

enough for Jesus, it speaks volumes to us today. Action alongside the struggling ones of this world can't be an optional extra. It's binding on all who would follow Jesus. *Our* good news is that we're the privileged generation to whom this globally effective method has been revealed and entrusted. By campaigning we are seriously engaged in "putting down the mighty from their seats, and sending the rich empty away."

Nelson Mandela said, "It's not the kings and generals that make history, but the masses of the people." In this 21<sup>st</sup> century we stand at another turning point in history. During 2005, thirty million people took some action to make poverty history. Earlier one million went to London saying we should not go to war. While the possibilities for change are so precariously in the balance, we have a new and unprecedented opportunity to turn history towards Jesus' vision for the world – a new way to bring us nearer to God's Common-wealth, or Kingdom, on earth.

#### PRAYER

*Merryn Hellier*

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. We stand here with deep joy and excitement that we have seen glimpses of the true nature of your great Common-wealth. As growing multitudes stand together in calling the powerful ones of this world to account, we begin to understand how we can create *real* Good News for the poor. Help us to remain faithful to the best that we know, and let the daily pictures of poverty and suffering drive us to action rather than despair, then through us all, may your kingdom come, and may your will be done on earth. Amen

#### SONG

We take up the challenge...

# A NEW SLAVERY

## IN 2007

## Praying in Public Places



## *A pilgrimage for our times*

## Introduction

Most of us will have been aware that 2005 was the year when we tried to **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**. Many good things have been achieved through that campaign, but it's far from finished. While debt and poverty still blights every aspect of the lives of countless people in all parts of the globe it has been likened to a new form of slavery. Those who hold the chains of *this* slavery are determined to keep a very tight grip.

This pilgrimage is offered as a means of informing both pilgrims and public, to encourage continued involvement with the ongoing campaigns, and to harness the spirituality of people of all faiths or none, in seeking justice for those whose lives are still condemned to hopelessness.

The organiser will need to identify a suitable pilgrimage route. Feel able to adapt to your local circumstances – you may wish to include a school or tax office, for example. The group gather in one place, begin with a prayer of commitment, and walk to the venues, pausing at each place. Public solo readers should be chosen in advance. While walking, people may need to divide into smaller groups to avoid congestion – but do consult with the police over the route.

The repeated song fits the first two lines of The Ash Grove, chosen as a simple well known tune that most groups could manage in the open after an earlier practice. The bible quotes are all from the Good News translation. The prayers on p.4 and 8 are from "More Living Prayers for Today", IBRA, and on p10 from Bread of Tomorrow, Christian Aid.

We hope you have fun and find it a valuable experience.

Campaigning materials and post cards for the different subjects dealt with in the pilgrimage can be accessed from:-

- Jubilee Debt Campaign, The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT 020 7324 4722 [www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk)
- Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)
- World Development Movement, 66 Offley Road, London, SW9 0LS [www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk)
- CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Rd, London SW9 9TY [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)
- War on Want, 56-64 Leonard St, London EC2A 4LT [www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org)

- 5,000 expected at overnight vigil and procession in London to show solidarity with campaigners from the South – 25,000 fill the streets of Westminster
- 2005 was designated a year to MAKE POVERTY HISTORY. A quarter of a million campaign in Edinburgh, joining with other cities right round the world
- Tony Blair sets up a Commission on Africa and pledges the government to act on it
- Gordon Brown tells campaigners that they have achieved more in a year or two than governments acting alone could do in 100 years
- meeting at Doha, poor countries learn the power of standing together to stop the World Trade Organisation passing new rules that would do even more harm to their interests
- July 2006, 18 of the 67 poorest countries finally receive full cancellation of a significant part of their debt.

Hear some encouragement from Jesus in Luke.7 v17-23:

*News about Jesus went out through all the country and surrounding territory. When John's disciples told him all these things, he called two of them and sent them to the Lord to ask him, "Are you the one John said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?" When they came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask if you are the one he said was going to come, or if we should expect someone else."*

*At that very time Jesus cured many people of their sicknesses, diseases, and evil spirits, and gave sight to many blind people. He answered John's messengers, "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor. How happy are those who have no doubts about me!"*

So if taking the poor seriously and changing their situation was proof

## Hospital / Health Centre / Surgery

God when all outstanding debts will be written off. No-one should be left to struggle for ever. Through the campaigning of Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History, cancellations achieved for a few countries have made a big difference, but these have come with harmful strings attached and are in no way a final solution. The Jubilee Debt Campaign is still working to get the debts of up to 40 more countries cancelled.

### SONG

**We take up the challenge..**

### PRAYER

*from Ghana*

**Let your Holy Spirit break into our lives. Let him come like blood into our veins, so that we will be driven entirely by your will. Let your Spirit blow over wealthy Europe and America, so that people there will be humble. Let him blow over the poor parts of the world, so that people there need suffer no more. Let him blow over Africa, so that people here may understand what true freedom is. There are a thousand voices and spirits in this world, but we want to hear only your voice, and be open only to your Spirit.**

## Churchyard / Open Space

### GOOD NEWS! .....GOOD NEWS! 1998 to the present day

- 70,000 form a human chain round Birmingham to demand that the G8 make God's Jubilee message come true at the millennium by cancelling debts for the world's poorest countries
- despite ridicule from world bankers, campaigners receive promises for partial cancellations at the next G8 meeting in Cologne

Standing outside a hospital reminds us that we can come here any time we are ill, and receive free treatment. It's only when travelling abroad that we may fully realise how great a privilege that is. The following story is from the time of Jesus (*Luke 17 v. 11-19*):

*As Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, he went along the border between Samaria and Galilee. He was going into a village when he was met by ten men suffering a dreaded skin disease. They stood at a distance and shouted, "Jesus! Master! Take pity on us! Jesus saw them and said, "Go and let the priests examine you."*

*On the way they were made clean. When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself to the ground at Jesus' feet and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. Jesus said, "There were ten men who were healed; where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who came back to give thanks to God?"*

In this story Jesus drew attention to the faith and joy and worthiness of the tenth man – a Samaritan. Samaritans were usually seen as foreigners with the wrong religion, and therefore less worthy in God's sight, but Jesus dared to show this man as the finest of the ten. For Jesus no-one, not foreigners or even enemies, was inferior or less deserving, and he gave free healing to all alike.

In Africa AIDS is wiping out huge swathes of people because in many parts there is not enough money to pay for the food and medicines that could stop the disease progressing. As whole generations of working age men and women are dying, grandmothers struggle to find enough money and energy to look after the children, and orphanages are over-stretched.

When AIDS arrived in Britain, the government mounted a £1 million education campaign which cut the spread of the disease. Africa couldn't

do this and the scale of the problem is now overwhelming, 25 million are HIV positive, and every day 1,400 new born babies are infected at birth.

Although many have begun the fight against AIDS, it remains a huge world problem. Our help is still desperately needed to keep the campaign alive and strong enough for the days ahead.

#### PRAYERS

*St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82)*

**Christ has no body on earth but yours; no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out to the world; yours are the feet through which he is to go about doing good; yours are the hands through which he is to bless us now.**

*Canaan Banana of Zimbabwe*

**Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of people; move my hands that they may feed the hungry; touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing; teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers; let me share my possessions to clothe the naked; give me the care that strengthens the sick; make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free. In sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity, we partake of your divine presence.**

#### SONG

*Tune - The Ash Grove*

**"We take up the challenge that Jesus has taught us to work at reclaiming God's world for the poor. With power from God's spirit to combat injustice, we'll all have fun turning the world down-side up"**

Debt repayments spiralled way beyond their reach, and are still increasing, but no form of bankruptcy is allowed.

After visiting Africa, the actor Ewan McGregor said, "I was staggered by how the massive debt affects people. It's not just capital, it's vast amounts of interest. It's just insane. There are kids starving to death, and countries aren't allowed to support their people because they're too busy selling export crops to earn money to pay us back – and we don't even need it!"

Can this be how God planned it? We read Deuteronomy 24 v. 10-15, 17-21 to find out:

*When you lend a man something, do not go into his house to get the garment he is going to give you as security; wait outside and let him bring it to you himself. If he is a poor man, do not keep it overnight; return it to him each evening, so that he can have it to sleep in.*

*Do not cheat a poor and needy hired servant, whether he is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner living in one of your towns. Each day before sunset pay him for that day's work; he needs the money and counted on getting it. If you do not pay him he will cry out against you to the Lord, and you will be guilty of sin.*

*When you gather your crops and you fail to bring in some of the corn or olives or grapes that you have cut, do not go back for them; they are to be left for the foreigners, orphans and widows, so that the Lord will bless you in everything you do.*

Here God says:-

- don't destroy a debtor's dignity by the way you deal with him
- don't deny him his essential comforts
- don't keep him waiting for his money when he is in great need
- maximising profits must not be the final aim of your dealings; you have a responsibility to the less fortunate as well.

Our continuing demand on the poor for vast and ridiculous interest repayments is a blight on our own humanity as well as theirs. In the book of Leviticus, every fiftieth year is to be declared a Jubilee from

Most of us are blissfully unaware of the terrible suffering caused in our name: the power of the rich world has been so complete. While Fair Trade is benefiting a few, the full global situation can never change unless binding rules of trade at the World Trade Organisation are made to care for the poor as well as the rich. Today's poor are crying out for help to remove Isaiah's "chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice". Campaigning is beginning to inform the public and politicians, but the power of vested interests is proving to be almost insuperable.

#### SONG

**We take up the challenge...**

#### PRAYER

*Rubem Alves of Brazil*

**Lord: Help us to see in the groaning of creation not death throes but birth pangs; help us to see in suffering a promise for the future, because it is a cry against the inhumanity of the present. Help us to glimpse in protest the dawn of justice, in the cross the pathway to resurrection, and in suffering the seeds of joy.**

## Bank

We stand by a bank as witnesses that something is badly wrong with our money systems.

- 3 people control more money than 600 million of the world's poorest people who have to survive on less each day than would buy us half a cup of coffee.
- poor countries were encouraged by western banks to take out loans when their own markets were buoyant and interest rates stood at 3%. Within a decade interest rates had soared to 17% and global prices for their raw materials plummeted.

## Job Centre

Standing by the Job Centre focuses our minds on the global problems of work and pay. Jesus told a story about this. (*Matthew 20 v. 1—14*):

*The kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them the regular wage, a silver coin a day, and sent them to work. He went out again to the market place at nine o'clock and saw some men standing there doing nothing, so he told them, "You also go and work in the vineyard and I will pay you a fair wage." So they went. Then at twelve o'clock and again at three o'clock he did the same thing. It was nearly five o'clock when he went to the market place and saw some other men still standing there. "Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing?" he asked them. "No one hired us" they answered. "Well then, you also go and work in the vineyard," he told them.*

*When evening came, the owner told his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with those who were hired last, and ending with those who were hired first". The men who had begun to work at five o'clock were paid a silver coin each. So when the men who were the first to be hired came to be paid, they thought they would get more; but they too were given a silver coin each. They took their money and started grumbling against the employer. "These men who were hired last worked only one hour while we put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun – yet you paid them the same as you paid us!"*

*"Listen, friend," the owner answered one of them, "I have not cheated you. After all, you agreed to do a day's work for one silver coin. Now take your pay and go home. I want to give this man who was hired last as much as I have given you."*

This is an extraordinary parable. If we are to take it seriously it is extremely politically sensitive.

- everyone should have a chance to work
- everyone should receive a living wage, however much work

they've done

Even if that seems absurdly unrealistic, according to Jesus, that's the way God wants the world organised, and by paying the first last, he made sure the lesson was driven home.

In contrast to this, work in too many developing countries has been described as a race to the bottom as Trans-National Companies (TNC's) trawl round the world to find those with the lowest wages and least controlled conditions. Too often workers must accept very long hours, receiving tiny wages in dangerous and health threatening conditions, where all trade unions are forbidden. It is complete exploitation, and to make it worse, most of the profits stay with the TNC's while the host country as a whole enjoys little benefit.

#### PRAYER

**Torn shirt, no shoes,  
My brother.  
Hungry he touches my heart  
and I ache to understand, to see,  
to feel, to reach,  
to share his life,  
his laugh, his dance.  
I even drink the coffee that he grows,  
and smell the flowers he picks,  
my brother.  
God,  
May his hunger change my heart.**

#### SONG

**We take up the challenge...**

## Supermarket

Supermarkets have become the place where the majority of our food is traded, which gives them enormous power in the global market. As customers shop around for the lowest prices, supermarkets are encour-

aged to squeeze the last drop out of those who work the land. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, but at 47p per kilo, the global price is the lowest for 100 years. Quat, the local drug, sells at £5 a kilo. Senegal's main export is groundnuts. In 1960 the global price was \$1,576 per tonne – in 2000, only \$707.

Alongside this the U.S. and E.U. have subsidised their farmers so heavily that such things as sugar, milk powder, rice, frozen chickens, tomato paste and cotton are dumped into developing world markets below the cost of production. There is no way local farmers can compete, and their livelihoods are completely shattered.

This is what Isaiah wrote about caring for our workers: (*Isaiah 58 v. 1-10*):

*The Lord says, "Shout as loud as you can! Tell my people about their sins! They worship me every day, claiming that they are eager to know my ways and obey my laws. They say they want me to give them just laws and that they take pleasure in worshipping me".*

*The people ask, "Why should we fast if the Lord never notices? Why should we go without food if he pays no attention?"*

*The Lord says to them, "The truth is that at the same time as you fast, you pursue your own interests and oppress your workers. Your fasting makes you violent and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this kind of fasting will make me listen to your prayers?"*

*The kind of fasting I want is this:*

- *remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free*
- *share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor*
- *give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives*

***If you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon.***