

# SOUTHERN SYNOD CHURCH AND SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

News broke during Minister's Spring School that the media had latched onto a story about a United Reformed Church in our Synod.



**The Synod Clerk said, "Maidstone URC in conjunction with the URC Press office and the Southern Synod had to issue a apology following an objection to a mannequin which was put in its shop window for Christian Aid Week. News reports were posted on line and in a number of papers. The whole Synod hold Maidstone in their prayers as they reflect on this incident.**

**The Challenge to the whole church is how might we respond if we in 'innocence' put something on display, in notices, or on a Church Notice Board that causes offence to an others?"**

## What would you have done?

Synod Church and Society would be interested to learn of other 'pitfalls' that churches have experienced. More importantly we would like to receive stories of things that have worked, which have started conversations in the community and beyond.

In Wimbledon week for instance, "In tennis love means nothing at all!"

Responses to Peter please.

## In other news

### Child Poverty

The Children's Society report is out. The Debt Trap: Exposing the impact of problem debt on children

### JPIT Update

A summary of Newsletter 58 May 2014

### An offer

Who would like to share their gifting to benefit other churches in the Synod?



## THE DEBT TRAP: Exposing the impact of problem debt on children



The Children Society has launched a campaign aimed at reducing the harm to children caused by problem debt; reducing the impact of problem debt on families; and introducing early interventions to prevent problem debt.

The report reveals the scale of the problem and “lifts the lid on how around two and a half million children are living in families with problem debt, behind on £4.8bn of payments on household bills and loan repayments.”

The research undertaken by Step Change analyzed an original survey of 2000 UK families, added information from an online YouGov survey of 4442 adults and interviewed 15 families to gain a qualitative dimension. Problem debt was defined as having current arrears with at least one household bill or credit commitment.

Many readers may use credit cards to pay for the big ticket items like holidays, Christmas and unexpected expenditure, but many in problem debt borrow to pay for essentials such as food, clothing and heating. The spiral of debt can push people into accessing more expensive forms of credit and this fuels even greater need for expensive short-term loans.

The particular concern in this report is on the impact of problem debt on children. “One mother described the ‘short week’ each month when the cost of sanitary products for her daughter affects what she has available for food. Other families weigh up similar choices about spending money on food or buying things for the children.”

The report is commended to you and churches may wish to consider practical support by becoming a money advice centre. Further information is available from Community Money Advice or Christians Against Poverty. Individuals could train through Citizens Advice and the government website [moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://moneyadvice.service.org.uk) might be a useful tool.



[communitymoneyadvice.com](http://communitymoneyadvice.com)



[capuk.com](http://capuk.com)

Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together...

## joint public issues team

...to live out the gospel of Christ in church and society

Praxis is the newsletter produced by the Joint Public Issues Team of the three churches

It is easy to sign up to their newsletter by following the links on the website

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk>

Newsletter 58 was circulated on 22 May 2014 and included:

- A resource for churches involved with food banks.
- An opportunity for young people to explore faith, politics and participation in social justice with a tour of the Houses of Parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> July
- An article on the continuing use of 'Drones'
- The chance to listen to Phillip Graf deliver the Beckly Lecture – Gambling: Sin, Vice or Legitimate Leisure Activity?
- The Debt Trap – highlighted on the front page
- Trident
- The Scottish Referendum Debate
- TLS course: Developing Community Experience advertised for those outside the URC
- A request for a knitted section of a seven mile long pink peace scarf to be stretched from Burghfield to Aldermaston to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dropping of an atomic bomb on Nagasaki in Japan.
- Various other events and news of interest

The team has in the past produced some very good reports and is a great way of keeping in touch with Church and Society matters from an international and national perspective.





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### From the desk

I have held the post of Synod Church and Society convener for nearly two years and this is the fourth newsletter. I am grateful to those who comment and use the publication to start conversations in church. I have visited a number of Synod Areas to promote the work and have learnt that many congregations are involved with a number of initiatives. I have a growing appreciation of individuals who concentrate efforts on particular aspects of Church and Society concerns like Fairtrade, Commitment for Life, Foodbanks, and Peace Fellowship.

Unlike other groups in the Synod and wider Church, I have not thought it necessary to meet as a committee to take the work forward. However I am keen to widen and deepen the profile of this aspect of the church's calling and would appreciate comment, feedback and suggestion in order to make this happen.

One way would be to ensure we could respond to requests from congregations and individuals to specific requests for help, advice and resource by linking those involved in particular action already with those looking to start an enterprise. This requires a network of knowledge, expertise and capacity throughout the Synod.

Another might be to arrange a Church and Society expo event inviting organisations to promote their interests and have a keynote speaker. (This would need a planning group and meetings!)

Please let me have your thoughts together with contact details for the 'champions' that you are aware of with the area of interest they hold.

