

POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS ACTION WEEK, 31 January - 7 February

Twelve performances of a specially commissioned drama, 'Voices from the Edge', will take place during Action Week, featuring the stories of seven people with personal experience of poverty, debt, destitution or homelessness. The script can be downloaded free of charge from the Action Week website for groups to use in putting on performances for the remainder of 2009.

To access the script, a full list of events, and resources, go to www.actionweek.org.uk to register your details.

Economic Downturn: Towards Sustainable Economies and Livelihoods

UK churches came together on 20th January to address the global economic and environmental crisis in a recent CTBI conference at Methodist Church House.

Bob Goudzwaard a former Dutch MP and economist in his key note speech referred to "a crisis not just in but of a system" warning us of a Faustian compact in which money expands its domain where politicians and government are brought under the hypnotic sway of finance capital. The God of finance, a self-made idol has betrayed us. Ann Pettifor, campaign director for Christian environmental charity Operation Noah, echoed this, saying: 'Principles of greed, selfishness and avarice underpinned the massive growth of credit, debt, consumption and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with consumption.'

The conference heard of a vision of 'the richness of sufficiency' and the need to find meaningful human employment for future generations in ensuring that 'self-interest prompts what justice requires.'

Papers and reports from the Conference will be available soon.

If you would like to listen to the keynote speeches and panel discussion, you can download them from the Methodist Church website:

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.webradio>

GET FAIR Constituency Lobby - June 2009

Get Fair will be holding a constituency-based lobby of MPs and parliamentary candidates at the end of June, comprising local delegations of supporters in as many constituencies as possible. A target list of 50 key constituencies has been identified, including MPs with specific manifesto responsibilities, and key marginal seats. There will be a series of regional briefings in March/April.

If you can offer specific support, or can help publicise the lobby in e-mail newsletters, website or other mailings, please contact Becca Hancock (0161 236 9321; beccah@church-poverty.org.uk).

TWO EVENTS FOCUSING ON THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Wealth cheque or health check?

Thursday 19 February, 6.00 for 6.30 pm at David Lecture Theatre, Anglia Ruskin University, East Road, Cambridge CB1 1PT

Seminar organised by Chaplaincy to People at Work, Cambridgeshire and Anglia Ruskin University. Speakers: Prem Sikka (Professor of Accounting, Essex University), Neville Reyner (President, British Chamber of Commerce), Malcolm Brown (Director of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England).

Bookings by 12 February to (01223 276657). Cost £5 including buffet, payable by cheque ('Chaplaincy to People at Work') to CPW Administrator, c/o 12 Station Road, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9LQ.

Money and Debt Day - How can the church help people in debt?

Saturday 28 February, in two repeated sessions (morning/afternoon), registration 9.30 am or 12.30 pm, at East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon CR0 5LP

Presentation organised by Hope in the Community and Church and Society, URC Southern Synod, to help churches understand the rising problem of personal debt and address it from a biblical and practical perspective.

Download a booking form at www.urcsouthern.org.uk to be returned by 14 February to alison.west@hitc.org.uk (01634 814240). Cost £5 including refreshments and Money Management book, payable by cheque ('Hope in the Community Ltd') to URC, c/o Hope in the Community, 5a New Road Avenue, Chatham ME4 6BB.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? - a church response to social disorder linked to gangs, guns and knives

Wednesday 11 February, 6.30 for 7.00-8.30 pm at Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7BJ

Regional launch of the significant report published in summer 2008 by Churches Together in England with the report's chief compiler, Bishop Joe Aldred, CTE's Secretary for Minority Ethnic Affairs.

CHURCHES REFUGEE NETWORK CONFERENCE 2009

Advance notice that this year's CRN Conference will be held on Saturday 6 June at Holy Apostles' Church, Pimlico, London. Further details will follow but please book the date now.

SHOPPERS DEMAND SUPERMARKET WATCHDOG - Call for Ombudsman over stores abusing suppliers

Eight out of ten shoppers want a watchdog appointed to monitor and penalise supermarkets which treat suppliers unfairly, according to a poll commissioned by Traidcraft, reported on 15 January. The poll, and research by leading economist Professor Roger Clarke, shows that an ombudsman would result in more choice for consumers, better products and, in some cases like agricultural products, lower prices.

It is expected that within a month the Competition Commission will launch 30 days' public consultation over its proposals for a stronger code of practice for the grocery trade and also submit to retailers its plans for a watchdog to police the code.

Visit www.traidcraft.co.uk for more information and to join the campaign for a supermarket ombudsman.

23 February – 8 March – Fairtrade Fortnight.

A variety of materials are available to help churches mark this event, including a Church Action Guide. Go to: www.fairtrade.org.uk.

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 ; 020 7916 8632 ; address - URC, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.