



Faith manifestos

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- Faith groups in the UK have produced manifestos, wish lists, expectations and requests for political parties to consider and commit to if they are elected to office.

CHRISTIANS

- Each of the main denominations has expressed its thoughts on the election in quite different ways this year.
- While in 2015 the Church of England’s bishops issued a lengthy letter addressing topics from the Trident nuclear deterrent to housing, this time the only official election intervention is a [short statement](#) from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It does not mention many specific policies, but instead gives more general thoughts including:
 - Christians have a duty to vote, debate and challenge
 - Voters must bridge political divides and build unity
 - Politics should put the vulnerable first and tackle injustice.
 - Climate change is a priority
 - A “just economic system” should allow for aspiration and support the poor.
 - Any stigma or hatred towards people on the grounds of religion, culture, identity or belief must be rejected.
- The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales [issued a series of points](#) to be put to candidates before voting, urging Catholics to help shape politics rooted in the service of human rights and peace. Issues include:
 - The innate dignity of every human being, defending both the child in the womb
 - The dignified care for those who are terminally ill and dying
 - The needs of people with disabilities, Travellers, older people, homeless, prisoners and those trapped in modern slavery
 - Integration of migrants and refugees who have made their homes here
 - Tackling extreme poverty, confronting structural injustices
 - Tackling the climate emergency
 - Freedom of religion and belief
 - The cherishing of marriage and the essential place of the family
 - The right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their faith

- In [Scotland](#), the Roman Catholic Church has issued a statement from its bishops urging the faithful to vote for people who reflect, as closely as possible, their beliefs. Mirroring the points above, they also include working towards eliminating the UK's nuclear arsenal.
- The Baptists, Methodists, United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland share a common office that works on public policy issues. They have produced [briefing papers](#) to help their members quiz candidates in the election. This has also been backed by Churches Together in Wales, a body that encompasses all the major denominations in the country. These address particular policies including renewing the social care system, ensuring high quality affordable housing, improving Universal Credit especially the five-week wait for an initial payment, overhauling the asylum system and creating a 28-day time limit for immigration detention, boost the numbers of electric charging points for cars, tackling global poverty or defending human rights, ensuring any Brexit resolution brings with it the minority who are disappointed with the final outcome.
- The Anglican Church in Wales has also issued a [statement from its Archbishop](#), John Davies, calling for a rebalancing of the political agenda to improve lives for people suffering increasing despair.
- The Quakers have published an [election briefing](#) to guide voters. The main points include tackling climate emergency, ending indefinite immigration detention, scrapping rules that stop family reunion, fostering dialogue and peace-building instead of military force, invest in better youth and children's work and mental health services.
- The Evangelical Alliance is another well-established umbrella group representing evangelical congregations in independent churches and within the main denominations. They have produced [policy briefings](#) on a handful of areas. On Brexit they say the debate must resist further polarisation of people, the Brexit settlement must prioritise the needs of the poor and needy across the world, relationships across national boundaries must be continued even if freedom of movement ends with Brexit.
- The Irish Inter-Church Meeting brings together the Catholic Church in Ireland and the umbrella group representing the other Protestant, Orthodox, and independent denominations present on the island. Their policy work focuses on homelessness and includes [material for voters](#) quizzing canvassers in Northern Ireland, suggesting the state should build more social housing, there should be more support for homeless families, and tenants must be protected.

MUSLIMS

- There is no single body that represents all British Islam, but the Muslim Council of Britain is generally regarded as the leading umbrella group. It has produced a [10-point manifesto](#) for the election, which it says is the fruit of a detailed consultation of Muslim communities across the UK. The main points:
 1. Tackle racism and Islamophobia, adopting the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, as rooted in racism
 2. Religious Liberty – defending the right of Muslims to express their faith through their clothes or food and accommodate where reasonable their religious practices.
 3. Promote engagement with a broad spectrum of British Muslims
 4. Provide funding for mosques to implement security and safety measures
 5. Improve health provision for older Muslims, whose outcomes lag behind the rest of the population.
 6. Encourage the resettlement of refugees across the UK.
 7. Enable minorities and women to participate more in politics and public life.
 8. Tackle the inequalities within the justice system which see those from ethnic minorities treated worse and ensure counter-terrorism policy does not discriminate against Muslims.
 9. A “fair approach” to education, with syllabuses that allow for parental involvement and reflect the diversity of communities.
 10. Recognise Palestine as an independent sovereign state and address human rights abuses in Kashmir, Xinjiang and Myanmar/Burma (three areas where a Muslim minority is oppressed by the state).

JEWS

- The Board of Deputies of British Jews includes elected representatives from all main Jewish denominations and groups. It has produced [a manifesto](#) for the 2019 election and its main points are:
 1. Oppose antisemitism and other forms of race-based hate, as well as promoting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism.
 2. Promote good relationships between all communities
 3. Defend the right to a Jewish way of life, through kosher food, circumcision, and religious dress, and flexible working to accommodate observation of the Sabbath and other holy days.
 4. Continue to support Holocaust remembrance and education.
 5. Resist boycotts that divide communities and support a solution to the Israel - Palestine conflict with a secure Israel and viable Palestinian state
 6. Take account of the implications of Brexit for minority groups
 7. Continue to back religious schools within the education system.
 8. Support the provision of “religiously and culturally sensitive” youth and social care services.
 9. Tackle climate change, poverty and human rights injustices, in the UK and overseas.
 10. Celebrate Jewish heritage and culture.
- The Movement for Reform Judaism, has also produced its own [manifesto](#). Its policy priorities overlap with the Board of Deputies in many places, but they also place greater emphasis in some different areas, for example, parity for mental health with physical health in the NHS, compulsory sex education in all schools – state, private and faith institutions – including LGBT relationships, more action on homelessness, including widespread building of social housing, taking in more refugees.

- In addition to the traditional manifestos, significant Jewish voices have also voiced specific concerns over the antisemitism crisis in the Labour Party in the run-up to the election. In early November, The Jewish Chronicle published a furious front-page editorial against the Labour Party and its leader over a failure to deal with antisemitism. Similar fears have now also been expressed by the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis.

SIKHS

- There is no one organization that represents all 423,000 Sikhs in Britain, but their three common concerns are to increase representation of Sikhs in Parliament; to tackle hate crime against Sikhs in the UK, with many crimes under reported and attacks on Sikhs simply because of their clothes; to mitigate against harmful effects of Brexit on businesses and professions.
- The Sikh Assembly which aims to connect all Sikhs in the UK, emphasising community engagement, has produced a set of responses to election topics. These include protection of human rights and ‘fundamental freedoms’ post Brexit – it suggests 65% of British Sikhs voted to remain; enabling Sikhs to provide aid to the homeless and for food banks on a wider scale; ensuring net zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 is met; hosting a national disability conference and more support for victims of crime.
- The Sikh Network has produced a [manifesto](#) with new demands: launching a code of practice on the rights of Sikhs to wear beards, turbans and ceremonial daggers; establishing more state-funded Sikh faith schools; securing the release of Jagtar Singh Johal and Sikh ‘political prisoners’ in Indian jails; an independent public inquiry into the 1984 Amritsar temple assault and recognising that Sikhs in India have the right of self-determination.

HINDUS

- No major Hindu umbrella group has produced a manifesto of their community’s specific policy demands. Three Hindu organisations were contacted for comment, but only the Hindu Council UK replied. The group’s general secretary, Rajnish Kashyap, said its view was that the coming election was primarily about Brexit and therefore any faith-specific manifesto would not garner much attention. He added that the council hoped to publish a “charter of demands” for the new government after the result.

- However, Britain's one million Hindus have become embroiled in election campaigning, primarily over the issue of Kashmir. Ever since the Labour Party passed a resolution at its conference in September criticising India for its contentious crackdown in the restive and disputed northern province, there have been reports of growing anti-Labour dissatisfaction within Hindu communities.
- This shift away from Labour has been welcomed by the Conservatives. The BBC has [reported](#) that WhatsApp messages urging Hindus to vote Conservative because of Labour's perceived favouritism towards Pakistan over Kashmir, have been circulating widely within the community.