

Taking Elections Seriously

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It's that time again. You can tell by the increased level of vitriolic outpourings on social media criticising various political parties, their leaders and their members. Friendships are destroyed when the horror is discovered that 'you're supporting that party!?!?' The increasingly partisan tribalism must mean that an election is on the way. The 2015 General Election in the UK will be the first opportunity in 5 years for all registered voters to elect their representatives on the national seat of governance since a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government was formed after the general election in 2010. With the election taking place on Thursday 7th May, there is just over a month to go before we get the chance to elect our local councillors as well as our constituencies' members of parliament.



This year's election reflects a shift in the political landscape in the UK in that there's a strong likelihood of another hung parliament with no single party with an overall majority, meaning that smaller parties may have the chance to form a coalition government with one of the larger parties. Whereas past governments in living memory had either Conservative or Labour majorities, the next government may be similar to the current coalition government. The political diversity was reflected by the recent televised debate between leaders of 7 political parties. There's a sense that citizens of this country have a real choice of selection.



And yet what saddens me is that many people in this country – especially young adults – will choose simply not to vote. They will relinquish their democratic privilege and lose their say in how the country is governed. There could be many reasons for this: They may feel that their single vote wouldn't make a change to the broader political landscape; they may be uninspired by the current political choices and follow the example of Russell Brand in choosing not to vote; they may simply be apathetic and not care for the democratic process. While I feel there is some legitimacy to these excuses, the last reason saddens me the most. The UK has a rich tradition of democratic representation. It hasn't always been universally accessible to all, but it is today to everyone above the age of 18. Considering that there are many parts of the world where people don't have a say in how they are governed, this is a privilege I feel that should not be taken for granted.



Jonathan handing power over to Buhari

The people of Nigeria recently elected a new president. What makes this vote so unique in Nigerian history is that this is the first time an incumbent president has been voted out of office, the significance of which can't be overstated in this region. All previous incumbents had been ousted by military coups or other undemocratic methods. While the Nigerian people may have been dissatisfied enough with Goodluck Jonathan to vote him out of office, I'm sure their esteem of him has been elevated by his grace in accepting defeat and wishing the best to his successor, Muhammadu Buhari. This will hopefully send positive shock-waves throughout the rest of the African continent, where the democratic process is not in good shape. I don't worry about David Cameron grasping hold of the premiership in the event of the Conservative party being voted out of power; the UK electorate's decision will be respected.

I know people who haven't even registered to vote yet. The good news is that it's not too late. The deadline to register to vote is 20th April. And it's also possible to apply for a postal vote. In other words, even if you're too busy (or too lazy) to visit your local polling station on the day of the election, you can submit your vote up to a fortnight before the election takes place.

Members of the Unification Community aspire to register as citizens of *Cheon Il Guk*, the nation of cosmic peace and unity declared by True Parents. This nation, however, does not exist substantially as it has no territory. We are all, nevertheless, citizens of nation states and have a duty to elect the best candidates for the positions of representative leadership. Please pray about which parties you feel best

represent God's will today. And don't just reflect on the parties. Reflect on the people, because fundamentally it is the person who represents, not the party. Investigate the candidates – both the prospective councillors and the prospective members of parliament – and even contact them to find out their views on issues that matter to you. Whoever wins the elections, congratulate their victory and determine to cooperate with those people.



The Unification Movement in the UK is currently undergoing a process to restructure its governance. Within the next few weeks, a draft proposal that has been more than a year in the making will be distributed for all members of the community to study and respond to. An EGM (extraordinary general meeting) will be held in order to vote on ratifying the proposal after which it will serve as our national community's constitution. This has been a very delicate process, and will continue to be so. The misunderstanding between the oriental

and occidental cultures requires a great degree of parental heart to bring unity between different perspectives. The restructuring proposal, I believe, will strive to reflect this maturity of heart, which is a reflection of the maturity of our community's population. My hope is that it will also serve as a model for the rest of the world. Just as the Magna Carta 800 years ago served as a model for the rest of the world, my hope is that our constitution may provide the 'Magna Carta moment' that our movement so desperately needs right now in this time of change. Just as I wish all members of the Unification Community get involved in the General Election next month, I want all of its members to get involved in this restructuring process and prayerfully reflect on the significance of this step our community is taking. In 1981, True Father said that the leader-centred movement is over and that a member-centred movement will begin. I believe we are mature enough as a community to take responsibility for our self-governance and offer to God our declaration of ownership based on our submission to God's governance in our hearts.

Image Credits

<http://mappingignorance.org/2014/01/31/to-approve-or-not-to-approve-this-is-not-the-question/>

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