

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

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

12 July – Sea Sunday. Resources are available to help remember seafarers in our prayers. Go to: <http://www.missiontoseafarers.org>

13-19 July – University of Wales, Newport-Caerleon Campus, NP18 3QT – ‘Stewardship, State and Society’. A residential conference which will tackle issues of 21st Century Christian stewardship. Full cost: £260 (one day places for 15 July cost £45). For more information contact Richard Jones: (tel – 01656 865560; email – richardjones@churchinwales.org.uk).

15-21 July – Lyon, France – Conference of European Churches Assembly. The Assembly happens every six years and the theme this time is ‘Called to one Hope in Christ’. For more information go to: <http://assembly.ceceurope.org>

24-26 July – European Baptist Federation: Amsterdam 400. A gathering where we celebrate 400 years of Baptist life. Conference plenary sessions and seminars will be led by inspiring speakers from the worldwide Baptist family. All welcome. For more information go to: <http://www.amsterdam400.org/>

27 July to 1 August – Ede, Netherlands – BWA Annual Gathering and General Council Meeting. This gathering includes worship, workshops, committees and regional meetings. For more information go to: <http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=819>

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)

7-9 September – The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire – CTE Forum: Changing World: Changing Church? A representative gathering organised by Churches Together in England, bringing together Christians of all traditions. For more information go to: http://www.churches-together.net/Groups/86973/Churches_Together_in/CTE/Forum_2009/Forum_2009.aspx

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.

18-25 October – One World Week. The theme for this year is 'Hungry for One World'. Resources are available to help churches mark the week. Go to: www.oneworldweek.org

REAL LIFE WORSHIP

A working group of the Faith and Unity Department has been reflecting on the issue of how worship should relate to life in the world. It has produced six papers to help churches and individuals think through the issues: *Introduction, Prayer, Bible Reading, Lord's Supper, Psalms, and Songs*. They can be downloaded by going to: <http://reallifeworship.wordpress.com>. Or email your request to: jfarnworth@baptist.org.uk

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Two web-based resources have been produced for use in our churches this autumn:

a) *Creation in Crisis - a time for prayer and action*

This is a programme of resources to encourage and assist churches to observe a Time for Creation in 2009, between 1 September and 4 October. In preparation for the UN Climate Change Summit which will take place in Copenhagen in December 2009, the Creation Time resources will include material to enable churches, groups and individuals to focus on issues relating to the decisions which will need to be taken in Copenhagen. The resources are undergirded by the hope we share as Christians, based ultimately in God's good plans for his creation, the cosmic scope of Christ's saving work, and the Spirit's renewing power at work within and through human beings. Go to: www.ctbi.org.uk/375/

b) *A World in Waiting: Advent hope in an economic crisis*

Following the global financial crisis over the past year, hope is in short supply and needs to be rebuilt. And that is what Advent is all about - a season to take seriously the plight of "those who dwell in darkness", but also to awaken a longing and commitment to a better and different kind of world. The resources will be available from September and will include reflections, liturgical ideas, prayers and pointers to action. Go to: www.ctbi.org.uk/398/

REITH LECTURES 2009

These have the title 'A New Citizenship' and are being delivered by Professor Michael Sandel. They address the prospects of a new politics of the common good, and address such issues as markets and morals and genetics and morality. The lectures can be heard or transcripts downloaded by going to: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00kt7rg>

JUBILEE DEBT CAMPAIGN – END THE VULTURE CULTURE

This is a campaign for legislation to tackle Vulture funds, one of the most unacceptable elements of the financial system. Vulture Funds buy up the defaulted debts of poor countries cheaply and then attempt to collect of their full value, often suing through the courts. Vultures often take legal action in UK courts which is why legislation to outlaw such cases is needed. For more information on the campaign and how to write to your MP, go to: www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk

CHRISTIAN AID – SRI LANKA CRISIS APPEAL

Christian Aid has launched an emergency appeal to bring aid to people in the rapidly deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka. You can access information, a prayer, and opportunities to give, by going to: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/current/sri-lanka/index.aspx>

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

The ECCR have made available a report entitled '*Vulnerable Migrant Workers: The Responsibility of Business*' This provides an overview of the vulnerable position of many migrant workers employed in Britain and Ireland and offers a comparative analysis of the extent to which nine food companies address this vulnerability. To download a copy, go to: <http://www.eccr.org.uk/module-htmlpages-display-pid-20.html>

GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

a) *Real Help for Communities: Targeted Support Fund* –

This fund has £15 million for projects focused on the fifty areas of England that are most at risk of increased deprivation during the recession. Small charities, which offer vital local services to those most in need during the recession, and have an annual income of £30,000 to £250,000, can apply to their nearest local funder for grants of £10,000 to £40,000. For more information and to find your local area and funder go to:

http://www.cdf.org.uk/bfora/systems/xmlviewer/default.asp?arg=DS_CDF_TECHART_23/page.xsl/27&xsl_argx=5

b) *Churches and Faith Buildings: Realizing the Potential* –

This paper aims to help faith groups identify sources of funding that could develop places of worship to make them better able to deliver public services. It seeks to build capacity of faith groups to address local priorities and access appropriate funding. Go to:

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/5991.aspx

ONE WORLD WEEK – INTERN RESEARCHER/WRITER REQUIRED

This is an opportunity for a recent graduate to develop existing research skills and put them to practical use in a small national development education charity. The Intern will research and compile existing global awareness materials and support a project exploring One World Week Across Faiths, with an initial focus on Muslims. Starting mid October 2009 for a fixed term and based in Central Reading. Closing date for applications is Friday 10 July 2009; interviews 21 July 2009. For more details go to:

<http://www.oneworldweek.org> (tel: 0118 939 4933)

20TH BAPTIST WORLD CONGRESS – 28 JULY TO 1 AUGUST 2010 – HONOLULU, HAWAII

This is the largest international gathering of Baptists. Held every five years, the 2010 theme is 'Hear the Spirit'. In response to the current economic downturn the BWA is offering a \$25 discount to those who register early. United States Residents will pay \$175, down from \$200, while residents of all other countries will pay \$150, down from \$175. To take advantage of the discount, persons may register online or submit their registration form and fee by regular mail, fax, wire transfer, or in person no later than Friday, July 31, 2009. Online registration or a printable version of the registration form is available at the congress website:

<http://www.bwacongress2010.org>

ASSEMBLY 2009 – PUBLIC RESOLUTIONS

The following two resolutions were passed at Assembly this year:

a) *Young People and 'Mosquito' alarms* –

This Assembly notes with concern the negative portrayal of young people within our national media, the frequent failure to listen to the voices of young people, and the marginalisation often experienced by young people within our society.

This Assembly believes that the use of 'Mosquito' alarms in response to perceived or actual anti-social behaviour is an example of unjust and discriminatory treatment of young people, and serves to reinforce popular misconceptions.

This Assembly

- *calls upon the Government to ban the use of 'Mosquito' alarms as a way of trying to address anti-social behaviour;*
- *urges Baptist churches to investigate and oppose the use of 'Mosquito' alarms in their local area;*
- *recognises the problems faced by the community and shopkeepers due to antisocial behaviour, and asks local churches to work with other agencies and services to reduce such behaviour.*

b) Asylum Seekers

This Assembly continues to affirm the teaching of scripture to welcome strangers and foreigners in our midst, recognising the particular vulnerability of refugees and asylum seekers in the face of the current economic crisis.

This Assembly welcomes the work of the Independent Asylum Commission, urging that proper consideration be given to its wide-ranging recommendations, and calling upon the Government to:

- *confer a right to work on an asylum seeker waiting longer than six months for final resolution of their case;*
- *bring an end to the detention of children, whose best interests should be paramount in the decision-making process.*

This Assembly asks that the Baptist Union of Great Britain share in campaigning and resourcing churches in support of these proposals.

Our churches are asked to consider how they might respond appropriately to these resolutions. Further information and resources are available from the Faith and Unity Department.

Graham Sparkes
Faith and Unity Department
Email: gsparkes@baptist.org.uk
Tel: 01235 517728
July 2009