

NEWS FROM THE FAITH AND UNITY DEPARTMENT

One of the ways in which the Faith and Unity Department seeks to serve our churches is by sending out regular news and updates on issues that link with our programme of work, including ecumenical, political and justice concerns. This supplements the Joint Public Issues Team newsletter prepared in partnership with the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

If you know of anyone not at present receiving this mailing or the JPIT newsletter and who would like to do so, then the Faith and Unity Department would be glad to facilitate this. Please make your request to Janet Farnsworth – jfarnsworth@baptist.org.uk

To read the Faith and Unity news online, go to:

http://www.baptist.org.uk/news_media/latest_news/fandu.html

DATES AND EVENTS

7 March – London – Million Women Rise. A march and rally to mark International Women's Day, and to draw attention to the campaign to end violence against women. It begins at 12.00 in Portman Square. For more information go to: www.millionwomenrise.com

18-20 March – High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts – Partnership for Development. The conference is designed for all who seek to involve their churches in poverty and justice issues and is on the theme of working together with agencies, business, campaigning groups, governments and producer. Cost is £30 for a day session or between £95 and £120 for the whole conference including accommodation. Booking forms are available from gsparkes@baptist.org.uk

26 March 18.00 – Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church – 'Helping the homeless, are we killing with kindness? Community, church and government responses to rough sleepers' Launch of a pamphlet by Housing Justice followed by responses from a panel and open discussion. For more information go to: www.bloomsbury.org.uk/news/Housing%20Justice.htm

28 March 11.00 – Methodist Central Hall, Westminster – 'Put People First'. A service followed by participation in a major demonstration calling upon the G20 meeting of world leaders to put jobs, poverty and climate change at the top of their agenda. For more information go to: www.putpeoplefirst.org.uk

19 March – Coventry – Climate Change Day of Action. Join in this campaigning opportunity in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December. There will be a service at the Cathedral, a march, and a campaign rally at the E.ON headquarters. For more information go to: www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/Countdown-to-Copenhagen-climate-change/come-to-coventry.aspx

10-16 May – Christian Aid Week. This year the focus is on the Democratic Republic of Congo. Worship resources, planning and publicity materials can all be ordered from: www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/christianaidweek/index.aspx

25-31 May – National Family Week. The UK's first National Family Week aims to develop and preserve the many benefits of positive family life. This initiative will highlight the contribution strong family relationships make to a cohesive and well-balanced society. Many events are planned including The Great Family Picnic on Bank Holiday Monday. For more information go to: www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk/index.php

22-25 June – Hothorpe Hall, Theddingworth, LE17 6QX – 'We Belong'. This is a 24 hour racial justice training programme developed by BUGB and offered to all accredited Baptist Ministers. It is an invaluable course that will help ministers in their understanding and appreciation of the UK's growing multicultural society. There are some spaces left and all ministers are warmly encouraged to come. For more information email: jfarnsworth@baptist.org.uk

4 July – Westbury Avenue Baptist Church, Wood Green, London N22 6SA – ‘Bite the Bullet’. A BUGB one day conference aimed at helping young people resist the lure of ‘glamorous’ crime and helping church leaders identify and reflect on the possible causes of such crime. The first part of the day will be aimed at adults and seeks to be creatively educational, the second part will be a concert aimed at young people seeking to galvanise them to contribute to developing their communities. For more information contact: jfarnsworth@baptist.org.uk

1-3 September – St Luke’s College, University of Exeter, EX1 2LU – Calvin Colloquium. Organised by Churches Together in England, this colloquium marks the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth, and will explore the influence of Calvin on the life and witness of the churches of England and Wales. Cost: from £145. For more information contact: carole.golden@cte.org.uk (tel: 0207 529 8132)

10 October – Edmonton Baptist Church, London N9 0LS – ‘The Gathering’. A multicultural day of worship, discussion and talks exploring different cultures and expressing hope for the future. This year’s theme is ‘How is Jesus revealed in your culture’. All are welcome at this important BUGB event. For more information email: jfarnsworth@baptist.org.uk.

LENT PILGRIMAGE – JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Christian Aid invites you to mark Lent in a special way this year by making an online pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It is an opportunity to pray and reflect on the social, political and spiritual realities that are central to that part of the world. You will be introduced to what is happening in the Holy Land today by following in the footsteps of Jesus. To sign up for this pilgrimage, go to:
www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/len/journey-to-jerusalem.aspx

CREATION CHALLENGE

This month BUGB has joined with Methodist and United Reformed Churches in taking up the Creation Challenge! This web-based network offers your church lots of ways to think, discuss, pray and act for the good of your local environment and for our planet. Discover worship and other resources around the urgent issue of climate change. Read what BUGB President, Rev Dr John Weaver, has to say. There are all sorts of ideas from other concerned churches in the monthly newsletters. Sign up today on the web site under ‘Mailing List’ and ‘Subscribe’, and take up the challenge. Go to:
www.creationchallenge.org.uk

DEBT ON OUR DOORSTEP

The Debt On Our Doorstep (DOOD) campaign is urging MPs to sign a motion which calls for extra legal protection for people who are in debt. The Government has proposed that county courts should be able to issue ‘Enforcement Restriction Orders’ (EROs), to allow for any action to recover debts to be suspended for up to 12 months. With rapidly rising levels of redundancies and unemployment, EROs would provide real help now to many households struggling to cope with the recession. However, the Government is now planning to delay introducing the Orders until 2010. DOOD believes that will be far too late for many people, and are urging Government to act now. DOOD has teamed up with John Battle MP in a bid to get Government to bring forward the introduction of Enforcement Restriction Orders.

John Battle has put down an Early Day Motion. Please read the Motion at:
edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=37814&SESSION=899
Please write to your MP urging them to sign it:
www.writetothem.com/

BAPTIST GLOBAL PEACE CONFERENCE

In February, about 350 Baptists gathered from almost 60 different countries to explore what it means to be peacemakers in our world today. The conference took place in Rome, hosted by the Italian

Baptist Union. Each day there was worship, workshops, and storytelling. People with immense experience of what it means to work for peace in situations of conflict shared their understanding, making this a practical exploration of what it means to live out the Gospel in the face of oppression and violence.

Reports of the Conference are available, together with the closing Statement agreed by those present. Copies of these will appear at www.globalbaptistpeace.org or email gsparkes@baptist.org.uk

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

A major new report, together with an action guide, has been produced by ECCR. The title is '*Philippines: Mining or Food?*' and it highlights how mining is destroying island environments, livelihoods and food security in that country. Speakers at the London launch focused on the City's role in financing the Philippines mining sector and on the involvement of UK-based and UK-registered mining companies including BHP Billiton and Xstrata.

For an abbreviated version of the report, go to: www.eccr.org.uk/module-htmlpages-display-pid-52.html

CHURCH WATER CHARGES

The change from discounted water rates to direct billing for water drainage charges is causing severe problems for many churches with large areas of roof or land. Share your concern by signing a petition to government before 6 April. Go to: petitions.number10.gov.uk/ChurchWaterBills

RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM

A significant conference took place at Ushaw College in Durham in January on the theme of 'Receptive Ecumenism'. It looked at how ecumenical progress can be made by asking what we might learn to receive from other Christian traditions. A helpful report of the Conference can be found on the Churches Together in England website. Go to: <http://www.cte.org.uk/>

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