



CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE Archdiocese of Cape Town

*Xa ufuna uXolo qala usebenzele uBulungisa
As julle Vrede wil hê, strewe na Geregtigheid
If you want Peace, work for Justice*

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Report to the Regional Conference – George, September 2011

The Cape Town Justice and Peace Commission has continued to function although most of its work is undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis. Although not much J&P growth has been achieved, the Archbishop has encouraged the movement to continue with its efforts to work for Justice and Peace. Lack of finance in the archdiocese has resulted in very little financial support, although we continue to have the benefit of a functioning office (part time) and infrastructure.

J&P Awareness

We submitted an article for publication in the Archdiocese's Quarterly Newsletter which received muted response. In addition, the most recent Newsletter from the National Office was emailed to all parishes. Parish representation at our bi-monthly 'Reps Meetings' varies from meeting to meeting, with between ten and twenty parish representatives attending regularly. Although this is a relatively small group, the parishes involved represent a wide cross-section of the Western Cape community, and offer various support roles within their parishes. We encourage those working within their parishes to raise the J&P banner to highlight their unselfish efforts.

Activities include –

- Support for adult education and literacy
- Involvement with the Community Policing Forums
- Facilitating Internet access to Municipal Library card holders
- Drug awareness campaigns
- Local elections - education and volunteering
- Assisting displaced persons
- Catering for foreign language speakers
- Engagement with Community Health Centres

Of particular concern is the area of teenage pregnancy and its consequences.

Drug and substance abuse is also a constant and growing concern. This scourge is widespread and is recognised throughout the Archdiocese.

Noted and acknowledged is the lack of service delivery to our poorer communities. This challenge continues to occupy those working in these communities.

In addition, two recent teenage suicides have drawn attention in one local parish.

Projects

The commission notes the impact the lack of policing is having on our communities.

Our primary project, which will be launched shortly, is the *Making Good Choices* programme which uses the Catholic Social Teachings as its base.

It is hoped this will assist Catechism and Confirmation class teaches.

In addition, further areas of discussion include –
The Environment – in support of which we issue the following statement:

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Western Cape recognises that the natural environment reflects God's creation in our world. The Christian perspective is upheld that people have a right to use the natural resources to sustain life, for development and for the benefit of all society. With rights there are responsibilities, such that we are to live in a sustainable way, such that there will be natural resources for future generations. We value the biodiversity of our natural environment, recognising particularly the richness of the plants of this region. We commit ourselves to ensuring that there is greater distribution of natural resources, including water to poorer people in our community. Recognising that we live in a water-stressed country the approach of conserving this resource is to be encouraged. For the reduction of carbon dioxide, and other air pollutant output the need to research and implement appropriate pollution-reducing technology is acknowledged. The resources of the natural environment belong to all people, and so appropriate access to these needs to be ensured where necessary through equitable judicial processes.

Potential damage via electromagnetic radiation as a consequence of the proximity of cell phone masts.

The effect of Electro Magnetic Radiation (EMR) on the health of both people and the environment from cell phone base stations and cell phones themselves has recently come under the spotlight, with the World Health Organization issuing a statement in May this year reclassifying radio-frequency radiation from non-carcinogenic to a class 2B carcinogen, placing it in the same category as lead, DDT and asbestos. Children are especially at risk. Ongoing research seems to indicate that exposure to EMR can even damage DNA and increase the risk of cancer – in some cases as much as 35 per cent. Cell phone companies aggressively market their product to young adults and are also targeting schools as a convenient place to erect cell phone base stations with the lure of promised funding for the school. We feel that awareness around this issue needs to be raised and communities be better informed of this potential health hazard.

Another area recently discussed at our meeting was that of the Millennium Development Goals.

At the Millennium Summit in the year 2000, our country and 188 other countries committed themselves to achieving certain development goals by 2015.

The Micah Project is a worldwide organisation which draws attention to the fact that many countries are failing dismally at achieving these targets. J&P members are now being challenged to make themselves aware of these goals and of how they can work within Primary Health Care facilities to improve South Africa's particularly poor record of under-5 mortality rate (Child Health) and Maternal Health.

We call on Christians, as followers of Jesus, to commit ourselves to work together for the holistic transformation of our communities, to pursue justice, be passionate about kindness and to walk humbly with God.

We call on Christians everywhere to be agents of hope for and with the poor and to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in our own communities.

- The Micah Call

Although faced with serious financial challenges we will continue to strive to work towards social justice in order to obtain the Peace which Jesus declared.

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