



Money is tight for everyone and ALTERNativity is no exception – we rely on sales for some income, but we need to apply for grants to enable us to continue to produce new resources and to fund our very important work with women in deprived areas. One way you could help is to become a member for a minimum of £10 a year (and gift aid it if you can). If everyone who reads this newsletter were to do this, It would make a big difference to us. And give our other long-serving volunteer, Lindsay, more work, as he looks after our finances!

Every year we rely on donations and grants to carry out our work. Most recently we've been supported by the following organisations and would like to thank them for their support

The Jesuit Social Fund



The Souter Charitable Trust

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## Issue 24 Autumn 2011

### Christmas Past and Christmas Present

Do you sometimes feel that you are the only one who longs for a different way to celebrate Christmas? We promise you it's not true. Last year the BBC blog invited views on this and it was both sad and revealing to realise how many negative words there were – *“it's just about greed, false sincerity, a relentless marketing exercise. Sooner it's come and gone the better”*. That was last year ...so how do we make this year different, not only for ourselves but for the community around us?

Keep an eye on our web site as we develop new ideas, some to make you smile, some to encourage others to do it a little differently and all to make this year to be a Christmas to remember – a celebration the way you have always imagined it. The cartoon says it all ...

off the mark.com



Get your friends together in October and agree to do one thing differently. Watch out for our new materials on angels - at the Guild, on the Church of Scotland web-site and of course here at ALTERNativity

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Scottish charity No SC032416

### What's happening?

**15th Birthday!** Come and celebrate with us at St Peter's/St Simon's in Partick in Glasgow. Hyndland Street Partick nr Kelvin Hall Subway  
**6th October 2011 7pm**

### Hearing, Living , Sharing the Message at Christmas

At the Ignatian Spirituality Centre 35 Scott Street Glasgow G3 6PE  
23 October 2011 7-9pm  
Cost £15.00 (£10.00) to book:  
[admin@iscglasgow.co.uk](mailto:admin@iscglasgow.co.uk)

## How can we celebrate Christmas in a world where half God's children are starving?

This has been a central theme in the work of **ALTERNativity** and over the years we have worked with co-operatives in several countries to bring small gifts, which enhance our message and also bring a message of their own. Alongside this, we have also gathered stories of different ways of celebrating and we'd be interested to hear from you if a small publication of these would be helpful for your church ([margaret@alternativity.org.uk](mailto:margaret@alternativity.org.uk))

This year we have two new products: The first are these lovely angels made in Nicaragua; These are made by Familias Especiales in Matagalpa, an NGO which works with families who have children or adults with learning difficulties. (cost £1.00) They are made from newspapers and we've lots of ideas for using them:



- Stick them on a card and add your own Good News to them
  - Use them on your Christmas tree at home or in the church so that you can tell people about the group that makes them.
- (for more information go to our website)
- Give them as a small gift.
  - **Or how about you take a photo of the angel somewhere special or somewhere near you, and upload it to our facebook page with the angel's message to that place or situation.**

Send us your ideas – we'd love to share them

## Pray for a just peace in Israel and Palestine

We want to encourage you to take up an idea brought to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by World Mission Council.

Carol Finlay (Twinning and Local Development Secretary) tells her story. *"A glance over the Hadeel stall at a Fair Trade event and a wee white dove caught my eye. My mind raced into overdrive as I thought about our Council's 'Invest in Peace' theme for the Assembly and how we might use the dove to highlight the report. The dove is made from sheep's wool from the hills around Bethlehem by people with disabilities who are part of a L'Arche Community. The project is called Ma'an lil-Hayat (Together for Life) and brings people together to share life through work, celebration and mutual relationships of friendships and trust."*



We would like to encourage you to buy a dove for a friend or to hang on your Christmas tree during Advent to remind you of the baby who came that we might have peace.



To buy the doves go to [www.hadeel.org/other](http://www.hadeel.org/other) or Tel 0131 225 1922.

Please note: if you want the doves for services or sales at your Christmas stalls, place your order early.

For more ideas for action contact: [world@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:world@cofscotland.org.uk)  
Doves cost £3.00

## What's happening at ALTERnativity?

### Our community work with women is growing:

A group in Priesthill has continued to meet since the ALTERnativity programme finished in February. The women took part in a variety of activities from our 'Christmas, Celebration or Survival Pack'. When asked what they liked most about coming along to an Alternativity group the women identified taking time out for themselves in the run up to Christmas and meeting up again in the New Year to share their experiences.

The women highlighted the peer support as well as learning new skills being very valuable and enjoyable

The women recently organised an open event for almost 100 local women to raise over £400 for 'Breakthrough Breast Cancer'.

At Tron St Mary's Mothers & Toddlers' group in Springburn, most of the women are refugee and asylum seekers and come from a variety of faith backgrounds. We adapted material from our woman's pack and used it with the group to reflect the variety of cultural and religious backgrounds.

The material stimulated discussions about how the women feel about their home, family and community lives at the moment, and what they were struggling with.

They spoke of their enjoyment in learning new skills and appreciated finding space and time to reflect on how they were coping with the upheaval, of being far from family and friends.

Many said how they valued the opportunity of spending quality time together in a supportive environment.



### Thank you



Thanks to Maureen Brough, who for many years was chairperson of ALTERnativity trustees. She has been a huge support to two women's workers and helped them both practically and personally.

So good has she been that she is being replaced by two people. Eildon Dyer and Maggie Lunan (founding members) have taken on the responsibilities. Thankfully Maureen is staying on as a trustee!

### And to our volunteers

Marjory Williamson has been with us for 6 years and I'm not sure how we'd survive without her; She keeps the database, does the stock-take, looks after all our sales as well as being a volunteer speaker and a trustee!



Lindsay MacQueen does the job we all hate – keeping track of the finances and preparing the books for audit. He too has been a long serving (and suffering) volunteer and we are indebted to him.

We'd love some more help - someone with a wee bit time towards Christmas to help with sending out ordered goods, or to make up packs of resources. Tel 0141 221 4242

## Sharing the Message – A wee exercise to try.

The Christmas Season can be one of the most difficult times for both living and sharing the meaning of the Incarnation. For the church it can be hard to get the message across without sounding pious or smug.

Some excerpts from last year's BBC blog highlight the feeling of exclusion and disgust of many people; The responses below were to the question 'How did you celebrate Christmas this year?'

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/haveyoursay/2010/12/how\\_are\\_you\\_celebrating\\_christ.html#\\_christ.html#\\_christ.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/haveyoursay/2010/12/how_are_you_celebrating_christ.html#_christ.html#_christ.html)

Sooner it's come and gone the better. Unless mine's bigger and better, more expensive than yours...

It's time for a serious redistribution of wealth from rich to poor. Until that's done, Xmas leaves me queasy

Just another day. No job, no prospects, no hope

A lot of the joy of Christmas has gone. It's just a relentless marketing exercise.

It highlights greed mainly and false sincerity, people wishing you all sorts who wouldn't speak to you the rest of the year

Here are some responses to these from those who have a faith.

*"I spent Christmas in church praying. This special day, the birth of Jesus should be remembered as a 'sign' that combines the God of heaven with our earth, with our daily lives Unfortunately around the world, it seems that some people have forgotten about this great gift from heaven."*

*"Last night I went to my local Watchnight service and shared the joy of Christmas with lots of good people. This morning I went to a short Christmas Day service where we sang and laughed and rejoiced; shook each others' hands and wished each other a very merry Christmas. I'll shortly be going out to have lunch with my family"*

*I will be celebrating Christmas in the traditional style. Today my thoughts and prayers are with those of you whose hearts are broken, if you are poor being relentlessly attacked by government evil, the sick, the lonely, those suffering in what ever way no matter what your status.*

Imagine you are one of those who are unhappy with the Christmas celebrations as highlighted on the previous page;

1. What would your reaction be to these comments?
2. How do the people on this page sound?
3. So what is the message we are trying to get across?
4. In twos and threes, now try to write short messages that convey the meaning of Christmas in a way that might be understood by anyone ( i.e. no jargon, no 'we've got it right', no complaining. )

Take some time to share some of your ideas. What did you discover as you tried to do this. How can you use this to share the message this Christmas?

\* A fuller version of this will be available on the members' website from mid October

**Watch out for new materials on Starters for Sunday (Church of Scotland web-site) and something on music in Different Voices.**

When we have ALTERnativity stalls at events we usually have a stock of our Christmas cards on sale. As you may realise, they are alternative cards, and often people who pick up our cards return them, saying "I couldn't think of ten people to send these cards to". Certainly they are challenging, but we think their message is universal. So here's a challenge to our readers – send us an order for any of our resources and we will include a free pack of Christmas cards.

Check our web-site for a set of three sketches to support the Church of Scotland's HIV fund; written by Robin Hill and Alex Shuttleworth. Use them and send a donation to Marjorie Clark at 121 George St EDINBURGH EH2 4YP

This year's link to last year's Fullarton Church, Irvine Christmas extravaganza:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gZeZA9HbjE>

**Looking for a speaker or someone to lead a workshop?**

**Phone us and see if we are free. 0131 221 4242**  
Whether it's training on the use of our resources or ideas for reaching out into the community or suggestions for worship and school assemblies, phone for a chat and we can tailor the session to suit your needs



**Take up the rice challenge!**

**It ONLY takes 90kg!!**

**If a farmer in Malawi can sell 90kg of rice at a fair price, he would be able to afford to send one of his children to high school for a year!**



Only 1 in 3 children attends high school in Malawi. Education is one of the most effective ways of escaping poverty. You can make all the difference, if 90 people buy 1kg of rice each, you can....

**Eat someone out of poverty!**

For more information, ordering, distribution etc –

Tel: 0141 887 2882 or visit

[www.justtradingscotland.co.uk](http://www.justtradingscotland.co.uk)

***Recipe Suggestion!*** ***Are you always stuck with leftover turkey at Christmas? Why not try our delicious dish below?***

***Cook 500g of rice, drain well and set aside. Heat a little oil in a wok or large frying pan and sauté one diced onion with a tsp garlic, tsp ginger and tsp chilli. Add 8 skinned, de-seeded & chopped tomatoes (or a tin), bring to the boil and simmer to reduce until thick. Add 2tbsps chopped coriander and stir briefly. Remove from the sauce from heat and put in to a bowl. Add a tbsp of oil to the washed frying pan and sauté the another onion and diced peppers (small green, red & yellow)for 2-3 minutes. Add the cooked chopped turkey, crumble ½ stock cube and half a tin of coconut milk. Stir well and add the prepared tomato sauce and cooked rice. Cook to heat through and serve immediately.***