



NEWSLETTER Number 2 **February 1999**

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Dear Friends,

Much has happened since our first newsletter last month. In this issue we bring you news of the response that is starting to come in from around the country, plus stories of people cleaning their slates.

Please write in and share your news and stories with us! Our aim is that by the end of 1999 over one million people will have signed the 'Clean Slate Promise'.

Best wishes,

Edward Peters, Chairman of the campaign

Ambassadors' Meetings

Three ambassadors' meetings have been held this month. The first, in London, drew 35 people on a Saturday afternoon. Main speakers were our patrons Margaret Smith and Imam Sajid. 'What's so refreshing about the Clean Slate Campaign,' Margaret said, 'is that it's not yet another project but gives each one of us an opportunity to DO something, or to STOP doing something that would make a REAL difference. If each one of us catches the vision....and invites those we know to sign the Promise, it will [have a] huge effect.' Those present divided into 'brainstorming groups' which produced many ideas.

The second meeting spanned a weekend, at Tirley Garth in Cheshire, and involved 40 people from Scotland, Wales and England. Canon Nicholas Frayling, Rector of Liverpool, explored the deeper meaning of 'clean slate' in relation to repentance and forgiveness, and the healing of the past. He counselled against treating forgiveness too cheaply, and the temptation of parading our well-doing. But, he said, 'the Clean Slate Campaign appealed to me because it is personal and practical.' Another patron, Geoff Thompson, former five-times world karate champion, focused on what cleaning the slate could mean for young people and inter-generational understanding. As well as these main speakers, there was much personal sharing of clean slate experiences, with fresh decisions being made, and forward-looking ideas explored for spreading the message of the campaign.

Finally, there was an evening in the Council Chamber of the Oxford Town Hall, for 26 people. Revd Richard Thomas, Communications Officer for the Oxford Diocese, spoke about the universality of the clean slate theme. 'If something's true,' he said, 'it's true whatever label you put on it.' Referring to the Churches Together's "New Start" plans, in which he is centrally involved as one of the Church of England's two representatives on the Millennium Group, he said, 'The Clean Slate Campaign is an extremely good campaign which fits in very well with what the churches are doing for the Millennium.' Again group discussions produced lots of ideas, and £195 was given for the campaign.

We hope that there may be many more ambassadors' meetings during March and April. Please feel free to arrange them to suit your local needs, and **if you would like to have a speaker from our committee, we will gladly come!**

"I welcome the chance to do something positive for the Millennium instead of criticising the Dome!" – an 'ambassador'

Stories of people cleaning their slates

"I find I am constantly having to wipe my personal slate clean with my wife. The other weekend, I got so angry, over what I thought at the time was unduly sharp criticism from her over an incident with one of our children, that I took myself off to the cinema by myself! It was pride on my part, for which I had to apologise to her later, for abandoning her to the two children, one needed support with homework."

"When I read the Clean Slate Guide and considered where I needed to clean my slate, I realised that I had closed my heart to Germany. I did not want to go there again. I find it difficult not knowing the language. I had seen TV programmes that made me scared of Germany. I realised that it hinged around a German colleague who I found difficult. I have decided to make my colleague a real friend and open my heart to Germany." (Judith Henderson)

"There are many things I should not do, such as being critical of other people. However, the practical one item I can do is to behave better towards my brother, who has difficulty with his legs and way of walking, and with other things about his body. I must keep the Promise in my mind."

"A shop assistant undercharged me several times. When I became aware of this, rather than rectifying the situation I continued to take advantage of it. On reading about the Clean Slate Campaign I decided to pay back the difference, as I had to admit that I would certainly have complained if I had been overcharged. The shop assistant refused to accept it, as I was 'such a regular customer'. I still felt uneasy and sent the money to the manager without identifying the shop assistant, explaining why I was doing it."

"Today I finally returned an overdue book to a church library, having meant to do so for a long time, and rededicated myself as a servant of God. Having that book had kept me back from looking friends in the eye and talking to them about the CSC." (David Down)

"Cleaning my slate has meant clearing my room! My very small bedroom is also my office. It has been swamped with piles of papers which get moved from desk to bed and back again daily. Having filled four black refuse bags, renewed my filing system, written over twenty letters and returned "borrowed" items to their rightful owners I feel a sense of clarity beginning to emerge from the fog. I can actually find things when I need them." (Joy Weeks)

(Some stories are anonymous at the request of the contributor.)

"Cleaning up the past will always clear up the future" – Chinese proverb, found in a Chinese fortune cookie

The Clean Slate Campaign will move into the public domain at the end of March. Meanwhile, we would encourage you to do all you can to use the Guide with people you know, and prepare for making the campaign known more widely from early April onwards. If you have ideas about the media, please be in touch with our office.

Snippets of news from the campaign

Revd Philip Martin, Vicar of the Parish of St James, Alderholt, recently preached on the clean slate theme at two morning services, quoting from the Guide. 'Seems a good idea to me,' he wrote afterwards, 'simple and down to earth. I want to commend it to folk in my church and village. Please can you send me – oh, 100 copies of the Guide.'

Peter Loch in Gillingham, Dorset, is using the Guide with his Lent study group.

A vicar in Oxford says he is going to use the clean slate theme in his Lent sermons.

'My deep longing,' writes one person, 'is for a cleaning of the English slate with Ireland and along that line I want to work with others who specially share that conviction.'

One of the campaign's patrons, the Director of Education for Newcastle, has written to all the schools in his education authority telling them about the campaign and suggesting they ring our office if interested. Six have already been in touch.

Another of our Newcastle patrons, the President of the North East Chamber of Commerce Trade and Industry, is sending a copy of the Guide to each of his 4,500 member organisations.

The head of *Relate* has asked for 150 copies of the Guide to distribute to all of their branches. The Board of Deputies of British Jews is sending a copy to each of its 350 members. The Archbishop of Wales will send one to all 150 on his Diocesan mailing list.

"I promise to take one practical step....."

One thing leads to another.

There's more to it than meets the eye!

One of our ambassadors has taken on to write to all the ministers in her area.

In an article in the *Catholic Herald*, Ann Widdecombe MP writes about the Clean Slate Campaign as one of two Millennium initiatives she wants to commend. 'It encourages us to start the new Millennium by putting right past wrongs, forgiving the trespasses of others, removing grudges, patching up quarrels.'

The Oxford Diocesan newspaper *The Door* carries in its February issue an article about the campaign. 'Make a new start is the Churches' Millennium theme,' it says. 'But how do you go about wiping the slate clean? [Here is] one answer.'

There has been coverage abroad too. *Union Jack*, a US newspaper with a readership of 220,000, refers to the Clean Slate Campaign as 'one of the most deceptively simple and yet potentially far-reaching propositions for marking the new Millennium. ... Surely this ingenious British idea could well be taken up in other countries.'

'We look for a massive outpouring of spiritual energy flowing from the individual decisions made by ordinary people, as they listen to the good spirit that speaks in their heart and take those steps which are honest, pure, unselfish and loving,' writes *Canadian Newsletter*.

In the *Malta Independent*, under the headline 'The Church and Everybody Cleaning their Slate', Bjørn Ole Austad ends his article: 'Such a campaign would go to the heart of the trouble in many countries. Most of us point the finger at someone else when discussing what is wrong. We may, however, have ideas at the back of our minds about where we ourselves can begin. Some years ago a friend did something which offended me. I cut the contact and have not been in touch since. Making amends could wait no longer. A letter has been posted.'

Ideas on spreading the message

Here are some ideas you may like to consider:

Put a Guide with a personal note through every letterbox in your street.

Coffee mornings?

Churches

- Natural link with Lent
- Material for sermons, Bible studies and home groups
- Speak to Church groups
- Copies at the back of the church
- Articles in parish magazines: regular 'clean slate column' with stories?
- Common project for interfaith groups

Synagogues, Mosques, Temples

Schools

- Material for assemblies and general studies
- Primary schools: act out clean slate stories, or draw them
- School newsletters to reach the homes

University chaplains, lecturers and student leadership

Youth groups; Cubs, Brownies, Scouts, Guides

Day Centres, fire brigades, ambulances and other community services

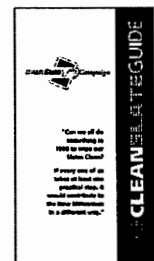
Prison chaplains, Taxi drivers, Women's Institutes, Young Farmers Clubs, Rotary Clubs

Anti-litter campaigns

Rehabilitation organisations for alcoholics, drug addicts, etc

Piles of Guides in doctors' or dentists' waiting rooms.

We have printed the first 55,000 copies of the Clean Slate Guide, so please use as many copies as you wish. Since we went to press, one further patron has joined the list: Gary Lineker OBE.



Finance

As at 24 February we have £2,477 in hand towards a budgeted target of £45,000 by the end of May. As well as approaching foundations we are hoping to find 45 people or groups who would contribute £1,000 each; we have just received the first £1,000 gift! We are most grateful to all those who have sent gifts of whatever size.