

Edition 18

July 2015



Welcome to the August Newsletter of ERNSAs Social Justice & Advocacy Desk

The Edmund Rice Network

The Edmund Rice Network is a global movement of people who have been inspired by Blessed Edmund Rice and wish to be part of his dream for a more just and equitable world. For us in Southern Africa, we particularly commit ourselves to Social Justice, Advocacy and Volunteerism.

We have a number of groups in Southern Africa. Some are comprised of older folk, some cater to the needs of university students while others are made up of Edmund Rice Society school-leavers.

Some of the groups have a strong spiritual growth focus while others are more committed to works of social justice.

Social Justice & Advocacy Desk

ERNSAs Social Justice and Advocacy Desk was launched in January of 2014.

Our yearly developed Formation Programme serves to educate and skill our members around Social Justice and Advocacy issues.

The Desk coordinates Social Justice Programmes, Eco Justice Presentations, Eco-Retreats, Skills Courses for vulnerable young adults, as well as volunteer projects such as The Umoya Project in Khayelitsha.

The Desk also advocates on behalf of local and international groups that suffer infringements on their Human Rights.



SJ&AD at UCT

The SJ&AD was invited to speak on UCT's panel on Careers in Development



CBC St Johns and One to One

CBC St Johns open stall at One to One!

The In-Reach Programme

As reported on in past editions, two of the Social Justice & Advocacy Desk's In-Reach Students have been involved in forming a drama group within their community of Khayelitsha. The purpose of this group is to continually take multiple youth off the streets of the township of Khayelitsha in order to keep them occupied, encourage them to remain in school, as well as keep them away from gangs who often force youth to join their ranks. Over the years the drama group has served as a great support for the youth who have encouraged and supported each other to work hard in school in order to find employment and contribute towards their communities.

After the Desk's In-Reach students approached us in fear that their friends were leaving the group to head back to the streets, we worked together with our students in order to offer an exciting In-Reach session that would re-inspire them to remain in the drama group with friends who would support them in working towards their futures.

This month multiple youth from the township of Khayelitsha attended this session based on drama training. Drama graduate from The University of Cape Town, Bontle Mafojane, taught youth about using drama to express ones feelings in a productive way that would in turn assist them in processing difficult situations in life. Participants were highly entertained as they were taught daily warm-ups and exercises that would assist them in perfecting their craft. They were also able to perform and workshop a piece they had written with Bontle and her team.

The participants then performed a phenomenal drama piece which they wrote and workshopped on the day. The play was the story of a poverty stricken family from their township whose only son and breadwinner was murdered while out at the shops with his sister. The play highlighted the loss experienced by the family, the blame placed on the daughter by her father as a result, the guilt experienced by the daughter and the life in prison the perpetrator would now have to face and how this would impact his own family. The play left observers in an array of shock, silence and tears as they witnessed the truly phenomenal performance that highlighted the importance of family, love and forgiveness. Students were then excited to receive a meal sponsored by the Khaya ERNSA York Road Community who supported them throughout the day. At the end of the day the group was congratulated on their wonderful talent, and invited to perform again at our upcoming Justice Evening on the 7th October. This news was received with great joy as the youth excitedly looked forward to their upcoming performance.



CBC St Johns at One to One Charity Event

Well done to the CBC St John's Grade 11 students who prepared, set up and ran a brilliant One to One charity event on Sunday 16th August!

Below is a reflection by Taydren van Vuren, a phenomenal grade 11 student at St John's who organised her school's involvement in the event.

Giving back

Every year, CBC St John's challenges its Grade 11s to make a difference in their community through getting involved in a community project. This year, the Grade 11s of CBC St John's chose to support the organisation, One to One. One to One hosts a day in the calendar for children who are mentally and physically 'differently-abled'.

Organisations are encouraged to purchase and set up a stall with an activity and the children are invited to play games and win prizes. This year, the Grade 11s decided to fundraise and collect teddy bears to give as prizes to

the children so they can always have a memento to remind them of this special day.

Even though the day started off cold and rainy, this did not dampen the excitement of the day. The atmosphere of the day was filled with joy and laughter. One very generous student donated a life-sized teddy bear, Charlie McFluffington, and he had a prominent place at our stall and has now been adopted as the One to One Charity Project mascot at CBC.

Through the generosity of our sponsors, Calvert Removals, Supreme Cylinders and Toy Kingdom, as well as the support of our CBC community, we were able to collect over 335 teddy bears to distribute to children who need them most.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped make this much needed project a success. We were able to put a smile on the faces of so many children and for that experience we are so

grateful.

One to One was truly one of the most enriching experiences you can ever hope to have in your life, as it showed us what a difference just one person can make, not only in the life of another person, but in a community that so desperately needs it.

We were able to not only touch the lives of so many people, but we were also able to inspire others to reach out in their community and make a difference.

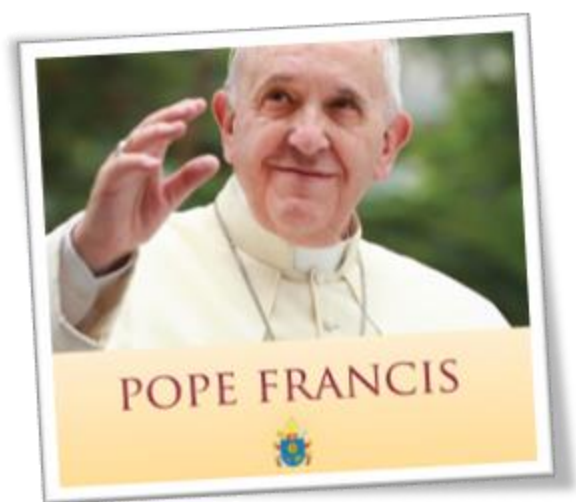


Exploring Encyclical Letter: *Laudato Si'*

On the 26th August, Justice Desk core members attended the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office's roundtable on *Laudato Si'*. Multi-faith communities and interested parties gathered to hear speakers Bishop Geoff Davies (Patron of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institution) and Professor Coleen Vogel (Distinguished Professor of the Global Change and Sustainability Research Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand) address Pope Francis's latest Encyclical, which carried the theme of man's relationship with the environment.

Bishop Davies spoke about the importance of Earth jurisprudence – that nature should have a legal right – and that the responsibility of caring for nature and the poor rests on all people, not just Roman Catholics. As the majority of people on our planet claim to be religious, Bishop Davies emphasised the Pope's suggestion of interfaith dialogue. We as people of faith are called to come together and discuss the way forward, as stewards of the Earth. Therefore, people of faith need to be concerned with environmental and social justice. Furthermore, as human development aligns with care for the environment, transcendental behaviour is required. We need to acknowledge that everything is connected. Bishop Davies stated that it is problematic that market and profit are the criteria for decision-making. Instead of being obsessed with economic growth and wealth accumulation, he suggested that we should rather be interested in the wellbeing of people and the Earth. On this finite planet, economic growth will not overcome poverty. This means that we are in need of a new economics system. It was established that the Pope's Encyclical is a call for global governance that includes the poor, and the needs of the environment.

In agreement with Bishop Davies, Professor Vogel also encouraged transcendental values and environmental citizenship. She addressed two key issues: 1) Adaptation and mitigation, and 2) Climate change and variability. The IPCC temperature change projection maps and graphs she provided gave evidence of our warming climate; demonstrating that the spike in global temperature has increased since the industrial revolution as a result of anthropogenic influences. Disturbingly, Africa is warming up by 2°C more than the rest of the world. This projection has devastating implications for our poverty-stricken continent such as: increased disease, water shortages, crop failure and famine. Professor Vogel suggested that government and science need to be brought together, so that environmental issues can be addressed at the policy and management level. Furthermore, with the support of scientific research, we can improve our climate projections and so make comments from a credible base. In conclusion, she suggested that transformative changes in our belief systems needs to occur, so that we can shift our preconceived paradigms. She also suggested that we must engage in transdisciplinarity, which involves examining the problem of environmental degradation from a scientific and social basis.



The Khaya ERNSA York Road Community

Written by Joan Armstrong

What is happening at 1 York Rd GreenPoint? After successfully running with the Community which they set up in Green Point in 2012, Evona and Alberto Rebelo have moved on. Joan and Steve Armstrong with their teenage sons, Kieran and Justin, are now the Community Leaders in the house. The Community as it is now will have run its course by the end of the year. The In-reach students living within the community have all completed their programme with The Social Justice & Advocacy Desk and many have begun to move into new ventures. The work of the Social Justice & Advocacy Desk will continue to operate out of the community.



The young people currently living in the house are mainly students. Some of them have been here since the Community was launched in 2012. We meet once a week for dinner and some of the residents also join us for prayer before dinner on Mondays. There is a good spirit amongst the group, who support the Social Justice Desk in their initiatives, especially Umoya, the outreach programme which works with the residents of the Sisters of Charity home in Khayelitsha.

From 2016 Steve and Joan will re-launch the York Community with a new multi-faceted focus, with shared prayer, shared meals and reflection on eco and social justice in the spirit of Edmund Rice. We are also looking to have those who join the community reside here for a one-year period.

We are going to have six places available for young people – women and men.

Our Chapel is once again a dedicated 'sacred space'. We are also planning that Community Evening Prayer will become the norm, with Chapel open anytime for personal prayer and meditation.

The rooms here are 'monastic' in that they are simply furnished and bathroom facilities are shared. This is however in line with our goals of exploring simpler ways of living.

The weekdays will see us having the evening meal together. This will give opportunities for shared experiences and Community building. The dining room has a three metre long dining table – ideal for Community dinners. We have a vegetable garden which we want to expand and diversify so that we can be eating organically from its produce! The meal preparation and the kitchen cleaning will be shared too.

Once a week we will have a Community evening where we will look deeper into some aspect of Social or Eco Justice.

The ERNSA Social Justice and Advocacy Desk will continue to operate from the house, and they will continue to have their focus meetings here, which we will support and be part of as the York Community. We will also continue to support the Umoya Project.

We are also planning to start using our small Conference and Guest room Facilities for small groups. Watch this space!

We need lots of prayer and support from the world-wide Edmund Rice family as we move into this new phase of the York Community.

SJ&AD Coordinator at UCT

Our Social Justice & Advocacy Desk coordinator, Jessica Dewhurst, was invited to speak at The University of Cape Town's recent panel on 'Careers in Development'. As a UCT graduate and current Masters student in Social Development, Jessica was invited as a UCT alumni to share her expertise in the development field. She was invited to speak about the work of the Desk, as well as what other students will need to do in order to enter the field of social development. Students and staff were then given the opportunity to ask Jessica questions and follow up with visits to the office.



SJ&AD Wishes Chaeli Climbers all the Best!

Our dear friend, Chaeli Mycroft of The Chaeli Campaign is an ability activist who aims to change society's perception of people with disabilities. On the 27th August Chaeli and her team of six South Africans began their 7-day ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro in order to raise awareness and funds for The Chaeli Campaign. Chaeli is the first female quadriplegic to climb Kilimanjaro.

The Chaeli Campaign was founded in 2004 by five girls between the ages of 6 and 12. Chaeli Mycroft, her sister and lifelong friends started The Chaeli Campaign to raise R20 000 for Chaeli's motorised wheelchair. They managed to do this in 7 weeks by selling cards and DIY miniature pot plants. Their Vision is to mobilise the minds and bodies of children with disabilities and to normalise society through advocacy and education programmes and events. They offer multiple services that include:

1. The **Therapies Programme** which benefits hundreds of children in several communities around Cape Town by offering regular physiotherapy, speech and occupational therapy sessions.
2. The **Assistive Devices Programme** which offers custom-made assistive devices in order to improve posture and in support with therapy.
3. **Inclusive Education where the team** run an ECD inclusion programme in disadvantaged communities as well as support children with disabilities in mainstream schools. They have created a supplement to the Life Orientation curriculum that is being introduced into mainstream primary schools that focuses on creating more accepting school environments.

4. **The African Odyssey Programme where they** support a group of 16 families with children with disabilities in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe, by providing them with wheelchairs and supporting the establishment of their own charity organisation, Hope In Motion, Chinhoyi.

We wish Chaeli and her team a phenomenal climb as they continue to inspire and raise awareness! For more, follow Chaeli and her team here: <http://www.discoverafrica.com>



Justice Evening



On the 24th of August, The Social Justice & Advocacy Desk hosted their latest Justice Evening at Khaya ERNSA. The topic for the evening was Relationship Based Education and the Effects of Trauma on Learning with the phenomenal guest speaker Sharon Verwoerd.

Sharon has over twelve years of teaching experience, and has taught in Queensland, Brisbane, Belfast, London, and most recently in Cape Town. For the past two years, she has taught Grade 8 and 9 Mathematics at a school situated in Mitchells Plain. Sharon is passionate about peace-building and believes in a holistic teaching style.

Her talk walked us through the symptoms of trauma and how this affects child behaviour. She explained how exposure to regular instances of trauma can hinder a child's learning capacity by discouraging reflective and logical cognition. This in turn prevents children from making logical connections of thought when attempting to solve Mathematical problems for example. Her solution for overcoming this barrier of broken thought is to engage with the student on a relational level, that is, a relationship-based approach to education. She stated that "no significant learning happens without a significant relationship". Learners must feel safe, be motivated and understand the context so that meaning can be achieved. She proposed a simple model for how to work relationally with young people, called PACE: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. Once a trusting relationship is established, the learner will be more inclined to open up and engage with the teacher in a manner that allows for productive conversation. As a result, a level of understanding, respect and reciprocation can be achieved so that learning is no longer hindered or disrupted.

Sharon also introduced the concept of Restorative Justice, which is defined by John Marshall (1996) as: "A process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future". By practicing restorative justice, the teacher and student work collectively to problem solve and resolve conflict.

Overall the event was a phenomenal success, and we would like to thank Sharon as well as all our guests for attending. Make sure to attend our next Justice Evening on the 7th October 2015.

The Umoya Project

The Umoya project began in 2013 as a collaborative project between the Edmund Rice Network of South Africa and St Michael's Catholic Church in Rondebosch. Since then, it has grown dramatically and over time has become extremely special to all those involved.

The Umoya project takes numerous volunteers to a Sisters of Charity home in Khayelitsha on a regular basis to interact with the many residents in the home. The 70+ residents at the Sisters of Charity home have various mental and physical disabilities and have little or no contact with their families. The project plans fun activities with the residents in order to provide a space for them to have fun and form positive relationships with the volunteers.

On the 1st August residents had a private screening of the Umoya Promotional Video as well as other funny videos. While this was happening, volunteers were outside setting up a café setting where residents were spoilt with snacks and drinks. On top of this, Influence Clothing for Africa sponsored over 300 garments of clothing which were set up in a 'pop up shop' format. This meant that volunteers created a shopping environment where clothes were hung up and accessories were neatly organised and placed on different tables. For the first time in years, residents were able to go 'shopping' and could pick out the exact items of clothing that they wanted.

On the 15th August the residents requested a movie day. All enjoyed the hysterical talents of Leon Schuster while enjoying popcorn and juice; all donated by volunteers. The day also included attending mass with the Missionary of Charity sisters. Volunteers were incredibly moved to join the sisters, barefoot, and on their knees as together we worshipped our Lord.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to volunteer, and live in the Cape Town area, visit our NEW WEBSITE!

www.theumoyaproject.com

Monthly Reflection

'Growth' by Joy Cowley

If a tree were capable of reflection would it have doubts about its growth? Would it worry endlessly about the direction that it would take, or when it should produce leaves? Would it think that its height and shape had been self-determined through random acts of will amounting more to good luck than good management?

Because that's what I'm like. True – I feel God working in my life – but at no given time is the direction clear to me. I seem to have so many decisions to make about the future that I'm always concerned about choosing the wrong thing.

But then, just as I imagine that I'm acting out of confusion, I stop still and look back on my journey until now.

What do I see? From my birth to the present time there is a clear straight path. Everything I counted as unnecessary, missed, wasted, wrong, foolish, is a part of the straight path. I see that an infinitely loving God has used every thread of my life to weave a perfect fabric of truth. Don't ask me how.

In awe, I surrender my confusion, knowing only two things; that as long as I choose to grow, my loving God will take care of the other choices in my life; and that as a tree must grow towards the light, so must I grow towards God.



Contact Us!



Jessica@ernsa.org



<https://www.facebook.com/EdmundRiceNetworkSA>



@ERNSouthAfrica

www.ernsa.org



Thank you to our funders:

Edmund Rice Development & Misesan Cara

A huge thank you to our funders Edmund Rice Development (www.edmundricedevelopment.org) and Misesan Cara (www.misesancara.ie) who have assisted us in making sure that The Edmund Rice Network of South Central Africa is able to continue the great work being done in our areas. The establishment of The Social Justice Desk in South Africa is a direct result of Edmund Rice Development and Misesan Cara's support, and for that we are truly grateful.

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read our Newsletter.

Should you have any suggestions of improvement for future editions, or if you would like to contribute an article, please feel free to contact Jessica@ernsa.org

