

Canopy of Prayer

February #103-2021

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Dear Prayer Partners in Europe

'And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this.' (Esther 4:14) Thus said Mordecai in his plea to Queen Esther to use her position to save the Jews. Both in my lobbying work at the European Parliament and later work on behalf of persecuted Christians advising the UK Foreign Minister, I have had a very acute sense of being in the right place at the right time, called to use a privileged position to serve Christ's Kingdom. None of us can solve the world's problems on our own, but we are called to do what we can in whatever unique circumstances God has given to us, aided by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Christian Lobbyists

As a teenager back in the 1960s I won a prize from a Christian youth magazine in the UK for submitting an article promoting the idea that it was just as important that Christians be called into the world of politics as a vocation as it was to be ministers, missionaries, teachers or medical workers, which seemed to be the favoured holy professions at the time. Although I stood for a seat in the British Parliament in the 1980s I was not elected, but gradually found that my vocation was to be at the side of politicians of all political opinions, advising and supporting them rather than promoting a party line. Initially that was through working within local government in the UK, but eventually I was called to Brussels to work as a lobbyist or advocate at the level of European politics.

I was pleasantly surprised at the openness of politicians there to give me a hearing as I sought to represent the views of the Christian NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) I worked for on the issues of the day at the same time as showing care and concern for them as individuals working under extreme pressure away from home. Getting a first appointment was not always easy and required some patience. But I discovered that once a face to face encounter had taken place and they had not felt threatened or offended, then it was easy to get to see them again, and often they sought me out first. My NGO promoted an approach they called "grace-filled public policy" which I thoroughly identified with. Reflecting the grace of Christ came first, not giving priority to winning arguments or emotional blackmail.

In the EU system the representatives of "civil society" (which includes NGOs and churches) are given honourable recognition as those with an authentic voice speaking for needs, not greed.



As well as promoting Christian values in public life my NGO ran various programmes to help those in need, including counselling and aftercare services for those unexpectedly falling pregnant. This gave credibility to our voice as those who were willing to show that our actions backed up what we were saying. I feel it is vital that Christians are willing to follow God's call to love those in power as well as being willing to speak truth to them.

Churches and Christian NGOs have advocates or lobbyists representing a wide range of causes – social justice, peace and reconciliation, life and family, environmental issues and overseas development to name but a view. But unless this representation is done in a Christ-like way God's Kingdom is not advanced.

PrayerPoints

- Please pray that more Christians will be willing to serve the world of politics as advocates and lobbyists in an holistic way, seeing the person behind the label and giving them full respect and dignity. In the past British lobbyists have been the backbone of the profession in Brussels and highly sought after. Pray that Brexit will not diminish the Christian voice in Brussels, but that Christians from other countries will be willing to step into the breach.
- Please pray for Christian politicians to see clearly when their Christian calling needs them to depart from their party line and for God to send them those who can give godly counsel in an unbiased way and will pray for them.
- Please pray for Christian politicians to be given the strength to resist the temptations that come to those who have an onerous and influential job to do whilst living a private lonely existence away from home and family.

Brexit Update

Talks are taking place between the UK government and the European Commission over trading arrangements under the N. Ireland protocol which was designed to protect the Good Friday peace agreement. These talks have become necessary because of difficulties arising in the free movement of goods between Great Britain and N.Ireland. This has created tensions in the power-sharing N.Ireland executive and could cause political instability.



Additional Prayer Points:-

- Pray for Russia, which has seen huge demonstrations in 100 cities, sparked by the imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and government corruption.
- Pray that current difficulties in the rollout of the Covid vaccination programme would be overcome so that all those who want to be vaccinated can do so very soon.

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