



COMPASSION FATIGUE?

Another major disaster has struck. This year, it's drought and starvation in East Africa, affecting millions of people. Last year, there was the Haitian earthquake followed by floods in Pakistan. We are in the midst of yet another emergency appeal. At the time of writing, the United Nations is calling for an additional £1 bn just to enable drought victims to survive, let alone resume something resembling their normal lives. This sounds like a massive sum, especially when so many people have already responded generously. But there are other ways of raising it...

CASC-aid campaigns for people to aspire to give to charity an amount at least equal to that which they spend on themselves at Christmas ('50/50 Giving'). Thus, huge amounts could easily be raised for emergencies and other projects, at no extra cost to ourselves. And so, with reference to the current disaster appeal, is it really

TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

It certainly isn't, now that the summer holidays are over. Already some Christmas catalogues are coming through our letterboxes. And the first Christmas decorations have been on display in some shops since early September. Many people will already be wondering how they will afford Christmas this year. The first casualty may be their level of charitable giving.

With this in mind, there are two new resources this year on the CASC-aid website:

1. 'Christmas Is Coming': for church magazines and newsletters. This short article emphasises that the focus of gift giving at Christmas should be God, following the example of the Magi, and not ourselves. It explains what



is meant by '50/50 Giving' to charity. However, it also emphasises that Christmas is a time for celebration; and that by taking stock of our own spending and aspiring to give away a larger proportion to charitable causes, we can actually enjoy it more.

2. 'Gifts For A King': suggested order of service for a specific Sunday dedicated to focusing on our Christmas giving. The proposed Sunday is that of Christ The King, last in the church year and next before Advent (although individual churches might select another Sunday, as appropriate to their own schedule of services). In 2011, Christ The King Sunday falls on 20 November.

This particular Sunday is significant for two reasons. Theologically, the baby whose birth we celebrate on 25 December is also our heavenly King, and so our preparations for Christmas should include preparations for our own ultimate reception into His kingdom (Mt 25: 31-46). And liturgically, it is known as 'Stir-up Sunday' because of the collect for the day. An alternative collect could be: 'Stir up in us... a compassion that cannot be ignored, until there is no poverty or injustice left to feel uncomfortable about' (adapted from The Sanctuary's 'Prayer For All Those In Poverty'). There are suggestions for readings, prayers, music, and sermon points that may be helpful.

Both resources are available as downloads in PDF format at www.casc-aid.org.uk/downloads, or from contact@casc-aid.org.uk.

EXPANDING THE CAMPAIGN



We'd also welcome your ideas for expanding the campaign. We've changed the home page of the website, to make it more inviting and user-friendly. In addition, there are a number of published articles, leaflets and posters available from contact@casc-aid.org.uk

Some are also available in PDF format in the 'downloads' section. In the run-up to Christmas 2010, there were opportunities to link up with other websites, such as Ekklesia, Alternativity, and the Church Times. We were also given air time on Radio Sheffield, United Christian Broadcasters, and Revelation TV.

This year we hope to build on existing contacts and are already making new ones. If you have any ideas, or contacts of your own, please get in touch both with them and with us! It may be possible to arrange a speaker for your church or group, within the UK. Above all, please spread the word among your own family, friends, and churches: both by word of mouth and by means such as Facebook and Twitter. The more individuals can aspire to 50/50 giving at Christmas, the bigger the difference it will make to everyone. The Archbishop of York has written to CASC-aid in July 2011 that 'as you call the Church to be generous in our giving to others, I pray that you may be encouraged by the response that you see.'

More Resources Available



Visit www.casc-aid.org.uk for points to ponder, suggestions for talks and sermons, links to other sites, downloadable resources for publicity, and e-cards to send to your friends. There is now a page explaining '50/50 Giving' in more detail. And watch out for a new Christmas carol later in the autumn!

Your Feedback

In the first year of this website, there have been two questions in particular raised by our readers. The first is: 'Why don't you make this a more general campaign, and not one just aimed at Christians?' Indeed, there are many thousands, perhaps millions, of non-Christians who probably feel as we do. But we have to start somewhere, and since Christmas is primarily a Christian festival, it seems right to assume, at least initially, a largely Christian readership. If Christians don't prioritise charitable giving at Christmas, we can hardly expect others to do so.

The second question is: 'Are you trying to ban Christmas?' Absolutely not! Christmas should be a time of joy, of celebration, of love, laughter and generosity.

But so often, it is a time of tension, debt, anticlimax, illness, and relationship breakdown. This is what we want to 'ban'. We want to make Christmas pleasanter for everyone, donors as well as recipients of charitable giving. We want this website to reflect the joy and hope that Jesus' birth brings to the world, and we try to emphasise this on every page.

Please keep the suggestions coming in, either via the 'Feedback' page or directly to : contact@casc-aid.org.uk

