

Churches question whether BNP should be permitted to stand in elections

Written by Administrator

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- Christians should challenge the BNP's 'rhetoric of hatred'

The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church in Britain are questioning whether the BNP should be allowed to stand as a party in the General Election.

This follows a ruling that the BNP has failed to comply with a court instruction to change its membership criteria. Under the terms of the Race Relations Act, the BNP has been forced to change its whites-only membership policy, but the Equality and Human Rights Commission has argued that, despite this change, the constitution remains indirectly racist.

"If people want to make our laws, first of all they must comply with them. We would therefore question whether the BNP should be allowed to stand as a party in the General Election," said Graham Sparkes, Head of Faith and Unity for the Baptist Union of Great Britain. "Despite the changes to their membership criteria, the court has ruled that the BNP's constitution remains discriminatory."

"As Christians, we have a duty to challenge the rhetoric of hatred championed by extremist parties such as the BNP," continued Rachel Lampard, Public Issues Policy Adviser for the Methodist Church. "Every human being is created in the image of God and every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their nationality."

In addition to the discriminatory membership criteria, the Churches highlight three particular areas of concern with the BNP's policies; - the abolition of anti-discrimination laws - a halt on all new immigration, together with repatriation policies and plans to review all recent grants of residency or citizenship - cutting all foreign aid. "We celebrate the fact that Britain is a multicultural society and that British aid can change and improve life for people around the world, such as those affected by the earthquake in Haiti," said Simon Loveitt, Public Issues Spokesperson for the United Reformed Church.