

## From the Vicar's desk

Can you remember the quote 'We don't do God'?

When Tony Blair was Prime Minister he was interviewed by Vanity Fair. He was questioned about his Christian faith, his Communications Director, Alistair Campbell, interrupted with the now famous retort 'We don't do God.' We seem to be treating faith and politics as if they are separate domains that do not have any bearing on one another.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, speaks for the other side of the argument: 'Whenever Christians speak out on issues of poverty or social issues of all kinds, we always get letters saying, *'Why don't you just talk about God and stop getting muddled up in other subjects?'*

The Archbishop comments 'When I go to my Bible...the thing I find is that God says: *love me, and show you love me by loving your neighbour.* And if you love your neighbour you're going to be deeply concerned in all things that trouble them, whether it is about heating bills, insecurity in families or the need for good community life.'

If we take another look at the Bible we will realise that it is full of references to social justice, peace, equality and freedom. Many people are inspired by their faith to engage directly or indirectly in politics.

The former Archbishop of South Africa Desmond Tutu's words still challenge: 'When people say that the Bible and politics don't mix, I ask them which Bible they are reading? In his tireless campaigning in South Africa, Tutu always maintained that poverty, sexism, homophobia and racism are not only political problems but also spiritual and moral issues. 'The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person' he asserts. 'When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, *'Now is that political or social?'* He said, *'I feed you'* because the good news to a person is bread.'

A coalition of church denominations has issued a guide 'This is a time... reflections on the General Election' (<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/>). The guide challenges narratives, assumptions and policies that seek to stigmatise and misrepresent others. It warns against pursuing self-interest and encourages Christians instead to focus on the common good:

*'As the people of God we have a responsibility to seek what is good, to speak out for what is right and to challenge what we recognise as harmful and unjust.'*

Every blessing, Father Carl.