

A Prayer for Politics

From the Scottish perspective the UK General Election on 7th May holds the tantalising prospect of both certainty and uncertainty: nationalist dominance here in Scotland and the likelihood of no clear Conservative or Labour winner UK wide. A single party here, a scramble for coalition deals there.

As a Church leader and resident of Dundee with deep family commitments on both sides of the border I find myself more keenly engaged with this General Election than most others in my lifetime.

I believe that the political paradigm shift we are experiencing holds clear and present dangers for the governance and wellbeing of citizens, but equally the tantalising potential for a different style of wise, enabling and effective government in times of urgent need and rapid change.

We need progressive policies and space for more nuanced views. I fear the worst outcome for Scotland within the UK and Europe might be an unhelpful mix of inflexible conviction politics and short-term convenience politics.

It is a great mistake to regard the poor as undiscerning and the rich as uncaring. Both will soon sniff out the betrayal of politicians' promises. We are entitled to challenge all the party manifestoes and candidates. So we should be careful about what we wish for – perhaps it's better to give up a bit of what we prefer so that others' needs can be met?

As Christians we certainly encourage everyone to consider the issues and values that matter to them and their communities. Jesus and the Bible have much to say about the importance of loving our neighbour as ourselves, about relationships, about mutual respect, caring and sharing. The first Christians were recognised as much for their counter-cultural lifestyle as by their distinctive beliefs.

It's not what we say it's what we do that counts. Religious or not we certainly need to look after one another, taking our share of responsibility for the common good. Someone recently likened casting our vote to saying a prayer: now there's a thought.

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