

VOTE 2007 – INFORMATION FOR ELECTIONS

Thursday 3 May 2007 is Election Day. Elections will be held for the Scottish Parliament and Scottish local councils, the Welsh Assembly, and for some local councils in England.

Action of Churches Together in Scotland and the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) have prepared briefing documents on the hot topics for the Scottish Parliamentary election, and instructions on how to host a hustings event. For more information visit www.actsparl.org or www.acts-scotland.org, or contact SCPO on 0131 558 8137.

The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have made statements encouraging members not to vote for parties that promote racial or religious hatred. The website *Countering Political Extremism*, set up by the Methodist Church, has more information and has recently been updated: <http://www.methodistchurch.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.content&cmid=759>

For more details about English local council elections, visit the Joint Public Issues Team website www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

SEXUAL ORIENTATION REGULATIONS – PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The Sexual Orientation Regulations designed to prevent discrimination in the provision of goods and services in England, Scotland and Wales have now been published by the Government. The Joint Public Issues Team has prepared a briefing paper for members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church outlining some of the key issues and explaining what the new regulations will mean in practice. See www.jointpublicissues.org.uk or contact us (details at the end of this newsletter).

NOT FOR SALE SUNDAY – 20 MAY 2007

CHASTE – Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking Across Europe – is providing fresh resources to churches to enable them to be informed and their membership engaged in this issue. *'Not for Sale Sunday'* on 20 May 2007 seeks to raise awareness in churches of the many ways in which women, girls, boys and men are exploited in the sex trade in its local and global manifestations. This special Sunday will equip the churches to engage in the issue and highlight the problems associated with sex trafficking.

For more information visit www.chaste.org.uk - www.notforsalesunday.org - or call 0845 456 9335.

STILL HUMAN, STILL HERE

A coalition of asylum and anti-poverty groups are lobbying MPs over the UK Borders Bill. They are asking supporters to take urgent action to coincide with the Bill reaching the report stage in the House of Commons. For information about the issue, and how you can help, go to www.stillhuman.org.uk

If you would like to attend the Churches' Refugee Network Annual Conference *'The Needs of Strangers'* on Sat 19 May at Holy Apostles, Pimlico, London, please contact Wendy Cooper on 020 7916 8632.

BAMA KO

Bamako is the title of a film, on general release from 23 February. The film explores the unjust and damaging policies of the IMF and World Bank on the African continent in general, and Mali in particular - the home of the director Abderrahmane Sissako. Christian Aid and Q-News have come together to mount the BAMA KO petition targeting the IMF and World Bank, and will be delivered at their meeting in April. Actor and executive producer of the film, Danny Glover is working with Christian Aid and Q-News to promote the petition and its demands.

You can hear him speak about the film and sign the petition at:

http://www.pressureworks.org/play/video/270207_bamako_glover.html

GREEN CHURCH AWARDS

The *Church Times* is running an award scheme to celebrate what churches and individuals are doing to further environmental sustainability. Visit www.greenchurchawards.org. The deadline for applications is 30 June.

WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE: 1 – 3 June, Swanwick

'*The Earth is the Lord's*' – *What is our Response-ability?* is the theme for the 2007 World Mission Conference arranged by Methodists for World Mission in partnership with the Methodist Church, Christian Aid, USPG and Christians Aware. Enquiries and booking information from Meg Bailey, 0161 432 3854.

VOTES FOR PRISONERS

The Department for Constitutional Affairs recently held a consultation about whether convicted prisoners in the UK should be allowed to vote in elections. The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church submitted a joint response, which can be read on the Joint Public Issues Team website www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpublications.htm

JUBILEE DEBT CAMPAIGN – BECOME A JUBILEE CONGREGATION

The Jubilee Debt Campaign is continuing to work to eradicate the debt owed by poor countries to the rich. They have recently launched a new programme where churches can become certified 'Jubilee Congregations'. This means Jubilee Congregations agree to:

- Affirm the aims of the Jubilee Debt Campaign in their work to free poor people and countries from the burden of unjust and unpayable debt
- Pray for justice for the world's poorest communities
- Provide a contact person to facilitate education and action on debt
- Make an appropriate annual donation for the work of the Jubilee Debt Campaign
- Take at least one action a year on debt as a congregation.

If you would like your Church to become a *Jubilee Congregation*, see www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/?lid=2910

The Jubilee Debt Campaign's Annual Conference is taking place on 28 April at South Camden Community School, London NW1. Entry is free. If you would like to book a place call 020 7324 4722. Visit www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk for more information.

THEOLOGICAL SUMMER SCHOOL: 23 June – 7 July 2007, Dunblane

This International Summer School in Theology, Church & Society will offer an opportunity to Christians and others from all over the world to study the complex and varied social, religious and cultural life of Scotland. The fortnight is planned to explore some of the richness of past and present religious life as it faces globalisation. The historic impact of devolution, contemporary grappling with sectarianism, the new challenges of a multi-faith society will be among many aspects of the Scottish scene to be picked up through a series of visits and encounters with key people. Dunblane will be the 'base camp' for the event. A wide range of excursions will introduce participants to Iona and the Iona Community, the Highlands / European Year of Culture 2007, Edinburgh and Glasgow Divinity Schools and the history of the Reformation, with visits to St Andrews and the Border Abbeys.

For more information call 01786 823 588 or visit www.scottishchurcheshouse.org

CHURCH IN NEW HOUSING AREAS

Churches Together in England has set up a new website dedicated to the Church in new housing areas. www.cinha.org.uk looks at issues to do with building community and church in areas of development, has places to share stories and experiences, and information on the planning process.

CONTACT

The **JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM** newsletter is distributed through existing denominational mailing lists. If you are reading a copy that someone else has given you, and you would like to be added to the mailing, or if you have any other queries, contact Wendy Cooper wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk tel. 020 7916 8632 Address: 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.