

# Praxis



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

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### Newsletter 28 June 2010

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#### Churches Respond to Budget

Churches are very concerned that the budget will harm the most vulnerable. With Child benefit cuts, stealthy cuts in other benefits by changing how they are updated and potentially far reaching changes to Housing benefit, the initial fear is those who did not benefit from the boom are going to be hit hardest by the bust.

Paul Morrison, Policy Office, reflected on the point that Churches have argued that it would be just to levy taxes on those who could most afford to pay - who are also those who benefitted most during the boom years.

"The £2bn banking levy is welcome, but must be judged against the government's £850bn support to stabilise the banking industry. Other figures worth noting are that in 2009 £12n was paid by Goldman Sachs in bonuses to employees alone, with the average remuneration per employee being £325,000, up 35% from last year.

The hardest hitting tax measure is the rise in VAT to 20%. This hits the poorest 10% of society twice as hard as the richest. This cannot be fair by any measure as the poorest will see their ability to make ends meet severely damaged. This one measure will raise around £13n over the next 5 years, compare this to the mentioned above and we must question if this is being fairly distributed".

The URC released a [statement on the day](#) (external link).

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## All's fair in cuts and spending?

The budget proposed cutting billions of pounds from public expenditure. How this is achieved will be a subject of much discussion and debate. The Baptist Union, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church are part of a 'fairness test' coalition, examining the impact of the cuts to see who really pays the price. The fairness test applies principles of justice to tax cuts and spending rises asking questions such as:

- Are the people affected by cuts the ones who benefitted from the boom?
- Can the people affected afford the cuts?
- Are the people contributing tax the people who benefitted?
- Are people contributing tax proportionate to their ability to pay?

- For more information see [church action on poverty](#) (external link)

## Alternatives to Child Detention

Did you send a Christmas Card challenging the then immigration minister, Phil Woollas, to end the detention of children? Last year as part of a Baptist, Methodist and URC campaign, the minister received thousands of cards asking him to end the practice of keeping children in detention centres and pointing out the damage that it does to their physical, emotional and mental health.

The new coalition government has announced its intention to end the detention of children for immigration purposes but has not given any details. The government is currently consulting on alternatives to detention. It is vital that a solution is found which does not involve separating children from their parents.

Outcry!- the campaign against the detention of children co-ordinated by the Children's Society - has asked as many people to respond as possible to respond to the consultation which closes on 1 July 2010. You can find a link to the consultation and background notes [here](#) (external link)

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## Talking and Acting

By the end of the summer, representatives of Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed churches will have gathered to debate key issues of the day. At their respective meetings, issues including war, peace, Israel/Palestine, the environment and ethical investment will have been discussed and decided upon.

Read the papers and discover how your church is engaging with issues of social and moral concern

- Issues debated (and passed) at Baptist Assembly can be found [here](#) (external site)
- Methodist Conference papers available for download [here](#) (external site)

- URC General Assembly papers available for download [here](#) (external site)

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## Pray for those seeking sanctuary

The plight of people seeking sanctuary is a concern that many church congregations regularly hold in their prayers. This issue has resurfaced after the charity, Refugee Migrant Justice (RMJ), went into administration on 15 June 2010. RMJ is the largest specialist provider of legal advice and representation to asylum seekers. Payments via the legal aid system were altered under the last government to be delivered upon the completion of a case. This meant, regardless of length, payment only occurs at the end. For asylum cases this can be years, and meant that RMJ was left with a unsustainable deficit.

- Please consider in your prayers this week:
- Those seeking sanctuary who were represented by RMJ including an average of 900 unaccompanied children
- The lawyers and staff who worked for the organisation
- Other organisations and clients affected by the change in the Legal Aid scheme change

More information about [RMJ's campaign](#) (external link)

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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](mailto:wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk) Telephone - 020 7916 8632 Address - 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

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