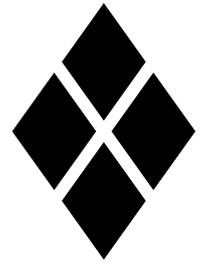


MOUTH PEACE



Shrewsbury and Liverpool Justice and Peace Commissions



This drawing by Naji Al-Ali is one of many featuring Handala. Find out more about Handa and his creator on page 5

ISSUE 72

Winter 2010/11

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THE ANASTAS FAMILY IN BETHLEHEM

Claire, Johnny and their four children live in Bethlehem, one of the Christian families that hangs on by the skin of their teeth in the world-revered town that has become a ghetto and a prison for its inhabitants. It was Claire who insisted on giving me a present when I visited them in May 2010, even though she had just finished telling me a catalogue of woes that have befallen her family in recent years. She gave me a small olive-wood carving of the Bethlehem Apartheid Wall because it has an all-encompassing significance for her. I would like to tell you her story.

I first met Claire in October 2005 when I visited Bethlehem for the first time with a small group of women. At that time the Israeli state was still in the process of building the 27 feet high concrete Wall that now imprisons the town. Every morning early we would go to where they were building the Wall to hold a silent protest vigil. It happened to be close to Claire's house and she came to ask who we were. That started a friendship which is strong to this day, and each time I go to Bethlehem I visit the family.

Since 2005 their house has been surrounded on 3 sides by the Wall which stands a room's length from their front door blocking light and every view except of its concrete slabs. The family used to live on the main Jerusalem to Hebron highway as it enters Bethlehem and they made a good living with three businesses that depended on the steady flow of the tourist and pilgrimage trail. The house has not moved but the road now stops in a dead-end by their house. The main highway leading into Bethlehem from the capital city has been totally blocked and the Anastas family live in a darkened cul-de-sac which no-one visits because it leads nowhere and because everyone fears the armed soldiers whose military post stands in the back yard. This is an improvement on the time when the army actually billeted themselves in the house controlling

everything the family did at gunpoint. There is one of the few houses now left inhabited as many were bulldozed to the ground and the inhabitants fled from others. Their businesses collapsed, their house fell into disrepair, their children's fees for school and university have gone unpaid, and various members of the family show their stress in physical and mental disorders. The court case they fought to get the line of the Wall pushed further away came to nothing except to ruin them financially. (*Photos of the house are on the Shrewsbury Diocese J & P website. See P.12*)

In spite of this catastrophe Claire and Johnny remain both defiant and hopeful. Johnny helps out in his brother's car repair business and when I visited this year Claire had performed two near-miracles of adaptation to the premises. She has converted her mother's rooms, now that the old lady is no longer with them, into charming and well-equipped guest rooms, and on the ground floor with its glass door opening out onto the Wall, is a small but elegant souvenir shop. Claire has taste and flair – and vision.

But most of all she has Hope: hope that the family can begin to be self-sufficient again and can pay their own bills instead of running up enormous debts and living off charity. Hope that some-one will come to use and enjoy her very own unique tourist facilities – little havens of beauty in the military prison which she is forced to live in.

If ever there were an opportunity for us as visitors to experience what it's like to live inside the Israeli-created ghetto and prison, this is it. This is reality tourism with a vengeance. And yet it is one that I would recommend. This is where the desert blooms and the caged bird flies.

For more information contact Gwen Backwell at gwen.backwell@hotmail.co.uk or on 0151 709 2407.

Editor: Gwen is also prepared to talk to groups

FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

On a visit to the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral in November 2010, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, appealed for our support for his people. In response a new organisation 'The Friends of the Holy Land' (FHL) was formed. Its patrons are Archbishop Nichols of Westminster and Archbishop Kelly of Liverpool. It is supported by the UK Catholic Bishops' Conferences. This is a humanitarian, apolitical organisation with following objectives:- To raise awareness of the difficulties that they (Christians) are experiencing To encourage and to provide for prayers to be offered for their intentions To generate financial support to aid their well-being.

We could play a small but important part in restoring peace and justice to all the peoples there, of whatever religion, by supporting this vital work. Any help that you can give, however small, would be greatly appreciated there by our brothers and sisters, for we are all one family in Christ. Please consider helping to establish a group in your parish or Local Pastoral Area (LPA). Your experience and insights of justice and peace work could prove to be invaluable.

page 2

FHL supports a variety of initiatives, which are designed not only to relieve poverty and malnutrition, but also aid the education of children of all ages, as well as the housing needs of families badly affected by house demolitions and bombing. Some schemes also exist to restore damaged Christian churches, by employing local craftsmen. Any monies raised are sent to the relevant church authorities by the central office of FHL for projects nominated by the local group, from an available FHL list. This avoids the many difficulties of transferring funds. Existing projects may also be supported by this means.

Two groups have already been established:

Wallasey, LPA21, founded 1st July 2010

West Wirral, LPA 22, founded 14th October 2010

Pat Revans, Facilitator for FHL Project Shrewsbury

Email: revopd@googlemail.com

Website: www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

Hard copies of the Kairos document from M Brennan, 5 Smithy Hey, West Kirby, CH48 7EH



A MOMENT OF TRUTH!

Marian Thompson writes:

As we travel on our faith journey we all experience those moments of truth when the penny drops, the light comes on and all suddenly becomes clear and obvious. Things we had been hearing, seeing and reading during previous months (or even years) all fall into place and we are challenged to own and act on an issue or an idea that was previously something we could easily skim over quickly. Such moments of clarity maybe referred to by those with a working knowledge of Greek as 'Kairos' moments.

Christians have in recent years also applied the term to those moments in the history of a people who are oppressed or unjustly treated when they feel have reached rock bottom and something bold has to be done. For instance in 1985 in South Africa a Kairos document challenged the model of church that justified apartheid. Christians world wide were encouraged to bring pressure to bear on the apartheid regime. Most of us then responded with our boycott of South African goods.

Christians who live in Palestine feel that such a Kairos moment has been reached for them. Faced with daily harassment and cruelty from the Israeli occupation forces, many are now moving elsewhere. There are currently around 125,000 Palestinian Christians in Israel/ Palestine compared to about 400,000 Palestinian Christians who are living elsewhere. The number who have emigrated looks set to increase as more and more Christians leave their homes in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the Galilee and elsewhere. In Bethlehem, for example, an estimated 357 families or 10% of the Christian population left the town between 2000 and 2004. There are thus increasing fears that in the years to come, the Holy Land could see an "emptying" of Christians. *

In December 2009 the Palestine church leaders published their Kairos document called 'A Moment of Truth' described as 'a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering'. This document took 18 months to prepare and was written specifically for two groups of Christians. The first is Palestinian Christian communities, all of whom have adopted it without exception. The second is the international Christian community as "a word of gratitude for the solidarity you have shown toward us, in word, deed and in presence among us", but also as "a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions which support unjust political options" * Unlike the Palestinian Christians, we in this country seem to have let this appeal pass us by. I include myself in this. A brief report of the Kairos document was included in the Autumn MouthPeace but then I went off on holiday and it slipped my mind to read it online.

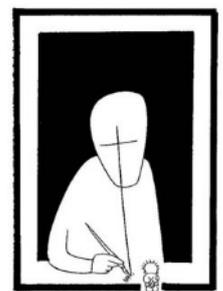
So I thank Methodist friends in our ecumenical J & P group who care passionately about the Israel /Palestine situation. They drew my attention to this year's Methodist Conference Agenda for June 2010. In this is an excellent detailed report on Israel/Palestine including historical background, present problems and stories from named individuals. There is very comprehensive list of all the organisations who work to support the people of the Middle East. In June the Conference passed a motion commending the report for reflection and action in Local Churches, Circuits and Districts and suggesting various ways this could be undertaken. Reading this report recently was a 'moment of truth' for me and I grasped the importance of the Kairos Palestinian document.

How should I respond personally? In a way it is more of the same. I can continue for instance to buy the now expensive Zaytoun olive oil (see page 11), try to avoid buying goods produced in the Israeli settlements of the Palestine Occupied Territories (a harder job) and support the Biblelands (see www.biblelands.org.uk) in their work. But how to spread the message more widely within our own Catholic parishes? I was very pleased to hear from Pat Reeves who is thinking on the same lines and drew my attention to Friends of the Holy Land (see opposite). A scan over the main denomination websites shows that all traditions at a higher level have taken the document seriously but somehow this message still does not seem to have reached us in the pews. The material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 2011 should help as it has been prepared by the churches in Jerusalem. It is to be hoped then that this cry for support from the Christians of the Holy Land which seemed to receive lukewarm reception from many of us in 2010 will become the flavour of the moment in 2011.

* Report 'Justice for Palestine' in the Methodist Conference Agenda 2010. This can be accessed at www.paxchristi.org.uk clicking on Middle East (Israel /Palestine) where there is also a copy of the Kairos document and much background information.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY JANUARY 18 - 25 2011

The theme is *All Things in Common* and comes to us from an ecumenical group in Jerusalem. As we have already noted above, the Christians of Jerusalem and indeed much of the Middle East are living under tremendous pressure. However, they are also communities of faith that worship, pray and study together, who work for the good of their society and pray for unity of the Church and the coming of the Kingdom of God. In 2011 they invite the world-wide Church to pray with them for the unity of the Church and justice and peace in the Holy Land and through the world. Material for study and worship on www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer



ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE—WE ARE BUILDING IT NOW

Grace Gallagher, from St Vincent's, Altrincham, writes of her experience of the Justice and Peace weekend at Loyola Hall 21-23 May 2010 :

As I drove toward Prescott on the M62 on the afternoon of Friday 21 May – the start of the hottest weekend of the year so far – I couldn't help thinking how much I would rather be out on my patio with glass in hand! Then I thought ... well at least I'll get a rest here just listening to a few talks and taking some notes – Oops, wrong!! ... this weekend was hard work!

As advertised Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of Pax Christi-British Section, directed and planned the form and timetable for the weekend jointly with Steve Atherton, J&P Worker for the Liverpool Archdiocese J&P Commission. Stephen Hoyland, in house lay member of the Jesuit community at Loyola was our constant host and guide. The timetable was very full and there was Mass each day, the House Mass in the Chapel on Friday and Saturday evening and a more informal Mass which we planned ourselves and held in our workroom on the Sunday.

Mealtimes were always welcome and most enjoyable – don't know when I last ate two main meals in one day – the hospitality overall was warm and generous and all in a prayerful atmosphere of quiet and peace.

The group numbered about 22 in all and although I was the only J&P member who was not from the Liverpool diocese I was made most welcome and had no difficulty in feeling quite at one with everyone and we worked well and played well over the entire weekend.

The first session took the form of introducing ourselves to each other, one by one, for a two minute brief conversation then moving on to the next when a small bell rang. We only managed about four or five of these introductions but it was enough to break the ice very gently and left people feeling quite chatty.

Each subsequent session after this took the form of a workshop, each workshop leading on to the next in some way, not by accident I'm sure. These were interspersed with quiet times for reflection, prayer and sometimes reading material to get through and think about for later discussion. In the workshops we were divided into groups, and no member was allowed to hang back, everyone had to make a contribution to the discussion and the outcome from each group reported at the summing up.

For me this was gradually sowing the seeds of a more joined up understanding of J&P issues at all levels – international, national, local, community and neighbourhood – and how there are some common threads at the root of all difficulties – i.e. relationship breakdown, historical barriers built up over years, mistrust between people and communities, resistance to change, lack of understanding, religious intolerance, racial intolerance, lack of respect, and all of these potentially leading to fear, hatred, injustice, lack of human rights, poverty, violence and wars.

In effecting change in the world it was heartening for me to hear at the weekend that however impossible the bigger picture can appear we are not to feel overwhelmed in our work for Justice and Peace. We are encouraged to work constantly toward change for a better world in seemingly small ways in our own neighbourhoods and communities, and more closely locally with other parishes and pastoral areas, and those of other Christian and on-Christian faiths so that, in time, the ripples of change may spread to the wider world and always to remember 'the dripping tap of hope'.

It was no coincidence either I'm sure that the weekend was that of the feast of Pentecost. So here was the perfect occasion for being open to the Holy Spirit, giving him thanks and praise and asking for his gifts to be strengthened in us so that all our efforts over the weekend would bear fruit, especially the courage to go out and witness.

I came away feeling that I had been on a Justice and Peace foundation course of sorts which covered considerable ground and although it was a lot to take in at once I feel it certainly left me with a great deal of food for thought and hopefully a better root base from which to grow.

Throughout the weekend it was emphasized too that we should be properly informed in any work we undertake, with proper advice and training where necessary. The need for encouragement was reiterated too so that we should not feel disappointed in any way if, for example, there's a poor attendance or outcome to any project, rather always to remember that 'dripping tap of hope' and to remember also that those who give light must endure burning!

Advance notice: May 20 –22 2011 'Wisdom and Justice.' J & P Retreat with Sr Camilla Burns at Loyola Hall

THANK YOU

John Paul Illunga wants to thank everyone who responded to his appeal that was featured in the summer edition of MouthPeace (MP 70). He asked for money to build three classrooms and six toilets at the school for displaced children near his family's home in the south east of the Republic of Congo. The money has been raised, sent and the buildings are in use. Thanks to everyone who responded.

HOPE FOR HAITI

Daniel Hale of Progressio writes:

There was total silence in Liverpool's St Michael's Church in October as Michèle Pierre-Louis, a woman who this time last year had led the government of Haiti as Prime Minister, recounted again the story of the earthquake. They call it 'Goudou Goudou' (pronounced Gudu Gudu), after the sound it made, before the ground shook and the people started to scream. A chance decision to see friends, rather than go home, probably spared her life. 58 seconds of terror.

And then running, over the rubble, to see if her daughter and baby grandson were still alive. The only thing she could think of. And the relief at finding them, dazed but unharmed, in front of what was left of their home.

The first night, sleeping out in front of the stars. Too dangerous to go inside, if there even was an inside anymore. No water, no food, no electricity or gas. Nothing but faith and hope. Her community devastated by grief at the 300,000 dead (in truth, no one knows the exact number), but joyful to be alive. The prayers and singing, as if neighbourhood were singing to neighbourhood, calling on God to be with them through the night.

It's a story that will stay with me for a long time, strains of 'Michael row the boat ashore' as Michèle sung it to us echoing in my mind; I certainly wasn't the only person to be deeply moved by stories of the faith of the Haitian people that night.

It was an unforgettable, if intense and challenging, couple of hours. Michèle, who runs a foundation in Haiti and is a visiting fellow at Harvard University, was certainly an honoured visitor. She certainly demonstrated what a good life is, what it means to serve others, what it means to dedicate your life to those less fortunate than yourself. She demonstrates the duties of privilege, of faith, of hope and charity.

It certainly seems as though there's a lot of hope in Haiti, a country filled with people just like Michèle.

Michèle Pierre-Louis was welcomed as a guest of Progressio, a Catholic charity which helps communities overcome barriers that keep them poor. You can play a part in their vital working Haiti by making a donation:

www.progressio.org.uk/get-involved/make-a-donation

HAVE YOU MET HANDALA?



This little chap is a refugee child from Palestine. Handala is ten years of age, the age at which his creator became a refugee when he lost his home and village to the newly created state called Israel. Handala was born ten years old, and he will always be ten years old until he can return to his homeland and then grow up as normal.

Naji Al-Ali (1936-87) his creator wrote: "I gave birth to this child in the Gulf and I presented him to the people. I drew him as a child who is not beautiful; his hair is like the hair of a hedgehog who uses his thorns as a weapon. Handala is barefooted like the refugee camp children, and even though he may appear rough, and

his clothes are torn, he smells of amber. I presented him to the poor and named him Handala as a symbol of bitterness. At first, he was a Palestinian child, but his consciousness developed to have a national and then a global and human horizon. He is a simple yet tough child, and this is why people adopted him and felt that he represents their consciousness."

From approximately 1975 until 1987, Naji Al-Ali created cartoons that depict the complexities of the plight of Palestinian refugees. These cartoons are still relevant today and Handala, the refugee child who is present in every cartoon, remains a potent symbol of the struggle of the Palestinian people for justice and self-determination. He stands with his hands clasped behind his back as sign that "outside solutions" are not of much use because they may involve some sort of compromise, and why should the Palestinians compromise over their right to their entire country? Perhaps most significant is Handala's back is turned towards us, which is what he and many other Palestinians feel the world is doing to Palestine!

Most of us feel helpless once we notice the situation in Israel/Palestine and we are left wondering what we can do. There are various possibilities: The Catholic bishops are promoting The Friends of the Holy Land (see page 2).

There is an active local network of the ecumenical Friends of Sabeel. Their website is: www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk

The Liverpool Friends of Palestine are affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. They can be found at www.liverpoolfriendsofpalestine.co.uk

There is also an organisation that campaigns specifically about the wall. www.stopthewall.org Their current campaign seeks to raise awareness and mobilize in the street, communities and institutions in our country. They say that civil disobedience is not as painful as what happens to Handala's country folk. However, as a well known advert goes, "Every little helps!"

Joe Prendergast

Editor: There are some cartoons in this MouthPeace. Many more cartoons can be found on www.handala.org

WHO COUNTS? Poverty and Homelessness Action Week January 29—February 6

March 27th 2011 is Census Day. Those who are interested in their family history will know how valuable these populations censuses taken every decade are. When the Victorians took the first census they were meticulous in including everyone, even going into the sewers to count the people living there.



In 21st century Britain do we care the same? There are many people living on the margins of our society who do not have a permanent address.... sofa surfers, asylum seekers as well as those sleeping in doorways and under bridges. It is important that they too are included in the count. The census figures are an important tool for policy makers during the next ten years and are used by government and local authorities in their planning of housing, schools, hospitals and other major projects.

Housing Justice is keen that homeless and marginalised people are included in the census by being in a household or community establishment such as a hostel on census night. As well as holding services on the two Sundays why not use the ACTION WEEK in between to find out who such people might be in your area and to ensure they will be included in the census?
For resources see www.actionweek.org.uk

COMPASSION FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR?

One of the amazing things about the scriptures is how we keep hearing different things from the same words. The story of the Good Samaritan is one of the most famous stories ever told but this year I heard for the first time that it contains Jesus' demand that we should be compassionate, that if we are to 'Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength and with all our mind' then we must 'love our neighbour as ourselves'. The story of the Good Samaritan was Jesus' answer to the question 'Who is my neighbour?' It turns out, of course, that 'our neighbour' isn't just the person we admire from down the street or the smiling friend who lives next door. It includes the people we don't like, the people we don't approve of, the people we'd rather not be seen with, the people we don't want to move in and live next door. It's everybody. Trust Jesus to be challenging.

'Lord, when did I see you hungry?' There are hungry, desti-

tute people among us, 195 on the books of Asylum Link, more than that agency is able to support. The law does not allow asylum seekers to work. Under Section 4 of the Immigration Act they are given food vouchers and extremely basic accommodation but only if they are prepared to sign an agreement to return to their own country if their bid for asylum fails. Since they have fled injustice, often in great fear, and good legal representation at asylum hearings is hard to come by it is unsurprising that they are reluctant to sign such an agreement. As Christians we cannot ignore their plight. **ASYLUM LINK MERSEYSIDE** would be glad to hear from you if you can provide any assistance (0151-709-1713). Members of one church group in the London area contribute the heating allowance they are given as over -60s because they are fortunate enough not to need it. Not everyone can do this but it is an example of a Christian response to our neighbour's destitution.

Terry Philips

Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies Hope University, Liverpool

This was set up in 2004 to promote the study of conflict and conflict resolution. It aims to promote research into the political, economic, historical and cultural contexts which give rise to conflict and play a part in its resolution. Its underpinning philosophy is that it is only by a real understanding of past and present conflict that conflict resolution can be achieved, and that public understanding of the issues contributes to ethically-based opinion formation

Programme of Public Lectures

Thursday 16th December 2010 5.00 pm AJB007

Dr Andy Storey, School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin. 'Rwanda after the 1994 Genocide: Conflict Resolution or New Patterns of Violence'

Thursday 27th January 2011 5.00 pm AJB007

Dr Stuart Gordon, Senior Lecturer, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst 'Afghanistan: A Rocky Road to Nowhere?'

Thursday 24th February 2011 5.00 pm AJB007

Dr Ian Speller, Department of History, NUI, Maynooth "The use and abuse of military history"

All lectures take place in the Alexander Jones Building which can be accessed from Woolton Road. Car parking is available via the Taggart Avenue entrance to the University. For directions see www.hope.ac.uk/getting-to-hope

Contact for more information: Dr Terry Phillips Director of Taught Postgraduate Programmes Tel: 0151 291 3126
Email: phillim@hope.ac.uk

SENT FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

A review of the pamphlet by Frank Regan, former Columban missionary, writer and speaker on questions of faith in interface with politics, culture and ecology.

Those of us who struggle for peace, justice and holiness are guided by our faith. But this faith is more than just a belief in the doctrines set down by the Church: it stems from a lived experience of knowing we are loved by God and responding to that love. This premise is the crux of Frank Regan's challenging pamphlet ***Sent for the Life of the World*** (available from Catholics for a Changing Church, 1 Carysfort House, 14 Halkin St, London SW1X 8JS price £2 incl. p&p).

Love is central to the Christian ethos: love of God and love of neighbour. And to love fully means building right relationships that centre on responding with love to the God who has lovingly created us as well as acting lovingly, justly and fairly with each other. Frank highlights four facets of the love of God which spur us into action: economic; political; ecological and personal. Within that framework he cites four areas of concern: the Planet; Peace; Poverty and the Person and makes a clear link between these in a well-argued discourse.

Whilst Catholics are familiar with the Gospel call to 'love our sisters and brothers as ourselves', he suggests that the Church is predominantly 'man-centred', hitherto showing little regard to the interconnectedness between humankind and the planet we inhabit and plunder. He argues that building a good relationship with the planet has not been high on our agenda but if humankind is to survive our attitude must change.

He contrasts the world in which we live with its gross inequalities, motivated by greed, selfishness and lack of respect for life to Jesus' vision of the Kingdom valuing as it does the dignity of every person regardless of class, age, sex, race or creed. He reveals how far we have fallen short of this vision, increasing the divide between rich and poor and causing irreparable damage to the planet. He concludes by directing our focus towards Jesus, the promised Messiah, sent for the life of the world to speak the truth that will set us free and calls for us to take Jesus' teachings to heart so that everyone may enjoy the fullness of life.

Anne O'Connor

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

Anne O'Connor has prepared four Advent reflections useful for individuals or group that are on www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk Here is Week 1 as a taster:

Watching and waiting

Stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. Matthew 24:42

He will wield authority over nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.

Isaiah 2:4



Prayer There are several helpful prayers on www.paxchristi.org.uk/litgy.HTML

Reflection Muggings; street crime; racial attacks; ethnic cleansing; physical, mental and verbal abuse; violence; war: conflict all around – presented to us daily through the media. The whole world is brought into our living rooms.

- Is there tension in my family? What can I do to resolve it?
- Is there hostility in my local community, especially towards newcomers? How might I be a better neighbour?
- Can I change my lifestyle to shift the focus from my own needs to the needs of others.?
- How might I help those who suffer because of violence and war?

Action Ideas

- Join a local community action group or the LETS scheme (Local Exchange Trading Schemes – www.letslinkuk.net) which swaps skills and resources
- Become a member of the Catholic Peace organisation Pax Christi (www.paxchristi.org.uk)
- Send a greetings card to a prisoner of conscience (www.amnesty.org.uk)

Group Activity

- Everyone is invited to take two paper leaves: one a green holly leaf on which to write a word or phrase that expresses personal regret or concern for an issue in the wider world, the second a red poinsettia leaf for their hopes and dreams
- Florist's wire is attached to the leaves and they are displayed in a vase for everyone to see



COLOMBIA'S NEW POLITICAL AGENDA

Francis McDonagh writes:

When Juan Manuel Santos took the oath as President of Colombia on 7th August this year, Colombians got a surprise. The new President proclaimed a government of national unity, committed himself to the defence of human rights, and proclaimed that he would place fighting poverty on the same level as fighting terrorism, and enable the displaced and the victims of Colombia's 40-year internal conflict to return to their lands. Was this the same man who, as President Uribe's defence minister, had kept Colombia on a war footing, and had been the candidate of a president who constantly denounced human rights defenders as allies of the FARC guerrillas?

Three months later, laws on victims and land restitution are making their way through Congress, and a national human rights conference is being organised for next year. Janneth Lozano, director of CAFOD partner CODACOP, says, 'I have no illusions, but there is a different atmosphere.' So is Colombia on the road to change, the road to peace? It is the question that everyone is asking.

Land is at the heart of the problem. Colombia's internal conflict started over the concentration of land, and is now a war for the control of natural resources, minerals or land that could be used to grow bio-fuel crops such as oil palm, or of strategic routes across the border or to the coast through which drugs can be transported. An estimated six million hectares has been stolen from small producers during the conflict: how will the usurpers who are now making money out of this land be persuaded to give it up? Here the signs are worrying. President Santos's draft legislation provides for 2.5 million hectares to be made available for restitution, far less than the area illegally seized, but even this cautious measure is being delayed in Congress by the majority still loyal to former President Uribe. And on the land itself, at least one rural leader who was trying to claim back land has been murdered.

And yet Church leaders and ambassadors see the situation as delicate and dangerous. They worry that if resistance to the reforms cannot be checked, Colombia could slip back into violence even greater than that seen in the last few years.

On the other hand, they also see this time as one of opportunity. Issues can now be aired publicly in a way that was impossible only three months ago. This national conversation is the one hope, and here the Catholic Church, under the leadership of the new archbishop of Bogotá, Rubén Salazar, has made work for peace its priority. The new situation also gives the international community a new opportunity, to hold the Santos government to its fine words and to find ways of supporting it against the groups who, until August, were its natural allies. It is a high-risk strategy, but perhaps there is no other.

Editor : Our thanks to Francis McDonagh who wrote this especially for MouthPeace.

Francis is CAFOD's Andes Programme Manager, and was in Colombia in the last two weeks of October.

FAIRTRADE NEWS

Well done Sophi Tranchell and Divine Chocolate Limited!

Sophi won the Ernst and Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2010. You can hear Sophi talking on the Ernst and Young website...a long address so it is easier to Google: Ernst and Young 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year winners 2010.

Looking for somewhere different to go in 2011? Why not try a Traidcraft Meet the People Tour.....you can read about previous tours and consider going in future on <http://meetthepeople.skedaddle.co.uk/splash/index.rails>

Start planning now for FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 28 February—13 March 2011



'SHOW OFF YOUR LABEL' theme encourages us show off the Fairtrade label where we can think of... wave it from the roof, project it on buildings, display it on your front room window, chalk it on the high street. Then photograph it and show it to the world.

Most of all we are encouraged to show off Fairtrade cotton and highlight the great difference that Fairtrade makes to the cotton farmers of West Africa and India. Start making your cotton flags and bunting now! More information and resources at:

www.fairtrade.org.uk/fortnight



PLEASE PRAY FOR PEACE IN SUDAN



In 2005, after 21 years of brutal war between north and south Sudan, the leaders and people of Sudan embraced peace. On January 9th 2011, the people of the South will vote whether to become a separate nation. It's a moment of hope– and fear that violence could break out again.

The Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference have committed themselves and their Church 'to the work of peace-building and reconciliation on a daily and practical basis, in collaboration with others and in line with Catholic Social Teaching. They pledge themselves to journey together with our people towards a just and lasting peace.' They are calling upon 'our brothers and sisters and all people of good will to pray earnestly for a peaceful and fruitful referendum. May the God of Justice and Truth guide us all at this momentous time.'

CAFOD asks us in the weeks leading up to the referendum to pray and speak out in our parish for the people of Sudan. They also encourage us to write to our MP...either as individuals or as groups. A sample letter and more information on www.cafod.org.uk/sudanpeace

ADVANCE NOTICE: Sat April 9 ENOUGH IS ENOUGH : A Christian Challenge to our Current Lifestyle.
How can we all flourish fairly on a finite planet? St Thomas More High School Crewe

PROMOTING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Thank you to Phoebe Spence from Stockport Peace Forum for this Statement of Concern from the Society of Friends.

We are in this world together but the way we are living is unsustainable; this makes the world less secure. Our consumption of consumer goods and our dependence on fossil fuels - using finite natural resources and producing ever-more waste - continue to grow. This in turn contributes to hugely destabilising climate change and to unbalanced and unfair economic relationships: where inequalities exist, conflict is inevitable. The interests of those whose power comes from the control of diminishing resources are protected by ever-more costly military and other technology as a mistaken means to building security.

Sustainable security means ensuring a secure future for all based on tackling the causes of conflict and insecurity: this means understanding the real threats and how they can be dealt with so there is peace and justice for everyone throughout the earth for the long term and striving for a balance with nature.

As Quakers we have a respect for all of humanity and for other living things. The Quaker peace testimony has always been about seeking to address the causes of war as well as about how we respond to conflict without resorting to violence. Our testimonies to equality and simplicity are similarly about ensuring that all people be enabled to flourish and live.

We know that some conflict is inevitable. We know too that we can choose to develop understanding as to how we contribute to causes of conflict, and how we respond and deal with this. Do we accept the short-termist market-driven approaches that drive resource misuse, inequality, instability and conflict?

It can be easy to feel despondent and fearful. But we can use these emotions in a positive way, to help motivate us in working together to develop vision of alternative ways of being together on this planet. We depend on all life. It is

vital that we recognise that all have the same rights to security and wellbeing and that we change from a society driven by perceived wants and fears to one that addresses the real long-term needs of all. Our sustainable way of living on this planet grows from a mindset; a change is needed to this mindset to underpin the many encouraging practical steps that people are already making towards more sustainable and equitable ways of living.

We are called to ask questions in order to promote dialogue and action. We ask that politicians and others in positions of influence and power - including business and media organisations - recognise this moral imperative and work together, responding in words and actions to create sustainable security for all.

Some questions for reflection, discussion and action:

- What makes us secure in this world?
- How can we move from a world driven by the struggle for power and control over the lives and resources of others to a world based on equality and respect for all life?
- How can we support one another in building that alternative?
- What resources can we draw on to help ourselves and others deal with pressures of change in ways that are peaceful and build sustainable security?
- What are the political and practical consequences of this?
- What opportunities can you take to raise these concerns with others and to take positive action for change?

A Statement of Concern, October 2010,
Northern Friends Peace Board Victoria Hall,
Knowsley Street, Bolton BL1 2AS

Editor: Useful links around the same topic can be found at http://nfpb.gn.apc.org/sust_sec/index.html



THE HOLY LAND - IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON CHILDREN

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) have a permanent presence in the Holy Land. Over the last four months one group of CPT has compiled data to highlight issues faced by communities in the Old City, the village of Al-Bweireh on the outskirts of the city and the Baqa Valley.

SERIOUS INCIDENTS AND REFLECTIONS

CPT keeps a log of 'Serious Incidents', which CPT has defined based on the requests of UNICEF and the American Consulate (i.e. situations where violent acts were perpetrated or there was a denial of humanitarian need). Examples of denial to Humanitarian Access include things such as property damage to Palestinian crops, checkpoints en route to educational institutions, or denial of access to water. This section highlights the serious incidents CPT witnessed recorded from June-September 2010 and places the incidents in the context of Palestinian daily life in the Hebron area.

CONSEQUENCES FOR SETTLERS/SOLDIERS

Of the 37 serious incidents CPT recorded over the four month period, the large number perpetrated by settlers, based on past experience, was not much of a surprise to CPT. However, the number of incidents perpetrated by soldiers was of great concern. Israeli soldiers have been granted the power of jurisdiction of law in the occupied territories. Concern, that a group of people granted power by the state is utilizing it to further oppress the Palestinian population. According to Israel Defence Forces standards they are to avoid at all costs damage to human life, dignity and property. It is based on our presence and observation that the Israeli army does not adhere to this ethical standard; in fact, it continues to further create an impossible situation for the Palestinian population.

PERPETRATORS OF SERIOUS INCIDENTS

In all record cases of violence, destruction of property or limited/denied access to humanitarian needs, CPT and other internationals witnessed no consequences for soldiers or settlers exerting violence. Furthermore, in cases of damaged property the Israeli police were unwilling to investigate settlers' involvement. In one particular incident in which Palestinian grape vines were found ripped out of the ground, the police refused to follow up on Palestinian owners' claims that settlers had destroyed the vines. As the Israeli police operating in the area are required to be neutral parties, it is their duty to take statements and investigate claims, whether made by Palestinians or Israelis. By refusing to follow up on claims made by Palestinians, the police relinquish their impartial role and become themselves participants in the violent acts they are required to police and prevent.

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN

In addition to recording the perpetrators of serious incidents in the Hebron area, CPT has also detailed the consequences for children, both Israeli and Palestinian, including both the direct and indirect involvement of children.

Direct incidents are defined as incidents in which children were either witnesses or direct recipients or perpetrators of violence. CPT defines indirect incidents as acts of violence which affect children regardless of their presence to the actual incident. For example, when crops are damaged by settlers, CPT obtains information on the family who owns the crops, including the number of family members under the age of 18. The destruction of crops results in families not being able to meet basic needs. It is understood that peoples under the age of 18 are recognized by international law as children. As they are internationally recognized as not being fully developed adults, they must be protected from parties that seek to harm them.



CHILDREN AFFECTED BY SERIOUS INCIDENTS - THE IBRAHIMI SCHOOL October 11th 2010

This incident is a microcosm of the forms of violence that continually take place in Al-Khalil. On 22nd September, a local business man alerted three CPTers to a group of soldiers outside the Ibrahimi School, located in the heart of the Old City. Upon arrival, the school principal informed CPT that a settler boy, around seven years old, had accused two Palestinian boys from the Ibrahimi School of throwing a rock at him. Soldiers wanted to enter the school with the settler child to identify and arrest the Palestinian boys and the school principal responded by stating they would first need to get permission from the Palestinian Minister of Education.

Over a period of three hours, 50 Israeli soldiers, 20 settlers and Israeli police gathered outside the school. When the Palestinian Ministry of Education stated to the soldiers that they could not enter the school the Israeli army disregarded his decision and entered the school with the settler boy in tow. Two Palestinian boys under the age of 18 were arrested in front of their peers and taken to the local police station.

Continued opposite

ZAYTOUN OLIVE OIL

There has been some disturbing news from Palestine this harvest season. Taysir Arbasi, Zaytoun Palestinian director, says "It is not a matter of incidents happening here and there. News comes from everywhere in the Palestinian villages about settler attacks on farmers; cutting down of trees, burning of stores on the main roads, or releasing sewage waste into the olive groves in the season, stealing olives - and all this happening under the protection of the military forces to settlers.... Obviously it is organised to snatch empty lands from their owners - uncultivated and abandoned land is an easy target for confiscation and the expansion of settlements."

Bureen village in Nablus south district is surrounded by 4 settlements atop the 4 mountains around the village, and there are some very fundamentalist settlers living there who always attack the villagers and prevent the farmers from having access their fields or harvesting their olive groves, claiming that these lands belong to the settlements. Settlers come down to the fields with their weapons to evacuate the farmers from the lands that have been cultivated by these village people and their grandparents for hundreds of years.

"On how many fronts do we have to struggle? We have been fighting poverty, trying to make a decent life since we were born, and now we are developing our olive oil and taking more care with the olive trees, but having to struggle and deal with the settler attacks on an almost daily basis. They have burned 217 trees of mine " said farmer Abed Eid. The agriculture committee in the village and the village council are planning to start a weekly action of planting trees and reclamation of lands to keep the lands alive, and to prevent more theft and confiscation.

To buy olive oil and other Palestinian products in support see www.zaytoun.org If you are interested in going to Palestine for the olive harvest next year find out more on the Zaytoun Harvest page.

PLEASE NOTE: "Peace" Oil is an initiative of The Charities Advisory Trust and its director Hilary Blume. It is heavily sponsored by the Zionist Federation This oil first appeared about 4 years ago, and re-emerges each Christmas season. It is sold as cross-community cooperation, and many charities unwittingly sell the oil on their Christmas stalls. The olives are supplied entirely by Israel and are grown in the Carmel hills. The press is owned by a Druze family and the labouring work is done by Palestinians. If you buy this oil you are helping the economy of Israel. All the tax revenue raised is paid to Israel and is used to support the occupation

THE HOLY LAND - IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON CHILDREN *continued*

The Israeli army and police informed the Minister of Education that these arrests were necessary to "maintaining the peace" as the group of settlers gathered outside the school had threatened to remain and harrass the school children if the Palestinian boys were not arrested.

This particular incident speaks not only to the Israeli police's lack of impartiality, but also to the reality that settlers' accusations supersede preserving the educational environment of Palestinian children. The entry of soldiers into educational institutions signifies to children that schools are not safe places for them, thus creating further barriers to education.

Furthermore, this situation highlights settler children being used as vehicles to perpetuate violence. Within this particular incident, the young settler boy that made the rock throwing accusation was prompted by his father and other adult settlers to demand entry into the Ibrahimi School during school hours. In addition, settler adults brought a number of settler children with them to the school and didn't respond to soldiers' instructions for children to leave the scene. CPT believes this to be a common tactic employed by settlers because, by law, Israeli children under the age of eighteen cannot be arrested.

CONCLUSION

Across the world parents try to create safe environments where children are provided with the opportunity to learn and grow. Unfortunately, what CPT observes here in Al-Khalil is that children, both Palestinian and Israeli, are not being brought up in a spirit of love. The Israeli authorities in this area are not preparing children for a life of peace, tolerance and equality. Children growing up in settlements are being taught to hate through a series of activities encouraged by parents and supported by authorities. It is often worrying that settler children are being exploited in order to further push forward the desires of settlers in Al-Khalil.

The actions exerted by soldiers and settlers, supported by the state continually hinder the growth and development of the Palestinian children. They continue to witness violence and are denied access to proper resources to grow into healthy adults. Sadly CPTers conclude that Palestinians on a whole face discriminatory policies and practices that deny their freedom to a dignified existence.

Thanks to Christian Peacemaker Teams for permission to use this report. For more information on Christian Peacemaker Teams see: www.cpt.org



DIARY DATES

DECEMBER

12 Shrewsbury Diocese Advent Reflection

by Martine Patoir IBVM 4.30—6.30 pm Wistaston Hall Crewe. Contact Joan Sharples 01270 620584

12 Music Showcase Night at Alexander's. Fund raising music evening for benefit of CAFOD. Alexander's is at Rufus Court, off Northgate Street, Chester. 8pm til late Contact 01244 345672

16 Dr Andy Storey 'Rwanda after the 1994 Genocide: Conflict Resolution or New Patterns of Violence' 5 pm Hope University Liverpool See p 6

16 Celebration of Cultural & Religious Diversity Annual gathering, including lunch and panel of eminent speakers, arranged by Chester Asian & Minority Communities Council, 12.30-4.30pm at University of Chester. Book via chesterasian@aol.com or 01244 343570

JANUARY

16 LACE Lecture 'Option for the Poor in Time of Crisis' Brian O'Toole cssp LACE Conference Centre 2- 4pm

18—25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity See p 2

21 CAFOD Quiz Night Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port town centre. 7.30 pm Quizmaster Mike Ives. Entrance fee: £3.00 (children half price)
All money raised will go to CAFOD's new Connect 2 Ethiopia fund raising project. Fair Trade stall and Fair Trade refreshments provided at the interval. For further details contact Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419

23 'All Things in Common,' A liturgy inspired by the Iona Community St Nicholas Church, Newport 3 pm: contact John Fowler - 01952 812458

23 'Hope for our Society' Can Catholic Social Teaching suggest ways to respond to our troubled world?
Speaker: Joan Sharples Our Lady of the Sea, Ellesmere Port CH65 8BY 7 pm contact Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419

27 Dr Stuart Gordon, 'Afghanistan: A Rocky Road to Nowhere?' 5 pm Hope University Liverpool See p 6

Sat 29 Jan—Sunday 6 Feb "Who Counts?"

Poverty & Homelessness Action Week
See www.actionweek.org.uk See p 6

FEBRUARY

4 Moral Maze Liverpool Town Hall 2.30 - 4.00 pm
This event is jointly organised by: Nugent Care, MARCAP, Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission.
For further information: 0151 522 1080 (J&P) or 0151 261 2012 (Nugent Care)

18 CAFOD Quiz Night Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port town See Jan 21

24 Dr Ian Speller 'The use and abuse of military history' 5 pm Hope University Liverpool See p 6

27 Sweet Honey and Hard Places - A liturgy for Justice and Peace Trinity Church Newport
contact John Fowler - 01952 812458

28 February—13 March Fairtrade Fortnight 'Show off your label' see www.fairtrade.org.uk See p 8

MARCH

18 CAFOD Quiz Night Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port town See Jan 21

20 Romero Mass St Michael's, West Derby Rd, Liverpool 10.30—12 noon

27 Welcoming the Stranger - with Shari Brown of RESTORE, a Birmingham Churches Together project reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers. St Nicholas Church Newport: Ecumenical worship contact John Fowler - 01952 812458

ADVANCE NOTICE:

Sat April 9 Enough is Enough: A Christian Challenge to our Current Lifestyle. How can we all flourish fairly on a finite planet? St Thomas More High School Crewe

Friday 20 – Sunday 22 May 'Wisdom and Justice.'
Retreat with Sr Camilla Burns at Loyola Hall, Warrington Rd, Rainhill, Friday 6.00 – Sunday 2.30

Shrewsbury

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Copy date

for next issue

1/2/2011 Don't forget to
send in reports of events
and dates for the diary

The opinions expressed in MouthPeace are the views of the individual contributors or organisations concerned and do not necessarily reflect those of the Justice and Peace Commissions of the dioceses of Shrewsbury and Liverpool

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