

Church leaders urge politicians to take the Pledge

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 04 March 2010 00:00 -

National Church leaders are calling on politicians to commit to responsible campaigning on issues of asylum and immigration, and to act to end the detention of children and families within the asylum system.

The leaders of the Methodist Church in Britain, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church are asking politicians to take the Sanctuary Pledge, which is an initiative of the Citizens for Sanctuary Campaign.

The Revd David Gamble, President of the British Methodist Conference, said, "Politicians must resist the temptation to use asylum as a political football in their election campaigns. We strongly support the Sanctuary Pledge campaign's call for politicians to campaign responsibly, and not to demean those fleeing persecution and seeking sanctuary in Britain. I hope people will ask candidates standing for election to sign the Sanctuary Pledge."

The pledge is a commitment to campaign positively and sensitively, helping the public to understand why it is important to offer a safe haven to people fleeing persecution. It also asks politicians to support policies that will end the forced detention of children and families, and to promote awareness of the UK's long heritage of providing a safe haven for people seeking sanctuary.

The Revd John Marsh, Moderator of the United Reformed Church, said, "By taking this pledge, political candidates will show that they are serious about offering sanctuary to those who cannot find safety in their homelands. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours as ourselves, and the Citizens for Sanctuary campaign encourages us to do just that."

"We are particularly concerned about the detention of children and young people in the asylum system," continued the Revd Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. "There is overwhelming evidence that holding children in detention centres is damaging to their physical and emotional wellbeing. Children are particularly vulnerable, and no matter where they are from, we all have a duty to protect them from harm. We encourage politicians from all parties will sign the pledge and commit to ending the detention of children."