



Action

by

Christians

*All that is
required for the
triumph of evil is
that good men do
nothing*

Against

torture

Feb - April 2014

Page	2 - 3	Letter from Chairman Appeals (<i>only available to members</i>)
	4	Syria + request to write to MP
	5	A prisoner's prayer
	6 - 11	Spotlight on North Korea + appeal
	12	Hajji Hussein is free, Good Friday Campaign with ACAT Switzerland
	13	News of Card signing
	14 - 15	The big question - final part
	15	SOS Torture
	16 - 17	Harrow Group - A focus on Sri Lanka Freedom from Torture meeting in Birmingham
	18	A Thank you from Eleanor and Terry Newland
	19	HELP
	20	The Meditation that never was
	21	Prayer and meditation for Lent and Holy Week

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

If I am not too late may I wish you all a Happy New Year.

I do hope the weather we are experiencing has not affected you too adversely. Living where I do in Bristol we have had horrendous rain and wind, trees blown down and my local park is more of a boating lake, but I thank God I am not living on the Somerset levels where several friends do. One has had to leave his house and is currently sofa surfing amongst friends. The flooding is due a lot to manmade problems, failures in dredging the rivers, different farming methods and Climate change . Man has a lot to answer for in the way our actions affect others in adverse ways.

A lot has happened since the last time I wrote; amongst the events was the sad death in South Africa of Nelson Mandela. The Amnesty International Secretary General Salil Shetty said of Nelson Mandela:

‘As a world leader who refused to accept injustice, Nelson Mandela’s courage helped change our entire world. “The death of Nelson Mandela is not just a loss for South Africa. It is a loss for people all over the world who are fighting for freedom, for justice and for an end to discrimination’ Nelson Mandela was a political prisoner, detained also for his conscience. He was a man who understood how exclusion of groups destroys the social fabric of a country by creating a politics of inequality. “The human rights movement around the world owes Nelson Mandela a debt of gratitude. All of us who admired him must carry on his struggle.”

May Nelson Mandela rest in peace and the world learn from his work against inequality and for human rights.

We have just celebrated Candlemass, when we recall that Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple where he was greeted by Simeon and Anna. Simeon recognised the child for who he was and spoke the words repeated over the centuries and which many of us still use in the Nunc Dimmittis: ‘Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...’

This scene shows the old man not only seeing Christ as a man, but also seeing the divinity of the man, the One who saves, the Messiah, the Son of God. Simeon blesses the One but probably he would have preferred to have been blessed by Jesus; just as John who baptized the One whom he would have preferred to be baptised by.

This scene in the temple reminds us that we must recognise the Christ in ourselves and in others, There is not one person for whom Christ did not give his life as John 3:16 tells us, and Paul in his letter to the Colossians 1:27 that the secret of the Christian faith is 'Christ in us'.

I pray that God will give us all the strength we need for the tasks in front of us this year, and especially for all we will try to do on behalf of others being tortured and ill treated even now as I write this, and soon as you read this.

I have written elsewhere in the mailing about the ways members could help a very small committee in the running of ACAT- UK. Please consider ways you could help us help you and let me know.

Also, I have been asked to again detail the dates when mailings will be produced because sadly we are finding ourselves overwhelmed with work and as such have had to change the pattern of mailings.

The dates are: end of February, end of April, end of June, early August and late October/early November

As we seek to put Kingdom values into practice may we recognise the Christ within us all and know that in serving others in his name we are serving him.

May God's peace be with you and all for whom you pray.

Margaret

SYRIA

I was watching the news with horror in the middle of January. It was showing images of the most horrendous abuses occurring in Syria, and feel we should do something.

But what?

As we know Syria is shut off with no diplomatic presence and no mail or e mail getting through.

I urgently e mailed the rest of the committee for their opinions and several steps were agreed.

- Firstly a strong letter to be sent to our Prime Minister and to our MP's
- Copies to be sent to the leaders of the other political parties
- Copies to be sent to our Patrons detailing what was done.
- Finally an e mail request sent round to all our members who receive the mailing by e mail asking them to also write to their MP's

I received a letter from the PM's office this morning saying the matter was under investigation.

Other members wrote to their MP's asking them to vote in support of the Syrian refugees in the vote which was to take place. We have so far received a variety of responses which mainly keep to the party lines of the recipient.

We will keep you advised of progress, but if any member does receive a reply please let us have it

Margaret

A Prisoner's Prayer

Lord, You offer freedom to all people.

We pray for those in prison.

Especially we pray for Arthur "Jun" Agarado Sapanghari, Jr of the Phillipines, experiencing threats of death for his work in the field of Human Rights

For the Bahá'i mothers and their children in Iran sentenced to imprisonment for practising their religion. Also for the people of South Sudan during the escalating inter ethnic troubles.

We pray also for the soul of *Umed Tojiv – Tajikistan* who died in custody following sustained ill treatment. For the people of Syria ,North Korea and Sri Lanka that their human rights situation will improve.

Break the Bonds of fear and Isolation that exist.

**Support with your love prisoners
and their families and friends,
prison staff and all who care.**

**Heal those who have been wounded
by the activities of others,
especially the victims of crime and torture.**

**Help us to forgive one another,
to act justly, love mercy and walk
humbly together with Christ in his
strength and in His spirit, now and
every day. Amen.**

Sent in by one of our members with some adaptations for our use

Spotlight on North Korea (D.P.R.K)

Background

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea shares borders with N.E.China (880 miles), Russia (12 miles) and South Korea (150 miles). The latter border is called the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), probably the most heavily fortified area in the world with military facing each other nervously.

North Korea is just less than the size of England, but only about 25% maximum of the land is suitable for agriculture: it has a population of 24 million.

Korea, which was united until 1945, has been a nation since 3000 B.C. The last dynasty, the Yi (1392-1910), had attempted to isolate the peninsula making it the HERMIT KINGDOM. North Korea is still referred to by that name.

Japan occupied the peninsula in 1905 and brutally ruled from 1910 to 1945 when it was divided at the 38th parallel, the north under Soviet administration and the south under a coalition of Western nations (US being the largest).

September 9, 1948 was the Foundation Day of the State under the leadership of Kim Il Sung (The Great Leader). War broke out on June 25, 1950 resulting in some 3 ½ million being killed or injured. An armistice was signed on 27 July, 1953. China had been drawn in when fighting had almost reached their border. The N-S border is little different from that which existed before the war.

Military

North Korea needs to maintain the military in order to prove its 'invincibility' to its people as a core of its propaganda. It still keeps its revolutionary mindset; the fact that the Korean War is still only a 'ceasefire' enables it to 'justify' the high cost of 1 million military personnel (it could be argued that it is better than these personnel being unemployed with the subsequent threat to the regime). Problems in the DPRK are construed and blamed on US-Imperialism. Military provocations bolster the young Leader, Kim Jong Un, as a young inexperienced General.

It is likely that its nuclear programme will continue for these reasons:

They saw what happened to Libya's Colonel Gaddafi

Would indicate inability to counter other massive forces

It could be seen as surrender

Philosophy

Kim Il Sung, the President of the DPRK since its foundation, and still Eternal President although he died in 1994, introduced a philosophy in 1955 called JUCHE which means 'self-reliance' (receiving aid flies in the face of this).

This allowed Kim Il Sung to achieve more independence by playing China off against the USSR, later purging those who still aligned with them. There are undertones of racial and national exclusivism in this.

Juche gave the opportunity for Kim Il Sung to position himself as a great thinker like Mao, although it was one of his advisors who created 'Juche Thought'. To believe in any other ideology is not permitted, thus it is forbidden to be a Christian in the DPRK. Those who are discovered, even in possession of a Bible, are imprisoned in harsh labour (political prison) camps, possibly together with three generations of their family, or even executed (as has occurred during Nov/Dec 2013).

The leadership has 'god-like status' with an estimated 35,000 statues of Kim Il Sung (a 70 foot tall one is at Mansudae in Pyongyang as a place of pilgrimage).

A summary coming from Confucianism and Juche thought: "The Korean people are too pure blooded and therefore too virtuous to survive in this evil world without a great parental leader".

It was said about Kim Jong Il, as a boy, as his father greeted adoring citizens- "For Kim Jong Il so loved the Korean people that he gave them his only parent".

One child, in class, was told by teachers to answer about 'my dreams'. "I will study hard and be a medical doctor when I grow up. My dream is to make people healthy and well, and bring joy to General Kim Il Sung".

Class (Songbun)

Following a 1966 census, citizens are divided according to family background.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| CORE class | - high-ranking officials and their families. |
| WAVERING class | - average citizens. |
| HOSTILE class | - former landowners, Christians, returned from South Korea after the war, not supporting the Party, etc. |

Pyongyang's citizens are from the 'Core' class. The best jobs are those earning foreign currency, probably children of party members with good 'songbun'. Bribery is rife by parents to government officials to obtain a good job for their children.

Propaganda

There are frequent and regular references by the regime to 'building a strong and prosperous country'. Any questioning of this is likely to result in 're-education' in a labour camp.

The DPRK is trapped behind a 'curtain of lies' e.g. during the famine the people were told that 'it is even worse in the ROK'.

For others to become prosperous, the result could be, perhaps, an alternative power base and the decades of lies be exposed.

Continual news comes only from 'official' government channels; receiving outside news, even 'soap operas' from the South are serious enough to get a labour camp sentence for 'subversion'.

Economy

Initially being supported mainly by the Soviet Union, the DPRK flourished in comparison with the ROK (South Korea). Gradually the ROK economy improved and went ahead of the DPRK during the 1970's.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, their support of the DPRK ceased. Although China supplied some food, during the mid-1990's a food shortage developed into a famine. Combined with a lack of shelter and heating (temperatures in winter can drop to -30 C) , estimates range from 1-3 million people died as a result of the famine- many of them on the streets or in places such as railway stations.

Insufficient food is produced nowadays so there is a continuing reliance on food aid from China and the ROK.

Today the economy of the ROK is approx. 40 times greater than that of the DPRK. Some trade is done on the black market with tacit state approval, often with bribery and corruption involved.

Human Rights

The Kim dynasty has committed appalling Human Rights abuses, illustrated vividly, perhaps, by the December 2013 'trial' and immediate execution of Jang Song Taek, who was No. 2 in the regime hierarchy advising Kim Jong Un, his nephew. All blood relations (including children) have been executed. Non blood relatives and

fringe associates have been sent to remote mountain areas on the Chinese border.

There are a number of political prison (labour) camps in the DPRK which have been mapped by Google Earth; some are expanding in size. An estimated 150,000-200,000 are incarcerated in these (approx. 70,000 are Christians); the prisoners are forced to work in mining, logging or farming industries in severe conditions on starvation diets. There is no medical care, many are killed in accidents and they receive brutal punishments and beatings, often at the whim of a guard. When someone is sent to one of these camps, often 3 generations of their family are also sent although, of course, they are entirely innocent.

Michael Kirby, a retired Australian judge, recently chaired a UN Commission of Inquiry into allegations of abuses by Pyongyang against its own people. He was 'moved to tears' at some of the testimonies, e.g. Shin Dong Hyuk who was born in Camp 14 and sent to mine coal for the first time when he was 10; subsequently he escaped at the age of 23 and is now testifying across the world.

The Commission's report will be released in March 2014.

In late October 2013, 8 people were executed by firing squad at Kim Il Sung Political University, this for watching ROK TV programmes and videos of nude women. It was conducted at the University so that ordinary people would not see it, but it would send a message to cadres (core people of a military unit or political group).

There were 80 public executions in 7 cities in November for having Bibles, watching ROK soaps or prostitution; victims are tied to stakes and machine-gunned. 10,000, including children, were forced to watch.

Defectors

26,000 defectors have arrived in the ROK in the last decade, plus 30-50,000 in China. The only viable escape route is via China. Some DPRK personnel are purposely positioned in China, often masquerading as guides/Christians/safe houses to catch defectors. China breaks its international agreements by repatriating many escapees. Under Kim Jong Un the border has been re-inforced with fencing, more guards (who shoot to kill). Those who are sent back face a very uncertain future.

Defectors trying to reach the ROK have an extremely difficult journey, via either Laos/Vietnam and Thailand or Mongolia, fraught with dangers of discovery, exploitation (unscrupulous guides, money shortages with possible prostitution outcomes for women). Some make it through sympathetic churches' assistance.

Defectors are willing to take the risk:- one said "It is better to die than live like an insect every day". Another, on realising the truth described it in the DPRK as 'being like a frog in a well' with just one source of information.

Those defectors who do successfully reach the ROK often find it hard to settle because:-

Their northern accent gives them away and almost makes them second class and not welcomed.

North and South have gone their different ways over the last 60+ years, so that the South is a modern country with the North far behind.

Although given a monetary start, they have no experience of financial affairs, costs of living, shopping, etc. leading to scam vulnerability, loneliness and lack of experience of city life (many from rural places). Many are overwhelmed and unable to cope (resulting in some suicides or moving elsewhere).

Conclusion

The DPRK cannot change because:-

- No one is foolhardy enough to suggest it.
- The elite are well off and for that to be known would encourage a fate similar to that of East German officials.
- For others to become prosperous could, perhaps, introduce an opposition and expose the decades of lies.
- To observe Human Rights would risk the collapse of the regime; therefore its reign of terror keeps it in power.
- To release camp inmates would open up the horrors creating anger, an uprising and likely killing of the leaders.
- It would pose questions by the citizens.

Therefore it is stuck in its time frame.

References bbNK News Open Doors The Cleanest Race by B.R.Myers
Only Beautiful, Please by John Everard Life in the Secret State (Channel 4)

It's Time to wake up to extreme persecution!

North Korea remains the number one place in the world where faith costs the most. Persecution is extreme: in North Korea, Christians are imprisoned in labour camps, tortured, or even killed just for owning a Bible.

And yet the international community remains largely unmoved!

On Tuesday 4 March, we have the amazing opportunity to bring a survivor of a North Korean prison camp to the UK parliament, to speak directly to politicians about North Korea. It's so important that their voice - representing thousands more - is heard by our government.

Please write to your MP today and urge them to attend!

This is a unique moment: the UN has commissioned its first ever inquiry into human rights abuses in North Korea and its report is due to be published in March 2014. This gives hope that the silence could be broken and the plight of people in North Korea exposed. **Please urge your MP to attend this meeting and to ensure that the international community does all it can to call the North Korean government to account. It's Time to break the silence!**

Taken from Open Doors web site

IRAQI KURDISTAN: Hajji Hussein is free!

Thank you for your appeals

After seventy-nine days in prison and four court hearings, Hajji Hussein has finally been re-united with his family. On 9 December 2013, the Criminal Court of Appeal acquitted Hajji Hussein of all charges brought against him by the former Director-General of the Asaish, Hakim Nadir.

The court acknowledged that a report, which the members of the Human Rights Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament compiled following a visit with Hajji Hussein in prison after he was tortured, was sufficient to prove his innocence.

This release marks the second time the court has acquitted Hussein of the same charges and the second time it has liberated him from incarceration. Together with the first stint he served in prison, he lost over ten months of his life, and much more, for refusing to give false testimony even though his inquisitors beat and threatened him. Members of CPT's Iraqi Kurdistan team are deeply moved and encouraged by the efforts of Kak Umer, Hussein's brother and lawyer, whose tireless work has truly moved mountains, and they rejoice with the family at the good news. The team would like to thank everyone who sent out emails, prayed, shared this story, or performed other actions in support of Hajji Hussein's release.

GOOD FRIDAY CAMPAIGN

ACAT Switzerland has invited us to join in their Good Friday campaign in support of the Ivory Coast.

We have collated much of the information supplied by Switzerland into a booklet which will be published on our web site and sent to those members receiving the mailing by e mail.

In view of the cost of sending copies by Royal Mail we will be sending copies only to those members who ask us the post one. Please contact the office and a copy will be sent out to you, or you could download details from our web site.

NEWS OF THE CARD SIGNING

From Gateshead

I thought the way the Christmas Card list was presented a very good idea, so I laid out the different names in groups plus some cards of both types and folk did take them.

It was our Gift Day but a poor turn out, so many things on so near Christmas, but we can only do our best at all times.

From Horfield, Bristol.

The Card signing took place on two consecutive Sundays, Christ the King and Advent Sunday. I was asked to talk in the sermon slot and

linked the tortured Christ with ACAT -UK telling about our work in the context of the sermon and I think this attracted more people signing cards.

The names were placed on tables in groups, Christmas greetings and non religious and a basket for donations of at least £1.50 for the cost of posting.

About 70 cards were sent over the two Sundays which was a great effort and the donations covered the postage costs. People took literature and asked many questions, I have been asked to speak to a group at the local Methodist Church about the work of ACAT UK as a result of this event.

From Rochester

You may be interested to know that I spoke about this campaign in the sermon slot at all three masses at St John Fisher, Rochester, last Sunday. After mass, about 130 leaflets with information about ACAT and details of four prisoners were distributed.

From St Albans

Just to let you know that Trinity St Albans URC continued to support the Christmas card appeal enthusiastically. I have not heard of anyone receiving a direct response.

‘THE BIG QUESTION -PART THREE’.

As I mentioned in the last mailing, our Questionnaire (‘the Big Question’) produced some big answers. You may remember that Question 8 of the Questionnaire was ‘What other comments, observations or suggestions do you have for the future of ACAT- UK?’

There were 66 comments and suggestions and we included 20 of these in the November/December mailing.

Here are some of the remaining ones, all of which the committee will discuss and consider how they might put them into practice. If those

members who remember making these comments would like to expand any of them we should be delighted to hear from you.

Our committee members are not the fount of all knowledge and would value your help in making decisions on how to implement some of the suggestions.

Nos. 1-20 were included in the last Newsletter:

21. In Lent there should be a drive focussing on Christ's suffering and Passion and linking these to torture today.

22. If funds are available or can be found, have an office with a part-time experience co-ordinator/secretary.

23. Find and use active committee members urgently.

24. Members should be urged to lobby their MP's re specific cases, if applicable, and also to write to government Ministers.

25. Get local politicians as members if possible. Also get members to visit their MP's surgeries re cases if relevant. (3 members said this).

26. Run periodic campaigns with and in local schools.

27. Put petitions, posters etc. at the gates of weekend Farmers' Markets and at other events where consumers with a social conscience can be found.

28. Appeals should concentrate on people who are actually suffering and not on cases where the victim is already dead.

29. Notices and posters should be placed on College campuses and in College chaplaincies.

30. Develop a database of members' interests/expertise which could be used to help other groups with similar members' interests/expertise (e.g. swapping e-mails.)

Thank you all again for the suggestions and contributions. We will let you know in future mailings how plans based on your suggestions are progressing. Richard Dent.

SOS TORTURE



Christmas greetings to all readers, especially to members of SOS; the chances are that you have had a wonderful family time with loved ones, food, warmth of every kind and a 'good' New Year to follow.

ACAT tries hard to serve Jesus, God incarnate, who was born into a time and place and nation where and when everything we have enjoyed at Christmas was denied him. As an infant he with his parents became refugees first in Egypt, later in Nazareth. He grew up in a remote area of Galilee where poverty and hardship were the lot of the population under the violent and oppressive rule of Rome and local rulers. At the age of thirty he brought a message of God's reign - of healing, peace, justice, sufficiency, in every respect the opposite of the Emperor's regime. After only three years he became a torture victim and suffered the terrible death of crucifixion. He lives in us his body; we are to serve him in the hungry, the poor, those in prison.

We read Jesus' story in Matthew 25 as a call to support and speak up for all who suffer human rights abuses in today's world, as Jesus did in his - he spoke up, and consequently suffered.

If you are a member of ACAT but not yet a writer of SOS appeals do follow the example of the three who have joined us recently, and write to 'The Office' in Bristol and say so. There's always room for more!

Anselm

ACAT (Harrow group) talk: "A Focus on Sri Lanka"

In order to mark the International Day for the Tortured (June 26th), the Harrow group invited local GP, Dr Mohan Seevaratnam, who is also in ordination training, to talk to us about the continuing abuse of human rights, including the use of torture, in Sri Lanka. In Harrow, we have large numbers of Tamils many of whom we are in contact with, either because they are our neighbours, or because of community projects

with which we are involved. The meeting was actually held on 24th June and opened with a Prayer of St. Francis, adapted by *ACAT-UK* especially for the International Day for the Tortured.

In his introduction, Dr. Seevaratnam told us that he was a Tamil, born in London but that he and his wife have worked in Sri Lanka in medical fields and in bible teaching during the civil war and the tsunami. His talk was very stimulating and informative, and he began by explaining the different ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka: 74% of the population is Sinhalese and the religion is mainly Buddhist. There is also a very large Tamil community which is mainly Hindu and an Islamic population of 9% descended from Arab traders. Christians, both Sinhalese and Tamil, make up 6 - 7% of the population.

There was a civil war between the Sinhalese government and some of the Tamils from 1983 to 2009 in which 70,000 died, and there are still tensions between the two communities. Explaining the causes of the civil war, Dr. Seevaratnam said that in 1948, when Sri Lanka became independent, there were 3 languages commonly in use; Sinhalese, Tamil and English, but in 1956 Sinhalese was made the national language. This upset the Tamils, the Burghers (Dutch speakers) and English speakers. Further discriminatory laws led to the formation of a new and violent resistance movement known as the Tamil Tigers. They were eventually suppressed, but torture and oppression were used by both sides. Government forces targeted schools and hospitals in the Tamil north and the civil war also led to high levels of suicide and impoverished the country.

Dr. Seevaratnam said that unfortunately the end of the civil war has not brought any major concessions to the Tamils and many Tamil refugees still cannot return to their homes in the north. There is also a strong feeling amongst some Buddhists that Sri Lanka should be a Buddhist country. Although there is a basic law on religious tolerance, in practice Buddhists are favoured in applications for official permission for new building. The rise of Buddhist groups leading anti-Christian and anti-Moslem campaigns has tacit approval from the authorities and has been followed by an increase of violence, particularly against Protestant churches.

In referring to torture, which is of particular concern to *ACAT*, Dr. Seevaratnam said that Sri Lanka has the 2nd highest number of disappearances in the world and is the 2nd most dangerous place in which to be a journalist. This affects Sinhalese as well as Tamils. At least 15 journalists have been killed since 2006. *Freedom from Torture* asserts that torture continues to be practised by the military and the police, particularly against the Tamils. Judicial rights are under threat and the Government also seems unwilling to investigate war crimes committed during the civil war.

In conclusion, the speaker said there is much need for a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, such as was set up in South Africa. The evening concluded with a prayer that the Church may be an agent of transformation and for justice and healing for all of Sri Lanka's victims.

Freedom from Torture meeting in Birmingham

Freedom from Torture is dedicated to providing holistic rehabilitation support to survivors of torture. Our clients have fled their communities, families and friends in fear for their lives after being persecuted by state or state sponsored agents, paramilitary groups or other organised factions. **At Freedom from Torture West Midlands, based in Birmingham**, a range of services from trauma-focused psychological therapies to forensic documentation of torture as well as practical help is provided to people who have survived horrific abuses of their human rights.

On the evening of Thursday 1st May 2014 they are planning to hold a fund and awareness-raising evening in Birmingham where they will aim to explore the issues of **Torture, Faith and Forgiveness**. Please contact them if you would like further details of the meeting. **aporter@freedomfromtorture.org t 0121 314 6825 Amy Porter, Unit 5, 1st floor, Caroline Point, 62 Caroline Street, Birmingham, B3 1UF**

Thank you from Eleanor and Terry Newland

THANK YOU!

Dear Margaret and members of the Committee

Thank you for organising the collection for us. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of ACAT's members and groups and their kind comments. We had no idea when Steve came down to see us last Friday that he had been tasked with bringing such a gift. Both of us were taken completely by surprise. It was so good to see Steve and we had a very special time with him.

We have always felt privileged that the Lord called us so many years ago to fight for the tortured - first with Amnesty and then almost 30 years ago with ACAT. In a small way we feel certain we have made a difference.

We both send our best wishes to you and the Committee and will hold you in our prayers. We would ask you to give our thanks to the ACAT members who were always supportive over the years. It was a great joy to work with them.

In Christ's name

Eleanor and Terry

HELP

We are continuing to ask for assistance from members with the ongoing work of ACAT-UK. Not only assistance with the Committee which as we have already said is urgent but with other small ways.

The mailing takes up quite a substantial amount of time which is why we have had to reduce the number of editions yearly.

Articles are always welcome about what you, your groups or your Church is doing in the fight against torture. Also, several members are assisting us by researching and writing out appeals for the mailing which is so helpful and for which we are very grateful.

The final page of the mailing is always for Prayer and Meditation and volunteers to undertake this page would also be welcome.

Other ways of helping us would be

- Helping to research, produce and post the Greetings Card list.
- Spotlights on countries or subjects , not necessarily regularly on not as long as this editions Spotlight
- Replying to any questionnaires we send out. We are in the process of looking at Groups and how they operate so watch this space.
- Talking to groups about the work of ACAT-UK and including items about our work in your Church magazines or on Noticeboards. We can always assist with this.
- Attending the AGM and Conference where decision making about the future of ACAT-UK is made.

Clearly praying for the work of ACAT-UK is vital because if we did not have this support I know many of the Committee would feel unable to do the work we do.

In this 30th year of the founding of ACAT-UK let's work together to continue with the work, but also to grow in commitment and presence in the national agenda. Margaret

THE MEDITATION THAT NEVER WAS

On Wednesday, 15th January in Reading at Park URC your committee met to consider matters grave, and some perhaps less grave, with much merriment and a strong underlying and unifying sense of purpose. As usual we started with prayer and a short meditation, provided at very short notice by our Chairman.

So, I was left thinking, supposing I'd been called on for such a meditation, what would I have said? What had God recently passed my way to give me food for thought which perhaps I could share? And this is what came to me.

I'm an early riser (and am usually in bed by 9.30, after Compline), and that morning I caught the tail end of the World Service - and heard the latest from two troubled countries, Syria and Central African Republic. In both of them entire populations live with experience of, or fear of, starvation, dispossession, eviction, violence, death, loss of loved ones - millions of men, women, children whom we can only think of as torture victims.

Later, waiting for the train, I picked up a copy of that freebie which is dished out on stations, in buses - in order to discover what is considered newsworthy in a society which is as far removed from Syria or the Central Republic as you can get. We are pampered, comfortable, 'free'. What did I find? The editors provided us with a diet of celeb scandal - you really had to search for anything else except of course the adverts and the dating columns. That's where prosperity has got us, at any rate in the opinion of news editors.

Economically, Syria and CAR are poor, the UK is rich - partly as a result of the activities of arms manufacturers. The human misery embedded in which is the torture to whose abolition ACAT is pledged, contributes to our comfort. Christians remember Christ, the archetypal victim whose resurrection brings hope into the worst imaginable human mess, and who is present, yes, at our committee meetings.

Anselm

Prayers and Meditations for Holy Week and Easter

That misery, suffering, poverty, loneliness and guilt mean something quite different in the eyes of God from what they mean in the judgement of man, that God will approach where men turn away, that Christ was born in a stable, because there was no room for him in the inn - these are things that a prisoner can understand better than other people; for him they are really glad tidings.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - Letters and Papers from prison.

He is the image of the unseen God and the first born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth; everything visible and invisible. Before anything was created he existed, and he holds all things in unity. As he is in the beginning, he was first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and on earth, when he made peace by his death on the cross.

Colossians Chap. 1

Lord Jesus Christ, Victor over suffering, crucified Redeemer. In you we will surmount all the difficulties of our hours of darkness. Whatever may befall us, may we bear it as a share in your destiny, and may it be for us a path into the eternal Easter light.

Karl Rahner

Let us pray dear friends, that God the Almighty Father may heal the sick, comfort the dying, give safety to travellers, free those unjustly deprived of liberty, and rid the world of falsehood, hunger and disease:

Almighty, ever-living God, you give strength to the weary and new courage to those who have lost heart. Hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Liturgy of Good Friday

I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you: you shall be my people and I will be your God.

A final

Thought '

**we fought injustice wherever
we found it, no matter how
large, or how small, and we
fought injustice to preserve
our own humanity.”**

— Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to
Freedom*

We hope you find this mailing stimulating and thought provoking

Articles for the next and future mailings are always required.
Especially it would be good to hear about individuals or group
activities, any good news about prisoners or any queries you may
havework of ACAT(UK).

Please send any material - handwritten, or typed to:-

Please send any material - handwritten, or typed to:-
Margaret Russell, c/o ACAT Office or by e-mail by 2nd April

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