

Catholic School Eco Newsletter No.12

September 2009

Hello,

A warm welcome back from summer holidays as you return to your schools and colleges. Normally in our Catholic Schools Eco Newsletters we tell you about what you are doing, but we're going to break with tradition and tell you what we are doing at ARC. Partly because it's keeping us so busy that you probably won't hear from us until November, partly because there is a very interesting public event in London involved, which you might like to attend or put posters up about it, and mostly because it really is very exciting news about the role of faiths in protecting the planet – and that role being recognised by the UN, governments, and other secular organizations, as well as by the faiths themselves.

ARC-UN Celebration of Faiths and the Environment: "Many Heavens, One Earth: Faith Commitments for a Living Planet"

From 2-4 November 2009, ARC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will celebrate the major faiths' commitments to the environment at a unique event in Windsor. For more details, please visit www.windsor2009.org

Since last year, ARC has been working on an initiative with UNDP which focuses on the major religions making long-term commitments to the natural world. The celebration will take place at Windsor Castle and will be hosted by HRH The Prince Philip and attended by the UN Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon. This ground-breaking initiative is the first time the UN has engaged with faith groups in this way, and will take place ahead of the Copenhagen Climate Change talks in December – giving the faiths a platform in which to present their long-term plans to protect the living planet.

Inspiring commitments from the faiths include all Daoist Temples committing to instal solar power (and quite a few have already done so); creating an eco-labelling system in Islam, Hinduism and Judaism; protecting sacred forests; printing sacred books on environmentally-friendly paper and creating educational programmes through the faiths' major role in both formal and informal education.

The enormity of this commitment is not lost on the UN: "The world's faiths joined together in this cause - if viewed in terms of sheer numbers of people - could become the planet's largest civil society movement for change. With their unparalleled presence throughout the world, the world's religions could be the decisive force that helps tip the scales in favor of a world of climate safety and

justice for future generations... this event will be one for the history books," said UNDP Assistant Secretary-General Olav Kjørven.

Public Form on Wednesday, 4 November: 1900-2100 hours

Although the invitation list for the Windsor Celebration is closed, you are welcome to participate in a major public forum entitled: "Many Heavens, One Earth: Faiths, the Environment and Copenhagen". Representatives include Olav Kjørven, the UNDP Assistant Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Goma, the Grand Mufti of Egypt and Nigel Savage, Founder of the Jewish green charity Hazon. There will also be musical and dance performances including an appearance by the New Psalmist Baptist Choir who will perform a specially written gospel version of The Dream of the Rood (the Anglo-Saxon poem about the tree which became Christ's cross, speaking about its burden and its honour) which we have heard down a phone line and it was extraordinarily moving. The event starts at 7pm on Wednesday, 4 November at Friends House, The Quaker Centre, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ. The hall is a historical one, where Gandhi once spoke, and we are thrilled to have been invited to hold our own event there.

Although the forum is free, registration is necessary – so please do enroll early if you would like to come along. Please see: www.quaker.org.uk/

Please feel free to put up a poster at your school or college to advertise the event, please see the pdf file attached.

For details about the faiths' celebration at Windsor, please go to www.windsor2009.org and to read about Martin Palmer's recent interview on Radio Four's Sunday Programme about Windsor and the power faiths have in shaping future generations, link here: <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=346>

And finally, please do remember this is your newsletter, so if there are any articles, ideas or events you'd like to share, please do get in touch. The success of the newsletter only depends on your interest and participation. So please keep in touch and let us know about the eco-work you are undertaking in your schools and colleges.

With very best wishes,

Victoria Finlay & Nicki McHugh
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