

Methodist Conference 2009

Methodist Conference met from 2 - 9 July in Wolverhampton. There will be a full report in our September Newsletter but in the meantime, see the webpage (<http://methodistconference.org.uk>) for detailed information and a link to recordings of the debates.

Inquiry into the Review of MPs' Expenses

Through the Joint Public Issues Team, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church worked together to produce a swift response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life - Inquiry into the Review of MPs' Expenses. It was the only submission from a faith group perspective. Read the submission here. (<http://jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpolitics.htm>)

Creation in Crisis: a time for prayer and action

Between 1 September and 4 October, churches are encouraged to observe a Time for Creation, for the protection of God's creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

Resources for Creation Time 2009 include suggestions for churches, groups and individuals to focus on a creation theme, either on one occasion or over the five weeks (sermon notes, discussion ideas for young people, Bible study notes, action ideas, prayers and other liturgical material). In particular, some of the material looks at the crucial issues facing the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December. The resources are now available here. (<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime>)

Hope in God's Future - the impact of climate change and our response

Wednesday 4 November, 10.30 - 4.00 at Carrs Lane URC, Birmingham. Revd Dr Rosalind Selby will speak on 'Hope in God's Future', the ecumenical climate change theology report. Workshops: transition towns; energy saving; how the poorest countries are adapting; campaigning; communication; and Bible study. Organised by the Mission Team of the United Reformed Church. Please contact Gill Hillman (Commitment for Life Programme Administrator) if you would like to attend: gill.hillman@urc.org.uk ; 020 7691 9867.

UN International Day of Prayer for Peace

The Joint Public Issues Team is preparing some resources for prayer and theological reflection for churches to use on **Sunday 20 September** to mark the UN International Day of Prayer for Peace (21 September). Available to download from the Joint Public Issues Team website (<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk>) in August.

The Citizen and the Law of Armed Conflict

A two-day conference, **1-2 September**, at Friends' House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, organised by the Institute of Law Accountability and Peace (INLAP) and World Court Project UK. Speakers include John McDonnell MP, Nick Grief, Paul Dorfman and Dr Nick Ritchie. Further details here (<http://tinyurl.com/qucqvr>) or email geowcp@gn.apc.org ; phone 01323 844269.

Nuclear Non-proliferation and Trident missiles

At the G8 summit at L'Aquila, Italy, Gordon Brown stated that, at the NPT Review Conference in May 2010, he could place on the table the offer of a reduction in the number of warheads in the Trident nuclear missile

system. Our churches take the view that a reduction in the number of warheads is a poor token gesture in the light of the billions that our government is due to spend on new submarines. This investment makes sense only if we are to keep the system well into the 2040s and beyond. A recent report by the Institute of Public Policy Research states that cheaper and more flexible options to maintaining a minimum nuclear deterrent need to be investigated. (<http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=676>)

The Government intends to make a decision on the next stage of the Trident programme in September while Parliament is in recess. This will commit us to the design phase for the new system. This phase is likely to cost over £4 billion. 160 MPs have signed an early day motion calling on the Government to fulfil its promise to provide a report to the House of Commons for scrutiny before the decision is made. Has your MP signed? See (<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=37711&SESSION=899>) Please consider writing to express your concern.

Get Fair

It's good to know that at least 117 MPs were lobbied by constituency groups during the weekend of 26/27 June. Since the lobby, the Government has pledged to increase the number of social rented homes and 62 MPs (only one Conservative) have signed EDM 1529 tabled by John Battle MP. Please ask your MP to sign it by linking to Get Fair's e-action at <http://www.getfair.org.uk/lobby> or the Early Day Motion itself: (<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=38699&SESSION=899>)

Obviously, asking MPs to sign the EDM or pledge their support is not the end. Get Fair is encouraging people to have ongoing dialogue with MPs and prospective candidates on these issues, and to organise follow up meetings in the autumn.

Please forward any feedback, stories, comments, pictures or media coverage to info@getfair.org.uk or Get Fair c/o Church Action on Poverty, Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ.

Human Embryology and Early Human Life

Following publication of the report, 'Created in God's Image', in 2008 by a joint group of Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Church representatives, a study guide to help churches consider the issues will be available in the early autumn. More details to follow in the September Newsletter.

'Asylum in Britain - a Question of Conscience' by Revd Dr Anthony Harvey (formerly Canon Theologian and Sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey and chair of the Churches' Refugee Network)

A significant new book examining the successive stages of the asylum process, reviewing the efforts government has made to meet its obligations and conform with acceptable standards of humane treatment. It argues that even when all these factors are taken into account the balance of public policy has come down too heavily on the side of exclusion and restriction, with the result that much of the system and its administration amounts to an affront to any well-informed conscience. £10.00, incl. p&p (cheques payable to the George Bell Institute) from Dr Andrew Chandler, George Bell Institute, University of Chichester, College Lane, Chichester PO19 6PE.

Racial Justice Sunday - 13 September

The Changing Face of Britain and Ireland - 'Who do you say I am?'

This year all the materials for use on Racial Justice Sunday (or any Sunday) will be available online to download from CTBI (<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/396>) and denominational webpages, and will include worship resources, stories and suggestions for other activities. If you require the materials in printed format, please contact your denominational Racial Justice/Equalities office.

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, e-mail - wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk ; phone - 020 7916 8632; address - 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT