

Village Email
to Village

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This month's Parish Magazine contained a plea for Church Wardens, however all the other Parish Magazines I write for had an article about Politics and Religion, which it would seem a pity if Barrowden missed so here it is...

The weekend after the Chancellor's 'Fiscal Event', or 'mini budget', the Sunday Lectionary Gospel reading was the Rich man and Lazarus. The Sunday Lectionary is a three year cycle of readings, Vicars on occasion complain about them being inapt, however I noticed on Social Media that many of my colleagues felt that the Rich man and Lazarus reading was apt and timely. It is a parable told by Jesus about a rich man, traditionally named Dives, who ignores the plight of a poor man named Lazarus. Dives finds himself in hell, and he calls to Abraham in heaven for Lazarus to be sent to help him, but Abraham explains this is not going to happen. I got the impression that some of my colleagues were going to use this parable to condemn the Chancellor's tax cuts for the wealthiest.

I was on holiday in Whitby at the time, so did not have a pulpit available.

The Church of England used to be known as 'the Conservative Party at Prayer', but in recent times it has gained more of a reputation for being left wing. Such stereotypes are of course misleading, individual Vicars have all sorts of views, there is no ecclesiastical consensus on political matters, either now nor in the past. As a Parish Priest I try to keep my political views to myself, I wouldn't want to anyone to feel I wasn't their Minister because I disagreed with their politics. I am the Priest for everyone in the Parishes, no matter what you believe or who you are. If you fall within the boundaries of the Welland Fosse Benefice I will listen to you, pray for you, offer the services of the Church to you, and may well ask you to help with the running of the churches. I do have strong political views, one of them being that no political party has a monopoly on good ideas or common sense, and another being that as the bible says we should pray for those in authority I do pray regularly for local, national and international political figures and events.

It's not that I think the Church should keep out of politics, individual ministers can say what they like according to their conscience, it's that I think the Church should be above politics. In the funeral of our late Queen, at St George's Chapel, the Crown, Orb and Sceptre were removed from her coffin and placed on the Altar. The bible says that all authority and power belong to God, and that we are accountable to Him for how we use the authority and power He lends us. That is why the Crown, Orb and Sceptre were returned to the Altar, the place in churches that symbolises the presence of God, until that time when our new King will take them up. Dictators and tyrants think they are accountable to no one, even democratically elected politicians can be demagogues, but Christians should recognise they are accountable to God's reign of justice and mercy. The remarkable sense of humility and duty seen in the life of our late Queen demonstrated that she knew her crown of gold was held in service to the One who for our

sakes was crowned with thorns. There is a standard higher than self interest, or class interest, or national interest, a standard by which all behaviour must be judged, a standard which we cannot claim to own, but that owns us. I recognise that standard as Christ-like love of God and neighbour, what do you recognise it as?