

JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM

Newsletter 13

May 2008

The Art of the Possible - Exploring the meaning of faith in the world of politics

Does politics have a role in the Church or is it a distraction from mission? Is politics about compromise and faith about truth? This unique new resource from the Joint Public Issues Team will stimulate and challenge groups to explore these questions. Material for six sessions, comprising leaders' notes and group handouts, is available to download free from:

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/artofthepossible. Each session is complete in itself so you could cover the whole series, pick one, or tailor a session to the particular needs of your community.

Topics include:

- how our images of God shape our understanding of politics;
- what do we mean by 'justice'?
- being a change-maker;
- how should Christians relate to the state?;
- how does parliament work and how can we influence it?;
- what does politics mean for your local church?

'Created in God's Image' - Report of the Working Group on Human Embryology and Early Human Life

Methodist Conference in 2007 asked that a Working Group be established to produce a report on the theological, ethical and social principles in issues of early human life in the light of technological and medical developments. The group comprised Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Church representatives. The full report is now available at www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/co_847_080408.doc. A study guide will be available by June 2009 and it is intended that further work will be undertaken on issues of peri-natal and neo-natal care.

Climate Change Bill

The Climate Change Bill will shortly come to the House of Commons. The government has not yet accepted proposed amendments to include aviation and shipping emissions. They have also not yet agreed to place a limit on the use of overseas credits that allow the financing of carbon reduction in other countries instead of taking action in the UK.

For writing to your MP, see www.jointpublicissues.org.uk and www.christianaid.org.uk.

National Ethical Investment Week, 18-24 May

Organised by the UK Social Investment Forum (UKSIF - www.uksif.org), the first National Ethical Investment Week (NEIW) aims to highlight the benefits of green and ethical investment. With involvement from the financial services industry, NGOs, community and faith-based organisations, NEIW will encourage consumers to reflect on the social and environmental impact of their financial choices and consider a green and ethical investment option. For more information, go to: www.neiw.org or contact Julia Blair: julia.blair@uksif.org ; 020 7749 9956.

International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel, 4-10 June

The World Council of Churches has encouraged its member Churches to support a week of advocacy and action for a just peace in Palestine and Israel, with a commitment to:

- Pray with churches living under occupation, using a special prayer from Church Leaders in Jerusalem (copy attached);
- Educate about actions that make for peace and about facts on the ground that do not;
- Advocate with political leaders using ecumenical policies that promote peace with justice;

- Take up Public Action - in order to stress the depth of church concern.
- For further information, go to: www.oikoumene.org.

City of Sanctuary - First National Conference

Wednesday 4 June, 11.00am - 4.30pm at the Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield.

Could your town or city become an official 'City of Sanctuary' for refugees and asylum-seekers? Find out how Sheffield has become the UK's first official 'City of Sanctuary'; share information and ideas with new City of Sanctuary groups around the country and explore how you can build a grassroots City of Sanctuary movement in your own town or city.

To book a free place or for more information, please contact craig@cityofsanctuary.org or visit www.cityofsanctuary.org.

Speaking Out - Guidance on Campaigning and Political Activity by Charities

Issued in March 2008, the latest guidance from the Charity Commission is online at:

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.asp> and is the first to be published since the new Charities Act came into effect. Although the basic legal position as regards charity campaigning has not changed, this guidance focuses first on the freedoms and possibilities for charities to campaign, and only then on the restrictions and risks that trustees must bear in mind.

REMINDERS

Churches' Refugee Network Conference

Saturday 17 May, 11.00 am - 4.30 pm at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. For further information/booking form, contact Wendy Cooper (wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk ; 020 7916 8632).

Journey to Justice - Breaking the Chains of Global Debt

Sunday 18 May in Birmingham. For further information and to book tickets for the afternoon event, see www.journeytojustice.org or ring 05601 507359.

Not for Sale Sunday - 18 May

See www.notforsalesunday.org for a wide range of worship resources.

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 - telephone 020 7916 8632 - United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.