

# JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM

Newsletter 7

July 2007

## **United Reformed Church General Assembly 2007**

The United Reformed Church has decided to oppose “**Assisted Dying**”, saying it could not support a change to the law that would allow doctors to act in ways that deliberately seek to help end a patient’s life. The URC recognises that some treatment to relieve pain for people who are terminally ill may hasten death, and says it believes this is acceptable, as long as the intention of the treatment is pain relief. This was one of the decisions taken at the Church’s General Assembly in Manchester. Members also agreed that quality palliative care needs to be more uniformly available for people who are terminally ill.

Assembly accepted, reluctantly, that some local churches will need to apply for **Lottery funding**, for the upkeep of churches listed as historic, although it re-affirmed its concern about the impact of the Lottery.

The Church cautioned against any form of retaliation directed at Muslims, in the wake of **terrorist incidents** in Glasgow and London. An emergency resolution expressed its dismay at what happened, but said it was an affront to the overwhelming majority of Muslims, when such actions were claimed to have been committed in their name.

General Assembly also passed a resolution on **climate change**, asking that a plan be developed for monitoring and reducing carbon emissions across the Church.

Details of the resolutions and supporting papers are available at [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk) click on Assembly Book of Reports.

## **Methodist Conference 2007**

Conferring, Discerning, Envisioning, Inspiring were the themes of this year’s Methodist Conference, meeting in Blackpool. There were three key debates on social issues:

**Climate Change:** Resolutions were passed urging the UK Government to introduce robust policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to actively promote renewable sources of energy. Local churches, circuits and districts were urged to monitor and reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. The Church’s environmental policy *Caring for Creation* will be reviewed in the light of new information about the threat posed by climate change.

**Social Cohesion:** Community cohesion and integration has been a focus for the Joint Public Issues Team since the start of the year, as part of the three Churches’ dialogue with the Government’s Commission for Integration and Cohesion. Conference called on the Church to consider prayerfully what further action can be taken to reduce tensions and reach out to those excluded from society.

**Trade Justice** for the British Food Industry: Following a request from the Cumbria District, Conference looked at the issue of fair trade in British food production. Conference called on supermarkets not to abuse their monopoly power in determining prices, and for all Christians to consider the ways in which their own purchasing patterns contribute to unfairness and injustice in the domestic market.

**Overseas matters:** Conference debated Israel-Palestine, and again called for an end to violence by all sides. Conference expressed solidarity with persecuted Christians and Churches across the world, and rejoiced with the Free Methodist Church of Rwanda for the relative peace in that country following the genocide of 1994. Support was expressed for organisations working to combat human trafficking.

Resolutions were also passed on Methodist views on **alcohol**, **animal welfare** and the Church’s relations with the **media**.

More information about the Conference and its decisions, as well as access to audio files of debates can be found at [www.methodistconference.org.uk](http://www.methodistconference.org.uk), or contact the Joint Public Issues Team.

**Public Issues Calendar 2008** The Joint Public Issues Team has produced a calendar of Sundays/ Weeks for which organisations involved with social justice offer worship and other resources via a web-link. Download a copy from our website [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk) > Resources for Churches.

**Joint Public Issues Team website** - [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk) Visit our much improved, user-friendly, website. During the autumn a totally revamped, brighter and even more attractive version will arrive, coinciding with the Team's first birthday.

**Independent Asylum Commission** If you work with asylum seekers or refugees the Independent Asylum Commission would like to hear from you. The IAC was set up, with the backing of the Churches' Refugee Network, to investigate the workings of the UK asylum system following much criticism from individuals and agencies. Special hearings are taking place around the country, where the Commission can hear experiences and talk about ideas they might put forward to change the system. If you want to submit evidence or share stories about your work, please respond by 1 November. The Commission will report in Spring 2008. For more information about the Independent Asylum Commission and how to submit evidence, visit [www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk](http://www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk)

### **Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, 27 January-3 February 2008**

As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported on 17 July, the gap between rich and poor is greater than at any time in the past 40 years - and concerns about inequality in society is growing. In 2008, Homelessness Sunday and Poverty Action Sunday are only a week apart. Church Action on Poverty, Church Urban Forum, Housing Justice and Scottish Churches Housing Action are providing linked worship resources for the two Sundays and are aiming for 100 local Poverty Hearings across the country. Would you like to get involved but feel you don't have the knowledge or the skill? Training events will be run across the country during the autumn to present a variety of options for local congregations or wider groups of churches to run events connected with the week. Each event will last around 2 hours and will take place either on a Saturday or an evening. Further details of locations, which range from Aberdeen to Plymouth, can be obtained from Liam Purcell at Church Action on Poverty on 0161 236 9321 or at [liamp@church-poverty.org.uk](mailto:liamp@church-poverty.org.uk) or Judith Maizel-Long at Housing Justice on 0207 723 7273 x254 or at [j.maizel-long@housingjustice.org.uk](mailto:j.maizel-long@housingjustice.org.uk)

**Stop the Traffik Chocolate Pledge** 12,000 children have been trafficked onto cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast, which supplies nearly half of the cocoa used in our chocolate. Stop the Traffik is encouraging churches to join a campaign calling on chocolate companies to put a guarantee on their wrappers indicating that the cocoa beans have not been harvested by trafficked labour. Find out how you can get involved at [www.stophetraffik.org/chocolatecampaign](http://www.stophetraffik.org/chocolatecampaign)

### **EVENTS**

**Sharing Good News - Anglican Social Responsibility Conference, 2-4 October** (or attend the stand alone day on 3 October) at Derby Conference Centre, London Road, Derby. Open to all involved in social justice work. For further details and booking form, contact Derby Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility (01332 388684; [socialresponsibility@derby.anglican.org](mailto:socialresponsibility@derby.anglican.org)), or download booking form at [www.srnet.org.uk/Homepage.htm](http://www.srnet.org.uk/Homepage.htm)

**Now is the time - Christian Aid Weekend for supporters, 19-21 October** at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. For full details, phone 020 7523 2248, email [active@christian-aid.org](mailto:active@christian-aid.org) or see: [http://www.christianaidconnect.org/pooled/articles/BF\\_EVENTART/view.asp?Q=BF\\_EVENTART\\_287997](http://www.christianaidconnect.org/pooled/articles/BF_EVENTART/view.asp?Q=BF_EVENTART_287997)

### **RESOURCES**

**'On the Water's Edge'** Bible studies, stories and worship resources to encourage churches to explore the issue of climate change through water. Produced by the United Reformed Church. £3.00 (cheques payable to 'United Reformed Church Trust') from Commitment for Life, United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT; email: [alison.blick@urc.org.uk](mailto:alison.blick@urc.org.uk)

**'Breaking the Chains'** Resource pack from the National Christian Alliance on Prostitution to help churches reflect on the wider issues of sexual exploitation, engage with the situation and take action. For a copy, ring NCAP on 0845 0044231 or email [ncap@ncapuk.org](mailto:ncap@ncapuk.org).

**Contact** 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](mailto:wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk); 020 7916 8632; 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT