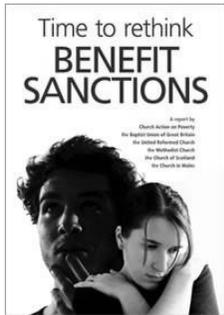


Department of Work & Pensions are “stubbornly ignoring” calls for sanctions review



A coalition of national Churches and charities has criticised the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) over its refusal to undertake a full review of the benefit sanctions system. The DWP has issued its overdue response to the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into benefit sanctions, but has failed to commit to a review as recommended.

The Select Committee, the government's own advisors, the Social Security Advisory Committee, charities and Churches have all called for a full independent review of the regime. These groups have highlighted the extreme hardship caused, the inconsistent and unjust application of sanctions and the lack of evidence that they encourage people into work.

The Methodist Church, Baptist Union, Church in Wales, Church of Scotland, United Reformed Church and charity Church Action on Poverty have called for an immediate suspension of sanctions against families with children and people with mental ill-health. They say the DWP's response does not go far enough and have called again for a review.

A Prayer for Justice and Peace

Lord Jesus, friend of all in need,
you care for the homeless, for refugees and
exiles,
and all victims of violence.
Strengthen those who try to serve them
and help us to bring them your love. Amen

Connexional News is compiled by Rev Andy Fyall

Any suggestions for items should be sent to Andy by 10th of January.


News from **The Methodist Church**
News from the Methodist Connexion – Advent 2015

Extraordinary gifts

Practical gifts that help people in some of the world's poorest communities to become all that they can. Our gifts directly support our partners - creating positive, lasting change in poor communities. Simply choose a gift for a friend or family member from our selection and we'll send you a colourful card for you to personalise and give.

If you want to see what you can give in this way, please visit:



www.allwecan.org.uk/extraordinary-gifts/extraordinary-gifts

Refugee Crisis

The Methodist Conference is urging members and friends to PRAY, REFLECT AND ACT to make a difference to the many displaced refugees in our world and on our doorstep.

A fund is now open to receive donations to support Methodist Churches that work with refugees in Macedonia, Serbia, Germany and Italy.

Donations can be made in cash, cheque or by bank transfer.

For cheques, please make them payable to 'The Methodist Church World Mission Fund' and clearly mark with 'Methodist Refugee Support' on the back. Send cheques to 'Mission and Advocacy, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5JR'. Please include your name and contact details.

For other means of donation, please email Stephen Drury with any queries or call him on 0207 467 3532.

Please consider gift-aiding your contribution if you can - details here.

The Notice of Motion (2015/220) which was overwhelmingly supported at this year's Methodist Conference says:

The Conference welcomes the Statement by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) (3 June 2015) regarding those fleeing war, conflict and hunger by risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean, and commends the work of the Churches Commission for Migration in Europe (CCME) in this urgent situation, as well as the efforts of the Churches in Greece and Italy, especially the 'Mediterranean Hope' project of the Methodist Church of Italy delivered in association with the Federation of Protestant Churches.

The Conference notes the launch of the 'Sanctuary for All' initiative at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham on 11 May 2015, which offers inspiring biblical, worship, theological and practical resources for local churches, especially for Racial Justice Sunday, and encourages the Council to ensure that the Connexional Team explores how this resource might be published, possibly in association with others.

The Conference welcomes the enormous contribution that migrant people and refugees have made and are making to Britain, and calls on all our Methodist churches to consider offering sanctuary to at least one individual or family who have reached Europe across the Mediterranean, until they can fend for themselves.

The Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference to write to Her Majesty's Government:

incorporating the spirit of this Notice of Motion
urging continued financial assistance for refugees within the region
advocating an even more generous and compassionate approach to a situation to which we, by some of our actions in the region have contributed
urging Her Majesty's Government to accept a much increased number of those arriving in Europe, commensurate with our size and resources.

1 July 2015

Westminster turns blue



To mark 70 years since the founding of the United Nations, Methodist Central Hall Westminster, the first meeting place of the United Nations General Assembly, will be turning blue this Saturday 24 October.

To celebrate UN day, Central Hall will be joining iconic monuments, buildings, statues, bridges and other international landmarks in being bathed in blue lights. Pictures will be broadcast across the world through social media under the hash tag #UN70.

As well as turning blue, Central Hall is holding a unique 'UNEARTH Exhibition' for eight weeks, celebrating the achievements and history of the UN.

The Methodist Church and Social Media

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