CHRISTIANS URGED TO PRAY AND VOTE AT ELECTION

Christians are being urged to pray and get involved in the General Election to take place on 8 June.

Faith has a central role to play in politics say the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in a letter sent to all parishes ahead of the General Election. The Archbishops suggest Christians could organise hustings or volunteer for candidates as well as ensuring to vote.

They said that we should pray for those standing in the election and “renounce cynicism” by “engaging prayerfully” with candidates and issues.

They add: “Our Christian heritage, our current choices and our obligations to future generations and to God’s world will all play a shaping role.”

Director of Church and Society Martyn Goss added, “Through public elections Christians are called to remember that they are also citizens and therefore have responsibilities for both the local community and the wider society in which they live. We are invited to make choices that will have consequences not only for our generation but also for the future.

“Deep at the heart of the Gospel is a message to be concerned and caring for the most vulnerable people in our world – those whose human growth is stunted by disease or poverty or oppression. All Christians have a moral duty to look beyond their own interests and speak up for justice and kindness.”

For a copy of the archbishops’ letter and for further resources go to the news section of our website: www.exeter.anglican.org

communications@exeter.anglican.org
NEW DIOCESAN SECRETARY

Stephen Hancock has been announced as the next Diocesan Secretary for our diocese. Stephen was a Commercial Director for HSBC Bank and is the son of a priest, his father Paul is a Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral. He will oversee the administration and financial life of the Diocese and be an important voice in the senior staff shaping policy. Bishop Robert said: “This is an enormously important appointment for the Diocese as we begin to build on our priorities to grow in prayer, make new disciples, and serve the people of Devon with joy. Please pray for Stephen and his family as he prepares to take on this role.”

RURAL FORUM LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

The Devon Churches Rural Forum has published its first newsletter and launched its website. The forum brings together people from churches and farms with academics, community groups and public sector agencies to share concerns.

To sign up for the newsletter email info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk and the website is www.devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

PRAYING FOR THY KINGDOM COME

Hundreds of people from around Devon are expected to converge on Exeter Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday (4 June) at 6.30pm for a prayer event to mark the culmination of Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) Global Wave of Prayer. Parishes will bring their TKC prayer boxes to be offered to God at the event which will include contemporary and traditional worship and Bishop Sarah will be there to bless all who come.

Bishop Sarah will launch the nine days of prayer in Exmouth on Ascension Day, and churches around the county are holding prayer events throughout.
Kim describes a ‘difficult’ childhood and the church being a safe space for her. She said: “I joined a church youth group. I liked being around other young Christians as I felt accepted. I didn’t like being at home and this got me away for a while. I saw the church as a safe space but the idea of a God that cares for me did not relate to my everyday experiences at this time.”

For Kim joining the army was a more permanent way to get away from the difficult home environment and she served in Germany, Canada, Poland and Kuwait between the ages of 17 and 22. She describes experiencing a profound sense of God when she was feeling at her lowest on duty in Iraq. This experience has changed her life and led her towards a life of faith in the church.

She said: “I was at breaking point and said some words, which I suppose was a prayer to God - ‘I can’t go on living like this anymore.’ There was a sudden feeling of a golden warmth seeping through me. God felt so real at that moment. The thing that changed in that moment was that I had accepted there was a God and that I wasn’t on my own.”

She adds: “When I look back I can see how God was with me even though I had lots of questions and couldn’t see how it was personal for me.”

Upon leaving the army Kim got a job as an Activity Instructor at Christian Retreat House Lee Abbey. Whilst there, as part of a loving and diverse community, Kim decided to go through the selection process for church leadership and was accepted.

Kim was marrying Jared in May and will be serving at St Jude’s in Plymouth for her curacy.

She finishes: “It is about trust and knowing that God loves you despite everything. I believe there is a plan for each of us and we rely on God’s provision to keep us going in the difficult times.”
Many of us who read this in parish magazines or on line will have been among the 90,000 people visiting the Devon County Show last month. It showcases the life of the county in a fascinating way and gives a great boost to rural crafts, local produce and countryside activities alongside the fierce but friendly rivalry in the livestock and equestrian sections.

We live in a part of the country with a wonderful diversity of high moorland and inner city, seaside town and rural hamlet, new housing estate and ancient village. Many come here as tourists or to retire but this is also a place where most of us work, bring up families and enjoy our leisure.

I have been the rector of both. What they all have in common is the call to act as salt and light to the parishes where they are set: salt adding flavour to the life of the community and light in revealing the presence of God in Jesus Christ.

We recall this month how that presence came in a new and transforming way at Pentecost as the Holy Spirit filled the first disciples with a joy and confidence to proclaim the wonderful works of God. The result was a community that devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers (Acts 2:42).

We talk a lot about wanting growth in the diocese but growth, at least in numbers, is best seen not as an aim in itself. It is an outcome of the life of a healthy church, a church which as in Acts, enjoys teaching and fellowship, breaking bread and praying together. To have 612 such churches across the diocese really does enrich the life of the county!