

A New Parliament



Not everyone enjoys the right to vote in a general election. Those who live in totalitarian states, ruled by autocratic leaders, often dream of the privilege of being able to be involved in a democratic process. For such a cause thousands of people protest the world over and more than a few end up sacrificing their lives. It reminds us who live in the United Kingdom that the freedom to vote is a freedom not to be taken for granted.

No political process is perfect and our own is found wanting at times. Cynicism that whatever the outcome of an election will result in little or no change, can be dispiriting. This is not helped by candidates who resort to bad-mouthing their opponents in an attempt to catch a cheap headline, often in the hopes of holding on to a closely contested seat. Such poor behaviour only confuses and mystifies an electorate who must then work doubly hard to disentangle claims denigrating an individual's character from party policy. Good debate puts before the people clear options about what different political parties stand for and articulates a strategy for the future. It is on this basis that people express their voting preference.

To serve as a Member of Parliament is always an honour and brings with it significant responsibilities. Those who vote place into the hands of those duly

elected the task of forming a government and running the country. We entrust the future of our jobs, our homes, and our families into their care. We equally entrust to them our hopes and fears, anxieties and dreams on the understanding that they will do their best to serve the common good. To want to be an MP is to know from the outset that this is a vocation. A vocation to serve.

MPs of course are human beings and being human means that they sometimes fail. There may be cause for concern in personal relationships and the ability to work successfully with colleagues. As in all areas of life, relationships can and do break down resulting in serious consequences. At other times poor judgement in a policy area may result in failure. MPs are not superhuman. It is a tough and stressful job as recent studies of MPs' well-being and work-life balance have brought to light. Yet it is a worthwhile profession, and our country cannot function without them.

This month a new parliament will be convened. There will be many new MPs taking their seats for the very first time. It is our privilege to have elected them to be there. We pray they will serve with humility and safeguard the trust we have placed in them.

'Lord God of truth, grant to our King and his government, and all members of parliament the guidance of your Spirit and the comfort of your grace.'

God Bless.

Revd Mark Bailey