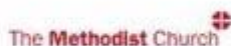


Praxis



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

Newsletter 33 March 2011

Housing Justice

A Lenten Day of Reflection will be held at [Hinde Street Methodist Church](#), 19 Thayer Street, London W1U 2QJ, on Saturday 19 March 2011, 10am-4pm.

This will be an opportunity for people of all denominations for guided reflection, prayer and discussion on themes related to homelessness and Lent, providing a space to pause and reflect in your Lenten journey.

COST £15 per person or £5 per person low/unwaged. Tea and coffee will be made available. Please bring your own picnic lunch.

For further information, please contact Alison Gelder or Alastair Murray at Housing Justice: a.gelder@housingjustice.org.uk 020 7920 6441, a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk 020 7920 6440

Should we Bank on the Robin Hood Tax?

On Tuesday 29 March 2011, The St Paul's Institute is hosting a free event entitled 'Should we Bank on the Robin Hood Tax?'

A panel including Ken Costa, Chairman of Lazard International, Rt Revd Peter Selby, Former Bishop of Worcester, Michael Izza, CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and Baroness Shirley Williams, will debate the question: 'To what extent do banks have a responsibility to contribute to the common good and, if so, is the proposed Robin Hood Tax the solution?'

The event takes place at St. Paul's Cathedral and is free and unticketed. Doors open at 6.15pm.

For more information go to <http://www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk> or call 020 7489 1011.

On our own two feet

Action for Children have launched [On our own two feet](#); an urgent new campaign for a savings scheme for looked after children.

On 1 January this year, the Child Trust Fund, which provided money for children leaving care, vital if care leavers are to have the same chances as other young people, was scrapped. In 2010, 80% of those eligible for after-care services in Scotland were not in education, training or employment (NEET). **This is not fair.** Speaking of this scheme, Helen Undy of Action for Children said 'not only would it make sure that care leavers have money to spend on things like text books, or to help towards a deposit on a flat, it shows them that, just like other young people, someone is there for them and cares what happens to them when they leave care.'

For a cost of just £6.6m, it could change thousands of lives forever.'

Action for Children are asking your urgent help to persuade the Chancellor, George Osborne, to include this proposal in the 2011 budget, announced on March 23.

You have fourteen days to make a difference. To take action for children in care today:

- [Email your MP](#). This will take just a few minutes but could make a real difference to children in care.

- Download the ['On our own two feet'](#) report to find out more about the proposed savings scheme and the difference it would make to care leavers.

Benefits

Last October the Chancellor, George Osborne claimed that £5 billion was being lost to benefit fraud. As reported in the [Joint Public Issues Team's blog](#) this was a serious misrepresentation: the actual figure attributed to fraud was £1.6 billion, the other £3.4 billion representing error.

It is encouraging that Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith has subsequently admitted that accusing those who receive overpayments through error of engaging in fraud is unjust ([see here](#)). He also stated the implementation of the proposed Universal Credit would help eliminated the accusatory rhetoric.

The replacement of the complex benefits system with a single Universal Credit is to be welcomed, as is the shelving of the proposed 10% cut in housing benefit for those who have been receiving Jobseeker's Allowance for more than one year. But other points in the Bill raise serious concerns and Churches are currently scrutinising the Welfare Reform Bill in detail.

Join the March for the Alternative on Saturday 26 March

The Close The Gap campaign is asking that people [pledge to join them](#) and hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of London on Saturday 26 March, to call on the Government to tackle the deficit in a fairer way.

The [March for the Alternative](#), coordinated by the Trade Union Congress, is going to be massive, with 500 coaches and trains already booked.

Church Action on Poverty, who are coordinating the Close the Gap campaign, are calling for Christians to gather at 12:15 on the north side of St Martin in the Fields church on Trafalgar Square, and to join the March at an appropriate moment. We will then go through central London to finish with a rally in Hyde Park.

The gathering will be preceded by a service of commemoration for Archbishop Óscar Romero at St Martin's church at 11am. This will be a poignant rallying point, helping us to gather inspiration from somebody whose stand with the poorest cost so much.

Please consider [giving a donation](#) to help Close the Gap between the rich and poor.

Children in Asylum Detention News

Thank you to everyone who has recently sent the "Keep Your Promise" cards, reminding the Government of the urgency of this issue. We sincerely hope that the proposed new arrangements set out in the Home Office document, "Review into Ending the Detention of Children for Immigration Purposes", December 2010, will in due course protect these innocent children from further damage.

Meanwhile, End Child Detention Now has produced [this video](#) of some refugee children in the UK.

Young People Seeking Safety

YPSS, the [Young People Seeking Safety](#) campaign, is a network of individuals and organisations who have joined together to promote the rights and safety of unaccompanied young people seeking asylum in the UK.

Young People Seeking Safety Week 2011 (28 March - 3 April 2011) is a chance to share the music, film, and photography of young people expressing their experiences of seeking safety in the UK. Around the UK community groups will host events to bring attention to the issues facing unaccompanied young people. YPSS are urging the Government to:

- Give fewer and better age assessments to unaccompanied young people.
- Ensure the best interests of a child are always at the forefront of decisions to remove children.
- Issue an investigation into the extremely high percentage of refused cases of 18-21 year old unaccompanied young people and ensure that they are given the leaving care support to which they are entitled by law.

Get asylum decisions right the first time by ending the widely acknowledged 'culture of cynicism and disbelief.'

'What Kind Of Political Animal Are You?' Find out with the SUSA Roadshows

Supported by Christians in Parliament, the SUSA roadshows began last weekend in Bristol. Led by the Bible Society's SUSA resource and Christians in Politics, the SUSA roadshows are a series of events to help Christians to get more effectively and extensively engaged in politics.

<http://www.susa.info/news/roadshows>

The aim is to encourage Christians to see involvement in politics as being biblical, missional and possible. Local and national politicians will be making contributions, and The Salvation Army, CARE, Evangelical Alliance, 24-7 Prayer and Premier Radio will be giving support. More information can be found [here](#).

World Week For Peace in Palestine And Israel: 29 May - 4 June 2011

The World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel is an initiative of the World Council of Churches that offers us all an opportunity to

- pray
- learn more about how people's lives are affected, and
- take action.

It's time for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace. What will you do this week?

<http://www.worldweekforpeace.org>

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 Telephone - 020 7916 8632 Address - United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT