



JUSTICE & PEACE in 2017

This is the first time we have published a newsletter on J&P issues for over ten years. We intend to make this an annual publication, and any contributions are welcome. If we get plenty then we will consider more frequent publication, but that is up to you!

As always, the J&P Activity during 2017 flowed down three strands – we had the (mostly) monthly mass for J&P on the first Saturday, we had the fund raising for OPEN DOOR Cheltenham through the film cans and coffee mornings, and we had the awareness raising through poster displays at the coffee mornings.

On the spiritual front, the first Saturday has been a fixture now for many years – and all are welcome. We are also conscious of greater visibility of Justice & Peace in the bidding prayers during Sunday masses.

On the fund raising front, the greatest thanks must go to our bakers whose cake sales are well supported each month, and have become the dominant source of income. And others too have contributed cakes – for which many thanks. Film cans continue to make a useful contribution (about £150 last year) but a lot less than they did ten years ago. We have been running out of cans but have now found an alternative source. Meanwhile many thanks to those who helped raise over £1600 for OPEN DOOR during 2017. We looked into other forms of help for OPEN DOOR but they confirmed that existing channels for food donations (which includes the CWL managed food bank collection in the church porch), and their volunteer rotas, were currently healthy.

On the awareness raising, the key issues highlighted over the past year (in addition to the needs of OPEN DOOR) have been the emergence of the Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees group (see the article opposite) and the work of the Traidcraft organisation. The latter is supported by a monthly stall at St Gregory's but we didn't get enough interest to start one here. We also did poster boards on Peace Sunday (with Pope Frances' messages) and Homelessness Sunday. As every December, we distributed details (obtained from ACAT) to allow us to send seasonal greetings to those imprisoned for matters of conscience.

Finally, many thanks to everyone for their support to J&P. The organisers meet to plan things after the monthly Saturday mass – everyone is welcome.

CHEL TENHAM WELCOMES REFUGEES

CWR is a local volunteer organisation (working closely with GARAS) that aims to ensure that refugee families in Cheltenham feel welcomed and supported.

Berry Smith reports

Refugee figures quoted in millions boggle the mind and one feels overwhelmed and paralysed. Britain is accepting 20 000 Syrians and Cheltenham is allocated about 60. A drop in the ocean one thinks. Mother Theresa said prayer makes the impossible possible and the Pope speaks a lot about encounter. Thanks to GARAS, Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees and Volunteer Teachers and the Church, there's now a very effective network locally.

When you get involved the sea of faces become individuals with names and personalities and stories. Each encounter means showing an interest and empathy, and this enables and encourages. In just a year and a half, Hanan with her extrovert energy has really engaged in the process of resettlement. Her enthusiasm draws us all along with her. She's almost fluent in English and has started giving Arabic classes. Her husband seemed depressed a year ago, but with support from our conversation class at Hester's Way, has passed his driving test first time.

That is so joyfully liberating for him and rewarding for us. Their son Mohammed aged 10 was struggling, and along came special needs tutor, Stella. When everyone in a community makes a small contribution to a shared effort, it makes such a large cumulative difference. Word probably spreads on social media back to family still in Syria. It promotes understanding and international relations, reducing prejudice. These Christians are friendly people! These Muslims are respectful, very hospitable, hardworking and grateful!

If you'd like an enjoyable way to meet and befriend these courageous people, do come to the Pavilion Café, Hatherley Lane on the first Thursday of any month at 6pm. There's a great bring-and-share meal provided by the Syrian women from Gloucester and Cheltenham, and representatives of CWR and CVT mingle amongst the jolly crowd. Or contact Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees through their well organised website.



JUSTICE & PEACE in 2018 FUNDRAISING ALABARÉ

Alabaré is a national charity founded in 1991 which supports vulnerable, homeless and marginalised people. One strand provides specialist support for Armed Forces Veterans who struggle to cope; part of this is the Gloucestershire Home for Veterans. It is this element for which we are fund-raising.

The Alabaré Christian Community was founded in 1991 by Rev John Proctor (now the Alabaré Chairman) and his wife Alicia who, after befriending and housing a series of people in crisis, realised the problem was bigger than they alone could meet. After a year of fundraising, the first home dedicated to homeless and vulnerable women was opened. Today Alabaré offers support to thousands across the South and South-West of England and Wales.

Homes for Veterans is a service run by Alabaré that supports service men and women across the UK who have served our country, and who experience difficulty adjusting to civilian life. Homes for Veterans helps veterans of the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to gain the skills and confidence they need to move on to their own accommodation.

Gloucestershire Home for Veterans provides two homes near Gloucester city centre, providing for up to twelve veterans. There is access to training, skills and leisure facilities, and help is provided for moving on to a permanent home. Visitors can stay for a maximum of one year. Gloucestershire Home for Veterans takes referral from local support agencies.

Each resident draws up a support plan with their key worker, based on individual needs. Residents take turns with housework and cooking communal meals, helping to foster a feeling of camaraderie. The problems with which residents arrive include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, mental and physical ill-health, addictions and more. There are also homes in Bristol, Plymouth and other locations.

Alabaré runs Charity Shops and Emporiums to raise vital funds, and welcome volunteers to help with their work. See their website www.alabare.co.uk for more details on how you might get involved.

DID YOU KNOW

- Pope Francis has launched a global campaign, supported by Catholic organisations across the world, called Share the Journey. It provides 20 Action Points for the discussion on Migration and Refugees at UN General Assembly in Sep 2018. A useful summary is provided by J&P Scotland at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rc01w8c_o2I
- There is a National J&P Network whose website can help you keep up to date with J&P issues, at <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/>
- CAFOD is a strong voice on the J&P front, currently campaigning on Climate Change and World Bank support for renewable energy, and on Fairtrade, alongside “Share the Journey” and many more topics. See www.cafod.org.uk
- There is a free online course available from Future Learn to guide you on “Working with Refugees” – it could make your volunteering with Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees, or with GARAS, much more effective.

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Every spring, a two week period is designated as Fairtrade Fortnight by the Fairtrade Foundation, as a chance to highlight to us all the value and the continued importance of the concepts of FAIR TRADE.

The Fairtrade Foundation sets social, economic and environmental standards for both companies and the farmers who grow the food we love. For farmers and workers the standards include protection of workers’ rights and the environment; for companies they include the payment of the Fairtrade Minimum Price (which is stable, unlike world market prices) and an additional Fairtrade Premium to invest in business or community projects of the community’s choice.

- There are 1,226 Fairtrade producer organisations across 74 countries.
- On plantations, workers spend 26% of their Fairtrade premium on education.
- Fairtrade products are now sold in more than 120 countries.
- The Fairtrade mark is globally the most widely-recognised ethical label.