

How Christians and Churches Can Support Elected Parliamentarians

Christians engaging in party politics have to study the philosophical and ideological bases and history of the different parties before deciding where to join and to engage. In that research, special attention should be given to how much space is given in the different parties for their members, activities and elected representatives following their Christian conscience in key moral and ethical questions. Entering a political party without a sound philosophical and ideological platform and history as well as a real space to follow one's conscience would prove an effort in vain due to the lack of possibilities bringing about any change within that party and in politics in general.

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1) Caring for democracy:

A. Basically, there is a great concern for and defense of the democratic system and institutions as such in the Christian congregations and churches – but not specifically addressing certain questions or elected representatives. The general support for the democratic system as such takes place on a more general level and is also perceived as the church being one of the bulwarks in standing up for freedom and democracy if these values are threatened. This also implies that the Christian leadership, the denominations, churches, congregations, and individual Christians foster an atmosphere of courage and sound self-assurance, so that each member is prepared to act if needed instead of being characterized by cowardice and lack of conviction.

B. The congregation prays for the democracy as such, the local community, nation and the world, asking the Lord to protect and, in general, to give wisdom when the politicians are facing and deciding any issue. The church is not threatened by a political divide among its members but tends not to give any ethical guidance to the politicians in any questions.

2)Caring for the elected representative parliamentarian:

A. Going a step forward, the congregation could say that we should care for the geographically closest elected representative or that one who is a church or denominational member or who has cared for a specific issue of concern for the church: “Adopting” a politician (could be on either level: local, regional, national, European, UN). Inviting the person; giving him/her the right to address the congregation; having meetings to exchange views and opinions; giving low-key or even public support; defending the person when he/she is facing problems in media, the party or from political opponents; or correcting if having done something wrong politically and/or personally.

B. The congregation prays for the specific person and his or her life as well as service to the people. It requires much more knowledge and analysis from a Christian point of view. Some in the congregation will also say that this is not “our man” and find the actions taken in support or “adoption” of a parliamentarian as partial and biased.

3)Caring for the actual policy-making and legislation: through focusing on specific key issues and giving clear advice to the politicians on what stand to take and long-term direction to go.

A. Using all methods from 2) but in a much more specific way with less hesitancy to disagree and to put pressure on the parliamentarian. This is not easily done and would be enhanced if the church or denomination had developed a Christian social and political teaching – as the Roman Catholic Church – as a basic document to rally around and find guidance and support from. The actual policies and legislation could be mirrored in this document, guiding whether to applaud or correct. Such a base has to be generally supported, proclaim long-term values and distinct Biblical positions and receive church leadership’s authority/blessings as well as laymen’s trust and engagement.

B. The congregation prays specifically for the outcome in elections or key issues, having taken the time to find the common Christian teaching and Biblical ground to work from. Those supporting this social and Christian teaching will experience that these are shared values, soundly based, and not just one's own personal views.

4) Questions?