

# SOUTHERN SYNOD CHURCH AND SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June has been a busy month for high profile Church and Society events.

In this issue we look at the pilgrimage from Dover to Crawley seeking to highlight the inhumane UK (In)justice system of indefinite detention.

Some members of our Synod also marched and lobbied!

On Saturday 20th June people showed their disapproval of the Government's continuing policy of austerity despite the harm it is doing to the poorest members of our country.

Earlier in the week after Prime Minister's Questions, a number of people lobbied their MP about the growing worldwide concern of climate change, urging politicians to get engaged with the issue ahead of the COP21 UN talks in Paris between Nov 28 to Dec 6.

There are further details of Earthyear:the Conversation, an international conference being organised by this Synod for Saturday 26th September 2015. Tickets are selling fast so please organise your church's trip to London soon to avoid disappointment!



Refugee Tales

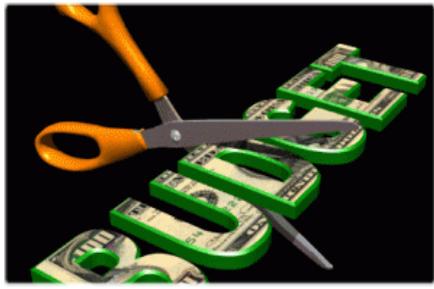
**Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group's** unique walk followed the North Downs Way from Dover to Crawley via Canterbury along some of the paths that were taken by the Canterbury pilgrims many centuries ago. The pilgrims reflected on the many long and dangerous journeys that refugees make fleeing war and persecution, seeking a safe place to live.

Following a colourful launch event at the beginning of the walk in Dover, arts events (drama, art, music, poetry and prose) inspired by The Canterbury Tales were held at every evening stop on the walk.

The final event at the Hawth Theatre in Crawley on Sunday 21st June, included a reprise of some of the tales.

More info at [www.refugeetales.org](http://www.refugeetales.org)





## Austerity March 20th June 2015

While it is obvious that the UK cannot continue to spend more than income received there is no case for the least in our society to carry the burden more than others.

Ed Miliband, the former Labour leader, used Twitter to point out that he looks set to have been proved right, saying: "The PM's one-nation speech feels like a weak attempt to explain why it is OK to cut tax credits and say you stand for working people."

Many of the readers to this newsletter will have different opinions about the way to tackle the country's financial ills, but surely cutting welfare benefits from working families while leaving higher rate taxpaying pensioners with cold weather payments, bus passes and State pensions seems imbalanced.

The People's Assembly have disputed many of the claims that austerity is the best way forward. For further details

[www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/10\\_myths](http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/10_myths)

### 1. Austerity has worked.

**TRUTH** - Austerity was meant to reduce the deficit – the gap between the government's spending, and what it gets from taxes. In fact, the deficit has grown 10% in the last year to over £100bn.

### 2. The British economy is stronger than other big economies.

**TRUTH** - The majority of developed countries have grown faster than the UK since 2010.

### 3. We are creating jobs and prosperity for all.

**TRUTH** - Average pay, taking account of rising prices, has fallen every year for six years. This is the worst decline living in standards for most people since official records began in 1856.

### 4. We are all in it together.

**TRUTH** - While most of us have seen falling pay year after year, the wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain has doubled since the financial crash.

### 5. We are rebalancing the economy by creating jobs outside of financial services.

**TRUTH** - Only 1 out of all 40 new jobs is proper full-time employment. Most new jobs are forms of fake self-employment without enough work to pay the bills, part-time or temp jobs, or zero hours contracts.

### 6. Austerity has reduced the government's debt.

**TRUTH** - Because austerity has failed, this government has borrowed more in 4 years (over £430bn) than Labour did in 13 (£429bn).

### 7. The NHS has been ring-fenced.

**TRUTH** - NHS spending has been capped. It has not kept pace with inflation and a growing population, and therefore is falling in real terms. That's why waiting lists are rising.

### 8. The government has invested in future growth.

**TRUTH** - Government investment has been slashed from 3.5% of GDP to 1.5%.

### 9. We must curb benefits to stop benefit tourism.

**TRUTH** - Britain has the lowest wages in Northern Europe, and one of the lowest levels of immigration. Recent migrants contributed £20bn more in taxes than they took in public services over the last decade.

### 10. We must stick to the course.

**TRUTH** - Austerity has lowered living standards, cut public services and not reduced the deficit. More of the same will produce the same result.



## Speak up for the Love Of.. Climate Lobby

On a beautiful sunny day in Westminster, 9000 people from around the UK came together to speak up for what they loved, to over 330 MPs. I was able to lobby the new MP for Bermonsey and Old Southwark, Neil Coyle and bumped into a URC member from Bexley doing the same with her MP. Earlier, Alex Mabbs from Brighthelm URC led prayers in a packed St Margaret's church at which the Bishop of Salisbury The Rt Rev Nicholas Holtam, was the main speaker. Organised by the Climate Coalition, the aim was to get MPs to consider domestic and global issues.

### Pope's Encyclical

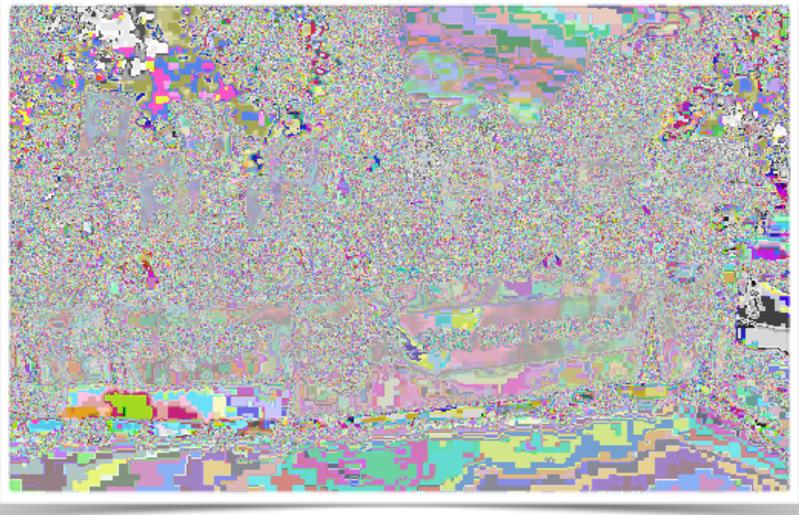
[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

Laudato Si is available for download and Alex Mabbs has offered a help summary on [www.earthyear.org](http://www.earthyear.org)

### Anglican contribution

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/06/archbishop-of-canterbury-join-faith-leaders-in-call-for-urgent-action-to-tackle-climate-change.aspx>

The Lambeth Declaration calls on faith communities to recognise the pressing need to make the transition to a low carbon economy. The Declaration, signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other faith leaders in the UK, (including URC Gen. Sec and Moderator) warns that world leaders must agree to reduce emissions to avoid average temperatures rising beyond 2°C.



#### Domestic

- Ensuring the UK's buildings are energy-efficient by making the retrofit of existing homes a government infrastructure priority.
- Making 2 million of the UK's low-income homes highly efficient by 2020, and all 6 million low-income homes highly efficient by 2025.
- Ensuring new building regulations for homes and buildings in England are zero-carbon.

#### Global

- Make sure the new Sustainable Development Goals agreed in September 2015 respond to the threat of increasing climate change and deliver low-carbon development.
- Help agree a global climate deal in Paris

this December that requires all countries to take their fair share of action to limit global temperature rise to well below the internationally agreed target of 2°C and support developing countries to cope with escalating climate impacts.



## EARTHYEAR NEWS

The reflection day earlier in the year led by Rosalind Selby was very useful and set Earthyear into the context of God's creation.

Our march the following week highlighted the wider context in which the theological reflection was framed.

The lobby day focussed on the political considerations.

We are delighted that Richard Goldring will bring a theological perspective when we meet at Brighthelm for a study day on July 4th.

Our major event of the year is detailed below and we hope that there will be significant support from members of the Synod!

The year finishes with a pilgrimage to Paris and local events to mark the UN COP21 summit. Please visit [www.earthyear.org](http://www.earthyear.org) for further details.

**Saturday 26th September  
St John's Church, Waterloo, London.**

## Earthyear: The Conversation

an exciting international conference exploring how we as communities of faith can and should be responding to the threat of global warming, and how we as Christians can help campaign and pray for a strong climate deal at the United Nations Climate Change Conference that will help to meet international development aims, which are at increasing risk from rising global temperatures. Eliminating poverty, improving health and building security are all outcomes linked to tackling climate change.

Some of the most vulnerable places on earth, as the planet warms and sea levels rise, are small islands in the Pacific Ocean. Last summer, President Tong of Kiribati said, "It's too late for us – whatever the US and China agree about emissions." How do you pray when your homeland is disappearing beneath the waves? What does the world church mean when human-produced climate change is threatening our sisters and brothers like this?

At Earthyear: The Conversation, we will hear from Church leaders from the Pacific nations of Kiribati and Tuvalu.

There will also be contributions from the UK church, the world of politics and the oil industry. Christian organisations working in the field will be there to resource your thinking and action further. It will be a day to change your life and ... perhaps ... change the world.

A full programme will be published on this page soon. Tickets for the day are £6.00, available via [Eventbrite.co.uk](http://Eventbrite.co.uk) on this link:

<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/earthyear-the-conversation-tickets-16296678805?aff=es2>

