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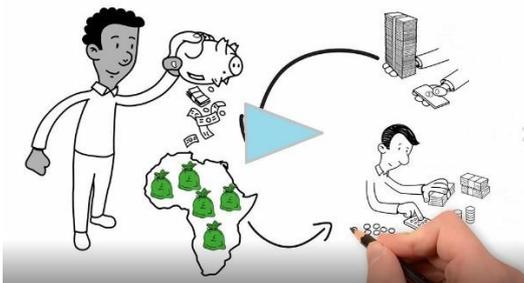
CATJ News

It has been a busy month for Church Action for Tax Justice and there is much to report:

Tax Justice Sunday Resources

As part of [Fair Tax Week](#), Sunday 14th June 2020 has been designated [Tax Justice Sunday](#). We would very much like you to draw attention to tax justice issues at some point during your regular sunday service that day. To assist you in this, Church Action for Tax Justice has produced [a suite of resources](#) - many of which are new - which could help you mark Tax Justice Sunday. These include:

1. Our animated video which explains why Christians should be concerned about tax justice. This is available [on our website](#), on [youtube](#), and can be emailed to anyone who requests it. It would be great if you showed this video at some point during your service on Tax Justice Sunday (14th June 2020).



2. Sermons and short notes on biblical texts - these could be used as a framework for your own tax justice sermon, or provide the text of an entire sermon if that is more helpful. They are all available [on our website](#)

3. Hymns, prayers and creeds - which can be used as part of a tax justice service. Again, [these are available on our site](#)

4. Small group studies - our national coordinator, Justin Thacker, has written three entirely new small group studies which address issues of economic justice with a particular focus on tax justice. Feel free to [download this resource](#) and make available to your church as you see fit.

If you intend to mark tax justice sunday in any way it would be great to know, so please do drop us a line at mail@catj.org.uk and tell us what you intend to do. Thankyou

Call to Action: Lent Petition 2020

As you will be aware, Church Action for Tax Justice has sent out its 2020 Lent Petition to all subscribers to our newsletter. The petition is calling for an end to tax dodging in poorer countries by multinational corporations. This is a crucial time for such discussions as the OECD continues to discuss the best way forward for global tax rules. We hope that our petition will put pressure on the government to prioritise the needs of developing countries in those discussions.

We would ask that you [print off copies of the petition](#), place them at the back of your church and put something like the following notice in your church bulletin. Thankyou very much for all your support in this, and thankyou to those who have already distributed the petiion.

Suggested Church bulletin notice:

End tax dodging by multinational corporations in poorer countries. Please sign the petition which is at the back of the church calling for an end to tax dodging by multinational corporations, especially in developing countries. This petition is being organised by Church Action for Tax Justice and comes at a particularly crucial time when reform of the global tax rules is currently being discussed by the OECD. Thankyou

You can also distribute and sign the petition electronically by sharing this link:

<https://www.catj.org.uk/petition.html>

The following is the list of current events planned over the next few months. If you would like one of our team to speak at your church / event, do get in touch.

- **Wednesday 1st April 7.30pm – Cuthman Lecture at Steyning Parish Church, West Sussex (Rev David Haslam, Chair)**
- **Thursday 2nd April, 12.30 - Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Albans (Rt Rev Michael Doe, Vice-Chair)**
- **[Saturday 23rd – Monday 25th May](#) – Cliff College Festival, Cliff College, S32 3XG (Dr Justin Thacker, National Coordinator)**
- **Saturday 13th June 9.30am – Moravian Church, London (Dr Justin Thacker, National Coordinator)**
- **Sunday 14th June 9.00am and 10.45am – St John’s Church, Chesterfield (Dr Justin Thacker, National Coordinator)**

Tax Justice UK find support for taxation of wealth

[Tax Justice UK have issued a new report](#) based on a series of focus groups they undertook around the country, including in seats that were historically Labour but that switched to Conservative at the last election. They found general support for increases in taxation, especially for the wealthy. The sense was that the public are fed up with ten years of austerity, want greater investment in health and education and recognise that taxation is how we pay for it. They did also find however significantly different views on what people meant by the term 'wealthy' with some understanding it to be those who could afford two holidays, private schooling and staff at home, while others equated it with not worrying about bills.

Where are the tax havens? Closer to home than you think

Competing ideas of where the tax havens are were released in the last month. On the one hand, the [EU published its list of 'non-cooperative' jurisdictions](#). The most interesting thing about their list is that the Cayman Islands, a British Overseas Territory, has finally been added to the EU blacklist. However, as many tax campaigners have been pointing out the EU blacklist fails to include some notorious tax havens such as Bahamas, Bermuda and the British Virgin Islands, and perhaps more importantly completely ignores tax havens within the EU itself as these are exempt from analysis. In



contrast, [the Tax Justice Network also issued their financial secrecy index](#) and this is a much more robust measure of the extent to which any particular jurisdiction enables the wealthy to hide and launder money from across the world. Top of their list was the Cayman Islands, followed by the US, Switzerland and Hong Kong. Despite the fact that most countries around the world improved their financial secrecy score, the UK actually worsened its financial transparency and so leapt up the list from 23rd in 2018 to 12th in 2020. A global interactive map is available by clicking on the map to the right.

Freeports consultation

The government have announced their freeports consultation, and anyone is able to respond [here](#). Freeports are designated zones often around the coast (though they can include airports) where different tax rules apply. The theory is that manufacturers can import raw materials, process them and export them without having to go pay the usual import and export tariffs that might apply. However, freeports are notorious worldwide for being areas where workers are abused through low pay and poor conditions, and where money laundering and tax evasion is rife. [An EU study in 2018](#) concluded that they present a significant financial risk in this way. Church Action for Tax Justice will, of course, be responding to the consultation but we hope that many of our supporters will do so too. For more on this topic, see [here](#)

Country by Country reporting

As part of its ongoing discussions about the global tax rules, the OECD has [launched a public consultation](#) on its review of country by country reporting. One of the major reasons that large multinational corporations can avoid and evade paying taxes in low-income countries is because they do not have to publicly declare in which countries they have made their profits. This means, for instance, [that a company like Netflix](#) can have over 5 million UK subscribers but apparently make so little profit in the UK that in 2018 it paid no tax at all, because all of the profit that accrues from those UK customers is actually declared in a tax haven elsewhere. In order to address this issue, tax campaigners have been arguing for years that large companies should be required to issue public country by country reports. That way, we would be able to see in which countries they have activity, and to what degree, and in which countries are they declaring their profit. Currently, such reports are provided to tax authorities but they are not made publicly available which means it is very hard for tax campaigners to hold these companies to account. The OECD is currently looking at these arrangements and has issued a public consultation. Church Action for Tax Justice [has written a response to this consultation](#), and we hope that together with pressure from many other civil society organisations our response will lead to the changes that we all want to see.

Which ethical bank? New analysis by ECCR

Features of each account

	Tridos Bank	CAF Bank	unity trust bank	The Co-operative Bank	RELIANCE BANK
7 day switch guarantee	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Physical branches	Other services of branch staff & manager	Pay by cash & cheque at ATM, office or branch	Pay by cash & cheque at ATM, office or branch	Pay by cash & cheque at ATM, office or branch	Pay by cash & cheque at ATM, office or branch
Fees	Pay per transaction	£2 per month	£2 per month	£2 per month	Free for first 500p, £2 per month
Card facilities	✗	✗	Personal credit cards in addition card facilities	✓	✓
Internet banking & dual authorisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interest paid	On balances in UK	Link to bank website settings	Link to bank website settings	Link to bank website settings	Link to bank website settings

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) have created an analysis of the five most ethical banks in the UK: Tridos, CAF Bank, Unity Trust, Co-operative, Reliance. Each of the banks is rated against a series of measures, and the whole initiative is designed to get us talking about the ethics of the banks we use, and to consider whether we should switch to one with more ethical

credentials. [The resource is available here](#)

Facebook - worst of the UK tech tax avoiders?

[Taxwatch has conducted new estimates](#) of the amount of tax avoided by the top five tech companies operating in the UK. They examined in details the tax affairs of Google, Apple, Facebook, Cisco and Microsoft and found that collectively they avoided an estimated £1.3bn in 2018. The worst offender in percentage terms was Facebook who it was estimated avoided paying £165m in that year. They were closely followed by Microsoft, Apple and Google in that order.

In brief

- [Trust for London issue report exploring Londoners' views on a 'riches' line](#)
- [Joseph Rowntree Foundation publishes new analysis of poverty in the UK](#)
- [Tax Reliefs cost us £155bn a year, and we don't know what we get from them](#)
- [Parliament debates tax avoidance but doesn't reach a consensus!](#)

And finally...

Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 'Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. (Luke 14:21-24)



The painting you can see here is anonymous, painted by a Dutch artist in the early 16th Century. I love this painting. It depicts the parable of the great banquet, also known as the parable of the wedding feast. It's the story of a master who invites a host of people to his party and who all, one by one, make excuses, until the master gets his servant to go out into the streets to invite 'the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame'. The parable is widely understood as a parable of the feast in heaven, in other words the life that is to come. In Isaiah, the age to come is also portrayed this way as a great feast to enjoy. Isaiah 25:6 says this "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines." Both accounts speak to us of a place where there is no want, no hunger, no crying, no pain – just a place of enjoyment.

But what's interesting in Luke's parable is the way in which the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame are shown to be enjoying this feast also. We see this depicted in the painting – we have the food, the drink, the merriment, the young the old – but also a lame man, dead centre in the painting.

So what has this to do with tax justice? The vision of heaven we are given in scripture is not merely about something we look forward to when we die – it in the words of the old Christian Aid slogan – about life before death. The vision of heaven is basically an indication of how life should be now. Don't we pray 'thy kingdom come'! In other words – life should be a party – but it should be a party for all. Life should be a place of flourishing for all – including for the crippled, the blind and the poor. Our tax regimes should be such that everyone can enjoy life as much as they are able. And if our tax systems are such that some are excluded, that they are left out of the party as it were, then they are wrong. But as we all know, that is what our tax systems do. In the UK, as the JRF report above indicates many are still suffering significant degrees of poverty. And internationally, the picture is even worse. Yet, the global tax rules are set in such a way that they benefit the richest countries not the poorest. Tax justice is, in part, about ensuring that everyone is invited to the party - for that is the vision that Christ gave us.

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