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Love is civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #231
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Why should we get involved in the 2017 general election?

As Catholics, Pope Francis reminds us that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and calls us to join a new dialogue about the future.

This election must look to the kind of society we wish to create for ourselves and to pass on to our children. It's also about the world we want to see for our brothers and sisters worldwide, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable.

What has this election got to do with poverty and climate change?

We live in an interconnected world. To say we can't help people at home if we help them abroad is to present a false choice. We are big enough to do both: it is who we are and what we stand for.

Britain has a proud record in looking outwards, and in working with others to tackle poverty, inequality and climate change. We want to ensure that all candidates and parties commit to maintaining and strengthening this record.

Amid domestic concerns, we cannot let the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor go unheard. We are all part of one human family. Our future is shared.

What can I do?

During this election campaign, we can all stand up for an open, tolerant and welcoming society. We must encourage and challenge all political parties and candidates to show how they will do the same.

You can raise questions with the candidates standing in your local area about:

- > global poverty and aid,
- > climate change and care for creation,
- > Britain's role in the world,
- > building strong communities in the UK.

You don't have to be an expert! Simply by letting candidates know that constituents expect them to stand up for common good, you can ensure they know you care.

Questions to ask your candidates

1. Global poverty and aid

For more than a decade, there has been cross-party support for spending 0.7% of national income on aid. UK aid saves lives every day, and must always be focused on the needs of most vulnerable.

> **What will you and your party do to continue to tackle poverty overseas?**

2. Climate change and care for creation

In 2015, Britain joined with 195 other nations to agree urgent global action on climate change.

> **How will you and your party make tackling climate change a priority and prevent more people being pushed into poverty because of the changing climate?**

3. Britain's role in the world

Whether it is in agreeing new trade deals or addressing the needs of refugees worldwide, Britain must recognise the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

> **How will you and your party ensure that Britain is an outward-looking, tolerant and welcoming nation in years ahead?**

4. Building strong communities in the UK

Nine million people – one fifth of the UK population – privately admit to being “often or always lonely”.

> **What will you and your party do to help build strong, inclusive communities so that all people can flourish?**

1. Global poverty and aid

Although there have been huge advances in tackling poverty, billions of people are still denied a life of dignity. Compassion rooted in love drives us to respond to their immediate needs.

CAFOD believes international aid is a vital component in our response. Aid saves lives and must have as its sole focus the needs of the poorest people.



Aid has helped communities in Sierra Leone respond to Ebola, and provides clean water, healthcare and emergency relief throughout the world.

2. Climate change and care for creation

Pope Francis urges us to care our common home: the world we want to leave to future generations. To do so, we must act on climate change which threatens lives and livelihoods everywhere. The UK has strong cross-party support for climate action and has shown global leadership.

CAFOD believes that to tackle poverty, we must tackle climate change. Climate change affects the poorest people first and hardest, despite the fact they have done the least to cause it.



Olomaina's family in Kenya are affected by severe droughts. They are concerned that the death of livestock will mean they are unable to pay the fees to send their children to school.

3. Britain's role in the world

Pope Francis has warned against the 'globalisation of indifference'. In difficult or uncertain times we can turn inwards and forget our role in working for the common good.

CAFOD believes that the UK should have an interest in and influence over what happens beyond our borders. We must hold our elected representatives to account, encouraging, praying for and challenging them to continue to work for the common good.



The Catholic community in England and Wales has a long tradition of welcoming the stranger and seeing all people as brothers and sisters.

4. Building strong communities in the UK

Social isolation is when someone lacks social ties, social integration or the sense of belonging to a community. As the human person can only flourish in community, we should seek to build a society in which communities can thrive.

CSAN believes that policies should help communities to support older people, disabled people, homeless people, migrants – anyone living on the margins.



Investment in local organisations, transport and social care strengthens communities and helps prevent social isolation.

How can I contact my candidates?

In person: When candidates or canvassers phone you up or come knocking on your door, have the questions overleaf ready to ask them.

By email or letter: It's quick and easy to send a personalised email to all the candidates in your constituency at cafod.org.uk/election. Your local elections office will also publish a list of the candidates standing for election. To find your local office, visit aboutmyvote.co.uk

At a hustings meeting: This is where candidates debate policies and answer questions from the audience. Find information about hustings in your local papers, on notice boards or through your local Churches Together network.

Through the media: Use this briefing to help write an open letter to the candidates and send it to your local

paper or call your local radio station. They often hold call-ins around election time and ask for questions from the listeners.

On social media: You can tweet candidates with your questions. Remember to always be polite!

What next?

- > Please let us know how you contacted your candidates and what they said. Email mpc@cafod.org.uk
- > Arrange to meet your newly-elected MP during the *Climate Coalition Speak Up* week of action (1-9 July). Find out more: cafod.org.uk/speakup
- > Join CAFOD's network of MP Correspondents. Write to your MP three or four times a year when we think you can really make a difference. Find out more and sign up: cafod.org.uk/mpc

As registered charities, CAFOD and CSAN fully support and comply with charity law and regulations covering elections in the UK. Addressing the causes of poverty through advocacy in the UK and abroad is part of our charitable purpose(s). This resource is to assist supporters should they wish to engage local parliamentary candidates ahead of the 2017 General Election, not to influence voters for or against a particular political party, candidate or category of candidates.

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CAFOD and CSAN address is: Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7JB

Printer: Holborn Direct Mail, Unit 3, Profile Business Park, Pylon Way, Beddington Farm Road, Croydon, CR0 4XX