

The Catholic Parish of Hampshire Downs

the promise

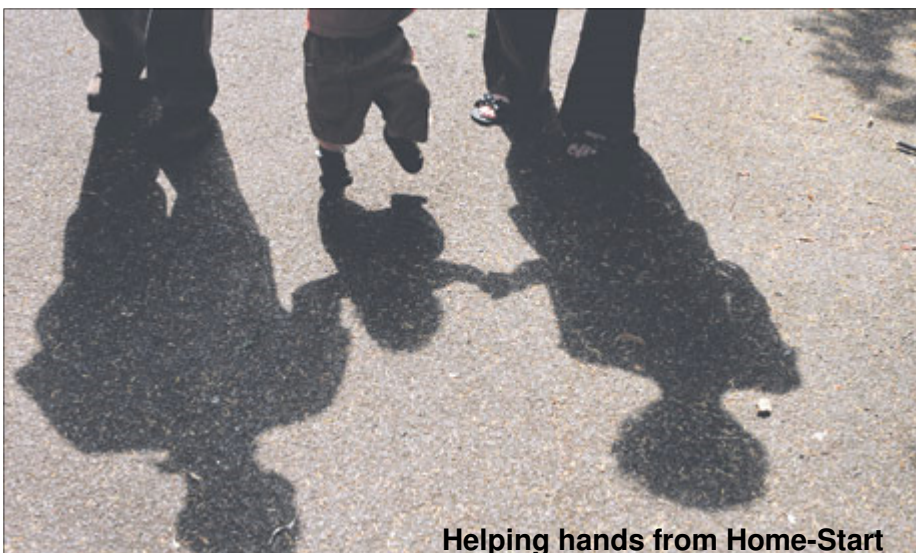
News about our Covenant With the Poor

Support for vulnerable children and families in the Winchester area

Today's Covenant With the Poor appeal (like our Lent appeal in March) is to help support vulnerable and disadvantaged pre-school children, and their families, living in our local community, and so to increase their life chances. The project we are raising funds for is run by the Winchester and Districts branch of Home-Start, an established national charity.

Home-Start's formula – of parents helping other parents – is very simple, and very effective. It works! Home-Start recruits and trains volunteers (who are all parents themselves) to support families at home on a weekly basis. They offer friendship, and emotional and practical help in an understanding and non-judgemental way.

The Winchester and Districts Branch, which for the last five years has been based at Lanterns Children's Centre in Bereweke Road, Winchester, currently supports around 60 families. They could not offer this service without their dedicated team of over 30 active volunteers who, with their co-ordinator's support, give immense time, energy and thought to the families.



Helping hands from Home-Start

the promise

No. 23

Pentecost 2011

Covenant With the Poor, quarterly appeals, plastic buckets, blue GiftAid envelopes, meetings, projects, *the promise* – what's it all about?

Our Covenant With the Poor (CWP) has been going a few years now, and while many of you will be familiar with how it started, and how it works, others may not. So here is a quick recap, and an invitation to you all to become more actively involved. After all it is YOUR Covenant.

Following Pope John Paul II's exhortation that we should maintain a "preferential option for the poor", the CWP process was instigated by Bishop Crispian as a diocesan initiative, to be carried out in and by the parishes.

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Home
START

Support and friendship
for families

Here are some examples of Home-Start's work:

⇒ Tania was a young, inexperienced, single mum, who needed a mother figure to help with parenting skills and budgeting. Home-Start's intervention over a 12-month period, prevented her from getting into serious debt and now she is confidently managing on her own.

⇒ Hailey had severe post-natal depression, and couldn't face leaving her house. She had no family support and felt completely alone. Six months later, after gentle and patient encouragement from the Home-Start volunteer, Hailey can now go out with her baby and is meeting other parents at Home-Start's Family Group.

⇒ A couple in their twenties had a new baby with a severe physical disability, and they were in despair about the future. The Home-Start volunteer, who had been through a similar experience herself, has been helping them come to terms with their situation, and together they are exploring what other resources are available.

The rewards of this work are many and varied, both for the families and the volunteers. Liz Cooper, who chairs the charity, said "It is wonderful to see parents who have gained enough self-confidence to manage on their own and to see their children flourish. We are frequently told by our families and their referrers what a difference Home-Start has made to their lives. We are most grateful to have the chance to ask for your help."

The purpose of our appeal today is to raise the funds needed for the training of new volunteers. Home-Start's 40-hour training course, held over a period of eight weeks, costs **£2,500**. They aim to run two courses a year to keep up with the demand for their service. In the present economic climate, voluntary organisations are experiencing huge cuts in local authority funding and Home-Start is no exception. Without sufficient funds, they cannot continue to prepare their volunteers – and they are Home-Start's most valuable asset.

<http://www.home-startwinchester.org.uk>



THAILAND PRISON VISITORS UPDATE

The Covenant With the Poor Advent 2010 appeal for The Jesuit Foundation Prison Ministry, in Thailand, had hope to raise £5,300. In the end, thanks to some extraordinarily generous donations, the appeal raised a total (before the GiftAid refund) of £9,955. Thank you.



From asylum seeker to Royal Garden Party

Mina, an asylum seeker, was granted leave to remain last year. She has been supported by SWVG (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group). She is part of the International Cooking Exchange in Southampton which has received a national community award, and she and three others in the group have been invited to the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

SWVG were helped by Covenant with the Poor.



Bringing Water to 5000 Tribal People in Rural India



Over the last 10 years the Covenant With the Poor has supported a number of Wells for India projects, and the many parishioners who have visited them have seen the amazing benefits that these have brought. Since Nicholas and Mary Grey founded the charity in 1987 more than a million rural villagers have been given sustainable supplies of water at an average expenditure in India of £3 per person. In the next two appeals (on the 1st Sunday in September and the 1st Sunday of Advent) the Parish will be raising money to support ten villages in the Aravali Hills in Southern Rajasthan, where Wells for India is working with a local partner to give water for drinking and agriculture to 5,000 villagers. *Nicholas Grey* talks about the new project.

India is a country of great contrasts, but in city slums and remote rural areas people still live in extreme poverty. In rural Rajasthan water remains the first requirement for life.

In Southern Rajasthan there is a range of hills, the Aravali Hill, that rise up to 1000 metres. Some 4,000,000 tribal people live there in remote locations. Sixty years ago, thick forests covered these hills, but now the trees have gone and each year during the monsoon, 80% of the rain flows away with no productive use, and causes large-scale soil erosion.

It is very difficult to make a living there – the seasonal Wakal river is dry for most of the year, the land is degraded, and there is inadequate food and fodder. Malnutrition is widespread, as is disease due to lack of sanitation and hygiene.

People live scattered across the hillsides, surrounded by their small plots of unproductive land. Mary and I talked to villagers in one of the project areas. They said their one meal a day consisted of chapatti and water; but during the monsoon season, before the harvesting of any crops, they were surviving on buttermilk.

The men and children had no choice but to go to the neighbouring state of Gujarat and work for months at a time in the cotton fields – the children get no pay but they at

least they got one meal a day; or they worked as tea boys or girl servants in roadside cafés. This migration is contributing to the breakdown of family and community life, and the children are not attending school. Imagine the daily anxiety of the mothers, and do pray for these vulnerable little girls and boys.

All this can be changed, however – give the people water to drink and water to grow crops; provide fruit tree saplings; show them how best to farm, to collect seeds, store food and grow vegetables and fruit – then life is transformed in a magical way.

Valleys that were once a brown barren landscape are now covered in green vegetation. This is achieved by catching the monsoon rainwater as it flows down the hills, allowing it to percolate into

Water –the first requirement for life



We have four appeals each year, for projects designed to help the poorer members of the world's communities. The projects, which are run by (or associated with) UK registered charities, are chosen by the CWP Group. The Group is simply those interested parishioners who come along to our open meetings (see the Parish Newsletter for details). You don't have to join, or make a commitment, just come along and see, and help us make what can sometimes be difficult choices.

Over the years the CWP has supported projects in Winchester, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and Central America, and your consistent generosity suggests that we have chosen projects that you have been happy to support. However, we

would always like a broader input, different views, and new ideas. Anyone can suggest a project to the Group – many of them have been proposed by parishioners, who act as the project's 'sponsor' – the link between the Group and the charity, providing details about the project's aims and objectives, costs, and timetable etc. The CWP does not simply provide support for charities, but for identifiable, well conceived and clearly costed projects.

And the buckets? – well they are just a symbol of the CWP's simplicity of purpose – and of our (so far) justified optimism.

Next meeting - Parish Office 11th July, 7.30pm
ALL ARE WELCOME – PLEASE COME ALONG

the ground, filling the wells and giving moisture to the soils and water to vegetation. This is done by building hundreds of loose stone check dams which slow the water flow down the gullies, and across the contours of the hills by digging trenches and making earthen dams.

Typical costs of a one metre high loose stone check dam is **£7**, plus **£7** community contribution. At key locations small masonry dams are built to store water at a cost of **£3,145**, plus community contribution of **£315**. Wells that have been dry for decades fill with water; these are being brought back into operation at a cost of **£215**, per well plus **£215** community contribution.

The hills are scattered with stones and most of the work is done by the local community. Cement has to be bought. In total, about 25% of the costs are donated by the community. Manual labour that is not donated is paid for, prioritising the poorest families – so that they can buy food.

For the first time families will have drinking water close at hand all the year round and will be able to grow crops, establish vegetable gardens and plant fruit trees. Fewer children will die from malnutrition; the children and the fathers will no longer need to migrate for work. Health improves with clean water, and hygiene and sanitation becoming available. Children are able to go to school, community life begins to flourish and the women, freed from the daily grind of searching for water, are able to undertake income generation activities. Family life is transformed, as is the life of the village community.

Our target is **£9,500** (although extra generosity will enable more villagers to be helped).



Wells for India

Bringing water and dignity
to the poorest people of rural Rajasthan

Catholic Social Teaching – Justice in Action

Mike Slinn writes: We all know that as good Christian Stewards we should be giving of our Time, Talents and Treasure. Our giving through Covenant with the Poor ties in with the Treasure element and can open up the opportunity of our giving of our Time and Talents. For example, the recent appeal for Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group resulted in some parishioners coming forward and joining the group as Volunteer Visitors.

More recently the series of Catholic Social Teaching Justice in Action evenings provided parishioners with information on other local voluntary groups such as Boaz, Wells for India, SVP, Trinity Centre and Emmaus.