

Holding an Election Forum

Make the Cross Count

Hold an Public Election Forum

This resource provides steps to help the whole community participate in this important process.

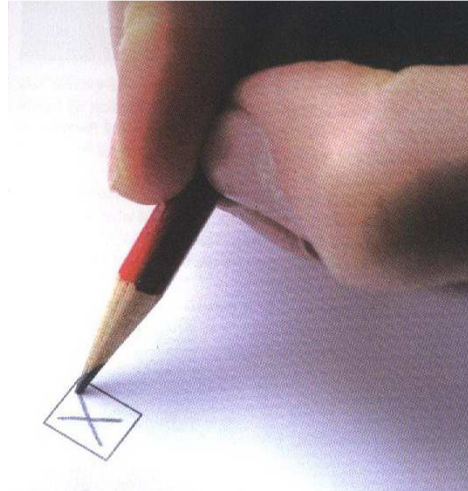
Make the “Cross” count this coming election.

Amid secularism and our Nations changing values Christians need to have a say in choosing our Country’s leaders.



Hold an Election Forum.

The Uniting Church does not support any particular political party but it does encourage participation in the political process. With a General Election on the horizon now is the time for your church to plan an Election Forum in your local area.



To help people look beyond the headlines and to meet candidates face to face and raise issues that matter, your church can host a Forum and provide a community venue that encourages sharing with others and public debate. Local Churches are well placed to arrange this sort of meeting as a service to the community. Candidates from as many parties as possible can be invited to participate and people from all sections of the community can be encouraged to come along. This is part of our democracy which all MP's and people should support.

Suggested Steps

Planning. Start now by setting up a planning group. Plan on holding the Forum during the last full week before Polling Day. You may want to work with other churches on a joint Forum. Plan general publicity and obtain contact details as soon as possible for provisional acceptance of the concept.

Venue. The Candidates should feel comfortable at the venue---in some cases it may be preferable not to use a church.

Chairperson. This is a key appointment. Find someone who is well known and respected in the community and without known party political affiliations. Also appoint a Time Keeper. The Chair must be firm and able to enforce time limits (three minutes to answer questions) for speakers and questions. Stewards can meet candidates as they arrive and make people feel welcome.

Campaign Begins. As soon as the election is announced consult with the candidates. Firm up time and date options and follow it with an invitation letter to major and minor parties. Explain the public meeting will provide a platform for all parties and it will go ahead with or without all candidates present.

Other Issues If a candidate does not attend but has responded to questions in writing, these could be conveyed to the meeting. You may wish to leave a collection plate with a Steward near the exit to help cover costs.

Since a range of issues will need to be discussed, at the beginning of the meeting make it clear that no one issue will be dwelt on and slander or charges against people will not be permitted.

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Draft Invitation Letter

Draft Letter to Local Press

General Notice to Community

Draft Invitation Letter

Mr/Ms Candidate,

Further to my recent contact, I am writing to ask you to take part in an **Election Forum** meeting, run by (name of your church/ group of churches).

The meeting will be held in (venue) at (time) on (date/day of week by week prior to Election).

The meeting will be a public meeting, advertised throughout the constituency, and all Parliamentary candidates are invited. The purpose of the meeting is to give electors an opportunity to find out first-hand about their candidates' view on important issues of the day. The main structure of the evening will be in question and answer format, with a range of issues being covered in questions from the floor, and the meeting will be chaired by (name of Chairperson).

You will be asked to respond to each question in no more than three minutes. We would appreciate your co-operation in this regard as this time limit will need to be strictly enforced for all candidates. Each candidate will also have the opportunity to speak uninterrupted for three minutes on their candidacy and priorities.

The issues that will be covered include (add your own list).

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting. If you have any questions about the arrangements, do not hesitate to contact me on (your phone number)

Thank you for your willingness to be involved.

Yours Sincerely
(Your name)
Meeting Organiser

Scroll down for:

*Draft Letter to Local Press
General Notice to Community*

Draft Letter to Local Press

(Your own contact address
and phone number)

(Editor's Address)

(Date)

Dear Sir/ Madam

As the election draws near, readers are possibly experiencing election overload. It can be difficult to see beneath the spin, presentation and hype to the real issues. However, there is going to be an opportunity to do just this.

With the Election now only x weeks away, we would like to invite your reader to an Election Forum at (town name) Hall on day/date/month at x pm. This will give voters in (town name) the ideal opportunity to quiz their parliamentary candidates on local and national issues. Straight answers to straight questions we hope.

The intention is not to endorse particular candidates, policies or parties, but to provide an open Forum that will help enable people to vote in an informed way.

We look forward to welcoming your readers

Yours faithfully,

(Your name), Meeting Organiser

On behalf of (your church)

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General Notice to Community

General Notice to Churches and Community Groups

Voters in the constituency of (town name) will be given the opportunity to quiz their parliamentary candidates face to face in the run-up to the election.

An Election Forum meeting will be held on day/ date/month at (town name) Hall at x pm. All candidates have been invited. The meeting will be chaired by (chairpersons name).

The meeting has been organised by x church(es). It aims to raise awareness of important contemporary issues during the Election campaign, and all members of the community are invited to attend and ask questions.

The main topics that will be raised will include: (insert your own list).

Meeting Organiser, (your name) said;

“We want to give people the chance to put questions to their candidates about the issues that concern them. We are not seeking to endorse particular candidates, policies or parties, but to provide an open forum which will assist people who want to vote in an informed way”

For further information please contact:

(Your name), Meeting Organiser

(Your own contact address)

Telephone: Day/Evening