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what's inside

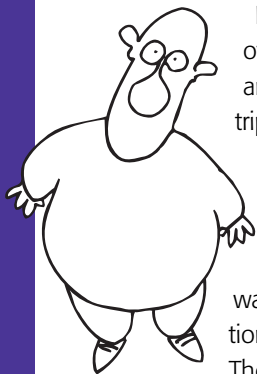
- editorial2
- counting down to a fair trade scotland ..3
- christmas greetings campaign feedback ..3
- a cashless society:
- the other side of the coin4
- slave labour in the middle east5
- prayer for blessing of our justice work ..5
- lenten prayer5
- United Nations World Days6
- news from stop climate chaos scotland ..6

- paying the true price7
- commemoration of the genocide in rwanda
17 april8
- an anti nuclear picnic8
- magazine subscription8
- newsbrief9
- obituary:
- Bishop Emeritus Samuel Ruiz García10
- SCIAF's lent campaign11
- diary12

editorial

It was a commonplace of spiritual advice when I was growing up that Lent was not simply about giving something up, but rather of taking something on. In the developed world at least this advice has coincided with a period where economic prosperity and consumerism have allowed a significant majority increasingly to satisfy most if not all of their desires. All very well; but we have lost the element of giving things up or fasting. Who fasts now?

Perhaps it is simply encroaching fogginess, but I can remember a time just over 50 years ago when we ate a limited but nourishing diet of what was in season. External entertainment was a half hour of the wireless; ideas for Christmas, birthdays or pocket money came from a nose pressed to a local shop window. Major economic enterprises were looking through the latest book of approvals that came with 200 free stamps from the Universal Stamp Co., Eastington, Goole, Yorkshire. The average wage of £10 a week in 1957 for a generation which had just left war and rationing behind allowed limited consumerism. Adult aspiration was for a washing machine, a fridge and a car.

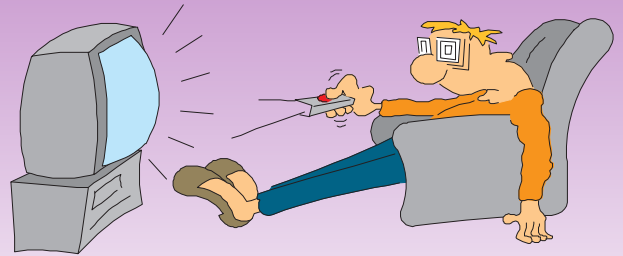


Nowadays, by contrast, about two thirds of Britons including a quarter of all children are overweight or obese, a figure that has tripled since 1980. This is almost wholly due to poor diet and the relentless marketing of junk food. Recent Ofcom research revealed that consumers are now spending almost half of their waking hours involved with communications devices – computers, mobiles and TV. They spend almost a quarter of their time

on the internet on social networking sites; and spend about 4 hours a day watching TV. Many of these devices require renewal on an almost annual basis. The average weekly wage is currently just short of £500 and aspiration seems to know no bounds.

One might think that the opposite of fasting is more and more possessions and in part it is. Yet it seems to be the craving to possess itself which distracts from the realities. Classically, that goes by the name of covetousness. 'You shall not covet' is last among the commandments (Exodus 20:17) and the only sin of motive rather than of act. And as motive it can be seen as underlying all sin. As the poet Thomas Dekker said, 'When all sins are old in us, and go upon crutches, covetousness does but then lie in her cradle.'

Perhaps the worst aspect of covetousness is how it robs people of their individuality and cons them into following the values of the herd, substituting a homogeneous mush instead of individual taste while creating a deformed sentimentality. I think everyone is entitled to and probably needs their own oasis of bad taste. But public taste is generally appalling – as television viewing preferences and most market research show. If



you eat, drink, wear, read and think processed crap, it is hardly surprising that vision in a consumer society is reduced to nothing more than a sliver of reality composed of what is sold to us as fashionable, contemporary, popular and smart.

It is against this backdrop that the church has developed its teaching on fasting. Refraining allows us to assess relative value, to find points of reference and to make individual judgements. Fasting, however, is not a discipline on its own, but exists alongside prayer and almsdeeds – works of compassion and justice. In one of his earliest Lenten addresses in 1979, Pope John Paul II spoke of how *Prayer, fasting and almsdeeds need to be understood more deeply, if we want to integrate them more thoroughly into our lives and not to consider them just as passing practices which demand only something momentary from us or deprive us of something only momentarily.*

Fasting, in this perspective is a powerful spiritual tool. In Liturgical Guidelines, issued by the Vatican at the end of 2001, its value is well described:

The practice of fasting looks to the past, present and future: to the past, as a recognition of offences committed against God and others; to the present, in order that we may learn to open our eyes to others and to the world around us; to the future, in order that we may open our hearts to the realities of God and, by the gift of divine mercy, renew the bond of communion with all people and with the whole of creation, accepting the responsibility which each of us has in history.

The problem then, is not absence but superfluity. We are surrounded by so many things to distract our attention and absorb us – what sound engineers aptly call 'sound baffles' - that is hardly surprising that it is difficult to hear God. To begin to hear in this age, we must first clear away all the hubbub of noise and the shimmering distractions. We need a new understanding of fasting.

Perhaps this is why the Beatitudes are addressed to those who are deprived or dispossessed. Those who think their cup is full have nothing to add. God's fullness is more readily recognised out of our emptiness. That is why those who hunger and thirst for justice are blessed (Matt 5:6). Something is, as yet, incomplete, which leads us on to greater effort. And while the mighty are cast down and the lowly raised up, it is not to create a new set of victims. Justice is re-established by the restoration of human equality and the balance of right relationships between God, humanity and creation.

Tim Duffy

counting down to a fair trade scotland



Scottish
Fair Trade
Forum

Martin Rhodes is Director of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum which was established to co-ordinate the campaign for Scotland to become a Fair Trade Nation

Since taking up the role of Director of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum last September, I have seen in person the commitment of people right across Scotland to Fair Trade. I've met Fair Trade campaigners from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Ayr, Glasgow, East Kilbride, Montrose, Inverness, Dundee, Renfrewshire, Falkirk, and many other towns, villages, islands and cities across the country - each of them testimony that the Fair Trade movement is a truly grassroots movement. I first became involved directly with Fair Trade in a similar manner, through my local Fair Trade group in Glasgow.

Across Scotland, there are people who are eager both to speak up about injustice and to do something about it. At the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, we feel that it's because of this that we can operate at all. Thanks to it, we have been able to get real weight behind our campaign for Scotland to become the world's second Fair Trade Nation, where public bodies and a significant number of private organisations would become committed to buying Fair Trade products and supporting Fair Trade ideals.

For the Fair Trade Nation campaign to be successful it needs to connect with people and communities throughout Scotland. Fair Trade Nation status is not something that can be gained wholly or even largely by the Forum or the Scottish Government, but rather which requires people to make the decision to go Fair Trade. For among the criteria Scotland must achieve are targets for the number of people aware of and buying Fair Trade goods - targets that require people to take action. We at the Forum can and do encourage people to take the plunge, but ultimately the decision to do so still rests with individuals, organisations and communities.

This concept of people taking action individually and collectively is at the core of our Countdown campaign, which aims to put people and communities at the heart of the Fair Trade Nation campaign - as throughout 2011, we are counting down to Scotland becoming a Fair Trade Nation in 2012. For every day throughout the year, we

intend to get at least one person or organisation to make a conscious decision to do that little bit extra for Fair Trade. So far we've had churches, schools, private companies and government organisations pledging to support the campaign, but we've also been supported by many individual people, who've gone further for Fair Trade in all kinds of ways. Whether they've been giving Fair Trade gifts or making Fair Trade cakes, or campaigning for Fair Trade awareness, people are showing that they have given conscious thought to the consequences that their own lives have on the lives of producers hundreds of miles away.

It is this awareness and commitment to trade justice that is essential to the campaign to make Scotland a Fair Trade Nation. We have certain quantitative criteria to meet on Fair Trade Towns etc. But the real test of whether together we have made Scotland a Fair Trade Nation will be the collective commitment to justice in global trade. This is Scotland's chance to lead the world in this commitment. This is our chance to embed the values of Fair Trade within Scottish society as a whole.

So whether you live in Ayr or Ullapool, we'd urge you to pledge your support to our campaign, and to the commitment to Fair Trade that underpins it. Your support will show that Scotland as a country is dedicated to trade justice. It will also show that we believe our individual and collective actions can shape the actions of others, and that the choices we make can have genuine transformative power.

If you and others like you make a pledge as part of our Countdown campaign, you'll be making a bold statement, and if you make it loud enough then Scotland will begin to make it also. And when that happens we'll be a Fair Trade Nation - but we'll also, I think, be a wiser one as well.

If you want more information about the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's Countdown Campaign, please email countdown@sftf.org.uk or write to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, Thistle Court, 1-2 Thistle Street, Edinburgh EH2 1DD

christmas greetings campaign feedback

In their latest newsletter Action by Christians Against Torture gave the following news on the success of the Christmas card campaign

One of their members received an unexpected phone call before Christmas in response to a card she had sent. Someone working at the Committee against Torture in Israel called her to say that many cards had been received but hers was the only one with a phone number. The Committee had been included on the List of Human Rights Defenders. The call was to say "thank you" and ask about ACAT. This was very pleasing!

Someone else also received a response a few weeks ago from a prisoner in Philippines - she had first sent a card to him six years ago when his name appeared on the Christmas Greetings List; she had sent further cards to him in the following years. She was quite overwhelmed to receive a reply from him.

We have heard from a number of individuals, J & P Groups, churches etc who took part in the Campaign - 120 cards were sent by parishioners at St Joseph the Worker Church in Hutton, Brentwood. Card signing was organised at the church and its two sister churches - 200 cards were sent.

These efforts should not detract from other churches, groups individuals who also took part in the Campaign, although at a lower level - each card sent is important and can make a difference to a prisoner, human rights group etc. Such cards also let the authorities know that they are not forgotten.

Do continue to let ACAT know what action you or your church took so that they can tell all their members about it.

a cashless society: the other side of the coin

Anne Singh, of the Institute of Race Relations, is writing here in a personal capacity

'Section 4 support', as set out in Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, provides for limited financial support to be provided to asylum seekers whose claim has been refused but who are still unable to return to their country of origin and who would otherwise be destitute. In order to receive this support, refused asylum seekers must move into accommodation provided by the UK Border Agency (UKBA). At the end of June 2010, 6,750 people plus their dependants were in receipt of Section 4 support.

A voucher scheme for refused asylum seekers was (re)introduced at the end of 2005. The vouchers were accepted in a limited number of stores to pay for 'essential' goods (food, toiletries) only, and could not be exchanged for cash. The principle behind the voucher scheme was to make failed asylum-seekers' lives as intolerable as possible to 'encourage' their voluntary return.

In late 2009, the voucher system was abolished principally on the grounds that it represented poor value for money and, according to the UKBA, was open to 'abuse and fraud'. The 'abuse and fraud' complained of by the UKBA was principally national and local charities and support groups - including the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) - who would exchange vouchers for cash to relieve the worst excesses of hardship.

The Azure card was introduced in November 2009 to replace the use of supermarket vouchers. It was introduced without any pilot but was proclaimed the definitive solution to the problems with vouchers. However, the Azure card has done very little to resolve these problems, continuing to restrict where and when people are able to shop, what they are able to buy, and often not working at all. From the start, the payment system was exposed as costly, inefficient and ineffective. The JRS highlighted this anticipating that, in addition to implementation costs, it would cost £200,000 per annum just to administer.

The Azure card is topped up 'automatically' each week by the UKBA and can be used in a limited number of supermarket outlets. Section 4 support is currently set at £35 per week for a single person (compared to £65.45 per week Job Seeker's Allowance - for over 25s). It cannot be exchanged for cash and only £5 can be carried over to the following week. This means that if an individual is unable to travel to the designated supermarket within the week s/he will automatically lose £30.

A response to a Freedom of Information request made by the Northern Refugee Centre (NRC) disclosed that a staggering £10 was being lost every week by each person using the card as a result of card malfunctions and deductions by UKBA. In the peak week of payments in July 2010, 1,184 of the 6,199 asylum seekers receiving the payments through the card suffered deductions at the end of the week.

Whilst the UKBA is allowed to reduce money on the card down to £5 (for those without children), the average value of the deduction per user is £9.62. This could indicate that those on the cards are finding it even more difficult to budget than with the previous voucher system.

Often the card does not work or is not accepted by the supermarket, leaving (humiliated and distressed) people unable to buy food for themselves and their children. The

figures we obtained by NRC also show that in March 2010, as cards were being more widely introduced, 22,717 transactions were refused at the point of purchase due to insufficient funds. The commonest cause was that asylum seekers would have credit, but tried to purchase above the limit on their cards. If the amount to be purchased is even over by a penny, the whole transaction is refused.

Figures for that month show that about one in six of attempts to use the card were met with the card being refused because of lack of funds on the card. This causes embarrassment to the asylum seeker, stood at the till and told that they could not have the food they were trying to buy. The number of refused transactions has now dropped to just over 7,000 per month.

The Azure card can only be used in a limited number of supermarkets. There is only one card provided per family unit and like the vouchers it cannot be used to obtain cash, making it impossible for people to pay for travel and other essentials not available at supermarkets.

The Refugee Council released a damning report on the Azure card, *Your inflexible friend: the cost of living without cash in November 2010*. They found that:

- Without access to cash, over half of respondents could not pay for travel to see their legal advisers, or attend essential health appointments, for example, if an individual or their children are sick outside their local GP opening hours, they do not have the money to get to a clinic or hospital.
- 40 per cent were unable to buy food that met their dietary, religious, or cultural requirements in the specified supermarkets, and many experienced hunger and malnutrition as a consequence.
- 39 per cent believed the supermarkets do not offer good value for money, and that they would get better value at a market or charity shop.
- The administration of the payment card system has left people without the funds they need to buy food. 60 per cent had experienced the card not working, including thirteen people with children, and 79 per cent reported that shop staff had refused the card, despite being in the specified supermarkets.
- 56 per cent reported feelings of anxiety and shame when using the card. The payment card identifies the user as an asylum seeker and exposes him or her to racist behaviour and stigmatisation.

The report exposes the serious failings of the Azure card payment system and the enforced extreme poverty and deprivation caused by the failure of the UKBA and its contractors. The Azure card payment system means that individuals are unable to:

- Buy enough or appropriate food to feed themselves and their children;
- Buy essential non-food items, including non-prescription medicines, household cleaning products and children's clothing;
- Manage their budget effectively, meaning money is wasted;
- Travel to access essential services including legal advice and medical care.

The Azure card has abjectly failed to alleviate any of the inherent problems of a cashless payment system which

means already vulnerable people are faced with turning to dangerous, exploitative and illegal ways of obtaining cash to meet their basic needs and those of their families. There is evidence of these pressures resulting in begging, prostitution or selling goods for less than face value. Meanwhile, between June and September 2010, UKBA recouped over £86,000 in 'capped payments' on Azure cards.

To be entitled to 'section 4 support', asylum seekers must

show that they are unable to return to their country of origin and that they are destitute. A support system which denies people access to cash support and which keeps them in extreme poverty is inhumane and degrading but moreover it fails to meet the UKBA's stated objectives of encouraging returns. It serves only to reinforce the government's propaganda agenda that asylum seekers are wilful scroungers who must be publicly outed and kept on the very margins of society.

slave labour in the middle east

Kathleen Summer, a member of the Motherwell diocese core group, reports on a film shown at the AGM of Anti Slavery International

At the recent AGM, the Director Dr Aiden McQuade gave his report and stated that Anti Slavery International was not as well known as other human rights organisations as it did not have the finances to promote or advertise itself nationally or internationally. Over 12 million people live and work in conditions of slavery in the world today and many are children. The only way to tackle this enormous problem with limited resources is a little at a time.

After the report there was a film by Pete Pattison called *Filming Forced Labour in the Middle East*. Pete Pattison specialises in the impact of social, political and environmental change on ordinary lives. The film highlighted the exploitation of vulnerable people from developing countries who are forced to find employment in Gulf countries and other Middle East countries. The film showed a coffin being returned to Nepal with the body of a woman who had been killed in the Lebanon because her family could not pay the organisers in Nepal more money. Pete Pattison told the ASI members that the Lebanese police were investigating the circumstances of her death and hoped to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The next part of the film showed the living and working

conditions in the construction industry in Dubai. The film described Dubai as being one big building site. Pete Pattison interviewed a migrant Asian worker in the construction industry in Dubai. The interview was given in darkness as the worker did not want his name or face to be known. He said he had to work long hours even in the heat of the summer when the temperature reached 45 degrees. He said the living conditions were basic and overcrowding was common and in spite of the long hours of hard work his wages were low. He continued by saying that he had to stay and work in these conditions as his family needed the money or else they would starve.

The Director said at the end of this film that Anti Slavery International was working with local partners in Nepal to curtail the gangmasters recruiting people for exploitation in other countries. On a personal note this film reminded me of the conditions that most workers from the developing world find themselves in when they come to the Middle East. They were virtual slaves with no form of escape as their employers held their passports and curtailed their freedom. It seems that conditions have not improved since I lived there over ten years ago.

prayer for blessing of our justice work

*O God of great compassion,
You called us to serve the cause of justice
and to be messengers of Your love
to those the world has forgotten.
As we go forth in the knowledge
that You are with us always,
help us to use our energy, our love and power
to transform Your earth through prayer and action.
Bless each of us in the days ahead.
Bless our efforts to serve the poor and the disadvantaged.
Bless our hopes to work for the fullness of life,
for peace and dignity for all.
Bless our celebrations and fill us with Your joy.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Source: Centre of Concern - www.coc.org/act-now/take-action

Lenten prayer

*Loving and gracious God,
be with us during this season of Lent,
as we respond to your call for conversion
of heart and life.
Deepen our awareness of your presence
even in those whom we cannot see.
May our imitation of you in word and
deed
inspire us to be generous in our prayer,
fasting and alms giving.
We make this prayer in the name of your
Son, Jesus.
Amen.*

The following United Nations World Days all have the environment at their core. Some will have taken place by the time you get the magazine and are for your information, others have still to come and you may want to take action on them by bringing them to the attention of your parish.

World Wetlands Day

February 2nd each year is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non governmental organisations and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

Wetlands and Forests is the theme for World Wetlands Day 2011, especially chosen because 2011 is the UN International Year of Forests.

The slogan is simple - *Forests for water and wetlands* - allowing us to look at the 'big picture' of forests in our lives, including:

- **Forested wetlands and the special benefits they bring.** Mangroves, peat swamp forests, freshwater swamp forests: biologically diverse, helping us manage our freshwater, and providing us with many other 'services' across the globe including vital roles in carbon storage - our allies in the face of climate change. Despite their utility, they are often under threat from development, from drainage and conversion.
- **The role of forests - wet or not - in our lives, and why looking after them matters.** Vital to all human lives, freshwater availability on a global scale depends on our forests. So too, to a large extent, does freshwater quality.
- **The role of forests in how our wetlands function.** It's simple: the health of our wetlands, whether forested or not, is linked to the health of forests in our catchments. Losing and degrading forests means losing and degrading wetlands.

We cannot manage without forests, whether terrestrial forests or forested wetlands, given the critical roles that they play in our lives - for water, for food, for livelihoods, for recreation and more. www.ramsar.org

World Water Day 22 March - Water for Cities



Water is a basic requirement for all life, yet water resources are facing increasing demands from, and competition among, users. The international observance of World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro.

The main World Water Day 2011 event 'Water for cities: responding to the urban water challenge' will take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 20 to 22 March 2011 in South Africa. It will be hosted by the Government of South Africa, in collaboration with UN-Water, the African Ministers' Council on Water, The United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. www.worldwaterday.org

International Mother Earth Day 22 April

International Mother Earth Day is celebrated to remind each of us that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance.

It also recognises a collective responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.

Mother Earth is a common expression for the planet earth in a number of countries and regions, which reflects the interdependence that exists among human beings, other living species and the planet. For instance, Bolivians call Mother Earth Pachamama and Nicaraguans refer to her as Tonantzin.

(Sources: World Water Day and Australian Catholic Social Justice Council)

news from stop climate chaos scotland



The Scottish elections on 5th May 2011 offer people across Scotland the opportunity to have their say on which party they believe - among other issues - will take that necessary action on climate change. Justice and Peace Scotland are members of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland; a coalition of organisations campaigning together on climate change. Together, we will work hard to ensure that climate change does not fall off the political agenda during these elections.

There are some exciting activities planned as part of the campaign that we hope you'll want to get involved in: **Climate cafes:** These will take place in February and March across Scotland, giving you the opportunity to meet with your candidates in a more informal setting than a traditional hustings. We will organise Climate Cafes in Aberdeen South, East Lothian, Edinburgh Central, Falkirk West, Glasgow Southside, Perthshire North. If you live in one of these constituencies and want to get involved, find

out more on the website

www.stopclimatechaos.org/scottish-elections.

If you don't live in one of these constituencies, why not organise your own Climate Cafe? Stop Climate Chaos Scotland can provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to do this and support and materials to make your event a success.

Online political debate: This will take place on the evening of Wednesday 13th April - so put the date in your diary! We plan to bring together leading political figures to discuss and debate the questions that you want to ask them about climate change. This will be brought to you via an online forum where you'll be able to ask questions while the debate is taking place. You can find out more about this debate at the website address detailed above.

Get involved in our campaign and help make sure our future politicians know that Scotland cares about climate change.

PAYING THE TRUE PRICE

Christian peace activist Chris Cole from Oxford was imprisoned on 19 January for 30 days at Westminster Central Magistrates Court. Here, he explains the background.

In 2009 the Defence & Security Equipment International (DSEI) exhibition was due to hold its bi-annual arms selling jamboree in East London, opening with a conference at the Queen Elizabeth Conference centre in central London.

According to its official brochure, the aim of the 'UK Defence Conference 2009' was to bring together 'senior officials from the arms industry, the military and the UK government' to 'explore the business opportunities' to be found in 'global security threats such as climate change, major population movements, growing water scarcity, competition for energy sources and the continued rise of Islamism.'

Here then, was another opportunity to confront the UK's military-industrial complex as it gathered together at the beginning of their week-long arms spree. So with spray can in hand I went to the conference centre just before the event and sprayed 'build peace not war machines' 'stop this bloody business' and 'arms trade=death' on the front entrance and poured fake blood over the steps.

I was shortly convicted of criminal damage and fined just under £2,000. Eighteen months (and numerous court letters, bailiffs threats and visits) later I went back to court to explain my actions and why I won't pay the fine.

As a committed Christian peace activist I've been researching into, speaking about, and resisting the arms industry for over twenty years now. No matter how many times I think I've seen it all, another corruption story, new deal, or yet another lethal technological development will come along to shock me.

Over the years I have had private conversations with senior arms company executives and I've engaged in public debates with their PR people. I've written thousands of words in newsletters, magazines, briefings and on websites. I've spoken at countless meetings and I've taken part in more vigils, protests and nonviolent demonstrations that I can possibly remember. I've also been arrested, spied upon, injunctioned and imprisoned. I have no illusions about the power that the 'defence' industry can wield nor the depths it will stoop to make its profit or to promote the ideology of 'might is right'. But I continue to undertake nonviolent action against the arms dealers.

So what is the point of such a small scale piece of direct action that hardly disrupts the smooth running of the monolithic arms industry? What is the point of going through all the hassle of courts, fines, bailiffs and prison? What possible difference does it make and in what way does it help the victims of the arms industry?

For me the point of nonviolent direct action (as well as the court and prison witness that follows) is to dramatise the choice that we as a society are making. In the Christian tradition this choice is summed up in the ancient Book of

Deuteronomy 'I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live' (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Nonviolent direct action is about trying to make visible the choices that we are making – or that are being made on our behalf – and articulating the fact that there is an alternative. In a similar way, the powers that be tell us that there is no choice with regard to peace and security in our world. The only realistic way to achieve peace and security, they say, is through the gun, the drone and the nuclear deterrent. 'It's the way things are and always will be' is the cry, and I have heard it from school boys in the classroom, from CEOs in the boardroom, and politicians in the parliamentary committee room.

The powers have managed to convince us that armed force is our salvation, that in bomb we must trust. But of course, that is nonsense. As we have seen clearly over the past twenty years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan in the so-called war on terror, armed force does not bring peace to the world nor defend the widow and the orphan – in fact, just the opposite.

There is, of course, an alternative to armed violence: justice. As the prophet Isaiah said, 'Integrity will bring peace, justice give everlasting security'

(Isaiah 32:17) By tackling the root causes of injustice around the world, like the situation of Palestine for example, we can address some of the real drivers of insecurity in the world. Instead of pouring resources into more lethal ways to kill each other, we need to be addressing global inequality by devoting resources to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and helping to achieve political and economic rights for all human beings and communities.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we need to be educating our fellow citizens to understand that our future security depends on global welfare and the common good rather than self-interest and national prosperity. Cynics will say of course that it is a waste of time. My direct action at the DSEI opening conference in 2009 did not stop the arms fair from happening nor more arms deals being made.

But the lie that is 'this is just the way things are and always will be', the pretence that there is no alternative, was exposed. Conference delegates, arms company employees, security guards, court officials, passers-by, friends, neighbours and readers of this very article all have a choice to make: to choose to support on the one hand, the arms trade, national self-interest, militarism, injustice, violence or on the other peaceful resistance, community, justice and the common good.

Chris Cole was until recently the general secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) in England. He is a freelance writer and activist also undertaking post-graduate research.



Chris (left) with fellow citizen disarmers in September 2010

commemoration of the genocide in rwanda 17 april

UN Secretary General's Message on the 16th commemoration of the Genocide in Rwanda: Today, we observe the sixteenth commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda. We cherish the memory of more than 800,000 innocent people who lost their lives. Our thoughts are also with the survivors, whose haunting testimony woke us to the reality of a tragedy that was all too preventable. The United Nations is fully committed to securing justice for the victims of genocide and to preventing future atrocities. The International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda (ICTR) delivered the first-ever verdicts in relation to genocide by an international court. These and similar actions from the halls of justice have sent a clear message to the genocidaires and would-be genocidaires. Simply put, their heinous crimes will not go unpunished.



an **anti nuclear**



Picnic



SCANA (Scottish Clergy Against Nuclear Arms) is a group of concerned clergy. Its mission is to continue Christian witness against the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons. This is something that most mainline Scottish churches are already in agreement with. SCANA sees its job as to try and find ways of giving expression to this stance – by providing information, vigils, services and opportunities for a Christian voice to be heard.

Last year they held a very successful Easter Saturday Communion Service and Picnic at Faslane. There were requests for the experience to be repeated this year, but the days around Easter are usually filled with services. So, this year's event will take place on the **Saturday before Palm Sunday, which is April 16th.**

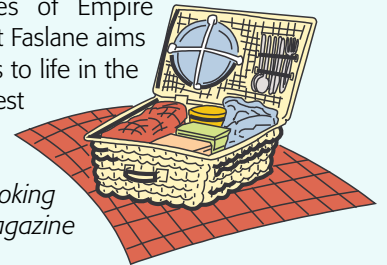
It's an opportunity for Christians from different churches to meet together and witness to our common faith in Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and to underline our belief that nuclear weapons are immoral and they should not be maintained or renewed.

Church Leaders from the major denominations have agreed to attend the day. Cardinal Keith O'Brien, will attend on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church and Rev

Alan McDonald, will represent the Moderator of the Church of Scotland. Also attending will be veteran peace campaigner Bruce Kent.

There will be a short act of worship with singing and prayers for peace, followed by a picnic. Bring food to share. Tea, coffee and juice will be provided. Music will be led by members of the Iona Community's Wild Goose Worship Group.

This is a safe event! It's especially designed for people who have not been to Faslane before, and for Christians and church groups who would like to be peace-makers but aren't sure where to start. This event is emphatically a celebration and not a demonstration involving any confrontational or illegal activity. The focus is on liturgy. Just as Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey with ordinary people turned the values of Empire upside down, the service at Faslane aims to show a Christian witness to life in the face of one of our darkest places.



Please see leaflet and booking form enclosed with the magazine

magazine subscription

The majority of subscriptions to the Magazine fall due for renewal at this time of year. The magazine is still our main way of communicating news and views about Justice and Peace and subscriptions go a long way to covering the increasing costs of production and postage.

We would be grateful if all subscribers and groups whose subscriptions are due, would renew their subscription by returning the form included with the magazine. Many thanks if you have already renewed your subscription for 2011, and thanks also to those who pay by standing order. If you would like to pay your subscription by standing order, please contact the office. Cost should never be a barrier to

receiving the magazine; if there is a problem, let us know.

Bear in mind that a subscription could make a useful gift for a special occasion.

This year the subscription rate remains unchanged again. Please help us by renewing your subscriptions promptly.

Note that cheques should be made payable to the 'Catholic National Endowment Trust' and returned to J&P office.

Thanks for your continuing support.



newsbrief . . . newsbrief

Earth Hour which takes place on 26 March was conceived by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Sydney Morning Herald in 2007, when 2.2 million residents of Sydney participated by turning off all non-essential lights. Following Sydney's lead, many other cities around the world adopted the event in 2008. It is now a global event and is held each year on the last Saturday of March. Households and businesses are asked to turn off their nonessential lights and other electrical appliances for one hour, from 8.30 to 9.30 pm, local time, to raise awareness of the need to take action on climate change.

World Day of Prayer 4 March: The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement which brings Christians of many traditions together to observe a common day of prayer each year. Through preparation and participation in the worship service, we can come to know how our brothers and sisters of other countries, languages and cultures understand the Biblical passages in their context. We can hear their concerns and needs and can feel ourselves in solidarity with them as we pray with and for them. In this way, it is possible to enrich our Christian faith as it grows deeper and broader in an international, ecumenical expression. The motto of the World Day of Prayer movement is Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action. Through our participation in the World Day of Prayer, we affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence on the world. This ecumenical prayer movement developed in Canada and the USA from a Christian women's perspective as a creative response to issues of concern around the world.

Equals on Film: To celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day on 8 March 2011, Good Screenings and Bond are working together on a Global Film Festival. Communities around the world are encouraged to screen a film from their Equals on Film programme that highlights key issues facing women today. If your group would be interested in taking part visit www.goodscreenings.org or email bookings@goodscreenings.org

Calls for continued prayer for Sudan: Zenit reports that the early results of a referendum on secession in Southern Sudan indicate that the region may soon become the 54th independent African state later this year. Bishop Eduardo Hiiaboro Kussala of Tombura-Yambio, in the southern region of Sudan, is asking the international community to continue to pray for a 'permanent peace' in Sudan and underlined the need for continued support, noting that 'this is a historical time for us with noble and delicate decisions before us'. www.zenit.org/article-31548?l=english

New report details string of 'dodgy deals' at export support body: As new Trade Minister Stephen Green embarked on a national tour at the end of January to promote British exports, Jubilee warned that Britain's export support body is not up to the job. A report released by the organisation exposes a history of backing projects by large corporations in a handful of controversial sectors. The projects have led to human rights abuses, environmental destruction and corruption in the developing world, and often failed to deliver even on their stated aims. Read the report at <http://tinyurl.com/4nvtpl>

Ash Wednesday 9 March; Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time during which we are invited to prepare for Easter and the coming of the risen Jesus into our life and our world. It is a time for personal conversion.

Traditionally, there are three ways we can participate in this season of preparation and conversion: through prayer, fasting and giving alms.

Victory for Kalahari Bushmen as court grants right to water: In a momentous decision, the Botswana appeal court overturned the high court ruling which denied the Bushmen access to their water. This is a great victory for tribal peoples' rights – and for Botswana and for Survival International. Celebrating after the decision, a Bushman spokesperson said, 'We are very happy that our rights have finally been recognised. We have been waiting a long time for this. Like any human beings, we need water to live. We also need our land. We pray that the government will now treat us with the respect we deserve.' <http://tinyurl.com/48xp9q8>

Archbishop Romero Lecture 2011: 'Romero and the Social Gospel - the challenge for us today'. This takes place Wednesday 23 March at 7.30pm, Lauriston Centre, Sacred Heart Church, Edinburgh. Fr Juan Hernández Pico, Central American Jesuit theologian and social scientist, will be giving this year's Archbishop Romero Lecture. Fr Juan lived through the Romero years, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and the traumas of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala to whom he has served as a committed pastor. He was a close friend and colleague of the six Jesuit martyrs. He has written a number of books of social and political analysis of Central America and the struggle of Christian communities for justice and peace. Fr Juan is currently a professor of theology at the Jesuit University in San Salvador. The lecture also takes place in London, Salford and Newcastle. www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=17508

Child and working-age poverty set to rise in next three years: Between 2010-11 and 2013-14 average incomes are forecast to stagnate and both absolute and relative poverty among children and working-age adults are expected to rise, according to projections funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and published by the IFS www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5372 (source Poverty Alliance)

Universal Credit: Winners and Losers: The Universal Credit will dramatically change the welfare system for working-age adults. If successful, it would make the welfare system more effective and coherent. But it will create winners and losers in the process: couples with children will gain from it and, when transitional protection expires, lone parents will lose. This is one of the key findings of a preliminary analysis published by the IFS. www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5414 (source Poverty Alliance)

Labour Behind the Label, a small but highly active UK-based NGO, campaigns to support garment workers worldwide in demanding and defending their internationally recognised human rights. In their current campaign, 'Taking Liberties,' they report on the conditions for garment workers from two factories in Gurgaon, near Delhi in India. These workers - who live with a constant struggle to meet even the most basic living costs - are not producing for low-cost, fast fashion brands normally associated with such appalling conditions. Instead they make garments for some of the UK's more well-respected brands such as M&S and Debenhams. It's surprising to find that trusted companies can lack transparency in the same way as their budget counterparts. www.labourbehindthelabel.org/campaigns/item/905-takingliberties

Obituary: Bishop Emeritus Samuel Ruiz García

“The Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee - General Command of the Zapatista National Liberation Army expresses sadness and regret at the death of Bishop Emeritus Samuel Ruiz García.”

There can't be too many bishops who have had the condolences of a revolutionary army at their death. But then again, there weren't too many bishops like Don Samuel, as people called him, if they did not simply use *Jtatic*, the Mayan word for Father. For it was with these indigenous people of Chiapas in southern Mexico that Bishop Samuel worked and acted as defender. He served as bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas for four decades.

Best known to the outside world for his role as mediator in the conflict with Zapatista rebels, from 1994 to 1998 he headed a commission looking for an end to the conflict between the Mexican government and the indigenous Zapatista National Liberation Army in Chiapas state, which significantly reduced the violence. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize several times. Bishop Ruiz dissolved the *Comision Nacional de Intermediacion* in June 1998 after President Ernesto Zedillo repeatedly attacked him in speeches that made thinly-veiled reference to 'hypocritical pastors who preach the theology of violence'.

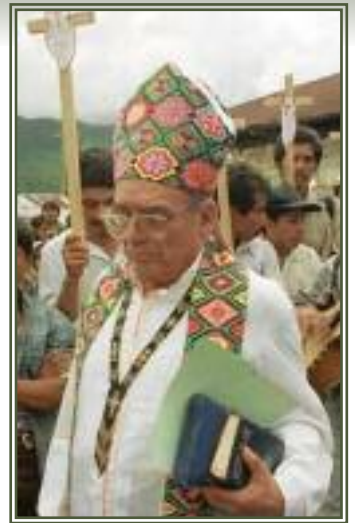
Bishop Ruiz was also criticised by conservatives in the Church who saw him as too influenced by left-wing political ideas and too flexible in his approach to indigenous religious practices that combined Catholicism with traditional Maya beliefs. On the occasion of the Pope John Paul II's visit to Mexico in 1990, landowners published an open letter, accusing Bishop Ruiz of being a communist and fomenting class hatred. Bishop Ruiz always opposed violence, whether from the Zaptistas, or the institutionalised violence of landowners.

Samuel Ruiz Garcia was born Nov. 3, 1924, in Irapuato, Mexico. He was ordained in 1949 after studies in Rome and was consecrated a bishop in 1960. He attended every session of Vatican II. He was also active in the awakening of the South American church that arose from the Council of Medellin in 1968. At Medellin, the Latin American bishops had proposed measures - notably the preferential option for the poor - which were geared for the needs of the church in South America and derived from the pastoral, spiritual and reflective efforts of many of those who would come to be lumped together as liberation theologians. While, as Hugo Assman, the Brazilian theologian remarked, the measures proposed were often beyond the capabilities of the bishops, Bishop Ruiz proved a shining exception.

To those who accused him of preaching liberation theology, Bishop Ruiz' disingenuous response was: 'Is there a theology of slavery?' In his diocese, there was an effective apartheid against indigenous peoples, who were ruthlessly exploited by the landowners, with flogging against men and exercise of *droit de seigneur* against young women. 'I was like a fish that slept with its eyes open and never saw anything,' said Ruiz, describing his early years in San Cristobal de las Casas, a city where racism forced Indians to step into the gutter whenever a white person passed on the pavement. Bishop Ruiz founded the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Centre for Human Rights in Chiapas. He was a tireless advocate for the rights of the indigenous people. He learned to speak four Mayan languages and often traveled through his

diocese on a mule.

He introduced the permanent diaconate in 1975 (over 300 when Rome stopped the process of ordination in 2002) and set up a network of over 10,000 lay catechists even to people in the remote areas of Chiapas, bringing the bible in their own language as well as forms of worship which took account of local culture. On one occasion, a general in the security forces



brandished a pamphlet claiming that it proved the links between the Bishop and those who 'transgressed the law'. It turned out to be a translation into the local language of the Gospel according to Mark.

In 1993, he published a Pastoral Letter, entitled *In this Hour of Grace*, which highlighted the injustices visited upon the indigenous people. In an interview for *Sojourners* magazine at this time Bishop Ruiz was asked what the face of Jesus looked like in his communities. 'It is not really Christ risen,' he said. 'It is still the Passion. He is on the cross, suffering, but not without hope. When we see people with hope, we know there is still the possibility for change. We can see the pain of Christ in the community, but also the hope'

At the end of 1997, having recently survived yet another assassination attempt, he presided over the funeral of 45 peasants, mainly women and children, murdered by pro government paramilitaries. On his 75th birthday, in 1999, he submitted his resignation as bishop in accordance with canon law. It was accepted with alacrity by the Vatican, despite his willingness to continue.

He died on 24 January from a series of renal, diabetic and circulatory problems. Or, as his successor bishops put it in the formal announcement, 'completed his travels on this earth and passed over into the fullness of life'. His funeral in Mexico City was attended by politicians as well as *campesinos*. A funeral mass was also held in the capital of Chiapas presided over by the papal nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon in a statement praised Bishop Ruiz's attempts to build 'a more just Mexico - egalitarian, dignified and without discrimination in it - so that indigenous communities have a voice and their rights and freedoms are respected by all'.

Perhaps the best assessment is that of Don Samuel, in his retirement speech as bishop:

'I can tell you that I am the same person, but that I am not the same,' he said. 'The bishop that arrived here has been left behind, has evolved.'

May he rest in peace.

SCIAF's lent campaign: your WEE BOX and your WEE VOTE can make big changes



Each Lent, SCIAF asks people to reflect, give and act on global poverty writes Lexi Barnett campaigns officer. This year, Lent falls in the run up to the Scottish elections, and we want to ensure that the candidates seeking your vote are committed to acting on global poverty too.

With almost one billion people going hungry around the world, the impacts of climate change putting increasing pressure on crops and livelihoods, and trade rules stealing opportunities from small-scale farmers, it's more important than ever that we tell those with the power to change government policies that they must act now.

I've seen for myself the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities in El Salvador, as well as the difference that effective aid makes to combating poverty in rural India. I've also seen in Nicaragua how the right support can help small-scale farmers to produce more and better crops, as well as receive a fair price for their products. I've also seen right here in Scotland how simple campaign actions like sending a postcard or writing an email to an MSP can impact big political decisions which affect the lives of the poorest people all over the world.

Last year's Lent campaign action ran before the UK general election. In response we received reaffirmation of the UK's international development budget from the new coalition government, as well as a commitment to fight climate change. Almost four thousand of you signed up to the Robin Hood Tax campaign which is gaining ever more support from politicians around the world. And in November 2010 over 400 emails were sent to First Minister Alex Salmond in just four days, calling on his government not to cut the Scottish aid budget - and this year's £9 million commitment to fighting global poverty was saved.

SCIAF's WEE VOTE, BIG Change campaign: What are we asking the Scottish Government to do?

Protect the aid budget

The Scottish Government's £9 million aid budget has saved and changed lives around the world. It means Scottish support can be there when disasters hit, like the Haiti earthquake or the Pakistan floods, and can back long-term sustainable development projects in countries like Malawi. SCIAF is calling on all of Scotland's parties to commit to maintaining or increasing the current aid budget over the lifetime of the next parliament.



Marlene with her family

Case study: Marlene, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Marlene and her family lost everything in last year's earthquake. At first her temporary camp had no toilets, showers or clean water. Scottish Government support, together with donations from SCIAF's generous supporters,

helped Marlene's family, and thousands of others in Haiti have access to clean water, showers and toilets.

Implement the climate change act.

Scotland's world-leading climate change act is the first piece of legislation that commits a country to doing what is necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change. All parties must live up to that responsibility by ensuring full implementation of the act, and creation of a fund to help people in developing countries to adapt to and survive the changing climate.

Case study: Vernia, Mombin Crochu, Haiti

Like many in Haiti, Vernia's family depends on their crops to survive. Climate change is making it even harder to grow food, as rain patterns are changing and the crops are often killed by drought, or the soil is washed away by flooding. Scotland's Climate Change Act is world-leading, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2020, in line with UN scientists' recommendations. This will help reduce the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable.

Make Scotland a Fair Trade Nation

Buying fair trade changes lives around the world. The Scottish Government is Scotland's biggest consumer, spending around £9 billion a year on goods and services across the public sector. They must take a lead by ensuring fair trade policies are applied where possible to government spending.

Case study: COMUS, Nicaragua

COMUS is an organisation, funded by SCIAF in Nicaragua, which helps small-scale farmers in rural areas to improve their crop yields and access markets to sell their surplus. With help from COMUS, farmers have been able to export coffee to the US for a fair price, allowing them to earn extra money to invest in their farms and their families.

What can you do?

You can find your action card included in this magazine. Please sign and send it back to SCIAF, and we'll send them all to the government after the election. If you have already received a campaign action card, why not pass this one on to a friend or colleague? If you have internet access, you can also email all your election candidates at the click of a mouse!

www.sciaf.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/wee_vote_big_change to take action today!

Scotland has a proud tradition of not only standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, but also of acting to challenge the reasons for their poverty. We can make sure that the next Scottish Parliament is made up of people who truly represent us, and will take action against poverty.

Three ways to get involved with SCIAF's Lent campaign:

1. Sign and send the WEE VOTE, BIG Change postcard enclosed in the magazine, calling on the first minister to act on aid, trade and climate
2. Email your election candidates at www.sciaf.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/wee_vote_big_change
3. Have you got your WEE BOX? Pop the money you save from giving up something this Lent into a SCIAF WEE BOX, and send it back to us to help fund our work overseas. Call 0141 354 5555 to order yours.

diary diary

PROUD TO SUPPORT FAIRTRADE

FEBRUARY

28 – 13 March Fairtrade Fortnight

MARCH

- 1 International Treaty to ban Landmines 1999
- 1 International Death Penalty Abolition Day
- 4 World Day of Prayer
- 5 International treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970)
- 5 Eco Congregation Annual Gathering
- 8 International Women's Day
- 21 UN Day for the Elimination of Racial discrimination
- 21 World Forestry Day
- 22 World Water Day
- 23 Romero lecture
- 24 Assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero (1970)
- 25 UN International Day of the remembrance of the victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
- 27 Earth Hour

APRIL

- 4 International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action
- 7 UN Day of Remembrance of the victims of the Rwanda genocide
- 10 Treaty banning biological warfare signed by 120 nations (1972)
- 16 Nuclear Picnic at Faslane
- 22 Good Friday
- 22 International Mother Earth Day
- 24 EASTER SUNDAY
- 25 World Malaria Day
- 26 Bishop Gerardi murdered in Guatemala (1998)

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



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12 Magazine