cultural level and in the spheres of public civil and political participation. 'It is inconceivable' remarked Benedict XVI 'that believers should have to suppress a part of themselves - their faith - in order to be active citizens. It should never be necessary to deny God in order to enjoy one's rights. The rights associated with religion are all the more in need of protection if they are considered to clash with a prevailing secular ideology or with majority religious positions of an exclusive nature' (Address to the United Nations). It is for this reason that: 'Religious Freedom is the Path to 'Peace'.

## more than a number - prisoner's week scotland

Have you ever felt 'just a number'? People in prison have another number to learn, and they can find life defined by what they did rather than who they are. Prisoners' Week, 21-28 November 2010, presents a different image of each person made in the likeness of God, immeasurably more than a number.

Prisoners' Week is an opportunity to remember all in our communities who are affected by crime and imprisonment - prisoners and their families, victims of crime and those who work within the criminal justice system. Prisoners' Week is an initiative of the Churches that aims to stimulate discussion, highlight concerns and share hope.

At [www.PrisonersWeekScotland.co.uk](http://www.PrisonersWeekScotland.co.uk) you'll find Prisoner's Week information, a calendar of local events. There are chaplains in every prison offering spiritual care and the means by which people can explore and practise faith. Come along to the Prisoner's Week Question Time: 7pm Monday 22 November at the Scottish Story-Telling Centre, 43-45 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR or watch it live on the web.

For general enquiries contact: Fr Brian Gowans or Rev Bill Taylor, Chaplaincy Advisors, SPS Headquarters, Calton House, 5 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh EH12 9HW 0131 244 8745

### The Prisoner's Week Prayer

Lord, you offer freedom to all people.

We pray for those who are captives in prison  
and those who are affected by or involved in their imprisonment.  
Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.

Support with your love: prisoners, their families and friends,  
prison staff and all who care.

Heal those who have been wounded by the activities of others,  
especially the victims of crime.

Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, to love mercy,  
and walk humbly together with Christ  
in his strength and in his spirit now and every day. Amen.

*'Remember those who are in prison, as though you were  
in prison with them.' Hebrews 13:3*

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# diary diary

## OCTOBER

- 21 Start of Africa in Motion, the UK's biggest African film festival. Filmhouse, Edinburgh
- 24 United Nations Day
- 29 Making a Difference - Three Short Documentary Films about Poverty in Scotland

## NOVEMBER

- 5 - 6 The Big Climate Connection in Scotland!
- 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict
- 6 Scottish Fair Trade Forum Campaign Day
- 11 Armistice Day
- 16 International Day for Tolerance
- 21-28 Prisoners' Week Scotland.

## NOVEMBER CONTINUED

- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- 27 Buy Nothing Day
- 29 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

## DECEMBER

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 9 International Anti-Corruption Day
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 18 International Migrants Day

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

Archbishop Tutu ended his public career recently at the age of 79. He had used on occasion an African proverb: *'Before the White Man came, we had the land and they had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and they have the land.'* His own development of this in September 2008 is worthy of the man: *'There's nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible. If you want to keep people subjugated, the last thing you place in their hands is a Bible.'*

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

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