

# FOCUS ON FAITH

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## MAKING A MARK

By the time this edition of the Journal is published and you get to read this article it will be 7<sup>th</sup> May and the 2010 General Election will be over – well more or less.

Depending on whether the polls are right and it really is a tightly fought contest, there could well be a hung Parliament and deals will be going on in (possibly) smoke-filled rooms. Decisions will be made depending on who agrees what with whom and which compromises have to be made; about who gets responsibility for what and where the consensus of policies lies. On the other hand we could have either what we already had before the Election was called or alternatively a totally new Government.

But whatever happens and whoever gets into power (or stays in power) the same old problems will be there. Our economy is in need of fundamental, strategic overhaul; our social and emergency services require funding which means taxation is involved; the threat from international terrorism will still be an ever-present reality and we'll continue to have the inter-personal issues, generational, cultural and ethnic tensions as well as moral, ethical and yes, spiritual, dilemmas to debate.

Who would be a politician, or for that fact, want to take on any form of leadership? Is there any hope on the horizon; any light at the end of a long, dark tunnel?

### **.. we “make a mark” on the ballot paper and the mark is a cross – nothing else is acceptable**

Well I for one believe there is and I don't think its just wishful thinking or that I've got my head in the sand.

Now I have certainly never thought it was my place to tell anyone how to vote and I wouldn't use this column or any other 'pulpit' or position I have for that purpose. I hope though that you will have used your vote – our democratic right to decide those who represent us was won after many sacrifices and not just by the women of the suffragette movement. Most ordinary men had to wait until 1884 before they could take part in Elections. Prior to that date it was only a small select group of privileged men who could elect an MP.

No, my reason to believe there is hope is based on my faith – faith in God of course but also in humanity. I'm not naive enough to think that our politicians are all there for altruistic reasons (the recent expenses scandals have graphically illustrated that's not the case) but there are men and women who do want to make a difference to society and who desire to make a mark for the right reasons. We have to put our trust in someone to represent us in Parliament and although party politics blur the edges somewhat, primarily our role is to elect

someone who will work on behalf of every person in a specific constituency – without fear or favour.

And that involves looking for someone who has integrity, a willingness to stand up and be counted, a sincere belief in their cause and policies as well as the energy and down-right doggedness to handle the pressures of parliamentary life and someone who is willing to make the sacrifices necessary to serve us. And that is also probably a compromise because no one of us is absolutely perfect.

But my primary reason for hope is found in my faith in God. You see I believe God is actively interested in what happens in our land.

All through the Bible we read about how spirituality is interlinked with government. Of course I hear people say that politics and religion don't mix but to be honest I think that's unsustainable logically. Spirituality goes to the core of who we are whether we believe in God or ourselves as being the ultimate force in the universe. If we don't act out of the principles, values and standards that are found within us, then we are living a lie. The Bible says, **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord”** (Colossians 3:23). Christianity has to be relevant not just in politics but in every aspect of our life otherwise it's redundant.

Faith has to have a practical outworking and the Bible shows God's heart for the poor, those who are discriminated against, the marginalised. Many of our great charitable institutions were founded because Christians took seriously the teaching of the Bible and acted out of compassion.

It's interesting to me that we “make a mark” on the ballot paper and the mark is a cross. We don't give our signature or any other form of identification – nothing else apart from a cross is acceptable. And of course the Cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for everyone. It was on the Cross that Jesus made His mark on our world.

In one sense God doesn't need our vote. The Message Version of the Bible translates the opening part of Psalm 145:13 this way, **“Your kingdom is a kingdom eternal; you never get voted out of office.”**

However in another sense He does. We may make a mark on a ballot paper to vote but we make an even bigger mark in our lives when we place our faith in God and our beliefs and actions are joined up.

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on local Churches together with contact details, please log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk).