



**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

CSW'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE, PURSUE JUSTICE

at St. Paul's Church Hammersmith, Saturday 22nd April.

St. Stephen's adopted CSW as a Mission Partner some years ago, and we provide regular financial support as part of our tithing program. We have invited visiting preachers to tell us more about the work of CSW, and many will remember Stuart Windsor speaking and last year, Rev. Joel Edwards. Peter and I attended this year's Conference, and here's a brief account of our day.

A warm welcome was quickly followed by news to the packed church, that 3 days earlier, on 19th April, the UN had finally granted accreditation to CSW – after 8 years of deferring the numerous applications! Warm applause and cheering started off an inspirational afternoon.

A highlight at this year's Conference, was an introduction from Helen Berhane, an Eritrean Gospel Singer. She had suffered years of intense persecution for expressing her Christian Faith and at its worst was imprisoned for 32 months in transport containers, with no sanitation, meagre food rations, very little light and no protection from searing daytime heat and freezing temperatures at night. After years of refusing to renounce Jesus, or keep silent in her praise for Him, she found her way to Denmark, where she now lives free to tell her story and witness without fear of reprisal.

We chose to attend seminars about the suffering of ethnic and religious minorities in Burma, with visitors telling us of loss and continuing violence for many under the new regime.

Another very inspiring seminar we sat in on was about the situation in China, and in particular, the Living Stone Church in Guizhou Province, where a Pastor has been imprisoned and their building taken over.

We asked our special Chinese guest, what more we can do to help? The immediate answer was to write letters and cards. We were told they really fill good people's hearts with encouragement. We are assured that all those included in the Connect and Encourage booklet produced by CSW, are carefully selected to ensure no further harm comes to individuals or communities.

We spoke too to those flagging up the plight of Christians and other religious minorities in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. Fulani Militia have been murdering men, women and children, destroying villages and taking their land away. We are urged to petition our Foreign Secretary to put pressure on the Nigerian government to act in protecting them, and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The day finished with praise and worship, as we had begun – being affirmed that prayer, encouraging the persecuted with letters and card and campaigning for justice will bring hope and change.

We have copies of Connect & Encourage, or see the website www.csw.org.uk

Please also sign the petition for the Nigerian situation – in church from this week.

Sue Charlton