



# Link Up!

**‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’  
Romans 12 v 2**

## Still to come in May

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May we will have a visit from Rev Jim Thomas who is one of the Regional Ministers with SCBA. Carri will be leading the service and Jim will be continuing our series in Luke’s gospel.

The following Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, we will be visited by another of the Regional Ministers, Rev Clare Hooper, who is the Acting Regional Team Leader, she will be leading worship and preaching again from Luke’s gospel.

Finally on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May our good friend Andrew Williams will be leading our service and continuing our Luke series.

## Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who helped at all with our Coronation Celebration event. I think that those who were able to come enjoyed the time together and, although we didn’t have many people who don’t usually come to church, it was still a good time to have fun together and may give us ideas about how to have some more ‘fellowship’ type events in future. Particular thanks go to Janet King for her work on the craft ideas, and for those who supervised the various table activities. Stan & Barbara for the quiz and musical contributions. Carri & Kim who worked with our volunteer, Philip, to prepare and clear up after the lunch. For all those who provided cake. For Stephen, John, Dave, & Paul who helped with setting up and/or putting everything back after the event. It shows what we can do if we put our minds to it.

## A reflection on Christianity and politics

I’m sitting writing this reflection after spending two straight days working on the local elections for BCP Council. I very much enjoy elections, and like being able to play my small part in enabling democracy to function. So, eschewing the opportunity to talk about the coronation, I’m going to talk about politics, and why we as Christians should play an active part.

Firstly, the example of Daniel inspires it. Daniel occupied a position of influence and was able to speak truth to power as part of the royal court. One example of this was in Daniel 4:27 when he advised Nebuchadnezzar to stop sinning, practice righteousness and to look after the oppressed. Here then was one of God’s servants using the gifts that God had given him to influence a secular pagan ruler.

Secondly, seeking the common good produces it. In the letter Jeremiah sends to the exiles of Israel in Babylon he urges them to seek the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29:7) In fact the exiles are to pray to God on behalf of the city, for in it’s welfare, they will find their own. This principle applies today as it did then. We are to pray and seek the good of the place where God places us. This surely involves engaging with local and national forms of government. For laws and policies have direct consequences in our lives.

#### Other Notices

Following the Day of Prayer held in February, the Deacons felt that this was something that we should try to repeat at various times during the year. This was suggested at the last Church Members' meeting in March and agreed. We will be holding the next of these on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, which is just before Pentecost Sunday the time when the Holy Spirit came to the early church. We will again have two sessions. The morning session this time will start at 10.30am and finish at 12noon. Coffee and tea will be provided for that session. The evening session will start at 7.30pm and will finish by 9pm at the latest. Both of these sessions will be 'come when you can, leave when you must', so if you can't manage the whole time come for part of it. We will again be providing ideas for those who can come along and those who are unable to come together but want to pray in their homes so that we will all be praying about the same topics on that day.

Thirdly, specific passages compel it. Our clearest passage on our attitude towards government is found in Romans 13. Here Paul establishes that all governments (good and bad) are established by God and draw their authority ultimately from Him. As Christian citizens we are to obey and be subject to the governing authorities because of this deeper reality. The purpose of Government is to affirm what is good and punish wrongdoing. The standard for right and wrong is supposed to be God's word. As Christians we seek to help governments to do this by influencing their decision-making process.

Fourthly, all human beings are image bearers of God. If we believe that all human beings are made in God's image and carry irreducible dignity and value, then surely we can and should lobby and work towards a society that places a greater degree of respect on the value of life. By our advocacy, both individual and corporate, we seek to bear witness to this better story.

Finally, we engage because we love our neighbours. The Bible teaches that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. If we believe this, and if we take the repeated emphasis in the Bible on God's heart for the quartet of the vulnerable (widow, fatherless, foreigner and poor) then we cannot stay on the sidelines. Jesus tells us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, so we engage with lawmakers and policy makers and seek to persuade them to do what is right.

Of course, the ultimate need of government is for a radical change of heart – the new birth that God alone can give. Yet God's common grace also means government can and does do good. Our engagement then flows from the points articulated above. We must reject the overly cynical and jaded view which seems so rampant and thinks there is no point in engaging. And we must not be naïve or blind to the reality of sin. Our calling, surely, is to engage with truth and grace and, in doing so, follow the very pattern of Jesus Himself.

*Graeme Smith*