



Dear Friends,

At the time that I am writing this piece election fever is in the air. Well, it is for those seeking election or re-election to Parliament, even if it doesn't seem to be yet for the electorate at large. One election has just taken place and the other is yet to come.

The choice of the Cardinals in Conclave of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to be the Pope to succeed John Paul II was a surprise to some, he being at 78 the oldest Pope to be elected since 1730, a disappointment to others hoping for a more liberal and progressive leader and, of course, a joy to those preferring a 'conservative' leader favouring continuity over change. It will be interesting to see what course Pope Benedict XVI takes. But one thing is sure, both he and the Catholic Church need our supportive prayers at this time of change and transition.

The General Election here in the UK is quite a different 'kettle of fish.' The various political parties are now busily preoccupied presenting their policies and attacking those of their opponents as they cover the length and breadth of the country campaigning for the votes they hope will bring them to power. I think a lot of people will heave a great sigh of relief when the 5th May has come and gone.

Whether we find this build up to the General Election exciting or tedious, the fact remains that we are each given a vote and with it the opportunity to share in the process by which the government of this country is elected. And while it would be quite wrong to suggest that Christians should vote for any one particular party or, for that matter, to identify any one particular party as being more Christian in the policies it stands

for, I do think that the supreme commandment of our Lord – to love God and our neighbour as ourselves – provides a pretty good yardstick when it comes to deciding how to vote.

Because human beings are basically selfish, seeing most things only in relation to themselves, the vast majority of people will vote according to - 'what is best for me.' This ought never to be the attitude of the Christian. In response to the commandments of Jesus, the Christian will surely vote according to what is perceived to be best for all, and particularly for those whose needs are greatest. We who are fortunate to live in the leafy suburbs of the south east of England enjoy a standard of living and a measure of comfort that is not shared by everyone living in the UK, not to mention those who struggle for life in the developing countries of the world. Because the needs of so many are very much greater than our own, they must surely find some place in our considerations and evaluations as we vote for the party we consider will best govern the country and encourage and support those whose needs are greatest.

If you want to hear what the main issues are, and if you want to challenge the candidates who are standing for the Bromley and Chislehurst Constituency, then come to the Election Husting organised by Churches Together in Central Bromley and being held at Bromley United Reformed Church on Tuesday 3rd May at 8.00pm. All five candidates hope to be there.

The Lord be with you

John Bown

Minister of
Bromley Methodist Church

COMMON
GROUND

In this edition John Bown writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC