

FROM OUR MINISTER

Dear Friends,

I am writing this on the day after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called the *General Election* for 4th July. Oh no, some of you are already groaning, we're already hearing too much about the election. Can't the minister keep out of politics?

I think it's important to set out a few Christian principles when it comes to politics and voting. Firstly, we should be interested. Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation, so every aspect of life matters to him. Our society matters to us, because we are our brother and our sister's keeper, and we are building for a kingdom community in God's new creation of which the church is meant to be the sign and foretaste.

Secondly, that said, there is no political creed which exactly lines up with the *Gospel*. Anyone who tells you to the contrary is reading their Bible very selectively at best, and at worst has made God in their own image. We care about the individual (traditionally a *Conservative* theme), social justice (more commonly a *Labour* theme), and liberty (normally a *Liberal Democrat* theme). We care about family life and about the climate. So it is often complicated for us in assessing where to assign our vote.

That is why I find websites that ask what we feel and how strongly about a range of issues and then indicate the party most closely aligned to our convictions helpful. By the time this is published, one such tool will be available on the website of the Christian campaigning group CARE (www.care.org.uk). There will be other secular equivalents, but CARE's will have a leaning

towards many of the concerns Christians have.

Thirdly, we have a distinctive approach to leadership. Politics is not just a technical discipline. It requires moral leadership, and that means we must take into consideration what Jesus said that even he came not to be served but to serve. Why that particular strand of Jesus' teaching? Because the title 'Prime Minister' means 'First servant.' I think it is a good question to ask at times like these: which candidate shows a desire to serve with the power they will be given, if elected? Fourthly, because God cares about our world and he is active in it, another distinctive for us is that we should make this a matter of prayer. Don't leave it to the person leading the Sunday intercessions, either. That's why I'm having a leaflet distributed at church from the 24-7 Prayer Movement, offering many ways of praying at an election time. It was produced before the General Election and contains no party bias. It also covers elections in a broad manner - including praying for those who work at polling stations, which is dear to my heart, because Debbie has done many a stint as a polling clerk.

I will not tell you how to vote, nor will I disclose publicly how I will vote. But I will insist that participation in the election is a vital Christian civic duty for us all.

May Almighty God guide us by the Holy Spirit and have his hand on our nation.

Your minister and friend,

Dave Faulkner

