

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Introduction

These resources are designed to inspire individuals, local churches and Evangelical Alliances to pray, think, ask questions and encourage others to do the same.

I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians," said Charles de Gaulle.

The word "politics" comes from "polis", meaning the affairs of the city.

Politics is what everyone – who chooses to get involved – can do and say to help shape the society they live in.

If we opt out, then others will carry on doing the shaping almost certainly in ways we don't like.

It may seem that citizens have little possible influence over the "affairs of the city". But let's hold on to what we can do.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Hope and responsibility

Individual Christians can feel powerless as they look at the socio-political, moral and economic challenges of their country. When something like the coronavirus pandemic can cause such havoc and change, we can be left feeling so insignificant. We can wonder if there is any point in praying about elections or voting.

But, hope returns when we focus our attention on the King of Kings, the one who is in ultimate charge and is working out His eternal Kingdom purposes no matter what.

As we remember that we are called to pray that *“His will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*, we are motivated to persevere in our intercession.

If we live in a democracy, however imperfect, then as adult citizens, we have a chance to express our preference about the future as we cast our vote.

The voting choice may be far from easy. And sometimes, perhaps we should pray and work to ensure there will be better party and candidate choices and media coverage for the next elections. But we should still take the opportunity to mark what we believe is right.

Praying and voting wisely requires all of us to do some homework – to work to understand what is happening in our country and continent and equally try to understand the will of the Lord. Let’s do this in humility, remembering that we will not fully comprehend until Jesus returns.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Strength in unity

There is particular power and wisdom in praying and reflecting together with other Christians.

The diversity of local Church (and indeed Church at national or European levels) means we can choose to understand the lives, problems, gifts and opinions of those who are very different to us. Our identity in Christ gives us a firm foundation for mutual respect, collaboration and the possibility of softening our opinions.

Of course, praying, thinking and discussing together can be hard, especially where a nation's political culture has become disrespectful and bitter. But let's resolve to lay such attitudes aside and remember that we are brothers and sisters who have much to learn from one another.

We know that, when we pray in humility, repentance and unity for our nation, we can be confident that the Lord listens and will heal (2 Chronicles 7: 14).

And when we consider socio-political matters with those who are different to us, it becomes much easier to find a truly biblical perspective on what is important.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



A biblical worldview sustains democracy

There is much we can agree on from the Bible. We know that every single human being is made in the image of God and, therefore, has infinite value. So Christians are united in wanting to see our society valuing all, no matter their sex, age, ethnicity, faith or worldview, “economic usefulness”, health or if they are yet to be born etc.

As image bearers, every human has the capacity for immense and creative good, so we seek a nation where there is opportunity for that flourishing contribution from each one. But, since the Fall, each human is capable of unspeakable sinfulness. And so public policy and, indeed, the political system itself must take this into account.

It is this biblical worldview which has provided the foundation for sustainable democracy and free societies.

- Since human beings can do good, they should be able to contribute to the political decision making system and to society.
- Since human beings can do evil, democratic systems should spread power as widely as possible, not allowing any individual or institution to dominate.
- Since every human being has infinite worth, politicians should work for the good of all, including those who did not or could not vote for them.

So let’s be proactive in our praying, voting and influencing to speak up for these core biblical principles and to protect and strengthen the health (in God’s eyes) of our democracy, nations and continent.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Politic has its limits

No matter how important elections are, politics becomes an idol when we expect it to solve every issue, give 100% guarantees of security and answer our every need. Christians look to the King of Kings first, trusting in His sovereignty and ultimate Kingdom purposes. And we also understand the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to the common good.

Local Church has the joyful task of offering the hope of Jesus Christ in word and deed. There is so much hardship, injustice, loneliness, sadness and fear around. The Church is doing a vital job in serving communities, reaching out to the most vulnerable, encouraging neighbourliness, building peace, offering hope for today and ultimate hope for eternity.

Let's keep going, whatever happens in political life.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Praying for elections

Christians may vote for different political parties but there is great significance in praying together in humility and unity for our nation and continent.

Here are suggestions for united intercession. Invite people to pray in non-partisan ways so that all Christians can say AMEN.

Let's pray for

- The well being of all candidates and their families during the stress of election season,
- Peaceful and safe campaigning and voting,
- Truth to be sought, seen and heard, valued and accepted,
- For accurate information, both positive and negative, to be available and for the media to serve the common good.
- Opportunities for respectful debate, with a variety of voices being heard,
- Growing support for core biblical values, including love, truth, justice, righteousness, forgiveness, integrity, respect, service and generosity,
- The success of politicians who will
 - Preserve and strengthen democracy and freedom,
 - Work for the good of all, including the weakest and most vulnerable,
 - Be a blessing to their nation but also work well with politicians from other nations.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



- The next government term to be a period
 - Where mutual respect and listening in political debate increase,
 - Where every politician / public institution is able to be and to offer its best to the whole and to be humble enough to learn from others,
 - Where there is a new generation of servant-hearted people entering the public arena, working for the good of all,
 - Where there is greater understanding of the value of every human being,
 - Where wise and just decisions are made to face the many economic, technological, environmental, social and security challenges we faces, and where the weakest are better protected,
 - Where freedom of religion or belief and of expression are strengthened,
 - Where decisions are made at the appropriate level – private, local, national, European,
 - Where there is a stronger connection and trust between politicians and officials and citizens.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Who to vote for?

How do you know what candidate or party to vote for? Christian leaders should not tell you how to vote. Instead, they should invite Christians to consider some questions that could help them decide for themselves. Investing this effort is energy well spent as votes have long-term consequences.

Questions for reflection as you prepare to vote

- Politics is not just about the will of the majority. Will the parties or candidates work for the common good of all? The sick, the vulnerable, young or old, rich or poor, all regions, indigenous or migrant communities or other minorities, the ignored?
- Politics is not just about the next few years. What is the long-term vision of your candidate and/or party? What kind of society could today's promises bring in the future?
- Are politicians using "Christian" language? If so, what does it really mean to them – in their lives, as well as in their political promises? How does that match your understanding of the Bible?
- How do candidates speak about others? Is their language respectful?
- Do the candidates engage in real debate or just recite their party mantra?
- It is important to be proud of our country, both past and present. But even the most splendid country will not be able to survive in isolation. How do the candidates intend to improve relationships between other

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



nations (and, where relevant, within the European Union) and collaborate with them?

- Power can be dangerous. Since we are all sinners, power should be spread widely. Therefore, what is the attitude of the parties / candidates towards democracy, including media & judicial independence?
- Do you normally give your vote to one party or candidate? Are they still worthy of your support? How do they measure up to a wide range of biblical values?
- What is the attitude of the parties / candidates towards freedom of religion for all, including in public? How will they make sure that people of all faiths and none can live together as good neighbours?
- What is the attitude of the parties / candidates to the most vulnerable, including the unborn, the sick, those with disabilities and the dying? What impact will their worldview and priorities have on these people?
- How supportive are the parties / candidates of flourishing families based on lifelong heterosexual marriage and also community cohesion?
- How do the parties / candidates balance the importance of protecting the nation and continent from pandemics, crime or terrorism and ensuring human rights & democracy?
- How do the parties / candidates view God's creation? Where in their priorities is the need to ensure the protection of the beauty and sustainability of the natural treasure of the nation and the world?

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



- How do the parties / candidates intend to assist economic flourishing, ensuring good education, opportunities and fairness?
- How do the parties / candidates regard truth, including combatting exaggeration, scapegoating or other fake news? How open are they to engage in constructive political debate, including interaction with the public?

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Beyond election season

From a biblical perspective.

- Government is a gift from God to maintain peace, justice and the conditions for human flourishing for all.
- Politicians are meant to serve the people and, even if they do not know it, are under God's law.
- Citizens have their role too. Their actions of neighbourliness, integrity, work and service, compassion and justice all matter. Their paying of taxes, obeying the law and the ways that they hold their politicians to account all contribute to the common good.

What needs to happen so that politicians serve, citizens play their part and society flourishes?

Let's commit to praying

- That those in power will be held to account in just and effective ways.
- For lawyers and police, media owners and journalists, civil servants and civil society to play their important roles and, if necessary, challenging politicians to do a better job.
- That there will be a longing for truly biblical values and that vision will emerge regarding how to begin to spread those values.
- That the Lord will open up politics and public leadership to people who follow His ways.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



- That positions of service will open up in political parties, the civil service, the law, education, media etc. for Christians to be salt and light.
- For new ways for Christians, as individuals, local church or at national level to demonstrate the heart and character of God in the way we live, speak and serve.

A RESOURCE PACK FOR ELECTION TIME



Your Kingdom Come

Of course, Christians will never create heaven on earth but we base our hope on biblical truth.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

If Jesus asked us to pray this, we can assume that the Father does want to answer the prayer.

Let’s recall biblical heroes like Daniel, Joseph, Moses & Esther who were given significant opportunities by the Lord for influence. The regimes in which they worked were evil, they were not able to change everything but God gave them the courage and strength to make a difference. So who knows how the Lord will respond to His people’s prayers?

But, while it is good to persevere in prayer and action to see politics improve, our hope lies elsewhere. We worship and trust in the King of Kings who is sovereign over all.