

# I58 Update – Christians & Direct Action

The last few months have seen some exciting Christian involvement in Direct Action around the UK, especially on Climate Change issues. This newsletter is intended to tell stories, give reflections and suggest ways to get involved and stay connected as we move on to new and exciting things.

## Cafe at Climate Camp a success!

After much perseverance and a last-minute change of tent, the café opened on the first full day of camp and began serving up hot drinks to everyone and anyone who dropped by. Whether people were looking for caffeine between workshops or for a quiet brew away from the madness, we had lots of visitors throughout the week, many of whom kept coming back. The idea was really simple, and yet it made a tangible and identifiable contribution.

We did manage to get our eco-friendly hand-made Rocket Stoves going, well done Rosie, who persevered until eventually we managed to boil some water using just the stoves. This wasn't helped by having some of the equipment we needed to make them seized by the police, but thankfully we could borrow a lot of similar kit on site.

On top of that, we held a service each night, reflecting on the environment as God's creation, and our responses to Climate Change, as well as the safety, peace and success of the camp. Around 40 Christians (up to 20 on any given night) gathered to pray. We shared communion, prayed the Litany of Resistance and asked God's blessing on the actions taking place. These were powerful times of community, especially when things were tough for the camp..

## Beyond Tea-making: The Day of Action

On the Day of Action towards the end of the camp, a dozen Christians took part in the Carnival March to the gates, at which point we sat down to sing and pray (for which we even got a mention in the Guardian!).

When asked to get moving again, four café-participants, along with 15 others, remained at the gates, for which they were arrested and released the following day with a caution; a brave and determined stand against the highly political policing of the event, and against the destruction of lives coal-burning is leading to through Climate Change.



Stopping to pray at the gates

I got involved because my daughter was one of the 29 Drax train blockaders, and her bail condition banned her from Kent, so I and another daughter did our bit.

We went to get better informed, and what an education it turned out to be! The way people behaved towards one another was as close to the Acts of the Apostles model as I ever expected to see. I loved the consensus decision-making, the recycling, the vegan food, the recycling, the camaraderie, and even the [compost] toilets!

I returned home ...burdened with the responsibility to inform everyone I know about the urgency of the issues; rather pessimistic about the policing strategy (not the individual officers, whom I felt great compassion for); anxious for the liberties which are perhaps imperceptibly slipping away; and confirmed in my conviction that the church MUST get involved and has a lot to offer the movement.

## What's i58?

We're a network of Christians involved in Direct Action movements in the UK, taking our name, and some inspiration, from **Isaiah 58**, where God tells his people he wants them to move beyond self-focused worship and make tackling injustice a part of their worship and commitment to him.

We've worked to build up a Christian presence at major mobilisations, starting with the 2005 G8 in Scotland, and lately within Climate Camp, meeting to pray and this year, even ran running a café.

As a network, we support Christians taking Direct Action. Sometimes our actions are overtly faith based, often our faith simply motivates us to participate in non-faith-based actions.

We tend to have a couple of weekend 'gatherings' each year (see over for details), in which we share fellowship, make decisions, pray and talk through ideas and issues with one another.

With no one person in charge, we make decisions through the same consensus decision making processes common amongst activist groups, and above all, we draw on a wide range of Christian backgrounds, including Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans and Quakers.

## Reflections from the café group

Sandie writes, "I have to say climate camp was a deeply significant experience for me. Thinking my camping days were over when my fourth child left home, I reluctantly heaved a tent on my back and hit the road (metaphorically speaking).

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Smaller than expected, yet more than enough - the cafe servery abandoned for the night.

**Useful Links** :: [www.i58.org.uk](http://www.i58.org.uk) – Our own site, events and news updated when we need to.  
[www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk](http://www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk) – Lots of How To guides for action, not just Climate Action.  
[www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk) – News about protests from the perspective of the protesters.

## Reflections, continued...

**Peter** writes, "Travelling to Climate Camp, I was a little bit nervous. This was my first event like it, and I was without a clear idea of how I would be spending my time, how I would be contributing and who I would be meeting. The Climate Cafe was a definite boon, both as a place to meet people and plan, and as a community of people who believed in the things I believe in. It also gave me a chance to contribute to the comfort of the other climate campers, an opportunity I appreciate. I think that community is central to activist efforts, and to me, community involves a cup of tea and a sit-down in unity with other people.

**Rosie** writes, "My Climate Camp highlights included dancing around with the sheer joy of seeing water boil on our rocket stove for the first time and the delight on people's faces when they saw we had acquired a tray of vegan chocolate cake from the fantastic on-site bakery (a foretaste of the heavenly banquet?). There was also the local man who was touched by the [origami] peace crane we made for him, and carried it with him all week.

During tense times at the camp gates, there were tears and laughter as Climate campers sang out their frustrations, slept at the feet of police officers and engaged each other in dialogue. It was a place of conflict often being transformed by good humour and a commitment to non-violence. I was inspired by the Camp's spirit and ethos, the small kindnesses of each person towards the rest of the community, whether through cooking, facilitating workshops, maintaining the compost toilets, offering mediation, giving first aid, setting up marquees, or serving tea and coffee. There was an overwhelming sense of what we are working towards – a reflection of Arundhati Roy's much quoted 'Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing'."

## Catholic Priest jailed for refusing to pay fine

On 17<sup>th</sup> September, Fr. Martin Newell of The London Catholic Worker was sentenced to a week in prison for wilfully refusing to pay the fine he was given for pouring red paint (symbolising blood) on the sign at Northwood Military Headquarters, the nerve centre of UK military operations. This was part of a prayer vigil action on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the feast of the Holy Innocents. Martin refused to pay his fine because he knew the money would only go to back to paying for the occupation of Iraq.

## Upcoming Events:

### Big Blockade – Aldermaston

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October, [www.tridentploughshares.org](http://www.tridentploughshares.org)  
Aldermaston is Britain's Nuclear Weapons lab, charged with making a new nuke, despite Britain's supposed commitment to non-proliferation. Christian Peacemaker Teams and London Catholic Worker are inviting Christians to join them in their actions. There's action training the day before, so it's an ideal event for beginners in civil disobedience.

### Climate Camp Gathering: Block Kingsnorth! 8th - 9th November 2008, in Bradford

See [www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk) for more...

Planning is now under way for direct action to prevent the building of a new Kingsnorth Power Station. Meantime, in Copenhagen in December 2009, a UN Summit will create the successor to the mostly failed Kyoto Protocol. And people are beginning to plan an "Urban Climate Camp" next summer. There's plenty to get involved with...

## Climate Camp Café Debrief and i58 Network Gathering

17th - 19th October 2008, Birmingham  
Journey MCC Church, Shaw's Passage, B5 5JG

We're holding a weekend gathering to provide a space for reflection and debriefing after the camp/cafe, and as a chance to determine the future of i58 and the cafe concept, and as a space to reflect, pray and share fellowship with like-minded Christians.

If you came to Climate Camp, wanted to but didn't, or have other connections with i58, or you're just a Christian inspired by the idea of Direct Action, then do come along!

Accommodation (email [links@movement.org.uk](mailto:links@movement.org.uk)) and (vegan) food provided. Requested donation £10-£20. Friday: 6pm onwards for food, discussions from 8pm. 10am start Saturday, ends 3pm Sunday.

## Other News

Of course, Christians don't always take action just with other Christians. On 27th February, 5 protesters scaled the roof of parliament to hang banners protesting against plans for a 3rd Runway at Heathrow. Our friend Tamsin was among them.

On 13th June, some people stopped a coal train from entering Drax, Europe's biggest coal powerstation, and hung banners from it saying leave it in the ground. Our friend Malcolm was involved, and he and Tamsin both have upcoming court appearances, so keep them in your prayers.

## And now for something completely different:

Incensed by the discovery that Stationary Box were targeting Playboy-branded products to young girls, Rev Tim Jones, of York, paid his local store a visit. After removing offending items from the shelves (stacking them neatly to avoid trip hazards), he appears to have caused a bit of rethink by Playboy and Stationary Box, whilst getting loads of great media coverage. Well Done!

## The World Turned Upside Down A look at Christianity, Anarchism & Peacemaking

21st-23rd November 2008  
Christ Church Pitts Moor, Sheffield.  
See [www.jesusradicals.com/uk](http://www.jesusradicals.com/uk) for more...

Now in its 3rd year, this conference seeks to provide a space for those interested in dialogue and connection between Christianity and Anarchism. A weekend of discussion on issues relevant to radical Christianity, this year it's in a church that regularly opens its doors to homeless asylum seekers.