



into the Melting Pot

the question is more important than the answer

Sunday 13 December 2020

Leadership Notes

As usual, respect views other than your own (even if you think they're crazy!), and anything about local leadership at Christchurch is off limits.

Is this the first time we've ever discussed politics apart from Hustings?

Notes from the meeting – a collection of things said during the Zoom session.

Leadership - What qualities do you look for in a leader?

- One who shows concern for the vulnerable
- Leads by example
- An encourager
- Trustworthy
- Authentic
- Truthful
- Good team player – we did it
- Shows determination
- Not only listens but hears
- Is well prepared
- Prepared to change opinion (and brave enough to say why)
- Decisive
- Able to delegate
- Charismatic (but not in a celebrity way)
- Has an ability to relate to people, to connect
- Recognises you can't be 'one of the boys' – need to be able to hold a degree of distance (when taking and explaining unpopular decisions)
- Appreciates the qualities in others
- Able to delegate
- Not wanting to be popular
- Supportive
- Visionary
- A leader must be able to manage change and can communicate well, bringing everyone along

Looking at that list, are we expecting too much of our leaders?

A good leader will assemble a team who have particular and complimentary skill sets.

Politics - What conclusions do you draw about Leadership from the statement by Biden and the letter from Trump?

- Biden's views are clearly based on a set of values, principles and ethics.
- Values are best seen by actions.
- Trump also has a set of values, but perhaps not articulated within the context of a faith. Perhaps based more on the wider ideologies of 'public opinion'.
- Many voters had a core priority that cut through the general politics, and it was this one issue that determined the vote (eg 'pro-life' or gun control).

- An example: Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel mega-church in California, publicly supported Trump in 2016, putting aside the then sexual assault allegations and accusations of tax evasion, but decided by Trump's position on 'pro-life' (banning abortions).
- Many vote negatively – which is the least worst candidate?
- It was the Anabaptist movement that first sought to separate Church from State, seeing Christianity as having State privilege, with other faiths marginalised.

Politics - What qualities would you like to see in our political leaders?

- The UK needs good leaders with vision.
- One aspect of politics that is found distressing is the apparent inability to answer a question. It's OK to say you don't know, or to admit you got something wrong (isn't it?)!
- Integrity seems to be missing – it is difficult to trust our leaders.
- We could do with a wider cross-section of people as MPs – there are too many white men from Eton (but people voted for them!).
- Are there too many career politicians who lack some 'real life' experience before going into politics?
- Listening to 'Today in Parliament' on the radio, it seems there is often little connection to the lives of ordinary people.
- Many vote for the party and not the individual local MP candidate.
- There is too much grandstanding – saying we have the best, world-beating, etc – too much over-promising. The leader shouldn't need to brag about achievements.
- There does sadly seem to be one rule for them and one rule for us.

The Church - What qualities would you like to see in our national church leaders?

- Having seen Justin Welby in 2015, he gave a fantastic speech, but the press picked up on it as being "too political". Church people speaking out are similarly castigated, the implication being 'get back to your holy huddle' but the message of Jesus was hugely political (which Bible are they reading, if at all)!
- There are Bishops in the House of Lords – directly involved, constitutionally, in our governance.
- The difficulty of any faith leader is that they 'represent' a very wide and diverse congregation, and must find it difficult to talk on everyone's behalf.
- The URC Moderator (Donald Hilton) had the courage to say ". . . but I may have this wrong". He also expressed a view that faith incorporates doubts.
- Pope Francis's encyclical letters are very political – the latest is on the environment.
- The state of British media is very biased and generally doesn't let church briefing material through. Similarly, Muslims are mostly viewed negatively.
- When religious material does hit the headlines, it is usually 'sensational' such as the B&B discrimination or the celebration cake a few years ago against same-sex couples, with the justifying statement "because I'm a Christian" which assumes every follower of Jesus has the same narrow (bigoted) view.
- 'What Would Jesus Do?' is still a catchphrase with life.

Jesus - In what ways was Jesus a 'good leader', and why might you follow him?

- He lived what he preached.
- He got alongside 'real' (ordinary) people.
- He fought against the bureaucratic institution of his Jewish religion – should we be thinking the same of our own institutionalised church structures?
- Jesus prayed, giving us an example of finding quiet places to step aside for a while.
- Jesus didn't tell us what to do – he wanted us to work it out for ourselves.

- He was a 'rebel' in a very political way – challenging both the religious authorities of his day, as well as the social (political) inequality.
- Jesus clearly had charisma in drawing large crowds, and had compassion for individuals.
- It was a pity that his ministry was just three short years – it would be interesting to speculate what would have happened if it had continued.
- His disciples are sometimes portrayed in the Gospel stories as being slow on the uptake regarding Jesus mission.
- Martin L King Jr was a good leader who courageously 'spoke truth to power'.
- Mandela similarly, although he was initially a terrorist/freedom fighter involved in atrocity and murder – years in prison tempered that passion.

Followers - Do you like being led; what makes a good follower?

- I like being led by a *good* leader
- I like to have a viewpoint and be able to challenge leadership.
- Loyalty has to be earned and maintained.
- As a follower, I feel free to express myself
- I'm pleased not to have the responsibility!

I wonder about our personal part in this life we find ourselves living.

How much do we try and influence our leaders?

Do we try to work on changing 'public opinion' to impact our local situation?

Might you become a leader, championing some aspect of Jesus' ministry about which you are passionate?

Or is it too easy to step back into the shadow; to not rock the boat?

The most important words for leaders

(sent to me by Brian Scott)

- Six: "I admit I made a mistake"
- Five: "You did a great job"
- Four: "What do you think?"
- Three: "If you please ..."
- Two: "Thank you"
- One: "We"
- The least important word: "I"