



Movement of Christian Workers

REVIEW

Issue 77 September 2021



Truth of Faith

Am I my brother's (or sister's) keeper (Genesis 4:9)? If we were reviewing our lives in an MCW group or perhaps following a set enquiry, what questions would we ask ourselves? What does this question refer to; what does it mean for us in the here and now? The original story of Cain and Abel told in Genesis shows a possible derisory, certainly suggesting no responsibility one for the other, by Cain. The use of the phrase today would probably, one might hope, suggest the opposite is true; that we should look out for our brothers and sisters. Loving and caring runs through the whole of the New Testament: the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are just two exemplary models.

Yet, just as we have often been challenged via the Old and New Testaments and in our groups and in articles in the MCW Review about who is the orphan, the widow and the stranger in the 21st century, here again we are confronted by this MCW Review edition. Its contents exude comparable mirror images in fact necessitates, us to face the question "Am I my brothers' and sisters' keepers?". Who, why, how, when; these probing questions just keep on going as a challenge to be more aware of the situation of others.

The Truth of Faith, one of the three truths, was fashioned by Joseph Cardijn to impress upon young workers that they had a God given dignity; created in God's likeness and not machines, animals or slaves. They were the sons and daughters of God, collaborators; the heirs to the Kingdom of God here on earth to form and transform the realities of life being experienced by themselves and others. These are certainly the words and phrases that older ex-YCWs will remember. For younger YCWs the language and words may have changed; however, whilst words and language may change overtime the essence of meaning has not. Differences too will be identified in the experiences of the world of work whilst the contradiction between our dignity and reality has not. What also may alter is who is now encompassed within our sense of brothers and sisters, as the world seems to get smaller and our awareness increases. The Truth of Faith commands us to link what is happening today with the challenges of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Michael McCann in his letter to the Tablet, Liz and John Meagher attending a video conference run by the New Economics Foundation, notice of a joint YCW/MCW seminar to mark World Day for Decent Work; all provide, in their own ways, a resounding "Yes, indeed we are our brothers and sisters keepers and we need to keep reminding ourselves and be reminded of that, Truth of Faith, fact: The all encompassing, challenging view of who are our brothers and sisters and that indeed we are their keepers".



Taking the knee

Melanie McDonagh, who has a regular column in the 'The Tablet', recently wrote about the debate on 'taking

the knee'. It originated in the USA with an American footballer to draw attention to issues of racism and police brutality. It has become particularly familiar to us in the UK as footballers in local clubs and the national England team took a knee at the beginning of their international matches.

Gareth Southgate the England manager said that "the players are sick of talking about the consequences" whether they should or should not (take the knee) and how it would be viewed. He went on to say that they were "more than ever determine to take a knee" as an anti-racism gesture and to continue to be in solidarity with the Black community. We are very aware from the media that members of the England squad continue to suffer racist abuse on a daily basis.

McDonagh, in her column (17 July 2021) noted it was originally an "emotional gesture by black sportsmen .. especially after the killing of George Floyd". She went on to acknowledge that Catholics were no strangers to gestures as the "entire liturgy is full of them" citing "We take the knee every time we enter the church, two knees if the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar." Stating that she was "happy to kiss the rings of bishops ..." she went on to refer to George Floyd. Whilst acknowledging her "felt revulsion" at his fate she distanced herself by adding "... but I don't have to be contrite about other people's racism" and "...what do people in another continent have to do with it? I've got quite enough sins of my own to be contrite about without taking on board other people's."

Her piece concluded with the words "Incidentally if I should ever have the good fortune to meet the admirable

Cardinal Sarah, I hope he will let me kiss his ring."

McDonagh is not alone. Others, for various reasons also are against taking the knee: Too political; sport and politics shouldn't be mixed; holding racist view etc. For others their objection is that it is not having an impact on the racism that exists.

Legacy of Racism

Michael McCann, an MCW member, was moved to write to 'The Tablet' in response. This is Michael's letter which was published the following week:



"Melanie McDonagh writes.. that she would happily kiss the ring of Cardinal Sarah while dismissing taking the knee as "gesture politics" and "cost-free tokenism". She expresses revulsion at the fate of George Floyd but asks: "What do people in another continent have to do with it?" The link is slavery.

Europeans enslaved 12 million Africans over four centuries and sent them to the Americas in horrendous conditions, one million perishing on the journey. They were considered as cargo rather than human beings and insured as such. The whole process was dehumanising, barbaric and cruel, and has left a legacy of racism that exists to this day. The effects of perhaps unconscious racism are expressed very well by parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima ("It is not enough to say 'I am not a racist'", The Tablet 17th July). Catholic Portugal and Spain started the transatlantic trade in the fifteenth century and England became a major player from the seventeenth century onwards.

When in the Young Christian Workers many years ago we would often ask the question: "What would Christ do in this situation?" So, would he take the knee in solidarity - or would he kiss a cardinal's ring?

Living Income Campaign Launch, New Economics Foundation (NEF)



This is an extract from the report of the meeting attended by John and Liz Meagher (17th June 2021). The Zoom campaign launch had 173 participants. As well as the presentations there was a 20 minute breakout group session which worked well. The campaign website is www.livingincome.org.uk and there you will find a pamphlet containing everything you need to know about a Living Income. Becki Winson (NEF), host, explained why there was a need for this campaign. By November 2021, 21.4 million people in the UK, which include 45% of children in the UK, will be below an acceptable income level, also known as Minimum Income Standard (MIS). This she described as being bad for **all** of us. The NEF stance is that a living wage is possible: It needs fixing and it can be fixed.

Miatta Fahnbulleh, CEO, NEF, described an economic crisis on a scale that we haven't seen for generations. The level of social security benefits in the UK is amongst the worst in the developed world, and the third lowest of the 35 OECD countries. People who lost their jobs, even low paid jobs, found on average that the benefits they received were 34% lower than the income they had at work. The social security safety net is now in its weakest state since the foundation of the Welfare State in 1948. Living standards have flat-lined since 2008 and nearly half of children in the UK are living in poverty. How have we got into this state? What gives her hope is that the need for change is being recognised by the public. Everyone should be able to afford the basics for human life – it's not revolutionary – it's basic! We can change this situation by raising our voices collectively to win the hearts and minds of the public. If this is successful, we will bring about a profound change.

Ellen Clifford, national steering group of Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC), outlined startling facts about the situation of disabled people in the UK:

- Prior to March 2020 disabled people made up 68% of the caseload in Social Security: They are 3 times more likely to live in extreme deprivation; were hit 9 times harder by austerity; with the most disabled hit 19 times harder. In other words, the more disabled the harder you were hit. Death has become an everyday part of our benefits system. These deaths and suicides are not accidental but because business and profit are put above the needs of the people.

Because of the pandemic disabled people faced increased expenditure. Costs of living rose due to shielding. Many low-paid disabled workers could not afford to shield. In addition, over the last 10 years the social security system has become harder to access. This has been deliberately created as the philosophy in that social security claimants, including disabled people, will accept any kind of working conditions to get out of the 'unbearable' system. Ellen ended by saying that a living income campaign should be based on putting the needs of people first, based on trust and celebrating diversity and not based on their contribution.

Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham's presentation was entitled "A Living Income for All".

Because of the appalling treatment experienced by disabled people we should be angry. In the last 10 years, people's incomes and their security of income has been eroded; life-expectancy has stalled for the first time in 100 years and is actually in reverse among women in the poorest areas of the UK. During the pandemic, particularly people on low and inadequate incomes have been unable to protect their physical or mental health. If you set people up to fail, they will fail. If you set people up to succeed, they will succeed! Finland for example, by setting people up to succeed spends less time and money on picking up the pieces. The time is now, if ever we were going to do it. We want other political leaders to get involved.

Some participants shared their experiences of trying to live on a low income and of how they were treated by the "social security" system. Dan Firth (NEF) then spoke about how a living income can be won and the hopes for a successful campaign. A Living Income can only be implemented by the UK Government needing to be in party manifestos and a majority of MPs supporting it. Organisations working together can be powerful enough to shift public opinion, so we need to build teams. Are you ready to become a Living Income Leader? The NEF will provide the training to build teams over the summer and to get themselves heard in Parliament. We need to be connected and motivated. The first step will be to build Living Income teams in local areas. The event was rounded off by a reminder Living Income = happy life = enjoy life = healthy life. It can be fixed!

Visit www.livingincome.org.uk or the NEF www.neweconomics.org
Stay involved, fix the broken system; get a living income.

Reminder

If you would like to become a member or make a donation to the MCW there are a number of ways that this can be done.

[To become a member, it is a minimum of £12.00 per year]

- Send a cheque payable to “MCW” with your full contact details to MCW, 337 Clay Lane, South Yardley, Birmingham B26 1ES
- Email mcworkers@aol.com asking for a membership form
- Make a bank transfer, the details are as follows:
 - Name of Account: Movement of Christian Workers
 - Sort Code: 60-83-01
 - Account Number: 20022372

Please do reference any bank transfer with your full name and “membership fee”

If you use the “G Donate to Movement of Christian Workers” button (JustGiving) on the website www.mcworkers.org for either a donation or wanting to become a member then please email mcworkers@aol.com to let us know who you are, the amount contributed and the reason for this contribution e.g. “membership” or “donation”. We really appreciate your financial support.



The Young Christian Workers and the Movement of Christian Workers invite you to:

DECENT WORK FOR ALL ONLINE SEMINAR 2021

Saturday 2 October 2021
10am-1.30pm



Register today for the Zoom meeting at:

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/165881902235

October 7th each year is designated as World Day for Decent Work. Five organisations, Solidar, ITUC, ETUC, Social Alert International and the Global Progressive Forum, launched the Decent Work, Decent Life campaign at the World Social forum in Nairobi in January 2007. Decent work is applied to both the formal and informal sectors.

The first World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) was in 2008. Having one designated day, the 7th October, is seen as a day for focusing public debate on the right to Decent Work for A Decent Life for all.

The risk of poverty, lack of social protection, inadequate access to paid employment, not having a voice as workers and denied the ability to participate in decisions are all elements that diminish or undermine Decent Work which in turn prevents having a Decent Life.

The two sister Review of Life Movements, YCW and MCW, are coming together in this Zoom seminar to mark WDDW by sharing experiences and promoting the justice in having Decent Work and a Decent Life for all.

NB: Page 2, Men footballers' picture, Jack Grealish and Calvin Phillips, England, from Metro.co.uk Lee Smith/PA Wire
Women footballers' picture, Alex Morgan, US and Hanna Glas, Sweden take a knee. Edition.cnn.com

The views expressed by contributors of the MCW Review do not necessarily represent the views of the MCW

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