



The Church of Scotland

The Methodist Church 



An open letter to the Prime Minister from:

The Baptist Union of Great Britain  
The Church of Scotland  
The Methodist Church and  
The United Reformed Church

12 May 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you on behalf of congregations present in every part of England, Scotland and Wales representing over 800,000 Christians.

We congratulate you on your success and assure you of our prayers as you embark on leading this new government.

During the election campaign, many churches hosted hustings meetings in their communities, and Christians stood for elected office for different parties. We encouraged our church members to engage in political debate as Christians with a range of views but all committed to the common good. Our message was that Christians should consider voting in the spirit of 'loving our neighbour', the message at the heart of the Christian gospel.

We know that your government will now face difficult choices over the implementation of policies. We all have different understandings of what is "just" or how peace should be achieved. We do not presume that the practice of government is simple, but a wholesome society needs us all to ask what truth, justice, peace and wellbeing mean for the person Jesus commands us to regard as our neighbour.

We hope and pray that as you make decisions about your programme for government, you will choose to offer greatest support to those of our neighbours who are the weakest, the most vulnerable and the most in need of our help. Such policies will not always be popular, they may be politically or financially costly, but they are necessary if we are to live out the common good.

We welcome commitments already made in this direction. We applaud the way that during the last government you showed strong leadership in meeting your commitment to achieve spending equivalent to 0.7% of GDP in overseas aid, and the role that you have personally exercised as a member of the High Level Panel on the post-2015 Development Agenda. We

welcome your commitment to invest in the National Health Service, to continue to combat the impact of climate change especially on the poorest, your action on high cost credit, your engagement with devolution of further powers for Scotland, and your pledges to extend free childcare and boost opportunities for young people through education and learning.

As you know, churches are committed to supporting and working alongside their local communities every day of the week, running projects such as credit unions, foodbanks, training centres, homeless centres, and older persons' drop in centres. Many are also involved in striving for a society in which, for example, the need for emergency food provision has been eradicated because the systemic problem of food poverty has been effectively addressed. As such we bring perspectives from communities across the country. But we are also international organisations, connected to Christian sisters and brothers around the world, and so bring viewpoints from countries across the globe.

Therefore we have concerns which are local and global. We will continue to work on a range of issues which have been of concern to our church members for some time, and hope to be able to meet with your government to discuss them further. For example:

- Our experience and research has led us to be deeply concerned about the damage caused, particularly to vulnerable people, through the benefits sanctions system and we ask your government to undertake a full review.
- We are committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. We hope that you will support the international call to make the use of nuclear weapons illegitimate under international law and consider a deferral of a decision on Trident in 2016 to enable the UK to play a full part in new multilateral disarmament initiatives.
- We pray for peace in Syria and the surrounding region and urge that assertive international action is taken to uphold human rights and deliver humanitarian assistance to over 11 million Syrians who have been displaced by the conflict.
- Christians and other religious minorities are facing persecution, and we ask that your government makes freedom of religion or belief a human rights priority in all aspects of foreign policy.

We look forward to discussing these and other issues with you further.

We are aware of the particular opportunities and challenges which your government will face following the electoral success of the Scottish National Party in Scotland. Proposals for the transfer of additional powers to Scotland which followed the referendum need now to be enacted.

In every part of the United Kingdom, local churches will be writing to their newly elected MPs pledging to pray for them and work with them. Once again, may we assure you and your government of the prayers of the people of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the

Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church as we all seek to ensure that our society puts at its heart the principles of truth, justice, peace and wellbeing.

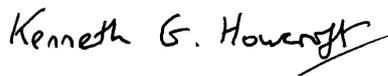
Yours sincerely



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