



Message to the Churches of Somerset concerning the General Election

As senior church leaders in the County of Somerset, we celebrate the life, beauty and variety of this vibrant County.

Our churches are actively involved in the life of Somerset's villages, towns and cities through our church communities and buildings, chaplaincies, schools, food banks, and community networks.

With a General Election having been called for 4 July, we acknowledge the enormous challenges we share in our County, and the deep responsibilities that any elected politician will face:

- The deep financial crisis currently experienced by Somerset Council
- The lack of affordable housing
- The reality of poverty for many families and the high cost of living
- The pressures on our farming community and the rural economy
- The changes in our climate that affect our flood levels and weather
- The increasing pressures on our NHS and Social Care provisions
- The needs of refugees including our guests from Ukraine

We call on our churches and church members to:

- encourage people to register as Voters (by 18 June deadline)
- engage actively in the election by asking challenging questions of all candidates
- take part in hustings meetings with local candidates, and make use of churches to host such meetings
- remind people to take personal ID to the polling station
- encourage people to vote
- pray for all those who seek to serve as our political leaders

We urge all candidates and political parties to:

- conduct their campaigns with integrity, honesty and fairness, avoiding smears and personal attacks
- seek the common good, with a spirit of listening

A prayer: Loving God, now that an election has been called, hear our prayers for our country and the campaign ahead. We pray for those who are standing for election, for their safety, and for their willingness to listen and to speak. We pray for truthfulness and kindness to prevail as the issues are debated. We pray that each of us will be inspired to use our voice and our vote for your goodness and glory. Inspire us, God, to Love, to Pray and to Vote. Amen.

Signed by The Co-Presidents of Churches Together in Somerset:

- The Rt Rev Dr Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells (Anglican/Church of England)
- The Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald, Bishop of Clifton (Catholic)
- The Rev Dr Jonathan Pye (Methodist District Chair)
- The Rev Dr Daniel Haylett (Methodist District Chair)
- The Rev Gary Woodall (Baptist Regional Minister)
- The Rev Nigel Manges (Baptist Regional Minister)
- Majors Paul and Gillian Billard (Divisional Commanders, The Salvation Army)

Somerset, 24 May 2024

Further details from Canon Jonathan LLOYD, County Ecumenical Officer,
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