



NEWS FROM ECCR

March 2017

ECCR e-Newsletter

A monthly round-up of news from the Churches and other sources in the areas of economic justice, human rights and environmental sustainability.

We invite you to forward this e-Newsletter to your friends.
They can also subscribe direct by going to the ECCR website: www.eccr.org.uk

ACTION POINT

Every month we invite ECCR supporters to do something, read something, or pray about something, so that together we are making an impact and making a difference.

Our suggestion for this month is the Christian Aid Campaign, **THE BIG SHIFT**. We are asked to email our bank and tell them how important it is that they scale up their investment in renewables, to help fight climate change.

The biggest banks in the UK, the ones that most of us rely upon to look after our money, are not using that money to look after our earth, our shared home. Instead they continue to finance the extraction and burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas, all of which produce carbon pollution. This in turn fuels climate change, threatening the lives of our sisters and brothers around the world and putting all of our futures at risk.

If we're going to build a better world and prevent irreversible damage to God's abundant creation, we need to make the big shift away from fossil fuels and into clean energy.

Money is key. And your bank could be part of the solution.

See more at:

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/campaigns/climate-change/the-big-shift>

NEWS FROM ECCR

Mining Advocacy

ECCR has established a new project with corporate member USPG which will focus on Mining and solidarity with churches in countries where human rights and environmental safety is threatened by global mining companies, beginning with the Philippines. An Intern is being appointed through "Action Reconciliation Service for Peace in the UK" and she will begin work in the autumn.

EMC West Midlands

Abi Nicholls, the EMC West Midland Development Officer, is now offering a half day workshop to churches in the West Midlands who have used Justin Welby's Dethroning Mammon book as a Lent Course, to further explore issues relating to faith and finance. A new five-week bible study course is also being trialled at St Peter's Church, Little Aston. The course covers topics such as usury, wealth, poverty and charity vs justice and explores ideas of how where we keep our money and where we spend our money can affect our local communities and their financial resilience. This course will soon be available for use, please contact Abigail.nicholls@eccr.org.uk for more information.

SALT Network

ECCR's Executive Director was present at the launch of this new Christian Aid network. It aims to support leaders of all sizes of business, to improve practices at their company and influence others in their sector to change their practices. It will also give them an opportunity to provide financial support to entrepreneurs in developing countries, through a special Christian Aid fund.

<http://www.lifeandwork.org/news/news/post/770-christian-aid-launches-new-business-network>

ECCR and Individual Supporters

In addition to the invaluable financial assistance from its corporate members, ECCR depends on our Individual Supporters. We are grateful to those of you who make a regular financial contribution to our work, and even more when it can be Gift-aided. As the beginning of a new year, we ask all our individual supporters to consider increasing their gifts, and if possible putting them on a regular basis like a monthly Direct Debit. It is now possible to donate through the website

<http://www.eccr.org.uk/support/donate/>

There will be a national meeting for all individual supporters in October, probably in Birmingham. More details soon.

OTHER NEWS

ASSET MANAGERS

Share Action has released its European Asset Managers Responsible Investment Ranking for 2017. It examines and ranks the transparency and Responsible Investment (RI) practices of 40 of the largest asset managers in Europe
<https://shareaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Survey-LiftingTheLid.pdf>

BENEFITS

In a Parliamentary debate on the impact on claimants of the time taken between applying for Universal Credit and receiving payment, the Bishop of Oxford asked the Government about the link between benefit delays and food bank use.

<https://churchinparliament.org/2017/03/09/bishop-of-oxford-asks-government-about-link-between-benefit-delays-and-food-bank-use/>

BETTING INDUSTRY

Following the call by the General Synod last month for the imposition of a maximum stake of £2 on fixed odds terminals in high street betting shops, the Times newspaper claimed this would 'wipe out' thousands of jobs and cost the Treasury £1 billion in tax.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/20-000-jobs-at-risk-if-stakes-are-cut-on-gaming-machines-88n2fqm5v>

BUDGET

Reacting to the Chancellor's Budget Statement the Bishop of Birmingham welcomed the extra £2 billion over three years for social care in England but it said it not go far enough. He expressed concern that funding for the sector is not sustainable enough.

<https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Budget-Bishop-of-Birmingham-welcomes-social-care-boost>

The Children's Society said that the Budget increases to the National Living Wage and personal tax allowances mean little in the face of steep rises in inflation, the freeze to family benefits and cuts to tax credits for those with three or more children. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast shows inflation rising to 3.9% this year, but child benefit has increased by just 40p since 2010. In the UK 5 million children are expected to be living in poverty by 2020.

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/press-releases/the-childrens-society-responds-to-todays-budget-announcement>

ECCR-supporter Barrow Cadbury Trust also helped fund this report from the Women's Budget Group which shows that women and those on low incomes continue to shoulder by far the greatest burden of tax and benefit changes and cuts

to public spending since 2010, with black and Asian women facing a triple disadvantage.

https://www.barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WBG_Budget2017_Fullresponse.pdf

In the post-Budget debate the Bishop of Chester feared that the triple lock and the guarantee on tax rates led to stealth taxes of one form or another. In a healthy democracy, the more open, direct and progressive taxation is, the better.

<https://churchinparliament.org/2017/03/15/bishop-of-chester-welcomes-government-policy-reversal-on-national-insurance-contributions/>

BUSINESS

In a Sunday Times article (behind the pay wall) Luke Johnson, chairman of Risk Capital Partners, discusses the role of faith in business, exploring how Biblical teaching on making use of talent and the accumulation of wealth may affect entrepreneurship.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/praise-the-lord-and-keep-the-faith-in-start-ups-zr3dgdrtw>

In the United States the InterFaith Center on Corporate Responsibility was among those who wrote to the Trump Administration expressing strong investor opposition to special interest efforts to weaken key elements of the shareholder resolution process.

<http://www.iccr.org/investor-groups-representing-65-trillion-tell-trump-admin-current-shareholder-resolution-process>

Faith-based investment organizations have also urged the Securities and Exchange Commission to keep a rule requiring businesses to disclose the CEO/median worker pay ratio. They say that it provides valuable information about a company's health, and is an important measure of income inequality in society.

<http://www.iccr.org/moral-concerns-raised-over-pay-ratio-roll-back>

DEBT

A new study compiled by charities including StepChange, AdviceUK and the Children's Society reports that some bailiffs are still abusing their powers when trying to recover debts despite changes to the law three years ago

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39257398>

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Just Finance Foundation has appointed Rowena Young as the charity's first Executive Director. The JFF will oversee and continue the programmes previously initiated by the Archbishop's Task Group on Responsible Credit and Savings in partnership with the Church Urban Fund.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2017/03/new-executive-director-appointed-to-lead-archbishop-of-canterbury%E2%80%99s-initiative-to-promote-fairer-finance.aspx>

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Commission on Economic Justice set up by the Institute for Public Policy Research (see *November e-Newsletter*) is getting under way. Its members include the Archbishop of Canterbury. In a Guardian article its chair, Tom Kibasi, provides a good summary of where we are post-Brexit.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/11/brexit-kibasi-ippr-article-50-referendum-remain-leave>

EXECUTIVE PAY

An answer to a House of Commons question on Church Commissioners salaries said that the staff in the investment teams are not in a pay banding system but have salaries compared against market data from similar institutional investors each year. They are in the lower to median quartiles of that data.

<https://churchinparliament.org/2017/03/23/church-commissioners-salaries/>

FAIR TRADE

A new report from the Fairtrade Foundation and Traidcraft, 'Brexit: Let's change trade for good', says that new figures show Brexit could make or break farmers from some of the poorest countries by creating fairer trade or it could result in at least £1 billion in extra taxes.

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/media-centre/news/march-2017/brexit>

FARMING

In a House of Lords debate on Brexit the Bishop of Leeds asked about the withdrawal from the common agricultural policy. What will be the impact on the land and on countryside management, and who will replace the subsidies that allow many farming communities to survive, if not thrive?

<https://churchinparliament.org/2017/03/23/bishop-of-leeds-asks-government-about-farming-and-rural-policy-post-brexit/>

An article in the Daily Telegraph Article recorded one fund manager saying that returns in forestry could increase off the back of Brexit because the fall in the pound has made UK timber more competitive than foreign imports. It notes that the Church of England is among the institutions known to have a large forestry portfolio.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/03/26/ex-morgan-stanley-md-money-does-grow-trees-actually/>

FOSSIL FUELS

Operation Noah is calling on Churches and others to become involved in Global Divestment Mobilisation, which is taking place 5-13 May. They call it “an opportunity to join with thousands of others to highlight the climate impacts of churches, universities, local government and pension funds investing in fossil fuels” and demand that they divest.

<http://brightnow.org.uk/action/global-divestment-mobilisation-coming-soon/>

Quakers in Britain are inviting Friends to join in the Global Divestment Mobilisation week (above) to celebrate divestment commitments that meetings have already made, or by taking a first step on the journey towards divestment.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/sustainability/fossil-fuel-divestment>

‘Investments & Pensions Europe’ drew attention to the second attempt by the Church Commissioners and others to get ExxonMobil to disclose how it will ensure its business will remain resilient as global efforts to mitigate climate change proceed

<https://www.ipe.com/countries/uk/church-commissioners-turns-up-pressure-on-exxonmobil/10017752.article>

And this post shows the involvement of many Catholic religious communities, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

[https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2017/02/investors-with-\\$4trn-under-management-renew-call-on-exxon-to-address-climate-risk.aspx](https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2017/02/investors-with-$4trn-under-management-renew-call-on-exxon-to-address-climate-risk.aspx)

An article in the EuroMoney magazine, using data from sustainability organization Ceres’ study of shareholder resolutions in the oil and gas sector, shows how religious organizations are now taking their role as responsible investors to a new and much more vocal level over climate change.

<http://www.euromoney.com/Article/3666670/Category/0/ChannelPage/207408/Will-ETF-providers-join-the-Church-and-save-the-planet.html>

In the United States, 35 diverse religious leaders joined together to welcome a Republican resolution on climate change which affirms the impacts of climate change, acknowledges that human activity has contributed to these changes, and calls on Congress to work constructively on solutions.

<http://www.iccr.org/35-national-religious-leaders-applaud-republican-climate-resolution>

HOUSING

In a House of Lords debate on the Housing market, the Bishop of St Albans called for the lifting of Government restrictions on the ability of local authorities to borrow money for social housing, and for more affordable rural housing.

<https://churchinparliament.org/2017/03/02/bishop-of-st-albans-raises-need-for-affordable-housing-in-rural-areas/>

ISRAEL / PALESTINE

The World Council of Churches has expressed grave concern about a new law passed by the Knesset which reportedly forbids granting entry visas to foreign nationals who call for economic, cultural or academic boycotts of either Israel or the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-gravely-concerned-over-israels-travel-ban>

PENSIONS

An Independent article on how the Parliamentary Pension Fund is invested in cigarette companies, oil giants and 'tax avoiders' compares its policies with those of the Church Commissioners.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mps-pension-scheme-investment-tobacco-cigarette-bat-fossil-fuels-tax-avoidance-a7607901.html>

POVERTY

The Bishop of Liverpool wrote in the Huffington Post of his anger that the cumulative impact of the government's welfare reforms is hitting the poorest hardest. He is co-chair of the city's Strategy Group for Fairness and Tackling Poverty.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/bishop-paul-bayes/uk-poverty-charity_b_15561714.html

Church Action on Poverty has again warned about zero-hours contracts, after the number of workers employed on the controversial work arrangements reached a record high.

<https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Churches-debt-counsellors-warns-of-job-insecurity-after-zero-hours-contracts-rise>

The Bishop of Durham has expressed concern over the rise in child poverty. He says that the Government statistics released this month show that children are already more likely to be in poverty than the overall population and the two-child limit will only increase the risk of children growing up in poverty.

<http://cofecomms.tumblr.com/post/158477326142/statement-from-the-bishop-of-durham-on-child>

RETAIL

For the fourth year in a row Sainsbury's - unlike Morrison's, Tesco and Waitrose - has refused to stock The Real Easter Egg, created by Meaningful Chocolate Company, a Fairtrade Easter egg that teaches the Christian Easter story.

http://www.christiantoday.com/article/why_wont_sainsburys_stock_this_christian_easter_egg/106040.htm

WORLD DEVELOPMENT

A new Christian Aid report, 'The Scandal of Inequality: the multiples faces of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean', highlights that inequality in the region based on identity, gender, economic situation, climate change impact or geographic location remains an outrage. Despite millions of people moving out of poverty, wealth and social inequalities remain deeply entrenched and the region still remains the most unequal in the world.

http://www.christianaid.org.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/582_March_2017/the-multiple-faces-of-inequality-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.aspx

Church women were amongst those attending the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. This year's theme, "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work", looked at issues such as how to promote equality and how to give women better access to education.

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2017/03/anglicans-hopes-high-as-un-conference-on-economic-empowerment-of-women-opens.aspx>

RESOURCES

Local Election Resource: Explore Faith & Politics 2017

In the run-up to the local Elections on May 4th, the Joint Public Issues Team (Baptist Union, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland) together with the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office have produced "Explore", a resource to help congregations engage with these elections and to explore some of the issues within their communities.

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/explore-faith-politics-2017/>

"Poor Church, Transfigured Church"

Extracts from a sermon by Church Action on Poverty supporter Ian Ross can be found at:

<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sparkle/201703/sparkle201703pdf>

Prayer for 2017

Christians on the Left offer this version of the Lord's Prayer:

http://www.christiansontheleft.org.uk/praying_for_2017

"An Unquenchable Thirst for More?"

A paper from Christian Aid on Faith and Economic Growth seeks to stimulate a wide conversation about economic growth and to provide a space to explore and advocate some alternative economic models. It reflects on economic growth within the context of the whole 'economy of life', outlining questions, identifying a particularly salient issue and making suggestions for the future.

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/unquenchable-thirst-may-2016.pdf>

Resources from the Quakers' "**New Economy**" project are now available. They include a document on principles that could underpin an economic system in line with Quaker values, and the first four of seven booklets:

- What's the economy for?

- Good work in the new economy.
- Energy in the new economy.
- Money, banks and finance in the new economy.

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy#heading-1>

There's also a podcast at

<https://soundcloud.com/qwitness/3-new-economy>

EVENTS

Abstinence and justice: food in Christian tradition

A JustShare Lecture on Food as a growing issue in the public mind and Christian theology.

6:05pm, Tuesday 4th April, at St Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside, London.

Dr David Grumett from the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/abstinence-and-justice-food-in-christian-tradition-tickets-31412247879>

In Praise of Whistleblowers

12 noon on Wednesday, April 05, 2017

PwC London Headquarters in London

An event organised by the Tax Justice Network and the Methodist Tax Justice Network, to challenge PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) "to re-join the human community, and honour LuxLeaks whistleblower Raphael Halet"

<http://www.mtjn.org.uk/calendar>

Climate change and AGM Activism: how can you get involved?

An Action Meeting organised by ShareAction and Christian Aid

April 5th 6 to 8.30pm

Christian Aid offices, London

An evening on how shareholders can make an impact on those companies able to make a real impact on reducing climate change.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-change-and-agm-activism-how-can-you-get-involved-tickets-32350422986>

Global Investment Mobilisation

May 5th – 13th

Operation Noah is partnering with 350.org and others on events which will be themed around climate impacts and emphasising the moral dimension of fossil fuel divestment.

<http://brightnow.org.uk/action/global-divestment-mobilisation-coming-soon/>

Tax Justice National Conference

Saturday 15th July

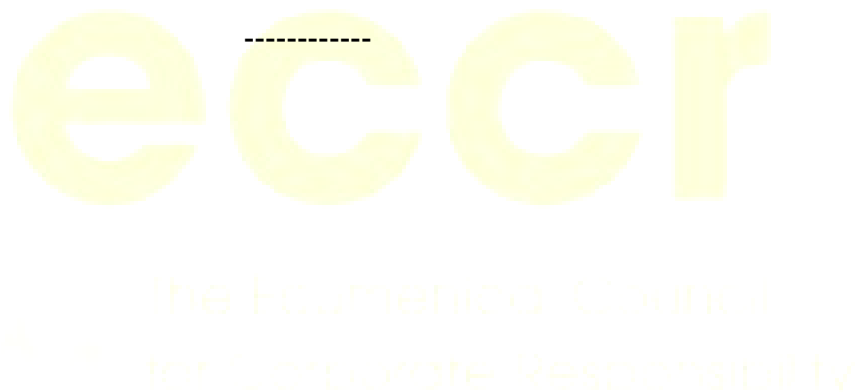
Priory Rooms, Birmingham

Organised by Jubilee Debt Campaign, Quaker Peace Hub, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and ECCR
More details from mtjncoordinator@gmail.com

A Sabbath for the Earth and the Poor: The challenge of Pope Francis
National Justice & Peace Network Conference
June 21 –23 July
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.
<http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

AND FINALLY....

If you're looking for earnest irony, look no further than the Reverend Billy and his *Church of Stop Shopping* in the United States. Billy is a bouffant-haired, Jimmy-Swaggart style preacher, created by performance activist Bill Talen. Together with his choir, Billy holds regular performances, stages stop-shopping interventions at retail corporations like the Disney Store, Walmart, and Starbucks, and stars in a recently released documentary called "What Would Jesus Buy?"
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2008/01/15/ironic-authenticity-reverend-billy-and-the-church-of-stop-shopping>



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