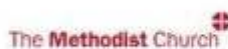


PRAXIS



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

January 2011

AFTER OUR CONFERENCE ...

Thanks to everyone who gathered in Birmingham last weekend for the first Joint Public Issues Team conference entitled *Poverty of Ambition: Churches and a Politics of Hope*.

Around 170 people heard Will Hutton, broadcaster and journalist, talk about why Britain needs to be fair. He argued that a desire for fairness is something hard-wired into the human condition. Andrew Stunell MP, parliamentary undersecretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government, spoke about the Churches and the Big Society. He argued that churches need to seize opportunities and not wait to be given permission. He heard concerns from many in the audience that the spending cuts were going to squeeze rather than facilitate the Big Society. The workshops in the afternoon included sessions on peacemaking and militarism, debt, poverty, eco-congregations, and how to get our churches interested in public issues.

If you couldn't attend the conference, the speeches by Will Hutton and Andrew Stunell can be heard at <http://www.methodism.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.webradio>. Summaries of the ideas and questions raised, and the outcomes of the workshops will soon be on the Joint Public Issues Team website <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk>. And we will be looking to build up a Public Issues Network of people who are interested in working with us and with each other to help our churches to engage with a politics of hope. If you are interested in any of this, please email us at enquiries@jointpublicissues.org.uk for more information ...

UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION CAMPAIGN

We have heard that the new arrangements which Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg announced on 16th December are being gradually rolled out, but because this campaign concerns the health and welfare of each and every child who is detained, churches are requested to remain active until the day when the last detention unit closes. (There is currently a family unit at Tinsley House, which Nick Clegg announced will close by 12th May). We hope that there will soon be evidence of the 'change in culture' in the way families are treated, which was at the heart of what Nick Clegg promised.

Meanwhile, we encourage everyone to take part in the **End Child Detention Now** post card campaign, congratulating the politicians on the proposed systemic changes, and reminding them to **Keep Your Promise!** This national campaign was launched at the Joint Public Issues Team Conference on Saturday 22nd January.

Postcards for your congregation and friends (the first 50 will be sent free) can be obtained by contacting info@ecdn.org.

'CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE - Contemporary Challenges and Principles Relating to Early Human Life'

A web-based study guide is now available to help groups and individuals to engage with the issues raised by the Report prepared in 2008 by Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Church representatives. <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/createdingodsimage/index.htm>

STOP LEGAL LOAN SHARKS - URGENT ACTION REQUEST!

On **THURSDAY 3 FEBRUARY** the House of Commons will be debating Consumer Credit Regulation, limiting the cost of credit charged by legal loan sharks. The debate is about legally limiting the astronomical charges lenders are able to make. The UK is one of the few industrialised countries that does not have a law capping the total cost of credit. With the economic downturn there is real concern that more people will turn to legal loan sharks and end up even deeper in debt.

Please urge your MP to attend the debate. You can do this via Church Action on Poverty's special [web page](#).

EVENTS

The Banks and Society: Rebuilding Trust

Tuesday 1 March, 5.00 - 7.30 pm, Banking Hall, Wragge & Co, 55 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2AS

Panel discussion and launch of the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility's new report on the banking sector, organised by ECCR and ECCR West Midlands Group. Chair: Rt Revd David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham. Panel speakers: Canon Dr Giles Fraser, St Paul's Cathedral; Damon Gibbons, Centre for Responsible Credit/ Better Banking Campaign; Suzanne Ismail, ECCR; Professor Andy Mullineux, University of Birmingham Business School and Centre on Household & Savings Management.

Booking essential: contact Helen Boothroyd (helen.boothroyd@eccr.org.uk 0705 931172); free entrance; buffet; wheelchair access.

Churches Refugee Network Conference 2011

Saturday 4 June in London (venue and programme information to follow).

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, wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk 020 7916 8632 United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

