

## **Speaking Out**

***Baptist – Methodist – United Reformed***

***News from these churches which are -***

***Working Together***

The bad news: These denominations no longer have their own secretaries speaking out on church and society matters

The good news: As is increasingly well known they work together to speak out in what is called the Joint Public Issues Team – see.....

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

The local news: The Heart of England Baptist Association, the Birmingham and Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Methodist Districts and the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church are setting up a Regional Joint Public Issues Action team. Its agreed aim is:

*In association with our Denominations' Joint Public Issues Team we will help our churches in this region to work together in living out the gospel of Christ in the church and in society. We will promote equality and justice by influencing those in power and by energising and affirming local congregations.*

This initiative has been fully supported by the denominational JPIT team whose leader Rachel Lampard has been to all the early meetings. As well as these denominations' church leaders and other representatives it also has in its membership Colin Marsh the secretary of the West Midlands Forum - a grouping that seeks to address public issues across the region which includes Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

The West Midlands JPIT will seek to work in partnership with a range of other Christian groups and partners and will seek:

- to deliver resources to enable the churches to deal with public and political affairs, in the region.
- to facilitate dialogue on public issues with decision makers, church leaders, members and congregations.
- to advance joint working whilst retaining denominational identity and discipline.
- to increase opportunities for churches to speak with one voice, when appropriate.
- to research and provide briefings on issues of public policy and concern as required by the parties.
- to coordinate campaigns.
- to maximise the opportunity for expertise to be developed.

The Revd Professor Michael Taylor ex Director of Christian Aid and Baptist minister living in Birmingham has agreed to become the Team's Chair taking over from Roy Lowes, (the United Reformed Church Synod Moderator) who has been chairing the process in its early stages.

We believe the establishment of this Action Team is good news – and as a first small step it has asked the denominational JPIT to produce a summary of their recent publication 'The Lies we tell ourselves..' for church magazines which you might find near this article. We believe it makes important and key points for our consideration and should be read as widely as possible within our churches. The JPIT website as well as the full report, has additional resources:

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty/> including a short pocket guide <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/truthandliespocketguide.pdf>

Watch for further activity later in the year.

**Joint Public Issues Regional Action Team – West Midlands**