



Churches Update

December 2016

CORBYN: "LET'S WORK TOGETHER"

Labour leader pledges to work with churches in building a fairer society

Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has said that he is keen to work with the churches across the country. And he has asked Christians to play a key role in the party's renewal too.

Speaking to *Churches Update*, Jeremy praised the work of churches across the country who provide help both in the UK and abroad. He said:

"Churches are at the forefront of many communities, and they are amongst the first to see the consequences of government policies. In the last Parliament."

Jeremy also pledged to maintain the historic link between the Labour Party and Christians: *"The Labour Party and Christianity share a proud history and we share common values—values of equality, of social justice, and of compassion for one another."*



"My task as Labour leader is to build a party ready to return to power again and one with a fairer vision for a society and I invite Churches to help me do this."

Andy Flanagan, Director of *Christians on the Left*, said: *"Churches are realising the importance of being politically engaged. I would call on them to join us on working with Jeremy."*

A MESSAGE FROM JEREMY CORBYN

"Happy Christmas. I'd like to send greetings from myself and on behalf of the Labour Party. It's a time of year where many of us get time off, where we spend time with our family and our loved ones. But for others, it's a time of increased loneliness and despair.

"It's the goodwill and generosity of ordinary people, public service and charity workers

who give tirelessly to help the most vulnerable and the lonely. They remind us of Christmas values: love for your neighbour, working together and hope, hope that things can be different. These are Labour values. They are values that remind us that together we can change our country for the better.

Enjoy your time with loved ones and Happy Christmas.

SHADOW CHANCELLOR PRAISES TAX CAMPAIGN

John McDonnell uses platform at the party conference to praise *Christians on the Left*

Labour's Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has praised a campaign organised by *Christians on the Left* to support paying tax.

During his party conference speech in September, John congratulated *Christians on the Left* and its chair, Jonathan Reynolds MP, for its campaign slogan *#patriotspaytax*: "It's a great slogan. Patriots should pay their taxes. Labour are already setting the pace on tackling tax avoidance and tax evasion," he said. John went on to tell delegates that the UK could not run the best public services in the world "...on a flagging economy with a tax system that does not tax fairly or effectively."

As part of the *#patriotspaytax* campaign

Christians on the Left have been encouraging people to answer the question "What are you proud your taxes are spent on?" Labour politicians and delegates at the party conference answered the question before posting photographs of themselves on social media.

Speaking after the conference, *Christians on the Left* Director, Andy Flanagan, said: "This campaign generated a lot of excitement at the Labour Party conference. We believe tax can and should be a good thing. It is time to change our perceptions and recognise we are part of one society in which we all have a stake. Paying tax is one important way we make that a reality."



CALLS FOR BOXING DAY TRADING BAN

Helen Jones, Labour MP for Warrington North, has called on the government to consider introducing a ban on big stores trading on Boxing Day. Over 200,000 people have signed a petition backing such a ban.

The petition calls on Prime Minister Theresa May to bring about the change so that retail workers are *"...given some decent family time to relax and enjoy the festivities like everyone else"*.

Helen called for the change in an interview with *Premier Radio*. She said: *"There is no doubt that very poorly paid retail workers are being exploited because the shops open on Boxing Day. By and large they don't get any extra pay any more, they're denied time with their families [something] we all take for granted. She continued: "...Politicians are very quick to rush and defend Christmas and rightly*



so, but if that's the case we ought also to allow other people in our society to be able celebrate it properly and at the moment that doesn't happen."

According to the Office for National Statistics, 365,000 people in the UK retail industry worked on Boxing Day in 2014.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ministers belatedly back tax disclosure plan

The government has accepted proposals for multinational companies to publish details of where they do their business and the tax they pay. The amendment to the Finance Bill, which was proposed by Labour MP, Caroline Flint, was backed by sixty MPs. It came in the wake of the landmark ruling of the European commission to order Apple to pay back up to €13bn (£11bn) in taxes to Ireland.

Speaking afterwards, Caroline said: *"The amendment is a victory for fairer taxation. A victory for openness, and a clear message to those global corporations that shift profits to low tax havens, that we expect them to play by the same rules as every other business."*

Stephen Timms challenges ministers on faith

Labour Party Faith Envoy, Stephen Timms MP, has raised concerns about the government's attitude towards faith groups.

Speaking to *Christian Today*, Stephen said he was troubled that government ministers repeatedly give the impression that religious faith is a problem.

He went on to say that ministers needed to acknowledge much more concretely that religious faith – Christian faith but also Islamic, Hindu and Jewish faith – are much more the source of solutions to our problems rather than the being the problems themselves.



THE AGE OF AUSTERITY

A message from Stephen Timms MP, Labour's Faith Envoy

The next few years will be very difficult for public services. My local authority has to make cuts of £50 million out of its budget of £250 million. Other public services also face huge financial challenges. And its going to be tough for families around the country too.

In July, the Chancellor announced that the National Minimum Wage will increase to a 'National Living Wage'. That will reduce Government spending on tax credits, which top up low wages.

The problem for those affected is that the cuts to tax credits will hit next April. The Minimum Wage increases will be staged annually between now and 2020. Hundreds of thousands of people - in work, on low and middle incomes, particularly families with children - are going to be hit very hard in April. Many families will see their income from work suddenly cut by 10% or more, and the family

finances wrecked.

Against this background, the witness of the churches will be needed even more in the next few years. Already in the last Parliament, that witness provided real hope for many in communities up and down the country.

If we had had a discussion ten years ago about what would happen if, suddenly, tens of thousands of people could not afford enough food, I don't think we would have predicted that it would be the churches which would step up to meet the need. But, with foodbanks, that is what has happened. It has turned out that, in modern Britain, it has been the churches which, uniquely, have had both the motivation and the capacity to deliver.

Those who are drawn together by the love of Christ have a unique capacity to serve others in their communities. That capacity will be needed more and more in the years ahead.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

More than ever, the Labour Party is committed to listening to and learning from those of religious faith—including those in the churches. We realise that many will not commit to supporting any particular political party, and we respect that. But we are interested to hear what you have to say. There are a few things you can do to help us in this work:

- 1. Tell your friends about this newsletter.** We want to be in dialogue with as many people of faith as possible. Encourage others to join our mailing list at www.labour.org.uk/faith.
- 2. Tell us how we can help you.** Write to Stephen Timms MP (Faith Envoy), c/o The Labour Party, 1 Brewers Green, London, SW1H 0RH. Alternatively, email stephen@stephentimms.org.uk.
- 3. Ask to display this newsletter in your church.** Ask your church leader if they are willing for this newsletter to be displayed so others can read about what Labour is doing.