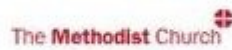


# Praxis



## The public issues newsletter of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches

Would you prefer to view this Newsletter as a PDF or Word document?  
Alternatively, visit our [publications page](#) to download a printable version of the Newsletter.

---

### Newsletter 31 December 2010

---

**Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2011 will run from 29 January to 6 February. 30 January is Homelessness Sunday and 6 February is Poverty Action Sunday.**



Our theme is 'Who Counts?' The 2011 census will try to list all of the people who live in the country - but chances are there are many it won't include - such as the 'hidden homeless' and destitute asylum-seekers.

God's own son was born into poverty in a stable, in the year of a great census. Scripture tells us that in God's kingdom, "the least shall be the first". Does the way we live bear witness to this truth? Are we living in true solidarity with people who are poor, homeless and excluded?

#### **Raise your voice and make sure that everyone is counted!**

- [Download free resources](#) to plan a church service or fundraising event.
- Learn, pray and take action through the week with our [prayer calendar](#) in print or online.
- See a video of Methodist Minister Madeline Andrews talk about [Living Wage](#)

**Who counts in society? Who does the counting?  
Who decides who is included and who is excluded?  
Who has a voice? Whom do we value and why?  
Who counts in God's eyes?**

[www.actionweek.org.uk](http://www.actionweek.org.uk)

---

## **Last Chance to Register for Public Issues Conference in January 2011**

In the last issue of Praxis we told you about the free conference which will take place in central Birmingham on 22 January 2011, entitled "Poverty of Ambition? Churches and a politics of hope".

As well as topical addresses from Will Hutton and the Revd Kirsty Thorpe, there will be workshops on key issues such as poverty, the meaning of the Big Society and peacemaking.

This conference, sponsored by the United Reformed Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain and Methodist Church, aims in particular to help those with local responsibility for public issues and enthusiasts in the 3 denominations build stronger links with each other, with local Churches and with Christians of other traditions.

We have been delighted at the response to date. There are still some places left, but please [register](#) soon at the Joint Public Issues Team's website, to maximise the chance of being able to attend your preferred workshops.

[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/conference2011.htm](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/conference2011.htm)

If you have any questions, please contact James North at [northj@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:northj@methodistchurch.org.uk) or 020 7467 5101

---

### **MP Accountability Network - an update from Church Action on Poverty**

Church Action on Poverty is looking to expand its MP Accountability Network: please get involved by starting a group in your constituency or joining a group if one already exists near you!

The MP Accountability Network is a collection of church groups in local constituencies who arrange regular meetings with their MP on a range of issues. Church Action on Poverty provides assistance setting up these groups and briefs them four times a year on a variety of subjects which can be brought up with MPs.

Groups are also encouraged to raise local issues and to interact with other church groups in their area. There is increased credibility for Christians meeting in groups - or churches! MPs take the shared concerns of **churches and disciplined groups** seriously and are increasingly willing to hear the concerns of their constituents.

- Visit the website: [www.church-poverty.org.uk/getinvolved/mpan](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/getinvolved/mpan)
  - **Find out more** by downloading the flyer.
  - **Sign up** for the MP Accountability Network.
  - Download the [MP Accountability Network guide](#) for more ideas on how to build a relationship and run meetings with your MP.
  - Ask your new MP to commit to meet with you regularly. Once you've joined the Network, Church Action on Poverty will send you regular briefings with suggested questions and issues you can raise with your MP.
-

## Poor Stigmatised by George Osborne's misleading numbers - letter written to Prime Minister



In his speech on the Comprehensive Spending Review the Chancellor, George Osborne, told Parliament that the Government estimated the level of welfare fraud to be £5 billion. This is a 3-fold exaggeration: the government estimate is actually £1.6 billion. The Chancellor and others in Government have repeatedly added the level of fraud to the level of government error and claimant error to reach £5.2 billion. They then call this £5 billion "Welfare Fraud".

This is important because government announcements have emphasised fraud and waste in the benefit system, and have criticised the lazy and the workshy. Seven Churches and Christian organisations (The Church of Scotland, The Salvation Army, Church Action on Poverty and Housing Justice as well as the three denominations represented by the Joint Public Issues Team) have [written](#) to the Prime Minister asking that the stigmatisation of the poor stops, and that the public record is corrected as to the level of Benefit fraud. We still haven't had a reply so you could write to your MP too.....

The concerns of our churches about the misrepresentation of the poorest have been covered by the Guardian, the Telegraph and the BBC among others.

---

### Common Wealth and Christian views on Public Spending

In the light of the Comprehensive Spending Review, many Christians are taking a renewed interest in discerning what their faith has to say about Government and its role in using public money to promote equity and social justice.

One such initiative is Common Wealth: "a network of Christians involved in campaigning against the current cuts in public spending and seeking to articulate a radical theological critique of the current economic and social order."

The Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist Churches have not adopted the position expressed by Common Wealth as policy, but the Joint Public Issues Team will continue to highlight the impact of Government policy on poverty and equality in our society and promote debate on this issue.

For more information visit <http://commonwealthnetwork2010.blogspot.com/>  
or the statement at the Ekklesia website  
<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/CommonWealthStatement>

---

## Climate Justice Photo Petition



Coinciding with the current round of talks at Cancun by parties to the UN Framework on Climate Change, an international coalition of Christian organisations is calling for "climate justice individuals and groups...to contribute images of themselves and their messages to global leaders" and "to put their names and faces behind the call for strong international action on climate change".

People can share pictures of themselves via [Flickr](#) or send their picture, including their name and country, to [photopetition@gmail.com](mailto:photopetition@gmail.com).

For more information on the WCC and climate change visit [www.oikoumene.org/climatechange](http://www.oikoumene.org/climatechange)

The photos of the petition can be viewed at the ecumenical campaign's website [www.climatejusticeonline.org](http://www.climatejusticeonline.org) and will be displayed at the venue of negotiations in Cancun.

Also in response to Cancun, The Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Baptist Union of Great Britain have issued a [press release](#) calling on world leaders to work towards low carbon economies.

---

## Christians in politics roadshow

Christians in Politics (a coalition of the Conservative Christian Fellowship, the Christian Socialist Movement and the Lib Dem Christian Forum) is planning to hold a series of "engagement in politics roadshows" in March 2011.

These will be fun, informative, and challenging events designed to move Christians from a position of passive concern to faith-filled participation. With special guests including MPs, public servants, party activists, campaigning organisations, community workers, and more, they will bring a broad range of inspiring testimonies and examples.

Christians in Politics is looking for churches or local networks to host these roadshows. If you're interested in finding out more about what would be involved please contact [phil.anderson@susa.info](mailto:phil.anderson@susa.info) We will give you further details about these roadshows as they are finalised.

---

## Public Issues Calendar

Make a note of key public issues dates for the churches in 2011. Visit our online calendar - [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitcalendar.htm](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitcalendar.htm)

---

**Shelter in a Pack - Launch Dates in London and Birmingham for New Resource**

**SHELTER  
IN A  
PACK**



**Housing  
Justice**

A NEW RESOURCE FOR CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES CONSIDERING SETTING UP WINTER NIGHT SHELTERS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE with practical guidance and information, inspiration and more  
Produced by Housing Justice with a grant from Church Urban Fund

**LAUNCH EVENTS**

London FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> December 3.00-4.30pm  
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church  
235 Shaftesbury Avenue  
London WC2H 8EP  
[www.bloomsbury.org.uk/about/location.html](http://www.bloomsbury.org.uk/about/location.html)

Birmingham WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> December 2.00-3.30pm  
Carrs Lane Church Centre  
Cars Lane  
Birmingham B4 7SX  
[www.carrslane.co.uk/travel](http://www.carrslane.co.uk/travel)

**TO BOOK / FURTHER INFO**

To book your place for either event contact Lesley Hedger  
[l.hedger@housingjustice.org.uk](mailto:l.hedger@housingjustice.org.uk)  
More info from Sally Leigh [s.leigh@housingjustice.org.uk](mailto:s.leigh@housingjustice.org.uk)  
HOUSING JUSTICE 020 7920 6600  
[www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk)

---

If you would like to receive the Joint Public Issues Team Newsletter, or would like to publicise an event or project, please contact Wendy Cooper, e-mail - [wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk](mailto:wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk) Telephone - 020 7916 8632 Address - 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

---