

National Week of Prayer for Parliament small group session:

We're encouraging you to join with many other Christians around the country as they commit to praying for our country's leaders and those who work with them. We are praying for them to benefit them, so that they may be blessed with wisdom, integrity, transparency and unity.

Use this one hour session to help engage others with prayer and political engagement.

Things you may need:

- Some paper and pens.
- Large sheet of paper with your MP's name written in the middle.
- Your MP's name – check out <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>
- A list of what your MP has been up to recently; grab some local papers and look at www.theyworkforyou.com
- If you're feeling really up for this, email your MP, tell them that you are going to be praying for them as part of a national prayer week and ask if they have any specific prayer requests.
- Some background music for during prayer time.
- A greetings/thank you card.

Icebreaker: 5 mins

True or False – below is a list of statements. Write them out on bits of paper or say them aloud and try to work out whether each one is true or false.

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| 1. The UK is divided into 458 constituencies. | False – 646 |
| 2. The leader of the House of Commons is Gordon Brown. | False – It's Harriet Harman. |
| 3. Legal voting age in the UK is 16. | False – 18 |
| 4. If you are a student you can be registered to vote at your term-time address and your home address. | True |
| 5. There are Christians in all the main political parties. | True |
| 6. Big Ben is the clock tower attached to Parliament. | False – Big Ben is the name of the bell. |
| 7. The words of Big Ben's hourly chime are based on Psalm 37. | True |
| 8. Around 61% of eligible voters voted in the last general election. | True |
| 9. Gordon Brown was the 2 nd European leader to meet President Obama | False – he was the first. |
| 10. The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party in parliament. | True |

Bible bit: 20 mins

1 Timothy 2:1-3

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour." – Today's New International Version

Read this bit out loud and then discuss the following questions:

We all want our rulers and governments to rule well; we want there to be transparency and accountability; we want to be able to trust that those who are elected to represent our views and perspectives will do so appropriately. Is this idealistic or naïve? Maybe. Currently we live in times of great uncertainty, global financial meltdown, expenses claims that make your eyes water and political leaders holding their fingers in the air testing the wind before choosing which direction to take. Yet deep down, there is surely still hope that the involvement of the local church can make a difference. We're not the only ones that think so:

'The world is changed not just by the mighty shoves of its heroes but by the tiny pushes from each honest worker.' – Helen Keller

'Sometimes it falls to a generation to be great; you can be that generation.' – Nelson Mandela.

Christians have often disengaged from politics, seeing it as a place that is deeply worldly, corrupt and based around power and control. And yet there are many Christians who find their calling to serve their communities by running for political office or working in the teams and departments that support the work of government.

As we look at the world around us and see that it is not as God planned or created it to be, do we look to his redemptive plan, to his calling on us to be co-builders and co-workers of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven? How do we engage with politics as people of faith to bring about change in this world?

Jim Wallis says that 'in order to change the world you don't change one wet-fingered politician with another, you change the wind.'

Paul calls us in these verses to change the wind by praying for all people, ESPECIALLY those in government and leadership.

The Parliament in the UK is grounded in Christian heritage and tradition, there are prayers every morning for those who want to participate and every hour Big Ben chimes out a tune, the words of which are based on Psalm 37: '*All through this hour, God be my guide, that by Thy power, no foot may slide.*' Such an encouragement for Christians working throughout Westminster to hear every hour of every day.

During this week will you pray for our brothers and sisters who are working in and around Parliament and throughout the country for the different government departments?

Questions to discuss in small groups or together:

1. Who was governing at the time of Paul's letters in the New Testament? How were they thought of by the public and by Christians?
2. Who creates the wind that Jim Wallis talks about?
3. Do you think Christians should be involved in politics? Why?
4. What stops us from praying for our government and leaders?
5. How can Christians be salt and light to Members of Parliament and government officials?

Thinking and praying locally: 10-15 mins

Have a flick through your local papers and look on www.theyworkforyou.com and see what your MP has been speaking about and working on recently.

Write your MP's name on a large sheet of paper and surround it with the issues that they've been engaging with and any of the specific requests that they have asked you to pray about.

Once you have prayed for your MP and for the issues that you have listed in front of you, you may feel led to pray for other members of the government like the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the leaders of the other political parties and all the people who work for the government in London and around the country.

When you want to draw the prayers to a close, you could all say aloud the following prayer that is used every day to open Parliament's business.

Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of Parliament and all in positions of responsibility, the guidance of your Spirit. May they never lead the nation wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but laying aside all private interests and prejudices keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all mankind; so may your kingdom come and your name be hallowed.

Amen.

Daily prayers during Parliament's Week of Prayer

24/7 and Christians in Parliament have come up with some daily prayers for this week of prayer. You can download this resource from <http://tinyurl.com/oflmsa> encourage your group to use this resource during this week.

Final thought: 5 mins

Send a greetings card from the group to your MP. You can send it to:

Your MP's name
Houses of Parliament
London
SW1A 0AA

In the message thank them for all that they do in representing your local area and tell them that you have been praying for them, but don't try to make any political points...the best place for that is in a separate letter.

You don't need to include a return address however you'll probably get a response if you do.

Close the session with an encouragement to continue praying for those in political leadership – here in the UK and abroad.