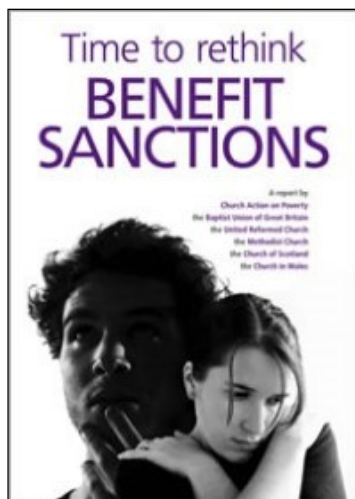


March 2015

Time to rethink sanctions



In 2014, one million benefit sanctions were imposed on people. This means their payments stopped for a period of between one month and three years. The most common reason for being sanctioned is being late or not turning up for an appointment. The result is often needing to turn to a foodbank.

This is one person's story: "During the first three weeks of my sanction I continued to look for work as I was required to. By the fourth week however I was exhausted, unwell and no longer had it in me. I was not eating as I had no food and was losing a lot of weight. I told the Job Centre I was unwell through not eating but was sanctioned for another three months for not looking for work properly."

The report, **Time to rethink benefit sanctions** published by a large coalition of churches, including the Methodist Church, looks at the sanctions regime and argues strongly that it is not working and is damaging some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Click [here](#) to read the report, see the video or take action to challenge this unjust system. For further information see this page on [ITV News](#).

Call all photographers



The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Photo Competition aims to showcase the diversity of worship leaders and local preachers across the Church.

Entrants will be asked to submit two photos for their entry. The first should be of the local preacher or worship leader engaging a congregation through worship or preaching. The other should depict the subject in an aspect of their daily life that informs their ministry - perhaps in their day job, enjoying a hobby or engaging with a community project.

The competition is sponsored by the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust (LWPT), which launched [Preach Resources](#) in September 2014.

The competition is open to all (there are separate categories from entrants below and above 18) and the closing date for entries is Sunday 31 May. Click [here](#) for more details, including tips for taking a good photograph.

Inspirational women: from victim to activist

Hari Kumari Sahi married her husband when she was just 13 years old. "From the beginning, he was very abusive, and used to hit me and beat me."

For Hari, support from All We Can's local partner Kopila Nepal has been a life-line. "I have learnt about domestic violence, abuse and how to talk about that. I've gained lots of self-confidence. It is a big change in my life."

By supporting All We Can's Inspirational Women Appeal, you can help more women like Hari to escape poverty, discrimination and violence. Watch the film [here](#) and donate today.



A church for everyone - 18 and 25 April 2015



Organised and endorsed by 23 denominations and organisations in Wales, these are exciting days for church leaders, worship leaders, childrens' & youth leaders and anyone with a heart to reach out to families and create a church for all ages.

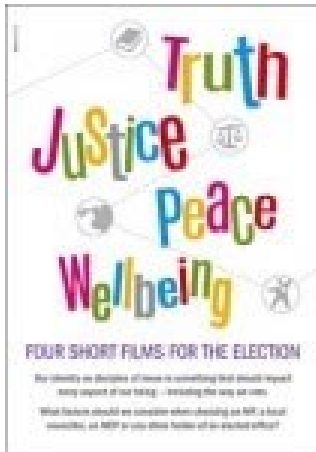
The days will include great speakers, practical exercises, workshops/seminars, models of all-age worship and prayer, inspirational video examples, resources exhibition, opportunity to talk with experienced practitioners and of course ... coffee!

Held on different Saturdays they take place in North Wales (Blaenau Ffestiniog) on 18 April and in South Wales (Swansea) on 25 April.

The day costs £15 and includes lunch for all those who book in before 11 April.

Discover more details [here](#).

Love your neighbour: think, pray, vote



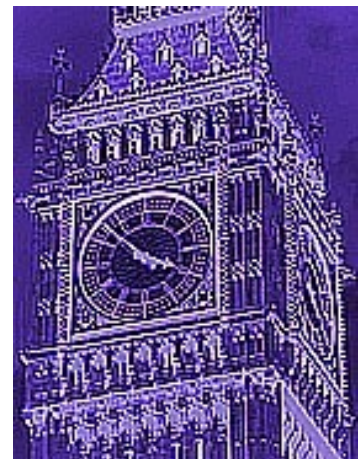
Our identity as disciples of Jesus is something that should impact every aspect of our being – including the way we vote. This [new resource](#) from the Joint Public Issues Team will help you and your church community to reflect on how being a follower of Jesus will affect your behaviour at election time.

Love Your Neighbour: think, pray, vote offers four short videos on the themes of truth, justice, peace and well-being; prayers linked to these themes; postcards which link these themes to questions for hustings or for your own reflection; and four short Bible studies. This pack can be used during worship or to inform Bible-study and house groups. [Available from Methodist Publishing](#) it costs £7.50 (plus postage and packing).

Faith and politics

Through JPIT (the Joint Public Issues Team) the Methodist Church has produced **Faith in Politics** a free downloadable guide to 16 issues central to political debate, including the economy, immigration and asylum, human trafficking and the environment. This briefing contains one page summaries of each issue and questions for MPs or personal reflection.

The [JPIT General Election 2015 webpage](#) also contains numerous links with further information about issues, what other Churches and organisations are saying about the election and further information, including guidance on holding hustings.



One Mission Bible study resource



The **One Mission Bible study** will help house groups to engage and explore One Mission in today's context, bringing together the local and global aspects of mission.

The five-session study series uses a short film based on the final journey of the Revd Thomas Coke in 1813. As the drama unfolds we gain an insight to those going on the journey overseas and those left behind to look after the work at home.

The material is available [online](#) and without charge.

Working together in rural mission

National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church, the Revd Elizabeth Clark, spoke in support of Released for Mission at The Church of England General Synod last month.

One of its key recommendations is greater ecumenical working.

"The report captures authentic grassroots voices in rural multi-church groups," says Elizabeth. "Their stories tell of the current realities in the countryside: creative ideas and opportunities; complexities and difficulties. I look forward to working with colleagues to ensure ecumenical working is at the heart of mission in the countryside."



Released for Mission, and accompanying paper GS1985, were commissioned by The Church of England Rural Affairs Group and prioritise changes to release capacity and energy for mission and growth.

Download the full report [here](#).

Big SleepOver 2015



The Big SleepOver resource enables 8-18 year olds to take an active and participatory role in the life of the Church and creates a link between the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly (3Generate) and the local church and circuit.

The resource aims to assist you in running a residential event that will enable children and young people to think, talk and be disciples.

The **Big SleepOver** resource for 2015 is now available [here](#).

In brief

Dates in April

2 Maundy Thursday

3 Good Friday

5 Easter Sunday

Prayers following attack in Pakistan

The Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church came together this week to issue a joint statement following Sunday's terrorist bombings in Lahore. You can read it [here](#).

Click [here](#) to read a prayer written in response.

Lifting the lowly - Spectrum annual conference

SPECTRUM (formerly Fellowship of the Kingdom) will be holding its annual conference at Willersley Castle, Derbyshire, from 27 to 30 April.

The theme is 'Lifting the lowly: bias to the poor revisited'. The speakers are the Revd Dr Joel Edwards and the Revd Dr Andrew Pratt.

Find out more [here](#).

Power to be free, Methodist European Conference - 11-17 July 2015

The 14th Methodist European Conference for lay persons takes place in Albania from 11-17 July 2015.

The theme, 'Power to be free', focuses on the persecuted and emerging Churches in Europe through talks, discussions, workshops and times of sharing with participants from all over Europe.

Places are limited - [email Gerald Barley](#) for more information.

Are you aged 18-29 and interested in visiting Taize?

Join a group of students from Cliff College to experience a week of worship, reflection and spirituality with the Taizé community in France, in a programme designed for those of university age.

This will take place on 14- 21 June 2015. There is an additional option to complete a Cliff Certificate in Christian Spirituality using your reflections on the week in Taize.

For more details click [here](#). (Note: the booking deadline is Monday 13 April 2015)

The good and the beautiful: living as apprentices in the kingdom of God

The Bible Society is hosting two seminars at Westminster Central Hall on Friday 5 June.

Both led by James Bryan Smith the first (10.30am-11.15am) explores the inner life of leaders and key spiritual practices for their your life with God. The second, Helping others become more like Jesus (11.45am-12.15pm) asks how does transformation happen? And how can we help others to be apprentices of Jesus?

The morning costs £15 (plus £1.55 booking fee). For more details click [here](#).

Can you be a volunteer 'meeter and greeter'?

On Sunday 21 June and Monday 22 June 2015 the World Church Relationships (WCR) team will be welcoming representatives from around the world for their annual pre-Conference Consultation. If you enjoy meeting people from different countries, live in London and have a spare morning or afternoon on the aforementioned days then we would love to hear from you! WCR need volunteers to meet the visitors at either Heathrow or Gatwick airport. All travel expenses would be covered.

For more information, email [Syntiche Dedji](mailto:Syntiche.Dedji).

Methodists for World Mission conference- 29-31 May 2015

Hear the voices of Christians in the Pacific and listen for the still small voice speaking through the insights, stories and songs of the liquid continent. The weekend will explore Pacific culture, hear and join in stories and music, investigate Pacific theology and examine the consequences of climate change.

Speakers will include the Revd Dr Cliff Bird from Australia, and Dr Ruth Valerio from A Rocha, with other contributors including serving Methodist mission partners. There will also be singers from the Pacific. There will be a children's and youth programme too.

More details and a booking form are available [here](#).

Don't drop the ball - Engage 2015

The Rugby World Cup, the third largest international event of its kind, takes place in the UK this autumn.

Engage 2015 is a cross-denominational campaign set up to help churches serve the rugby community during the World Cup event. It aims to provide the Church with inspiration, information and resources and to build bridges between the Church and the rugby community. Find out more [here](#).

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