

# ENGAGING WITH YOUR MP OR OTHER ELECTED REP- RESENTATIVES



COMMUNITY & GLOBAL

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## COMMUNITY & GLOBAL

# Engaging with representatives

### WHY?

Whoever and wherever you are, you can engage with your elected representatives. There is a biblical mandate to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16); standing out in society by our actions, whilst also respecting people in authority: *'Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established'* (Romans 13:1). And even when the Jews were in exile, they were instructed to seek the peace and prosperity of the city in which they found themselves (Jeremiah 29:7).

We should encourage, pray for and support our elected officials, whilst also raising issues of local, national and international importance. Lobbying is one way to do that, either individually or as part of a group. In politics, lobbying is the act of attempting to influence the policies or decisions of local or national government. Done well, MPs and local councillors, welcome the input, as it helps them understand the hearts and minds of the people they represent.

This Evangelical Alliance gives advice on why and how to connect:

<https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Connect-resource-UK.pdf>

### HOW?

In engaging with your MP or other elected representatives, try to find out the priorities for them as individuals, and those of the party they represent, so you can approach them constructively. Here are some ideas and tips on how to do that:

#### **WELCOME YOUR LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE TO YOUR CHURCH**

Why not invite your MP, mayor or local councillor to an event that marks the start of your Eco Church journey? Later, invite them back for the presentation of your award.

The website *'Write to them'* tells you who your local and national representatives are and explains the different areas of responsibility for the different levels of government: <https://www.writetothem.com/>



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### MEET YOUR MP

Meet your MP by making an appointment during a local surgery. If you've never met him/her before, it might feel a little overwhelming, but having a locally based politician who represents you in Parliament is one of the key features of a democratic system. It could make more impact, and be less intimidating for you, if you go to see your MP with others from your church or community.

A 'surgery' is a block of time set aside by your MP to see people in their constituency. You can make an appointment to see them by getting in touch with their constituency office through their website. Remember it is your MP's job to represent you. Here are a few tips to help your meeting with them go well:

- Make notes of key points you want to raise so you don't forget anything important
- read up on your MP's background to check whether they've held any key positions relevant to your issue.
- Be punctual, polite and prepared, but don't be offended if they're running late.
- Keep your meeting on track and don't let the conversation go off at a tangent.
- Present a personal case and explain why you care.
- If you can't answer a question, say you'll get back to them.
- Help your MP understand the issue and leave them a briefing.
- Ask your MP to do something concrete: for example, to get in touch with a government minister and then get back to you when they have an answer.
- Later, find out whether they've done what you asked.
- Follow up with a phone call, an email, by letter or using social media.

### HAVE A FOCUS TO YOUR ENGAGEMENT

This could be an event such as COP 26 (the UN's 26th Climate Change 'Conference of Parties') being hosted by the UK in Glasgow in November 2021. COP26 is a high profile and crucial event with 190 world leaders gathering to agree actions to address climate change as a global priority. Churches can make this, or other climate change issues or events, a focus of their conversations with MPs or when campaigning: <https://ukcop26.org/> and <https://www.hftf.org.uk/faith>





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### **USE THE RESOURCES PROVIDED BY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE (HFTF), YOUNG CHRISTIAN CLIMATE NETWORK (YCCN) AND SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS**

HftF started as a small group in Yorkshire which aimed to mobilise churchgoers to engage with climate change and make their views known to the 2015 General Election parliamentary candidates. Since then, the work has grown hugely, as HftF equips people to communicate the climate emergency, offering useful resources about how to communicate with your MP. This includes template letters and campaigner workbooks, including one in Welsh, and a COP 26 Guide for Churches. HftF also holds free training events, to help people gain confidence and learn skills to communicate to MPs and decision-makers effectively:

<https://www.hftf.org.uk/mps>

<https://www.hftf.org.uk/campaigner-workbooks>

<https://www.hftf.org.uk/events>

YCCN is an action-focused community of young Christians in the UK aged 18–30, choosing to follow Jesus in the pursuit of climate justice. The website has lots of resources around COP26 including a political advocacy 'How-to-guide': <https://www.yccn.uk/political-engagement>

### **CONSIDER BECOMING A LOCAL LOBBYIST FOR A CHRISTIAN GROUP**

Local lobbyists help take messages of justice to the heart of government. This is a powerful way of changing and influencing laws and policies. Being a local lobbyist for an agency will involve meeting with your local MP or writing to them on different issues. You don't need to be an expert on the issues, the organisation you lobby for will provide you with all the information and support you require, for example the Christian Aid resource pack: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/campaigns/local-lobbyist-pack-most-mps>



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### LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

Christians in Politics: <https://www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk/>

'Christians in Parliament' is an All-Party Parliamentary Group, which exists to support all Members and staff in their work in the Houses of Parliament. It is an informal group who firmly believe Christians should be engaged in politics, and that Christianity has a lot to offer to politics and public life. It is hard for MPs to be in the public eye constantly, so anything we can do to pray for, encourage and support our MPs will be welcomed:

<https://www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/>

<https://www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/resources/christianity-politics/>