

Cell Group Notes - General Election/Why vote?

Welcome: Can you remember the first time you were allowed to vote? How did it feel? Did it give you a sense of duty in some way or leave you feeling apathetic? Has the way you've felt about voting changed at all over the years?

Worship: Read Psalm 8 together and spend some time in praise of who God is and all he has done, and in prayer that in all the talk of politics/power and so on we would not lose sight of God's power and authority.

Word: Read Matthew 5.13-16.

- 1) Why salt - what characteristics make salt an appropriate analogy for Jesus to use? What does Jesus mean when he refers to people as salt of the earth?
- 2) In other places in the gospels Jesus teaches people to pray in private (Matthew 6:5-6) and in a parable criticises the idea of a Pharisee building himself up through the way he prays in public in the temple (Luke 18.9-14). Does the idea of letting our light shine before others that they may see our good works contradict all this? Why or why not?
- 3) What might being salt and shining our light before others involve for us individually and together as a church?
- 4) Does this have any implications for the upcoming general election? Is there a link between being salt and light and whether or not we vote and how we decide to vote? Discuss how voting and the way we choose to vote might or might not be part of Jesus' call to be salt and light.
- 5) How did Jesus himself live out being salt and light? Did he give us an example to follow? See if you can find and share some specific examples from his ministry - his teaching, his miracles, his lifestyle, in the gospels. What are the issues in our world that the example of Jesus' life show he would have felt important? Are these issues that we still need to consider and act on today? Is it important to try and get an idea of different party's positions on these issues and allow that to influence our decision on how to vote?
- 6) Discuss how important how we decide to vote is - how closely we look at candidates or party's stances on certain issues, whether we make our decision based on the person because we like or dislike them (be it the party leader or the local candidate) or based on the party because of the overall party position on different issues, and so on? Does our Christian faith make a difference here?

Witness: 'The church shouldn't interfere in politics.' 'Politics is a public/communal matter, faith is a personal/private/individual thing and so they shouldn't overlap.' Discuss your gut reactions to these kind of statements. Does the church have a right to take a stand and speak out on political issues? Is it part of our Christian witness and duty? How do we go about this - what can we do to make any difference to the world around us?

Pray for wisdom in deciding how to vote, pray for all those standing for office, and pray about the role and witness of Christians and the Church at this time of election.