

Debt – the black cloud in a world of sunshine

What great news. The world's leaders have finally agreed to wipe clean the debt of most of Africa. While this news has been welcomed, it has provoked some serious questioning. Why just Africa? Why not Asia or South America? It is argued that Africa has had billions of debt aid over the years with nothing to show for it; that corrupt governments will use this new situation to line their own pockets. So, will Africa be black-listed now? Will someone 'manage' their finances for a while – to make sure they don't fall into debt again? When will Asia, South America and all those countries not included this time be thrown the same life-line? And when they do how easy will it be for them all to stay out of debt?

Debt is a trap which is almost impossible to avoid in modern society. Is there anyone who doesn't have debt? It is expected in our materialistic world. The fact is that unless we live in the 'right area' drive a 'nice car' and wear 'good' clothes, society views us as less worthy. The commercials on television have the solution. We can have anything we want, change our look, move into a nice home, holiday to exotic locations, drive away in a brand new car. Society will accept us as worthy if we live like this. Just 'phone the number at the bottom of the screen and the finance for a new life will drop through our letterbox in just a few days. It's no surprise then, that the next few commercials are about debt consolidation, for those whose 'new' lives were changed – but not for the better. It's not just those seeking life's riches, who fall into the debt trap, however. Look at the finance required to buy a home. How easy is it to afford the most basic of human needs in this country – a home – a roof over our head. Those forced into paying more than they can realistically afford are often the poor victims of the debt trap, especially if their circumstances change through illness or job loss. Scotland is witnessing huge increases in the number of people with uncontrollable debt as well as rises in homelessness and poverty.

Like Africa and Asia and the other third world countries, the trap is the same. Fall behind with the repayments and the increase in interest soon doubles the debt until it spirals out of control. What sense is there in increasing the debt through high interest repayments when the original debt is impossible to meet? Debt is a black cloud in a world of sunshine. It's darkness makes life's journey difficult to make. Those living under it reach for God's help but fear He may not see them through its density. Debt is the black cloud which darkens our lives.

Let us pray that the world's leaders let the sunshine back into people's lives by continued and sustained efforts in ending the debt problems of the world's poorest countries, while they meet in the beautiful surroundings of Gleneagles, this summer. Then let us pray that through these talks and this action, they are able to address the problem of domestic debt and poverty in their own countries. Those attending the G8 Summit have the power to change the world in which we live, let us all pray they use this power wisely.

Shona Paterson
Network Officer

Make Poverty History Edinburgh, Saturday 2 July 2005

A unprecedented coalition of over 200 development agencies, campaigns, faith groups, trade unions and others are united in a belief that 2005 provides a unique opportunity for action to help bring an end to global poverty. They want as many campaigners and members of the public as possible to show the Prime Minister and his fellow G8 leaders that the UK public cares enough about global poverty and injustice to come in person to Edinburgh. It's eight hours out of your life, but it could change eight minds and transform 800,000,000 lives. The rally starts at 11am with the creation of giant human white bands around the city centre at 12 noon, 1pm and 2pm. After the rally, **Youth for a United World** (Focolare) is hosting an International Café at Sacred Heart Hall, Lauriston Street from 9pm onwards. Details of this from Anja Primbs – telephone: 0141 637 2216

Want to go, nowhere to stay?

If you are hoping to attend and don't know where to stay there will be a

**Weekend Special
at Scottish Churches' House**
on Sat or Fri-Sun.

Why not leave the car and take the train to Edinburgh

They can offer you Dinner, Bed & Breakfast with a packed lunch
1-2 July: £30

with the option of returning to Dunblane for Dinner, b&b after the event
1-3 July £55

or stay longer if you will

To make your reservation

τ 01786 823588

Email.

reservations@scottishchurcheshouse.org

Ecumenical Service to mark G8 Summit Conference Sunday 3 July 2005

The Service, organised by ACTS Church & Society and Church Life Networks is to be held in Dunblane Cathedral at 3pm

The sermon will be given by Daleep Mukarji of Christian Aid. The Service is open to all, regardless of denomination or faith.

CRE returns to Edinburgh in October.

The 8th in the series of Scottish Christian Resources Exhibitions returns to the Royal Highland Centre at Ingliston, Edinburgh from 13th to 15th October in the spacious and comfortable new Highland Hall with over 200 exhibitors from all over Britain exhibiting every type of resource that any Church or School could wish to find under one roof.

Everyone involved in church life will find what they need at this friendly, unique event that also includes a powerful programme of expert speakers on topics that span equipping your church in all aspects of ministry, resourcing youth-work, emerging church and importantly engaging community. Among the 50 or more speakers taking part in the 3 day programme is an ACTS sponsored Seminar in which The Rt. Rev Michael Henley, Alistair Cameron, Rev. Iain Sutherland and Rev Martin Robb will be focussing on key rural issues.

Entry to this invaluable event is free. Visitors who register in advance will receive the exhibition Handbook ahead of the opening day and it is possible to register by post or electronically. CRE is to be opened by Lord Mackay of Clashfern and will see the official launch of the brand new Scottish Bible Society's Bible World Trailer for schools and Communities Visit creonline.co.uk for full information and registration form or phone 01844 271476. You can bring a group from your church for a really rewarding day or days in this Scotland's newest exhibition hall.

Gos Home

Scottish Churches' House Crisis



Scottish Churches House is in serious financial trouble. Until recently the true state of our finances has been disguised by the way the finances of ACTS and the House were enmeshed. The House is losing money and is running at an annual deficit of £60,000.00. We need two years grace to try to turn the things around and double the House's usage. We are looking to bring in marketing expertise, find other funding sources, explore the possibility of a partnership with a similar centre and explore a new vision of the House's task in the twenty-first century, but to be able to do all that we need pledges of £120,000.00 to cover our running costs for the next two years. An appeal is being launched to raise this sum and you will be hearing more about that very soon. Please give serious thought and prayer to helping us.

Jeanette W Allan, House Committee Convener

Important Options for Publications

Over the past few months we have been creating a new system which alerts people when the News-sheet is available on our web-site. When the news-sheet has been posted on the web, this office notifies those registered by email who are then able to read it on-line or download it if preferred.

Advent resource material. This year, for the first time we are to publish this material on our web-site which you will be able to download free of charge. If registered, our email alert service will let you know when the material is posted on the web.

If you would prefer to receive your news-sheet, or be informed of other publications and newsworthy items in this way it is important that you register for the service, and remember to let us know when you have changed your email address!

However, if you would prefer to receive the material in the usual way we will still provide our print and post service allowing you to order and pay for copies as before.

To register for the Email Alert Service please email:

shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org

Please include your name, address and postcode as well as your email address so we are able to adjust our records.

Thank you

MEDIA TRAINING DAY

Friday 9 September 2005
Scottish Churches' House
Dunblane

This short course, offered by ACTS, at a fraction of the commercial rate will offer a limited number of participants the chance to be filmed being interviewed by a professional TV reporter, followed by a one-to-one assessment/advice clinic

**Offered on a strictly first-come-first served basis,
the day costs only £50 with meals package an optional extra at £10**

**For booking details please call Shona
01786 826382**