



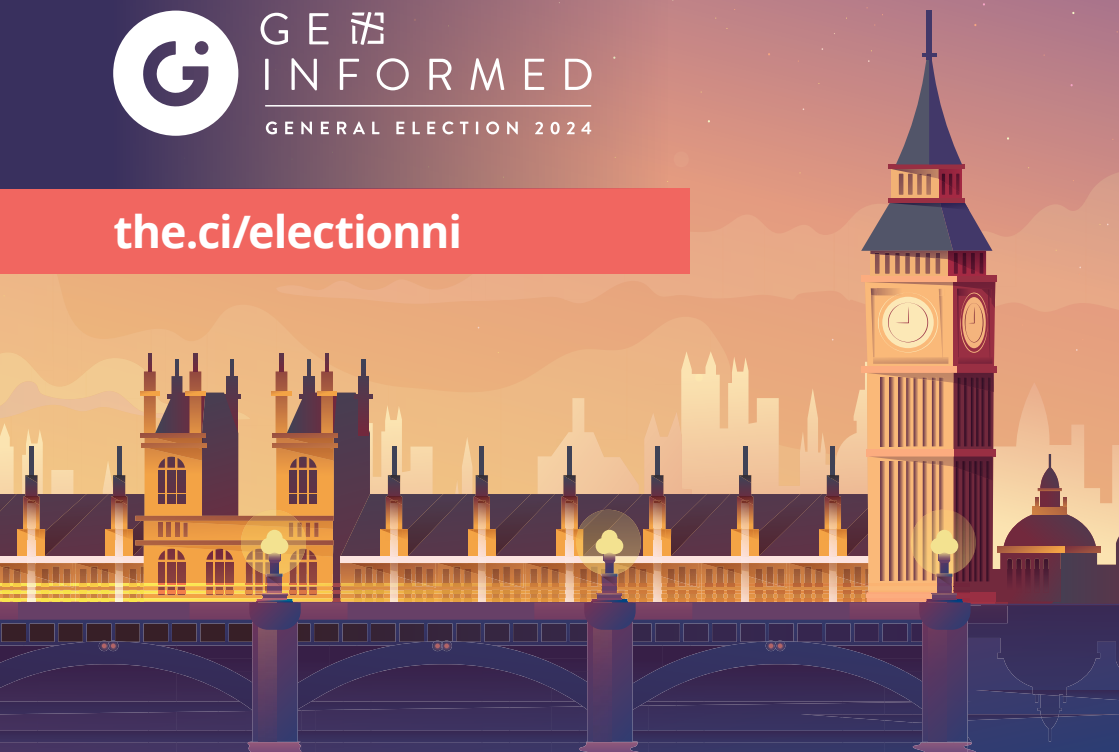
THE CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE
NORTHERN IRELAND

Questions for Candidates



GE 
INFORMED
GENERAL ELECTION 2024

the.ci/electionni



Key resources at *the.ci/electionni*



Voting records of MPs

This covers a specific range of moral issues. There may well be other matters you want to think about. Our voting records only apply to MPs from the Parliament just dissolved. There are some MPs who are standing down.¹ You will want to ask the views of the other candidates in your constituency.



Questions for Candidates

Questions to help Christians find out key views of candidates. You can also get copies from our office on request – email info@christian.org.uk or call 028 9094 1667.



Introduction



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GENERAL ELECTION 2024

ELECTION 2024

As Christian citizens, we should think carefully about how we vote in the General Election on 4 July 2024.

The Christian Institute is a registered charity and we cannot tell you how to vote. What we can do in this briefing is address:

- ▶ why you should vote
- ▶ biblical priorities
- ▶ issues on the horizon
- ▶ two key factors in voting
- ▶ speaking to candidates

We also suggest Questions for Candidates (see back page), to help you find out key views of the people standing for election in your constituency. The issues we have highlighted in the questions are those where we believe the Bible is clear. They are issues where biblical standards, particularly the Ten Commandments, directly apply.

WHY SHOULD YOU VOTE?

The State is a means of God's 'common grace'. The Bible is very clear that the governing authorities act on God's behalf to restrain evil and promote what is good (Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2). This benefits all people, not just Christians.

As a general rule Christians must follow

the Lord Jesus Christ's command to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matthew 22:21).² Christians are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) and also of the earthly nation in which God has placed us. The Christian's duty is to obey the governing authorities. The exception is where they forbid what God requires, or require what God forbids (Acts 5:29). It is our earnest prayer that Christians will have freedom to share the Gospel and live out the Christian life (1 Timothy 2:1-4). In praying "deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13) we are praying against the persecution of the Church as well as against personal temptation.

Common grace and the privilege of voting

Romans 13 makes clear that God has ordained the governing authorities in every country whether they are Christian or not. Thanks to God's common grace, there are many non-Christians who take the right view on a range of issues. Nobody's thinking is wrong at every point. Politicians who disagree with Christians about redefining marriage can still be strongly against assisted suicide or liberalising cannabis laws. Some atheists will strongly defend the free speech of Christians.

Like the prophet Daniel, God's people must encourage leadership which promotes

truth and righteousness. Daniel not only urged King Nebuchadnezzar to renounce his sins and his wickedness. He pleaded with the king to practice what is right and to show kindness to those who are oppressed (Daniel 4:27).

Unlike Daniel, Christians in the UK today get to play a part in electing their leaders. In our democracy we all have the legal right to vote. Billions of people around the world do not enjoy the freedoms we have in the UK. We elect Members of Parliament and so ultimately the Government. We help choose 'Caesar'. So voting is a privilege and a serious responsibility.³

The General Election provides an opportunity for Christians to speak out and play their part by voting. Governments can make it easier or harder to live freely as a Christian or to share the Gospel. Believers have to make a judgement about how their vote can be used to best effect.

BIBLICAL PRIORITIES

When it comes to matters of public policy, Christians have to assess biblical priorities.

The Lord Jesus Christ criticised the Pharisees and told them that they had neglected the more important matters of the law (Matthew 23:23) namely justice, mercy and faithfulness. This included setting aside the commands of God by neglecting to support their parents in order to observe a man-made tradition (Mark 7:9-12). For the Lord Jesus Christ, and for us, it is God's commands that tell us what constitutes justice, mercy and faithfulness.

We can also distinguish those political issues on which the Bible is absolutely clear from those on which it is not.

For instance, the Bible is not clear on how to improve access to GPs or the most

appropriate level of university tuition fees. To decide on these issues involves a detailed assessment of the facts and the exercise of judgement based on experience. Many situations we encounter in ordinary life are at this level, and so are many political issues.

Very often, making a Christian judgement depends on the wise assessment of several biblical principles. This can result in Christians arriving at different conclusions. For example, we know for certain that the State has a right to levy taxes (Romans 13:7). But Christians who hold to biblical truth can legitimately disagree on the level of individual taxes.

Yet at the other end of the spectrum the Bible is "clear, direct, and decisive"⁴ about a whole host of political issues. For example, a vote for abortion or euthanasia is a vote to break the Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13). These are the kinds of issues that our Questions for Candidates focus on – straightforward matters of right or wrong.

ISSUES ON THE HORIZON

The new Parliament elected on 4 July 2024 could vote on laws affecting religious liberty, freedom of speech, transgenderism, abortion, assisted suicide, drugs legalisation and gambling.

These are all issues of concern to Christians. Some are 'conscience votes', where MPs are free to vote without a party whip, which underlines the importance of finding out what individual election candidates think.

Biblical Christians believe that the Gospel is paramount. Salvation is only found in Christ, not in any political programme. Yet followers of Christ are to care about their world, being salt and light in our society.

And in order for that to happen, and for evangelism, there has to be freedom for the Gospel. Religious liberty is a crucial issue.

Christians in the UK have enjoyed remarkable freedom for centuries, which was hard won down the years. Many Christians elsewhere in the world do not have such freedom and we must pray for them. Our political leaders must do more to combat the persecution of Christians abroad.

Yet here in the UK religious liberty is being increasingly challenged. Street preachers have been arrested. Christians have lost their jobs for answering questions about their faith or for taking an ethical stand. Christians in business have come into conflict with equality laws and faced fines for holding to the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Many Christians are also gravely concerned about legislative proposals that intrude into ordinary family life, evangelism and the running of the local church. Christians believe that governing authorities are established by God, but at the same time the Government is not responsible for everything. Indeed, if there is to be freedom, it must not be.

It is important to say that society is more than the State. Society is made up of families and many institutions and organisations between the State and the citizen. In the UK, we do not equate society with the State. Government by itself cannot solve all our problems or even come remotely close.

TWO KEY FACTORS IN VOTING: CANDIDATES AND PARTIES

In the 'first-past-the-post' system for Westminster elections you vote for a

particular candidate. So there are two key factors we all must consider when deciding who to vote for. We must consider both our local candidates and the parties they represent.

It is very important to know what is going on in your parliamentary constituency and to find out who your candidates are. The key to identifying your candidates is to be sure which constituency you live in. Most constituency boundaries have changed for this election. This website is helpful: whocanivotefor.co.uk

A lot may hinge for you on the individual views of your candidates. In some constituencies there will be the option to vote for a candidate who takes the right stance on moral issues. In casting a vote, Christians are not necessarily endorsing every policy of the party they vote for. You may decide to back a particular political party that most approximates to where you stand. Or you may consider it better to vote for an exceptional candidate who shares your Christian views across a range of moral issues, even if they are standing for a party you would not naturally support. It is relevant to consider how the parties fared in the last election in your constituency.⁵

These are decisions which ultimately only you can make. Christians should prayerfully exercise their Christian conscience in these matters. Just because your parents or your colleagues vote in a certain way does not mean that you need to do the same. It is your choice.

But you cannot make an informed decision without knowing what the parties and the candidates stand for. Christians should make it their business to find out the policies of each candidate and party. You should seek to find out their positions on key moral issues.

SPEAKING TO CANDIDATES

Candidates or their canvassers may come to your door, call by telephone or stop you in the street to ask how you intend to vote. This presents an ideal opportunity to find out where the candidate stands on key moral issues. His or her opinions on these issues can be quite different from the position of their party.

More than at any other time, the candidates will be open to listening to your views. Should they be elected, they will be representing you in Parliament. In 'safe seats', where the party of your current MP is expected to win, raising issues with candidates could have an even greater influence than your vote.

The Christian Institute has suggested Questions for Candidates (see back page). Think through some of the issues and have the questions ready in case canvassers call or stop you while out shopping. Limit yourself to the two or three with which you are most concerned. Be prepared to give a reason for your view.

If you speak to the candidate, ask if he or she is willing to raise your concerns in Parliament if elected. If they say they will, you can hold them to this promise should they be elected.

If you speak to someone canvassing on behalf of the candidate, ask for your concerns to be passed on. The very act of asking these questions is a Christian witness.

CONTACTING YOUR CANDIDATES

You can contact your candidates by letter or email, or on social media, in order to raise your concerns. This way you can be sure that all the candidates have been made aware of the issues important to you.

For contact information about candidates, use this website: whocanivotefor.co.uk

Election literature put through your letterbox will also give the local addresses for your candidates. If your MP is standing again you may want to see how he or she has voted in the past, since this is a matter of public record (see the.ci/electionni). If you contact a candidate, keep things short, but do raise specific points. Make sure you tell them that you are a constituent. You could swap notes with other Christian friends who have had contact with a candidate.

There are many ways of being a Christian citizen, but a General Election provides an excellent opportunity for Christians to be salt and light in our society. We must pray for wisdom and speak out for the truth.

Christians must weigh up the evidence and exercise their Christian conscience, remembering that if we lack wisdom then we should ask God for it. He has promised to give wisdom generously to those who ask Him (James 1:5).

i For contact information about candidates visit: whocanivotefor.co.uk

i For MPs' voting records and other election information visit: the.ci/electionni

REFERENCES

1. *MPs standing down from the Commons ahead of the next general election*, House of Commons Library briefing paper 9808
2. See also Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25
3. Cranfield, C E B, *The Bible and Christian Life*, T&T Clark Ltd, 1985, page 60
4. Grudem, W, *Politics - According to the Bible*, Zondervan, 2010, page 18
5. For example, see the BBC's record of the 2019 election result at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2019/results>

Questions for Candidates



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Whenever you come across a candidate or their canvasser, ask them two or three of these questions. Ask your friend to do the same.

1. Do you think schools should teach children that there are more than two genders?
2. Are you concerned that a 'conversion therapy' ban could criminalise the ordinary work of churches?
3. Should recreational drug use be legal?
4. Are you in favour of making it easier to change legal sex?
5. Do you oppose moves to legalise assisted suicide?
6. Should public sector workers have to affirm same-sex marriage or transgenderism?

the.ci/electionni

KEY RESOURCES TO
INFORM YOUR VOTE,
INCLUDING:

- Voting records of MPs
- Questions for Candidates



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