

# FOCUS ON FAITH

Stephen G. Derges, Elder & Worship Pastor,  
Bridgnorth Baptist Church



## VOTE FOR REAL LIFE

Unless you've been living on a desert island or had your head buried in sand, over the past few weeks it would have been difficult to avoid the coverage of the Political Party Conference season. The TV and press have been full of a mixture of reporting, comment and analysis plus behind the scenes scrutiny of what's actually been said but what is really meant. The usual questions are trotted out – when will Tony Blair resign? Is Gordon Brown going to succeed him? What will the other two 'new boys on the block' – Cameron and Campbell – bring to the scene.

Whatever your hue of political opinion or allegiance I guess you've found things to encourage you and probably things that you don't like about those you support. And I'm sure you've found plenty to criticise about 'the other lot'.

Of course the Conferences are there to instil in their faithful supporters the belief that come the next General Election they will be on the winning side. However without our votes the carefully crafted policies and 'sound bites' will mean nothing, if the candidates can't persuade us that they have the answers.

**The Christian faith .... is all about relationship – we trust a person.**

Over the past few years it's been a privilege to get to know a few of our local councillors. Those I've met have been sincere in their desire to serve the community. They give up their time and energy and whilst I'm not so naïve as to think they don't benefit in a whole host of ways from their

service to us, often the rewards are diminished by the complaints and criticism that they receive for the decisions they make on our behalf. The words *"You can't please all the people all of the time"* are probably tattooed indelibly across their minds.

I vote at local and national elections not just because it's my right but because I believe in the democratic process and that I should take it seriously. I believe it's my responsibility to consider the parties, what they stand for and those who represent them. It's obviously a 'trade off'. There are certain policies I don't agree with all of the political parties and so I have to use my judgment about which one I feel will be the one that gets my 'x' in its box.

It seems to me that we have to place an enormous amount of faith in our politicians – at all levels. They take on a tremendous burden of leadership on our behalf – making decisions that most of us don't even want to contemplate let alone have to choose on. For example, how do we maintain national safety and

security, determine economic and fiscal policy, safeguard the Health Service or maintain the transport infrastructure, housing and welfare systems? These are huge decisions with many possible solutions and alternatives as well as people's livelihoods at stake.

Yet when it comes to the really big decisions about life – and what happens after life – where do we turn? The Bible has some interesting comments to make on this. It advises us that it's foolishness to tell yourself there is no God; that when we live our lives solely for our own benefit we miss the whole point and that faith without action is no faith at all.

Political parties rely on their policies and dogma to get us to vote. We have to trust the politicians to fulfil their promises and sadly many people find that nigh on impossible. The Christian faith though is all about relationship – we trust a person. Jesus, who the Bible declares to be the very living embodiment of God Himself, demonstrated the extent to which we are valued.

Jesus' life was radical. He challenged the political and religious establishments of His day by declaring that God expects us to live lives of compassion, fairness, justice, loyalty and integrity. These aren't just 'nice to have' traits. They are attributes and values that set us apart, which significantly affect our relationships with other people and help make our communities better places to live.

And Jesus promised that we could have a full, complete and abundant life – not just when we die (although that's part of the deal as well) – but here on earth too. Even when we're in the midst of difficulty we can experience God's presence and peace with us.

**The most important decision you can make is to vote for real life – eternal life – starting right here and now.**

If you are interested in finding out more about God's purposes for your life, log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk) which provides information on local Churches together with contact details, plus other Christian resources and activities.