



*Newsletter
No 11, October 2006*

*Centre for Theology and Public
Issues*



This first newsletter of the new academic session finds CTPI in a period of settling after the uncertainty of last year. Cecelia Clegg, was appointed Director of CTPI from 1 April 2006. Cecelia writes:

"I am not new to CTPI but I have decided to give myself this year to take soundings about the future direction of the Centre... not that our work will stop, on the contrary as you will see we have quite a full programme in view. Rather I am, with the help of Alison Elliot, Associate Director, putting in place a new, wide ranging reference group to help us to shape our agenda over the coming 5 years. In addition, I am moving gradually through a series of meetings with key people in churches, faith communities, voluntary organisations, statutory agencies, academic life, political life and social policy work to get an up to date sense of both their concerns and the gaps in public theological commentary in Scotland and beyond. This year also offers an unparalleled opportunity for the Centre to bid for Research Council funding in the Religion and Society programme. It will be a busy year but one that I hope will open up new and not so new topics for consideration, informed discussion and action - research. I am particularly glad to be working in close collaboration with Alison Elliot who brings so much expertise and experience to our team. Alison is also involved in a large number of groups and activities outside of CTPI which both enrich and open doors for CTPI in various ways."

Alison Elliot, Associate Director, gives us a flavour of her many undertakings. She writes:

"The genius of CTPI is the stimulating mix of people that it brings together at seminars and conferences. But other organisations are getting in on this act as well and I'm lucky to be involved with several gatherings of people who pool their diverse experience for the benefit of a cause or an institution. Here are some of them.

The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships is an impressive undertaking based in the University of Edinburgh that links researchers in four other Scottish universities. In its first five years, it has co-ordinated research, identified and plugged gaps, held conferences and published widely. The Centre is committed to collaborating with all kinds of organisations that are involved in this area, like Childline, the Scottish Executive, professional companies and many

others. They publish regular briefings on issues like women in their fifties, solo living, relationships between grandparent and teenagers. In November, they are holding a conference on Migration, Families and Relationships. You can find out more at www.crfr.ac.uk

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has worked with CTPI on various occasions. One of their current initiatives is the Better Public Services Forum, an attempt to stimulate discussion on how we might enlist the energy and particular contribution of all parts of society, including the voluntary sector, in delivering high quality public services. It's a fascinating issue and the Forum has heard from political representatives, people who use services, campaigners and local authorities, among others. We hope to report at the end of the year.

One of the public issues I got involved with as Moderator was the question of women offenders and I was glad to be included in the Short-Life Working Group set up by the Scottish Executive to look into this. Academics, practitioners, people concerned with substance abuse or families of offenders, representatives of the faith communities and of the criminal justice system have put their heads together to try to streamline and improve our approach to women offenders in Scotland and a report is expected soon.

Chairing Advisory Groups is something I enjoy and one of the most absorbing is the Lay Advisory group of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. The College is primarily concerned with medical training but takes an active interest in public issues with a medical aspect to them, such as smoking and drinking, assisted suicide, and the regulation of the medical profession. Our group is a valuable sounding board for the College and it's a privilege to be involved in this work."

COMINGS AND COMINGS.....

It seems strange to be welcoming Jenny Arnott, our administrative secretary, because she has been in post for some months now. But this is the first opportunity we have had to formally welcome her to the CTPI team. Jenny comes from a background in computing training for the university and is already making an impact on CTPI data systems...as well as other areas! We are delighted that she has joined us. Jenny writes:

"The people I work with and those associated with CTPI are a fascinating and energetic group. I look forward to helping more with the aims and objectives of the Centre."

We also welcome Miriam McHardy as the researcher on the 'A Right to be Human' project. Miriam, a graduate of New College, comes from a background in youth education and campaigning. Her previous work included staff appointments with SCIAF and Trocaire, development agencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland. She too has been in post for some months and you will see her brief project update later in the newsletter. Miriam writes:

"I'm delighted to be part of the CTPI team, and to be working on the 'A Right to be Human project'. During my studies at New College I was very interested in CTPI's work and its efforts to explore and develop the links between an individual's public life and their personal faith as this resonated with my own interests. In my previous work in Development, and in my research for my Masters degree, I have been interested in exploring how individuals' faith impacts on their involvement in social action, and vice versa. The current research project allows me to explore this issue in more depth, and I'm looking forward to hearing young peoples' "take" on some of the issues."

We are also delighted to say that Karoline McLean, our former administrative secretary, is back working fulltime in the Divinity School post graduate office after a lengthy and serious illness.

LAST YEAR.....

Last academic session our major theme followed on from the Spiritual Revolution conference of April 2005. We held a very interesting seminar series on Spirituality in Scotland. The year culminated in an excellent day conference *Being Fully Alive: Spirituality, Science and Wellbeing* for which Kathy Galloway, leader of Iona community and Peter Fenwick, neuropsychiatrist from the Maudsley Hospital, London were keynote speakers. The conference attracted a maximum 80 participants from a wide range of areas: education, youth work, parish ministry, academia, voluntary organisations, healing ministries and social work. Selected papers from the seminar series and the conference will be published as a CTPI occasional paper in the Spring 2007.

Last year also saw the launch, in July, of the project *A Right to be Human*, which is described more fully below.

THIS ACADEMIC SESSION....

SEMINAR CONVERSATIONS AT CTPI

This session, we are inviting you to listen in on a series of conversations about important public issues between people who can bring both theological insight and practical experience to the discussion. These sessions will take place at 5.15pm in the Martin Hall:

The Chains of Debt: financial exclusion in Scotland today (14th November, 2006) Graham Blount (Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer) and Mike Chapman (formerly Financial Inclusion Officer at Capital City Partnerships)

We are familiar with the value of Biblical imagery and ideas in exploring the damage done by international debt. This conversation will extend the debate and focus on domestic debt in Scotland. Graham has been instrumental in promoting the *Debt on our Doorstep* campaign and his doctorate was a theological study of debt. He is Secretary to the Scottish Parliamentary Cross Party Group on Tackling Debt. Mike is a consultant on issues around financial exclusion.

Giving time and talents: the changing world of volunteering (5th December 2006) Martin Johnstone (Faith in communities Scotland) and Maureen O'Neill (Queen Margaret University College)

What is happening to volunteering? On the one hand, it is being promoted as an ingredient of a healthy society and a healthy life. At the same time, more and more regulation is increasing the tension between volunteering and professionalism. What are the values of a voluntary culture and are we in danger of losing them? In conversation are Maureen O'Neill, of the Royal Bank of Scotland's Centre for the Older Person's Agenda, and Martin Johnstone, Priority Areas Support Worker for the Church of Scotland.

Taking a risk: freedom and prudence in private and public life (13th February, 2007) Elizabeth Templeton and Alan Alexander

We take risks all the time yet are generally unforgiving when things go wrong in public life. What are the ethical questions surrounding the calculation of risk? How far should we expect to be kept safe? To explore these and other questions, we bring together Elizabeth Templeton, an incisive theological thinker, and Alan Alexander, former Chair of Scottish Water, with wide experience and academic interest in public management.

War, weapons and peace (27th February, 2007)
Rt Rev Alan D McDonald and Professor Oliver O'Donovan

We welcome the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Alan McDonald, and Oliver O'Donovan, who has newly been appointed Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology in the University of Edinburgh. Their conversation will range over the ethics and theology of peacemaking in our violent world.

The Baillie Lecture 2006.....

Will take place on 28th Nov, 1730 hours in Martin Hall

"Jewish and Scottish: The Threads and the Tartan"

This year we are delighted to welcome Dr Ephraim Borowski, director of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and former Head of the Philosophy Dept, University of Glasgow.

We have asked Dr Borowski to reflect from a Jewish perspective on the challenges facing Scotland

All are welcome

DAY CONFERENCES

We are delighted to have one day conference already organised and two more in planning stages:

Faithful Cities: a Scottish Conversation (Friday 3 November 2006)

The Faithful Cities Report of the Church of England (May 2006), which was produced on the 20th anniversary of *Faith in the City*, has raised significant issues about the role of Faith Communities in the life and development of cities in England. This conference offers an opportunity to reflect in a multi-disciplinary, multi faith group on the role of Faith Communities in Scottish cities. Keynote speakers include Ann Morisy, former director of the commission on Urban Life and Faith who produced *Faithful Cities* and The Most Rev Idris Jones, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church and Bishop of Glasgow. There will be workshops on: Young people; Partnership with Public Authority; Interfaith Relations and Community Cohesion; Regeneration and Well being; and Faithful Capital. The conference (organised in partnership with Faith in Community and SCPO) takes place in Renfield St Stephen Church Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP from 0930 – 1630 hours. £20 (self-funded) £50 (institutional rate). We are grateful for Knowledge Transfer funding from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Edinburgh. For details <http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/CTPLevents.html> Or phone/email Jenny Arnott J.Arnott@ed.ac.uk (0131 650 7991)

Climate Change

This is one of the most pressing issues of our time. We are very lucky to have in Edinburgh Dr Michael Northcott, who has a long connection with CTPI and is currently involved in the recently announced European Churches initiative on Climate Change and also Dr Dave Reay, Geosciences, a leading scholar in the area. We are planning a day conference on the subject which will look at scientific, economic and ethical perspectives on the issue. Likely to happen in May 2007....details to follow.

For those interested there is a series of lectures sponsored by the Stop Climate Chaos UK network in the Botanic Gardens this month. Details at: <http://www.rbge.org.uk/rbge/web/news/WedSep06123103GMT01002006.jsp>

Spirituality

The evident interest in the issue of spirituality continues. So we are, in partnership with the Fellowship of Healing (Scotland), planning to organise another day conference on the subject in April or May 2007...details to follow

CURRENT RESEARCH

We have one research project (A Right to Be Human) running at present and we are involved in two more major bids for funding to study (1) the growing African Christian Diaspora in Scotland and (2) the relationship between Faith Communities and Government in Scotland - the structures and processes that might aid more fruitful relationship in both directions.

A Right to Be Human (researcher Miriam McHardy)

This project is part of a larger international project researching young people's attitudes to human rights and how these are influenced by religious affiliation. Our research will be the Scottish case study. The research aims to understand the effect of religious attitudes and behaviour on human rights attitudes among young people (aged between 16-18) from Christian, Islamic and secular backgrounds. It also aims to encourage them, regardless of background, to reflect on their involvement in, and attitudes towards, human rights

For a number of reasons it is an important and sensitive time to undertake this research. The Scottish Parliament has agreed to appoint a Human Rights Commissioner with a remit that includes public education and awareness raising. Public consultations prior to this decision have highlighted the lack of awareness of human rights among the Scottish public and a general desire for greater knowledge and education. Our research will contribute to this awareness raising and may lead to the involvement of CTPI in spearheading the development of a Human Rights youth education campaign.

Where we are so far....

The project uses a questionnaire to gather young people's views; it was amended slightly to better suit a Scottish audience. After extensive consultation with Education authorities and youth leaders the questionnaire was piloted with a Midlothian school in May this year. To date we have distributed over 1,000 to a number of schools and youth groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. The organisations taking part will be given a summary of research results and have been offered an interactive session on human rights, planned to take place in Spring 2007, which will be delivered by CTPI in conjunction with our partner the Christian Aid Education team. Schools and Youth groups will also receive an attractive resource pack containing materials on human rights. Schools in particular have been keen to take up the offer of a classroom session and interested in opening up the human rights discussion with their pupils.

Over the next few months we will be analysing results as the questionnaires are returned and look forward to reporting on some of our findings in the next newsletter.