

Report on NJPN networking day Sat. 21st November, 2009 CAFOD offices, Stockwell.

The meeting began with an introduction and short prayer led by Anne Peacey. Afterwards everyone present introduced themselves and told us where they came from. There was a very wide representation from all over England – indeed from as far away as Newcastle. The layout of the meeting room encouraged participation with five people sitting at eight tables which were set around the room. The Anne Peacey and Ann Kelly shared a table from where the meeting was conducted.

The speaker was Fr. John Hemer MMM who spoke about St. Paul and the Justice of God. The talk was very inspiring and down to earth. He showed the relevance of St. Paul to present day Justice Issues. He linked Justice and personal holiness in the writings of Paul – they are inseparable. He showed us the importance of understanding the political and cultural background of Paul as key to the proper interpretation of his writings. A lively and prolonged question and answer session followed.

This was followed by an hour lunch break. This seemed to me to be an excessive amount of time but I soon realized that a huge amount of intermingling and informal business was transacted by the participants during this time. I even managed to receive payment of a debt during this time!

After lunch various items of business were discussed. We talked about the upcoming General Election. Some groups are going to produce a type of election document which could be useful for meetings with candidates for election, tec.

A brief report was given by the Treasurer regarding the state of our finances. They are not as healthy as we would like, they might even be compared to swine flu - potentially worrying! This led us into a lengthy discussion on fundraising. Anne Peacey outlined the impressive work that she has been doing in this area. All kinds of fundraising ideas were discussed – from approaching bankers with big bonuses to running in the London Marathon – well at least sponsoring someone to run in it! We discussed the possibility of raising the annual Diocesan membership fee from £100 to £200. We discussed writing to Religious Orders, Anne has already written to twenty of these. We were encouraged to send to Anne names of groups who might be able to help us. Kevin has trawled through many charitable groups for potential sources of revenue. We will have to look seriously at cost cutting at every level although I don't think that anybody could accuse us of being in any way extravagant in our use of funds.

Maureen Matthews next gave an update on our website. She appealed for more material, especially on the social teaching of the Church. She is always ready to receive articles, reports from meetings, etc. It was remarked that it is a good website and is a very useful site from which to launch into other similar types of sites - it provides very good links.

With regard to the upcoming 2010 conference, it was remarked that it looks as if it will be an exciting and uplifting event. A lot of hard work and creativity is going into the preparation of it. Brief mention was made about the 2011 conference, the theme for that will be Justice in the Workplace.

Towards the end of our networking day time was allotted for propaganda and upcoming events. Chief among the upcoming events is the WAVE in London on December 5th. The meeting was concluded by a short prayer led by Anne Peacey. It was a worthwhile day. The commitment of so many people to the work of justice was very evident. As we left we were presented with a free copy of the new magazine "Justice" and we were encouraged to support it by subscribing and writing articles. So get on with it what are you waiting for!

Peter Hughes