

GENERAL ELECTION OPEN LETTER

Dear friends

We write to encourage everyone in our church communities to engage as fully as possible in the General Election process. We hope this letter will also be widely shared so that we can encourage all who are entitled to vote to do so. We believe it is vital for our long term health as a democratic nation that everyone plays their part by voting. So if you are entitled to vote do ensure you are registered and on December 12th vote. You will find a guide on how to register on www.gov.uk. Registration must be done by 11.59pm November 26th . We want to highlight what we believe need to be core common considerations over these weeks of campaigning.

LANGUAGE, TONE & TRUTHTELLING

Alongside many others we urge everyone involved in campaigning to take care with the language that they use of those with whom they disagree, and whom they wish to defeat in the election. Robust debate is important but this does not mean being disrespectful, rude or unkind. We plead for care in how we speak of one another. We ask for truth telling that is undertaken with humility and care for the other. Differing political views, and policies, are arrived at after considerable thought; so careful listening and critiquing are required from all of us.

We want therefore to encourage hustings to take place, if possible, on several occasions in each constituency. Churches and church halls are good venues for these and clergy, or leading lay people, should be able to chair impartially. Churches Together and inter faith groups are excellent bases from which to conduct these.

We also want to encourage children and young people's voices to be heard even though they do not have a vote. We hope schools will hold their own debates and mini elections. We encourage everyone to try and listen to their views in helping decide how best to vote.

CARE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AND NEEDY

When assessing different policies then care for the most vulnerable and needy is always at the heart of a Christian response. Will the poor be raised up? Will the disabled be respected and supported? Will children be cared for and educated well? Will the elderly be valued? Will the asylum seeker and refugee be treated with welcome and hospitality? Will the sick and dying be cared for and respected? We can arrive at different judgments on what

policies will be most effective in answering these but they ought always to be at the centre of what a policy seeks to achieve.

THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE NATION AND WORLD

The long running debate on Brexit shows us that different people have very contrasting views on what is best for the nation. Nevertheless, this is the question that must stay at the heart of our consideration though never seeking simply what is the best for our own nation at the cost of the wellbeing of our neighbours in other nations. This is also true as we consider the wellbeing of the planet. Climate change and how we respond as individuals and a nation should be a key area for us to consider in deciding how we vote.

PRAYER

As Christians we believe that prayer matters, and that the God to whom we pray is active in our world. We should be praying daily for all those seeking election and for the whole process. We should also hold whoever forms the next Government before God in our prayers. So please include the election in the regular intercessions in services alongside in personal and private prayer. Some might even want to run 24/7 style prayer during the campaign. The Church of England has produced a prayer for the General Election and we encourage its use.

**God of grace and truth,
send your Spirit to guide us
as we discover your will for our country.
Help us to discuss the issues before us
with courtesy, truth and mutual respect
and grant that all who stand for parliament
will seek to serve the common good
through him who came not to be served but to serve
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

May we all hold our nation deeply in prayer. May we find a way of moving forward afresh as a nation together committed to the common good of all in our land, and the common good of our entire world.

In Christ

+Paul & +Sarah