

WHO WILL YOU BE VOTING FOR?

I'm voting Labour

My relationship with Labour is love-hate, definitely. But this election I'll be voting Labour very happily, all because of the constituency I now live in. My MP is Lynne Featherstone, a Lib Dem who has supported the terrible policies of the ConDem coalition on everything from tripling undergraduate tuition fees to denying benefits to disabled people.

The Labour candidate meanwhile, is Catherine West, a local Quaker who was leader of Islington Council when it became the joint first local authority to adopt the Living Wage for all employees - and who has expressed a principled and strong stance against British intervention in the most recent war in Iraq.

I'm definitely voting Labour because of the candidate rather than the party.

Tim Rouse, Labour Party Member

TYQ has been hounding you, hassling you and bribing you to get you to spill your beans on who you'll be voting for this May

I'm voting Green

There is a saying that the Church of England is the Conservative Party at prayer, and the Green Party is the Quakers at work. It is a sweeping generalisation of course, but it contains many truths.

Our meetings start with attunement - a minute of silent reflection. Our internal structure is as non-hierarchical as possible, with a very familiar propensity for committees and representatives. Alas we do not use Quaker Business Method, although I definitely heard a rebellious/forgetful "Hope so!" from an elderly Quaker member in a consensus decision-making meeting last month. And it is full of people spending every spare moment of

their time trying to make the world a fairer place.

Greens and Quakers are equally misunderstood - Greens are no more "just about the environment" than Quakers are "just about peace". In fact, precisely what unites them both is a rare understanding of the inter-connectedness of the issues the world faces. I'll blow my word limit if I start listing policies, so I'll just direct you to: www.reasonstovotegreen.org.uk

Of course, they might not get elected in your constituency this May, but there's one way to ensure they don't, and that's to keep saying so.

Carla Denyer
YFGMer and Green Party Member
and activist, both since 2011.

REVIEW: QUAKER ELECTION GUIDE

The election is less than 4 months away. To help us prepare, Quakers in Britain has produced the Quaker Election Guide. The booklet introduces the key concerns, suggests questions to ask candidates, and contains ideas for activism during the general election.

SAM BARNETT-CORMACK
takes a look at it.

upcoming general election. Any general election is an important event with far-reaching implications, and many current political issues speak to Quaker concerns. It's important that Friends pay attention and live our convictions in the lead-up to the election, as well as making informed decisions about our own votes.

Following a brief explanation of democracy in the UK, the bulk of the guide explores current political issues of interest to Quakers. Under headings like Community and Economic Justice, each issue is summarised, including its relevance to Quakers. Of particular value are the examples of questions you might ask candidates to help tease out their, or their party's, position. I'm happy to see coverage of areas in which I've been involved in activism, and I expect that any of you involved

in activism will see areas that you care about. Friends may disagree in places, but that's unavoidable when dealing concisely with political issues. On the whole, the guide maintains a reasonable balance: it gives a general idea of the issues, and lets you know where to find more information.

Practical ideas form the final part of the guide, and it is this part that Meetings are able to act most directly on. Hosting hustings or panel discussions, ideas for encouraging political discussion and participation, and raising awareness of issues that matter to us are steps that Friends and Meetings can take, and can have a wider impact. I encourage Friends to read this guide, and to consider what ideas and suggestions they may wish to raise at Local or Area Meetings.

I am very pleased to see that Friends House is producing a guide to help Meetings and individual Friends prepare for the

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Are you LibDem?
UKIP? Plaid Cymru?
TYQ tried very hard ...
but couldn't find you!

I'm voting Conservative

I live in deepest West Sussex, and it is a very right-wing area. There are only two parties with a realistic chance of winning the seat in my constituency - The Conservatives and UKIP. Therefore, I am planning to vote Conservative as the more moderate reasonable choice (even if they are allowing themselves to be bullied into holding an EU referendum, which I don't think they really want to offer).

John Barber-Bacon

I'm voting for the
candidate's
principles (then the
party's)

I'm voting for someone's values that best represent the people in my constituency. I think that a person's views and values are often more nuanced than the 'party line'. I find that this the best way to vote within the limits of our voting system. What do you think?

Stephen Clement

I'm voting SNP

Poll after poll suggests the SNP is on course to win the UK General election in Scotland - for the first time ever! Given the potential for a hung parliament imagine what could be delivered if the SNP were kingmakers in such a scenario: could the renewal of Trident be, at least, postponed? Could austerity be mitigated? Could more meaningful power be devolved to Holyrood? Could there be reform to the unelected House of Lords? Could more ambitious climate change targets be set?

A strong group of SNP MPs at Westminster will mean that all of this could be possible and that Scotland cannot again be side-lined. Those who were empowered and enfranchised by the referendum process are not going to meekly return to the political shadows. The change afoot in Scotland can be best translated into real power by electing SNP MPs whose loyalties lie with the communities of Scotland, not with the party whip in London.

Conor Watt, SNP Member

Think that Quakers are a
whole load of Lefties only?
We're not! ANTHONY RIDGE-
NEWMAN explains why
Quakers should consider
voting Conservative.

British Conservatism and British Quakerism have more in common than one might think initially. Both are historic organisations that have continuously evolved over hundreds of years in order to advance in line with new times. Quakers campaigned for marriage equality and it was under a Conservative Prime Minister that Same-Sex Marriage was enacted into law (2013).

Both groups are pragmatic in nature and take a practical approach to putting their values into action. Both Conservatives and Quakers tend to actively engage in charity work and

develop networks and interest groups, which, in turn, encourage the practical advancement of notable causes. Quakers and Conservatives tend to be committed to getting off their backsides and doing something to help, rather than expecting the state to fill every void in the social fabric of the country.

Both are inclined to encourage a culture in which the personal freedom of the individual is valued and balanced against a collective responsibility to one another. The freedom of the individual to freely choose the manner in which they contribute to their community is often a significant characteristic of both Conservatism and Quakerism.

The Conservatives and Quakers have had historically prominent relationships with capitalism. A combination of business and philanthropy has been the signature of British capitalism and is a tradition to which Quakers and Conservatives have contributed significantly.

I'm voting Labour

I follow current affairs, and would most readily align myself with Labour. However, I am relatively torn as I think that a general election once every five years is not frequent enough. In a changing world where people expect to be able to express their opinion (think how many people vote on X factor each week), the idea that we get to put a cross against one name - who themselves may have little to no power against a strong party whip, is hardly inspiring.

Added to this, I live in a safe Lib Dem seat and so I wonder how useful my vote is. I may agree with one party on one matter and another on another matter. I can only vote for one however and this will be the party I see as representing most of my views.

Anon.