

JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM Newsletter 2. Christmas 2006

Welcome to the second edition of the Joint Public Issues Team newsletter, produced by staff of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, working together in the field of social justice. We wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas. At an informal Christmas gathering to celebrate the closer working relationship, Alison Jackson, team leader, thanked those people with whom the Churches were already co-operating - and welcomed many more, with whom the team hopes to work more closely.

CHURCH LEADERS OPPOSE TRIDENT RENEWAL

Leaders of the three denominations represented within the Joint Public Issues team joined together to issue a statement opposing renewal of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons programme. They urged the British Government to "work tirelessly" to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction; replacing Trident, they said, would send the wrong message to aspiring nuclear powers. The full text of the statement is available on the Joint Public Issues Team website www.jointpublicissues.org.uk It was signed by Revd Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary, Baptist Union of Great Britain; Dudley Coates, Vice-President, Methodist Church; and Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. The statement was mentioned by several daily newspapers and on *Today* on BBC Radio Four. There is the opportunity for individual church members to petition the Prime Minister online by going to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/trident/>

SET ALL FREE

As the bicentenary approaches, of the passing of legislation abolishing the slave trade in Britain - March 25 is the actual date - the Prime Minister has issued a statement expressing regret for Britain's involvement in slavery. Mr. Blair stopped short of making the formal apology some had wanted, but said "*It is hard to believe that what would now be a crime against humanity, was legal at the time. Personally, I believe the bicentenary offers us a chance not just to say how profoundly shameful the slave trade was - how we condemn its existence utterly and praise those who fought for its abolition, but also to express our deep sorrow that it ever happened*". Worship and other resources to enable churches to commemorate the bicentenary are available at www.setallfree.net

RE-CYCLING SUCCESS United Reformed Church House re-cycled 7,295 kilograms of paper during the year ended October 2006. This apparently save the equivalent of 124 trees.

UPCOMING DATES

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 27 January 2007 Theme: *The dignity of difference.*
Resources available from www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk .

HOMELESSNESS SUNDAY 28 January 2007 Theme: *Loose the bonds of injustice ...*
(Isaiah 58.6). Organised by the Homelessness Sunday Partnership. Order a resource pack from www.homelessness-sunday.org.uk or tel. 020 7723 7273.

EDUCATION SUNDAY 4 February 2007. Resources from www.educationsunday.org .

FAITH AND HOMOPHOBIA CONFERENCE 17 February 2007 Theme: *Securing legal protection and managing conflicts*. Venue: Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London E1. Information and booking form at www.lgcm.org.uk/fhconference

POVERTY ACTION SUNDAY 18 February 2007 Resources on the theme *Just Church* available from www.church-poverty.org.uk .

In 2008, there will be a **POVERTY ACTION WEEK 28 January–3 February 2008** planned jointly by Church Action on Poverty and Housing Justice, which will provide a significant opportunity for local churches to discover and engage with poverty and social justice issues within their own communities. Local churches interested in hosting a local or regional training workshop to promote the week should contact Niall Cooper of Church Action on Poverty at niallc@church-poverty.org.uk

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 26 February 2007–11 March 2007 Theme: *Change Today, Choose FAIRTRADE* . Focus on action to get more people to choose products with the FAIRTRADE Mark in order to help people in countries around the world to change things for the better in their own families and communities. For more information go to www.fairtrade.org.uk

SOCIAL WORK CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP 16-18 March 2007 Title: *The plate spinners guide to the galaxy*. Venue: Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from www.swcf.org.uk

FIFTH UK URBAN MISSION CONGRESS 14-18 June 2007. Theme: *Setting People Free*. Brochures available from ECUM, Bethnal Green Mission Church, 305 Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9LH or ecum1@tiscali.co.uk

RESOURCES

ACTION FOR PRISONERS' FAMILIES An audio version of the book *Finding Dad* is now available, recorded by Michael Palin. It is aimed at children aged 8-11 and tells the story of a boy who turns detective to find out why his dad disappeared with the police early one morning. For more details e-mail sam@actionpf.org.uk or download an order form at www.actionpf.org.uk

ACTION CARDS 2007 are available at £3.00 a set from URC Church and Society office (cheques payable 'United Reformed Church') or Christians Aware, 2 Saxby Street, Leicester LE2 0ND (cheques to 'Christians Aware'). This ecumenical venture encourages people to use information in monthly briefings to send a message of support or challenge to a designated recipient. Briefings appear in the Baptist Times, Methodist Recorder, and on the URC website.

CREATION CHALLENGE The November edition of the environmental newsletter from the Methodist/URC network is available at www.creationchallenge.org.uk . From the website, you can subscribe to an e-mail distribution, so that you receive each newsletter as it is published.

CONTACT

THE JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM newsletter is distributed through existing denominational mailing lists and will be sent to those who previously received the Baptist Faith and Unity newsletter, the Methodist Public Issues E-news (Pie) and the URC Church and Society network hotline. If you are reading a copy that someone else has given you, and you would like to be added to the mailing, or if you have any other queries, contact Wendy Cooper wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk tel. 020 7916 8632. 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.