

TRINITY 3: 2024

I think this is a good idea, and I wish I'd thought of it! The C. of E. has produced a modest little booklet in the run up to the General Election called, "Pray Your Part". In the welcome and Introduction, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York say this:

"The coming General Election is a critical moment in the life of our nation, which will shape our future. This is a time for us all to ask important questions about what kind of country we want to build.

The world and our nation face deep challenges – from questions of war and peace, poverty and injustice to the very future of the earth God has given us.

Faced with such huge questions, our calling as Christians is to turn first to God in prayer. We are therefore inviting everyone who is willing to dedicate the next few weeks as a time not just to think about the big questions, but also to pray for our nation and our world. We want to invite everyone to think about how we all can play our part both as voters and, more broadly, as citizens.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray each day, 'your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven'.

This simple and profound prayer is our starting point during the days leading up to the General Election – and all the days beyond.

May God's will be done in our nation and in God's world."

Well, Amen to all of that!

I spotted some of you at a packed St John's last week listening hard to the candidates represented by the colours blue, green, orange and red. The Reform candidate failed to turn up and there were a few cheers from where I was sitting in the high balcony! Of course all the big issues were out there: the NHS, Education, the Environment (not least the sewage pouring into the Deben while we are fast asleep), Housing, Defence, Migration, and so on. I do believe there is a Christian 'take' on all these matters – whether we 'own' a colour or not – and at the end of the day (however we vote), we have perhaps a unique role to continue praying for 'good government'. We surely need to pass on to younger generations that cynicism or corruption can be won over and replaced by integrity and honesty, compassion and justice. Let's pray so.

Today's parable reads very much like one of those outdoor 'hustings' where huge crowds have gathered to hear the one they want to follow. Jesus has to step into a boat to address them and speak to them - and well before the term 'soundbite' existed. He spoke instead in parables, and today, about the tiniest of seeds, the mustard seed which, after it has been sown, "grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs".

As someone who loves mustard, I warm to this parable of growing the kingdom, anything which adds a little heat and spice to the blandness of so much of our cooking. The

Christian story is something to not only taste but also to enjoy, and get excited about! It will always be a 'communal' story for everyone, and equally. There is no place for discrimination or oppression in the kingdom of God but only the opposite: inclusivity and liberation. Remember that famous quote from St Paul in 1. Corinthians 3.verse 6,

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

That would be my 'strapline' for any new Christian vocation, knowing that God is the creator and source of all that we hope to build and make new, and make fairer, all that we hope to commit to with our hearts, minds, and souls. We always need to be looking at the long-term instead of a quick-fix; how we can encourage our youngest members to be drawn to hear, be attracted by and, follow, the Christ figure upon the Deben – addressing us **all** today, young and old (or somewhere in between), in the year of Our Lord, 2024. It seems very fitting to close with our own Diocesan 'Growing in God' prayer because it really is so hopeful when we commit to this wondrous God of ours, who makes all things new:

"O Lord, our God, giver of life and growth, grow in us a longing for you, that we might deepen our faith; grow in us a compassion for your world, that we might serve our neighbours; grow in us a vision of your kingdom, that we might proclaim your love. By the power of your Spirit and in Jesus' name." Amen.