



**Do you love preparing for Christmas, or is the mere thought of it already beginning to weigh you down? There are many different causes of seasonal stress, but it's a pretty safe guess that pressures on time and money are high on most people's lists. Help is at hand! Read on...**

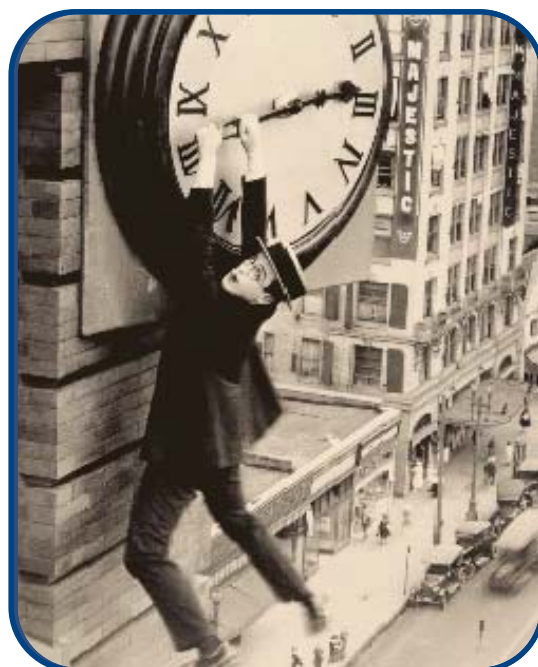
## FREEING UP OUR TIME...

We often have to *make* time to *take* time. Advent, like Lent, is supposed to be a time for reflection and spiritual preparation for the momentous events to come. One frequent argument is lack of time during Advent. CASC-aid is encouraging people to make the time this autumn, by offering two events in advance of the Christmas countdown:

### 'Just A Second...' Away Day at Shepherd's Dene, Saturday 13th October

A short pause for thought, before Christmas preparations get under way, led by Ruth Grayson of CASC-aid. It introduces an alternative scriptural approach to the festive season that could have a huge impact on our stress levels, significantly reduce personal debt, and substantially help narrow the gap between those who have too much at Christmas and those who have nothing at all.

Shepherd's Dene Retreat House is located at Riding Mill, Northumberland NE44 6AF. There will be a £5 charge for lunch, otherwise the day is free of charge. Enquiries should be addressed to [contact@casc-aid.org.uk](mailto:contact@casc-aid.org.uk) and bookings may be made through [Julie@shepherdsdene.co.uk](mailto:Julie@shepherdsdene.co.uk) (tel. 01434 682212). Coffee will be served from 9.30 for a 10 am start and the day will end by 4 pm.



### Omega Time at the Sanctuary, Saturday 10th November

Introducing 'Omega: Taking A Second Look at Christmas!' This is a new course, produced jointly by CASC-aid and The Sanctuary. It is a free, interactive two-part study course for small groups, and includes leaders' notes and individual follow-up resources. It can be downloaded from this website at <http://www.casc-aid.org.uk/downloads> and also from <http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-seasonal.html> We are offering 'an Omega Taster Day' for those who would like to experience the course before running it themselves in their own churches or house groups. The day is free and will be fun as well as thought-provoking – though it comes with the health

warning that it might just influence your Christmas planning...

The Sanctuary is located at 6 Church Street, Ilkley, W Yorks LS29 9DS. The day will begin at 10.30 and end at 4 pm. Participants should bring a packed lunch, and tea and coffee will be provided. If you could offer a lift, or if you would like one, it may be possible to arrange shared transport in some cases. The Sanctuary is within five minutes' walking distance of Ilkley railway station. For enquiries, or to register for the day, please email Ruth Grayson at [contact@casc-aid.org.uk](mailto:contact@casc-aid.org.uk) or Liz Baddaley at [info@thesanctuarycentre.org](mailto:info@thesanctuarycentre.org).

# ...AND FREEING UP OUR MONEY

## The Olympic Legacy

On 12th August, the final day of the 2012 Olympics, the Prime Minister hosted a 'hunger summit' in response to a request from Save The Children, World Vision and other aid agencies. Taking advantage of the 100+ world leaders gathered in the city for the greatest sporting event on earth, David Cameron – who will also host the next G8 summit when it meets in London in 2013 – used the occasion to draw attention to the ongoing food shortages in both East and West Africa, especially this year in the Sahel region, where 18m people are suffering from the effects of drought and where 1m children are in danger of malnutrition. It is anticipated that as many as 250,000 children will die from this condition, and millions of others will live with ongoing consequences such as stunted or deformed limbs.

It is hoped that this 'Olympic legacy' will prove to be a lasting commitment among nations worldwide not only to play together every four years but to work together continuously to combat food shortages, hunger and malnutrition wherever they occur. Increasingly, aid agencies are concentrating their efforts on supplying money, rather than food, where it is most needed, to minimise transport problems and to help communities stay together rather than have to go in search of supplies and employment. But, of course, this depends on money being available! Agencies are petitioning the government to provide more help, but they need more donations from the public as well.

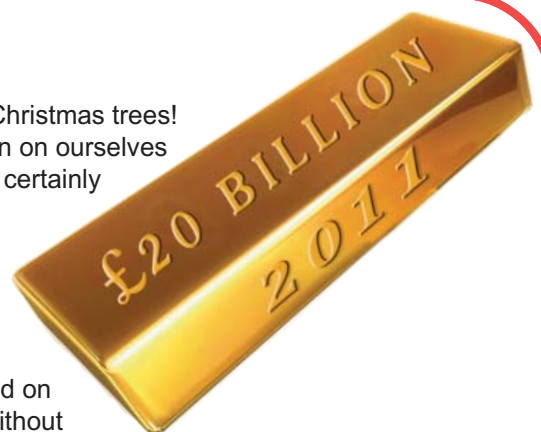
The UK is one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to charitable giving. According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), we gave a total of £11bn to charity in 2010-11. Over a million more people made charitable contributions as compared with the previous year, yet the total amount given remained static. Sir Stuart Etherington, chief executive of NCVO, said that although 'even in straitened times, the British public are prepared to show goodwill to those in need', charities will have to work harder just to stand still.



## GOING FOR GOLD!

There is at least one relatively easy solution, and it lies under our Christmas trees! Despite the recession, Johnston Press records that we spent £20bn on ourselves at Christmas in 2011. We probably weren't aware of it, and almost certainly most of us did not take stock of our spending beforehand.

The UK's ranking in the medal tables at the London Olympics this year also reflects its status as one of the wealthiest nations on this planet. So, can we do more to help combat poverty both at home and abroad? Taking stock of our anticipated Christmas spending before we do it, and aspiring to give as much to charity as we spend on ourselves (50/50 giving), could raise billions of pounds at one go without costing an extra penny. It's not about spending more, it's about spending differently. Isn't this how John The Baptist (Lk 3:11) suggests we prepare to meet Christ? And isn't it the point of Christmas giving anyway? After all, the Magi weren't giving gifts to each other!



New downloads this year include an original Christmas carol, 'Lord of the Universe', and a fresh adaptation of 'In the Bleak Mid-winter'. And don't forget the Omega course!

CASC-aid is an awareness-raising campaign only. It does not raise funds for itself or for individual charities.