

Winter 2005

NEWS-SHEET



A Christmas Message

from Gavin McLellan,
National Secretary of Christian Aid Scotland

Thinking about, shopping for and wrapping presents is a very large part of our Christmas celebration; yet it is here that many feel most uncomfortable with the excesses of today; it is however a very difficult tradition to challenge. People in the UK will on average spend £750 on Christmas presents. Peace on earth will be shattered as we empty our extra 3 million tons of rubbish after our celebrations.

At Christian Aid at Christmas we feel this discomfort strongly over the excesses of consumption because they bring into sharper relief the suffering of others and injustice faced in the world. So we feel compelled to offer challenges and alternatives. Two possibilities of these for you and your church this year are; Child of Africa and Present Aid. Our thinking at Christmas often turns to home and the family gathering. Christmas is now a time when Angolans think of home, and thousands travel for up to 10 days to be with their families on 25 December. For many, home was a distant dream during the long years of war. Many Angolans were forced to flee their villages to avoid being caught up in the fighting. Many sought refuge in the harsh bush and the overcrowded cities. Today, Luanda, Angola's capital, still hosts nearly 4 million displaced people, a third of the country's population.

Christian Aid's partner organisations in Angola, mainly churches, are now helping people to go back to their communities and rebuild their lives. They are providing seeds and tools, and rebuilding schools and clinics. Through training, they are also supporting those who will never be able to return home. In doing so, they are beginning the process of building a new and peaceful future for this beautiful country, that is rich in natural resources. 'The war is finished in 2002', says Julio, of Christian Aid's partner, ACM, 'but building the peace takes much longer. That is what we are now doing'.

Through another local partner, IECA providing training and support for refugees in Luanda, Josue (7) Jaeli (5) can attend school because their mother received training from IECA in baking, enabling her to start a small business. IECA is the Angolan Congregational Church, the largest Protestant Church in Angola. Its historical origin is in the centre/south of Angola, but it now has a presence in 15 out of Angola's 18 provinces. IECA's social programmes are run by the department of social assistance, studies and projects, established in 1991. Christian Aid has been supporting them since 1997.

We currently support two projects. IECA's women's literacy and health education project was set up in 2000 to enable poor women in Luanda to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and vocational skills, and learn about health, hygiene and nutrition. The first classes were held outside under a tree, until Christian Aid provided funds to build a teaching centre. We also support IECA's work with war returnees in Kuando Kubango province, a very isolated area in southern Angola. IECA's rehabilitation project supports families who have recently returned home, providing basic equipment like buckets and blankets, as well as the seeds and tools they need to sow their first crops.

Now back to presents! It doesn't always have to mean spending masses of money; or buying something that gets stuck in a drawer. How about a fishing net for families in Mali, or a flock of guinea fowl in Mozambique, or a sesame oil press in Nicaragua? Our Present Aid catalogue has plenty of selections for those who'd rather not receive a gift this year. From under £25 to over £500 there are options for you personally or as a fellowship to consider. Each present is a simple answer to a simple human need such as water, food, education and health, yet with real meaning and lasting benefits; no wasted wrapping and short shelf life.

Let's turn Christmas from a guilt laden chore to a privilege. To help children like Josue and Jaeli in Angola through featuring the Child of Africa appeal in our Christmas services this year. Wouldn't you rather hear these kind of thank you notes for your presents this year; 'with the profits from the fish, I can buy more food and the family is much healthier', Samba Kossibo, fisherman, Mali; 'The sesame press is the heart of our community' Ronald Urbina, Nicaragua.

Of course we have made it easier for those of you on-line; www.christian-aid.org/christmas www.presentaid.org Those of you who favour a human touch can contact us at our Edinburgh office for these resources 0131 220 1254. We also support Christmas alternatives through ALTERNativity looking at issues of injustice, inequality and exclusion. This year featuring the Star box advent calendar, advent meal events and More than just Tinsel school resources. Again on line at www.alternativity.org.uk or by contacting our Glasgow office 0141 221 7475.

Let us hope we have a Christmas that challenges us afresh, impacts upon us the meaning of hope in the real gift of a new life and through our lasting gifts leading to renewed lives and peace all over our Lord's hurting world.



Resources available from ACTS

ADVENT: This year's Advent leaflet, 'A Time of Hope' has been prepared by Rev Michael McMahon of Erskine. Available FREE in downloadable version from ACTS Website, the leaflet is also available in hard copy at 5p per copy **plus postage**. Variable postage rates apply. For 1-5 copies the postage is 25p, for 6-15 copies postage is 50p, 16-25 copies it's 75p, for 26-100 copies it's £1.00, for 101-250 copies postage is £3.50 and for more than 250 copies the postage is £5.00.

Week of Prayer: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name' – This material is available from ACTS now. Pamphlets are 60p each, Posters are £1.20 per pack of 2, Worship Resource Books are £3.50 each and Planning Packs are £10 per pack. Prayer Cards are £1.00 for 10 and there's a Large Print pamphlet this year for 60p each. Orders less than £10 carry a handling charge of £1.00.

Easter: Next year's Easter leaflet has been prepared by Captain David Alton of the Salvation Army who invites us to return again to St Mark's well-known narrative and contemplate events which have become very familiar to us. These accounts bring comfort and hope. They encourage us to consider and reconsider our understanding of and response to the events of that history changing event. The leaflet comes in a new A5 style and copies will be available FREE in downloadable version from the ACTS website and also in hard copy from January 2006 at **7p each** plus (variations in) postage. Copies may be made in advance **Postage rates** for Easter leaflet are: 1-5 copies 30p; 6- 15 copies 60p; 16 – 25 copies 80p; 26-100 copies £1.30; 101 – 250 copies £4.00 and for more than 250 copies add £6.00. Copies may be ordered now.

To order any of these publications please send your name, address and postcode together with your order details including postage to:
ACTS Publications, Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane FK15 0AJ
(After 15 December the address changes to 7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood House, Alloa FK10 2HU).

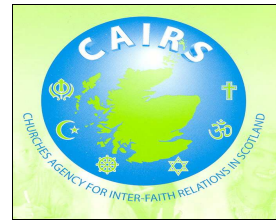
If you have not already signed up for our Email Alert Service please email your contact details to :
shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org giving us a note of your name (if it isn't apparent from your email address) and your current postcode. We will automatically email you when free resources are available for downloading and when other interesting news is posted.

Lent 2006: 'Easter People in a Good Friday World' Copies of CTBI's Lent Course for ecumenical groups are available from ACTS. To assist groups in Scotland which wish to assess the material, single copies are available for the cover price of £3.99 with no additional charge for post and packing. A charge for post & packing will be applied to orders of larger numbers. To order contact Tom Moyes either by email tommoyes@acts-scotland.org or by post Tom Moyes, ACTS Network Officer, Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane FK15 0AJ. Information on the content of the Study Book can be found on CTBI's website www.ctbi.org.uk

Training for Study Group Facilitators

Plans for a **day of training** for those leading Lent Study groups are being developed. The date will be Saturday February 4th and the venue will be in Edinburgh. The training will be led by Brother Stephen Smyth, Ecumenical Officer of Glasgow Churches' Together, and Rev Dean Fostekew, leader of the Scottish Episcopal Church's Mission 21 programme. It is hoped that a member of the team which produced the book will be present to speak about the team's plans and hopes for the book. There will be a fee of £5.00 per participant with tea/coffee & biscuits provided (please bring packed lunch) To apply for a place on the course, or for more information about the programme please contact Tom Moyes (contact details above)

**Scottish Churches act to
encourage dialogue with other
faith groups.**



New CAIRS Inter Faith Education Officer now in post

CAIRS (Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland) are pleased to announce that Andrew Sarle is now working part-time as Inter Faith Education Officer. Funding for his post has been provided through generous donations by member churches of ACTS and by Religious Orders.

Based meantime in the offices of ACTS in Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane, Andrew will work to encourage Christian churches and their members to engage in dialogue with members of other faith communities. He will provide workshops and talks on different aspects of engaging in dialogue for Church organisations and groups of all ages.

Andrew was formerly a secondary school teacher, and is at present in the final year of his studies in Theology at Edinburgh University. He is a Church of Scotland elder and Reader, at present attached to Camelon Parish Church, Falkirk. He was brought up as a Christian in a mixed faith home, and consequently has personal experience of many inter-faith issues.

He can be contacted by email at
andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org

or by phone on
0772 456 8259

Aberdeen Quiet Days

From the Epiphany Group

The Epiphany Group's desire is to help people explore their relationship with God. This can be done individually or in groups. One of the ways of working with a group is to make Quiet days available and so there are to be three in 2006.

Saturday 28th January Catherine McManus will lead a day in the John Skinner Centre, Aberdeen.

Saturday 25th March Sr Moira Donnelly will lead a day in St Mary's Cathedral hall, Aberdeen

Saturday 27 May Aileen Ross and Carole Phelan will lead a day in Queen's Cross Church Hall, Aberdeen.

For further information about any of the above please contact Carole Phelan on

01224 895033 or email carole.phelan@talk21.com



Unknown Journeys

Days led by Carol Marples of 'Soul Marks' dedicated to encouraging the visual arts as a tool for prayer, worship and community look at the Christmas Story as we approach Advent. The first event is at

Leith School of Art, Edinburgh
Saturday 3 December at 9.30am
Cost of day £30 per person which includes all art materials, tea/coffee and biscuits. There's plenty of places to eat close to the school for lunch or simply bring your own.

To book please phone
Therese Christie on 0131 554 571

The second day is to be held in Fife at

Lochiehead Farm, Fife
Monday 5 December 10am – 4pm
Cost of day £25 per person which includes all art materials, soup & bread lunch, coffee and biscuits

Please wear clothes which allow you to get messy.

To book, phone **0131 467 6243** or email carol@carolmarples.co.uk

Database Changes

Due to the separation of Scottish Churches House and the ACTS Secretariat, your mailing details are now registered in two databases. If you have any changes to make or you would like to unsubscribe from either list you must be in touch with both the House and ACTS Secretariat.

Changes for ACTS should be sent to Shona Paterson, ACTS, Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane FK15 0AJ or (7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood House, Alloa FK10 2HU after 15 December)
or by email shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org
(telephone number not yet known)

Changes to the House database should be made to Margaret Boon, Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane FK15 0AJ
or by email to reservations@scottishchurcheshouse.org
or by telephone to 01786 823588

Memorial Service for Brother Roger of Taizé

A memorial service of thanksgiving for the life of Brother Roger will be held at St John the Evangelist Church, 140 Princes Street, Edinburgh on Sunday 22 January 2006 at 6.00pm, with singing from 5.00pm, organised by ACTS Church Life Network.

The Archdiocese of Glasgow (RC) and the Presbytery of Glasgow (Church of Scotland) are organising a joint pilgrimage to the Taizé Community between 2-10 July 2006. See www.taize.fr for more details of what this will be like. If you are between 18 and 30 and are looking for an opportunity to reflect and meet thousands of other young people from around the world, this would be an excellent experience for you.

Salvation Army and Methodist Church win Top PR Award.

The Salvation Army and the Methodist Church have won a top PR award for their joint Gambling Bill campaign. The two churches have won the 2005 Third Sector Excellent Award for PR Strategy. The award was presented at a dinner for 500 charity and fundraising representatives in London. The award was given for the joint campaign run by The Salvation Army and the Methodist Church which resulted in major changes to the Gambling Bill. This included reducing the number of Super-casinos from an unlimited number down to one, and the removal of fruit machines from 6,000 premises frequented by children. The campaign used a range of public affairs techniques, PR tactics and grass-roots mobilisation. "However, the real winners are those whose lives will now not be blighted by gambling addiction" says Rachel Lampard from the Methodist Church. "We didn't launch this campaign for our own benefit, "we did it because we had serious concerns about parts of the Gambling Bill, and justified fears that it would lead to an increase in problem gambling. We made our points, the Government listened and we now have a Gambling Act that is better for people than it otherwise would have been."

Moving On..... as ACTS prepares to take up residence in Alloa, the General Secretary looks forward to a new challenge and a new commitment in the journey of ecumenical engagement.

With Advent almost upon us I've been reading a newish book by Matthew Byrne called '*The Way it Was*'. In it Byrne looks at the gospel narratives about Jesus' birth and focuses on some of the key people in the story. In a reflection on the experience of Mary he retraces the journeys she made, among them the road she took to the 'city of Judah' which was home to her cousin Elizabeth. In a very evocative passage Byrne writes:

'It was a long road, a strange journey...through villages and towns and cities whose names were history, and shaped the story of her religion.'

That passage has been playing in my imagination over these last days, not only because it opens up a way of looking at Mary's experience but also because of what it reveals about the character of our faith and of our ecumenical pilgrimage. A long road. A strange journey. Through villages and towns which have shaped the story of our religion.

These images have also helped me look afresh at the changes we are living through within the ACTS community. You will be aware that our life together has been dominated by the financial crisis facing Scottish Churches House, a crisis which has had an impact on us all and which has triggered a complex and demanding set of reflective processes and responses. Along the way there have been key moments of discernment and decision. For a long time the story of ecumenical engagement in Scotland has been bound up with Dunblane. The hope for the House must be that the extraordinary generosity of the response of so many of you to the Appeal will give the breathing-space required to craft a new chapter in that story.

While much of the focus has been on the House we have also learnt a great deal about the broader character of current ecumenical engagement in Scotland, and therefore about the context in which the ecumenical instrument seeks to carry out its mandate from the Scottish churches.

We know that one of the quiet revolutions over the past years has been the dispersal and flourishing of ecumenical engagement throughout Scotland. In 'churches together' groups in villages and towns, and in the concrete common engagement of churches in work as diverse as healthcare chaplaincy, relations with the Parliament and in relations with people of Scotland's other faiths, Scotland's churches act together. It is important to recognise and celebrate that ACTS never has been simply Scottish Churches House or the secretariat but that it is a dispersed ecumenical community, evidenced wherever churches act, study, witness, pray and serve together.

All of this sets the learning context for a decision taken at the Scottish Churches Forum's meeting in late October which concerns the location of the ACTS Secretariat.

The Forum received the report of a working group it had established in August to consider the best location of this office at this time. The Group brought together people from the member churches and from the range of ecumenical partners which are a vital and growing part of the ecumenical movement's visibility. The Group concluded that '*the locus of ACTS is wherever churches are and act together..[our] hope is that the location of the ACTS Secretariat will enable and enhance the churches engagement in their search for unity*'.

After lengthy and careful consideration, the Forum made the decision that the ACTS Secretariat should leave its current offices in Scottish Churches House by the end of this year, and that it move, initially on a three-year basis, to Forrester Lodge, Inglewood House in Alloa. Can I suggest that you log in to the ACTS web-site over the next few weeks which will give details of our new location and how to contact us. Future newsletters will give you all the details you need. We hope that some of you might visit us in Alloa but it is important to stress that many of the meetings which ACTS enables will continue to be held at Scottish Churches House and in the premises of our churches and ecumenical partners the length and breadth of Scotland.

ACTS is not leaving Dunblane, for Scottish Churches House under the care of the ACTS Trustees remain a key part of us. Yet this is a significant move for the Secretariat. I know many will hear of this with surprise and even dismay. We hope that Alloa will provide a good base for our work, and we look forward to building up our relationships with the churches in the town. But Alloa will not replace Dunblane. Rather, in this phase of the churches' life together the small staff of the instrument which seeks to serve and support their pilgrimage will continue to be present where you need us.

No road is too long and no journey too strange. We are yours to use.

Kevin Eason

Friends of ACTS

The Committee has sought to express understanding and support both for Scottish Churches' House and ACTS during recent months and is now reconsidering the relationship of Friends to both, in the light of the Forum's decisions for separation of structures and relocation of the ACTS Secretariat. Friends and others will be consulted about issues arising from these developments and any necessary decisions for change.

Planned future events include the annual Open Meeting on Monday 22 May at 5pm in Augustine Church, Edinburgh, with a panel of speakers, and an Autumn Conference in mid-September. Friends are also encouraged to support 'Seeds of Hope' on June 17th in Perth, the Programme of Scottish Churches House, and other ecumenical events and gatherings.

For further information please contact the Friends Secretary,

**Jenny Eason on
01382 776686 or
email**

eason@care4free.net

Please note that due to this separation, Friends mailing details are now contained in two databases, ACTS & House. Changes of mailing details should now be sent