

## How should we vote?



So, you've registered for the election, you've got your polling card and you merrily trot off to your local polling station, to cast your vote.

As Christians, seeking to apply our faith in our everyday lives, how should we vote? It is true that there are Christians to be found in most political parties in Northern Ireland, and that Christians vote for a variety of candidates and parties. But how do we make the best choice?

## A world designed for human flourishing

If we look at the creation narrative in Genesis we can see a world where everything and everyone was in perfect relationship – God & humanity; man & woman; humanity with creation. God created a context where humanity could flourish – everything that humans required thrive was provided for and it was all good. And some responsibility for the stewardship of creation was delegated to Adam and Eve who were commanded to fill the earth and subdue it.

And it was all good.

But we don't need to look too far to realise that Northern Ireland is not a place where humans are flourishing and meeting their full potential as God had intended. We have not handled well the responsibility given to us when God told us to rule over the birds of the air and the fish of the sea.

And so instead of perfect relationship we experience alienation – alienation from our environment, as we rapidly use up valuable resources and pollute the atmosphere; from each other, and also alienated from God.

## Creating a context for human flourishing

It is in this context that we begin to engage with the world around us. As Rev Chris Wright has said,

*'God's purpose was not to invent a production line for righteous individuals, but to create a community of people, who in their social life would embody those qualities of righteousness, peace, justice and love which reflect God's character and were God's original purpose for humanity.'*



Can we, through our voting, contribute to a society where humanity can flourish just as God intended?

## Some food for thought...

Here are some ideas to help guide your thoughts:

- ✘ *'Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others'; Phil 2:4*

Does the candidate or party pursue policies that will build up the whole community, rather than favouring one side over the other or use their position for personal gain?

- ✘ *'Do not ill-treat an alien or oppress him... Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan'; Exodus 22:21 & 22*

What is the party or candidate's passion for justice? Will they be concerned about and provide a voice for those who are more vulnerable in our society?

- ✘ *'Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.' Psalm 34: 12-14*

Are honesty and integrity key characteristics of the candidate you would like to vote for? Can they be trusted to keep to the commitments they have made during their election campaign? Is the party open about its processes and how it comes to its conclusions on policy?

- ✘ *'Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes' Deuteronomy 1:13*

Is the candidate someone who commands respect across the community? Have they been wise in decisions they have made to date?

## Standards in Public Life

In 1995 the Government established seven values as 'inherent to the ethic of public service'. Known as the 'Seven Principles of Public Life' they are:

- ✘ selflessness,
- ✘ integrity,
- ✘ objectivity,
- ✘ accountability,
- ✘ openness,
- ✘ honesty; and
- ✘ leadership



Sound familiar? How does your preferred candidate measure up against this list?

## Prayer

And we should never forget to pray. As Paul reminds us in his letter to Timothy:

*'The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live'. (1 Tim 2:1-3, The Message)*