

THE ADVOCATE

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Special points of interest

- Middle East Report
- The world goes dark (but don't worry!)
- Advocacy leads to success story in Mali
- Fair Trade Day and resources

IT'S RAINING RESOURCES!

As we spent some time this month looking over new resources we wanted to include in this month's newsletter, we realized that we had several strong, OSJ-related items that we wanted to take a bit of extra time to tell you about.

We're happy to offer info on them here, and hope that you, your church or school will be able to use and adapt them as you see fit.

Middle East Report

First, we are pleased to direct you to the report of a CRC study group that went to the Middle East last summer.

The team had a tall order: to explore if and how the CRC might become involved in the Middle East, how we might partner with Christian ministries in Israel and Palestine, and how we might work for peace-building in a place wracked with violence.

We strongly recommend that you carve out a bit of time to read the report and reflect (we've provided a place that you can discuss the report on our social networking site.)

Read the report: www.crcjustice.org

Talk about it: <http://justiceseekers.ning.com/group/middleeast>

Global Poverty Act Calendar

For those of you in the US, you can download a simple one-page calendar that provides action suggestions relating to the Global Poverty Act.

The Global Poverty Act is bi-partisan legislation that strengthens the US commitment to achieving the poverty-fighting MDGs by providing more and better poverty-focused development assistance to help lift up the poorest of the poor.

It's a legislative focus of the OSJ this year, as well as our partners at Bread for the World.

You can download the calendar for simple



monthly suggestions that keep your focus on the poor and hungry around the world, and you can get additional resource help, song suggestions for worship, and more on our website.

Download the calendar and view monthly suggestions: www.crcjustice.org

Office du Niger Video

It's advocacy gone very, very right. This new video, produced and shot by the auteurs at OSJ, shows what happens when advocacy at every level leads to great things.

Follow CRWRC missionary Mary Crickmore as she tells the story of how her friends, the Fulani people, nearly lost their land and livelihood to a corrupt government office that would profit off of the poor – but raised voices, from Mali to Oklahoma, win in the end.

Watch the video: <http://justiceseekers.ning.com/video>

Order a copy: www.crcjustice.org

So there you have it! Three great resources from us to you. We hope you are able to use them in some way, whether for personal reflection, or use in small group study or as conversation starters on campus.

Let us know what you think: osiha@crcna.org

NEWS BRIEFS

Global black-out raised awareness, lowered energy use

On March 29, communities, businesses, churches and individuals around the world participated in a voluntary rolling global blackout.

For one hour, starting at eight p.m. local time, folks flipped the lights off during the World Wildlife Fund-sponsored, Earth Hour.

Earth Hour had its start in Sydney, Australia last year, when more than 2 million people and more than 2,000 businesses participated, leading to a 10.2 percent energy reduction across the city.

This year, the hour went global, with folks from rich and poor nations alike turning off the lights for one hour in order to raise awareness and excitement for making better choices for the planet, and everyone on it.

Cities like Chicago participated, darkening its famous buildings, and even most stores along the Magnificent Mile shut the lights off.

Chicago's ComEd estimates that about 840,000 pounds of carbon dioxide were kept out of the air.

In Canada, about 4,000 businesses and more than 150 communities took part. In Toronto, it's estimated that demand for power dropped almost 9 percent.

Of course, no one pretends that turning off the lights for one hour will save the planet.

However, it is hoped that the shared action of people around the world will inspire folks to keep learning about energy consumption and its effect on the planet and

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES



We added a handy **Fair Trade Coffee resource** to our website for individuals interested in bringing fair trade coffee to their churches. The downloadable resource provides background information, a discussion guide, and a power-point.

Just visit our site: www.crcjustice.org, click on "Issues," then "Fair Trade."

* * * * *

Many of us show our mothers appreciation on Mother's Day by sending flowers. You can make that arrangement even more beautiful this year by purchasing **fair trade certified flowers**.

Transfair USA, the fair trade certifying organization in the United States, has recently begun certifying flowers. That means that when you purchase FT certified flowers, you know that the workers who helped to grow, pick and pack those plants were given a fair living wage, and work in safe and healthy conditions.

You can watch a cool video at the Transfair site on fair trade flowers, and learn where to purchase them here: <http://transfairusa.org/content/flowers/>



Elvia Almachi, 6 years working at Agrogana, Comite de Vigilancia of the Joint Body
Photo courtesy of TransFair USA

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Are you intimidated by the thought of calling your lawmakers? Don't know what to expect?

Well, we thought we'd demystify the whole thing and let you know **what happens when you call your representative or senators**. Kate Kooyman, our congregational mobilizer and activist extraordinaire, shows you exactly what happens when you call.



Watch this tutorial video in which Kate calls Representative Vern Ehlers' office regarding the SAVE Act.

It all takes under two minutes, and there's nothing scary about it. <http://justiceseekers.ning.com/video> (Video is called "Advocacy How-To")

people, and what needs to be done to make a lasting change.

If you participated, you can join a conversation going on at Justice Seekers (<http://justiceseekers.ning.com/group/crcecojustice>)

Money lost, then found again for the poor

A couple of weeks ago our friends at the ONE Campaign and Bread for the World were pleased to report that \$4.1 billion had been restored to the 2009 US international

affairs budget.

This is money that can help lift up the world's poorest people through programs like PEPFAR, a global HIV/AIDS program that is strongly supported by CRWRC and OSJ.

After the Senate Budget Committee cut \$4.1 billion from the administration's requested \$39.8 billion, we asked you to urge your legislators to restore this money so that important programs could continue to save millions of lives.

Our legislators overwhelm-

ingly heard the plea, and with a vote of 73 to 23, passed the full requested amount, thus restoring the \$4.1 billion.

Thanks to those of you that contacted your senators—if you did so, take some time to call or email a thank you if they voted to restore the funding.

(You can check the voting record at [ONE](#) and find next steps for action at [Bread for the World](#).)

ACTION OPPORTUNITIES



• **There's still plenty of time** to organize a Tents of Hope event on behalf of the people of Darfur!

Check out our page on [Tents of Hope](#) (complete with a planning guide and other help) and think about how your church or campus might be able to make a big visual and vocal splash for those who have suffered displacement and violence in the Sudan.

A Tent event is a unique way to educate your community on Darfur, inspire advocacy and raise funds for refugee relief.

• **May 10 is Fair Trade Day.** The global campaign this year focuses on fair trade and ecology. You can check out the campaign website at www.wftd.org and join others around the world to raise awareness about fair trade.

What are some ways you can take action? Take some time to learn about fair trade (www.transfairusa.org and www.transfair.ca), ask how you can volunteer at your local Ten Thousand Villages fair trade store (look up the closest one at www.tenthousandvillages.com).

Or, start planning ahead for Christmas by organizing an alternative gift market at your church using fair trade goods. You can contact our own Kate Kooyman for help on exactly how to do that: kooymank@crcna.org.

• **It's time for action this April** as the Jubilee Act (HR 2634 and S 2166) will be voted on in the House of Representatives early this month and in a hearing before the Senate at the end of the month.

The Jubilee Act would expand eligibility for debt cancellation to 67 countries that need it in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The world's most impoverished countries spend \$100 million every day in debt payments to the world's richest nations and financial lending institutions – money that could be used to help their own citizens in meeting basic needs like food security, healthcare and education.

You can learn more about global debt (how it got so bad, what happens when debt is dropped, how you can help) at Jubilee USA (click on "Truth about Debt" for FAQ): www.jubileeusa.org and for action steps on the Jubilee Act. You can also check out our own page on the issue at www.crcjustice.org (click on "Issues", then "Economic Justice").



• **Getting a rebate** from Uncle Sam this year? Consider using some of that money to support your favorite organizations that work for justice and to overcome poverty and hunger. Need some ideas? How about [CRWRC](#), [The Micah Challenge USA](#), or even, you know, [us](#)!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Join others from **April 24-27** in New Hamburg, ON for a Canadian Foodgrains Bank learning weekend called "**Hunger for Life: Food for Change.**"

With other participants you'll explore bio-fuels, climate change and global hunger, local food and more, and work together on action steps.

Learn more, including how to register here: http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca/event/537/a_hunger_for_life_food_for_change.aspx

Fair Trade Day is May 10. Check out www.wftd.org to see what others are doing, and learn how you might support fair trade this year!

Get your lobby on. **Bread for the World's annual lobby day is June 17.**

Christians from around the country set up appointments to meet with their legislators on lobby day to advocate for policies that help the poor and hungry at home and around the world.

This is a neat opportunity to visit your capitol, and use your voice as a citizen! Learn more at <http://www.bread.org/take-action/lobby-day.html>

JUSTICE & WORSHIP

As long as we're talking about the planet, pastors may be interested in Eco-Justice Ministries, an ecumenical agency that sees environmental issues and justice issues not as competing agendas, but as intertwined elements.

On the Eco-Justice Ministries website, you'll find lots of guidance, theological reflection, tips and worship help for engaging social justice and creation care in your church. You can even browse through a catalogue of reviewed eco-justice curricula.

Check it out at: www.eco-justice.org

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