

Connect

*A guide to engaging with
your public representatives
(MSs, MPs and councillors)*

wales

evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known



The Evangelical Alliance longs to see Christians engaging with their public representatives in a productive and encouraging way...

... but we recognise that sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start. We hope that this resource will help you to begin to build relationships with your public representatives and encourage you to pray for and support them as they represent you. You will find a choice of ways to get in touch with your public representatives and the most effective way to engage with them on matters that you care about.

The coronavirus pandemic has made us all very attentive to the latest news headlines, with politicians under an even closer microscope. Public representatives, like the rest of society, have been overstretched and dismayed by the gravity of the health, economic and social crisis. As Christians, churches and faith leaders, may we encourage our elected leaders, and not just those we agree with. We want Christians to be known as ‘good news’ people in every sphere. Therefore, may we not take for granted the opportunity to become active citizens. May we engage with our political representatives in a way that fosters trust, encouragement and partnership.

The church has all the framework and infrastructure to be at the grassroots when it comes to rebuilding people’s lives and supporting our communities from every background. We have the heart to love and serve the broken, and have unique relational networks.

We want these connections and relationships to make a difference to our communities, for the love of Jesus to be made known. Similarly, God commands us to be active in serving and loving our public representatives. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 says: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Why should we engage with our public representatives?

The church’s contribution matters

Our society is made up of people who hold various different beliefs and values. Sometimes these views contrast with those that are held by Christians, standing at odds with our biblical perspective. This can perhaps intimidate some of us, or make us think that we can’t offer a relevant voice to conversations regarding key topics in society and in how we are governed.

Christians still account for a large proportion of the Welsh population, and therefore as a significant presence in our nation we should understand that our voices matter in shaping legislation. Instead of passively allowing other voices and worldviews to shape our national values and laws, we can all be positive and active citizens in conversations about issues that matter to us.

The Bible instructs us to respect people in authority

1 Peter 2:17 says, “Respect everyone and love the family of believers. Fear God and **respect** the king.” What better reason to connect with our elected representatives than to put God’s word into action by giving respect to their leadership role and office?

The Bible instructs us to love people who differ from us

Mark 12:31 commands that we “love our neighbours”, including those from whom we differ. While Jesus talks of people of different religious backgrounds being our neighbours, those of different political persuasions are our neighbours too.

As Christians we are called to seek the welfare of the city

Jeremiah 29:7 instructs us to seek the peace and prosperity of the city wherever you live. Surely this is a call to activities and conversations that make life better for all in our society?

We're called to make Jesus known to everyone, including MSs

As we love our MSs, let's get to know them. Then when we share our Christian perspectives with them, they will already know and understand us. After all, you're more likely to take constructive criticism from someone you know well than from a complete stranger. When our MSs know us as people of love who build them up, they will hear us when we engage with them and when we offer our perspective.

This call applies to Christians within the church and in the public sphere. We are called to be known as people who show respect to one another, even those we disagree with — and sometimes especially those we disagree with.

In John 17:26, we read that Jesus prayed for the Father's love to be in His followers:

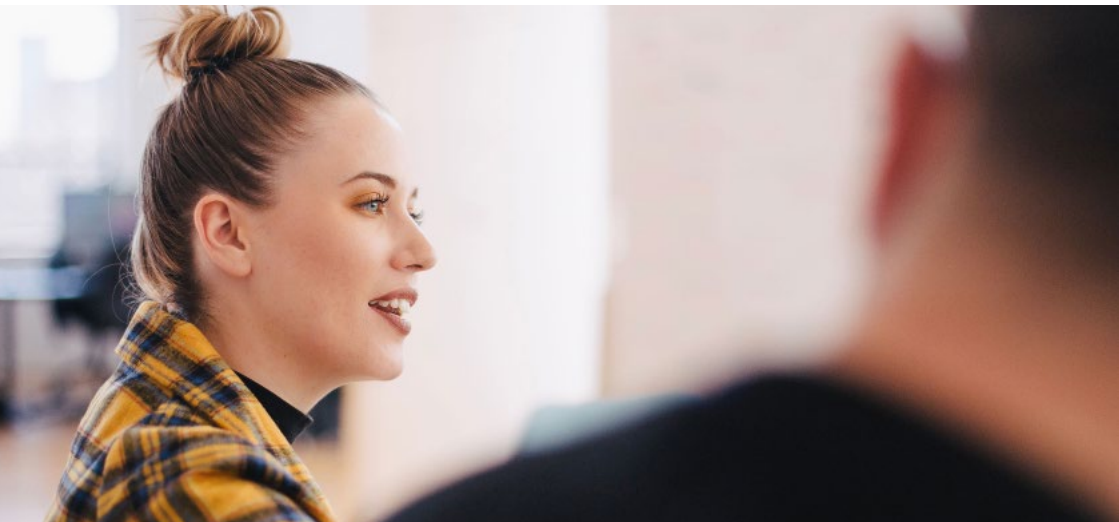
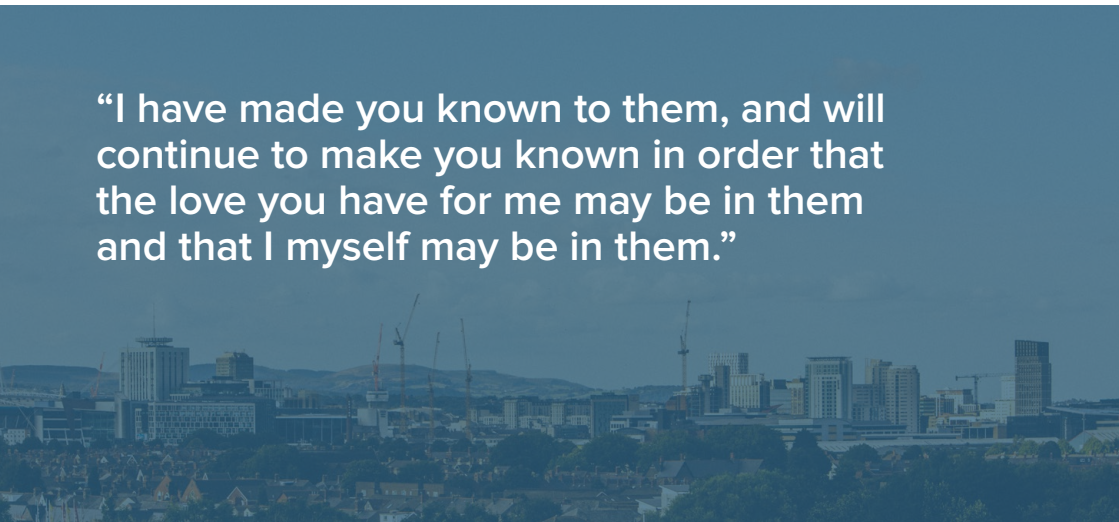
“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

The first step in connecting with your public representatives

As children of God, we should engage with our public representatives to show them gratitude for their service, praise them when they do something well and get to know them as people, not just a political party. When our public representatives know us as people marked by respect and love who build them up, they will hear us when we offer an alternative perspective.

Therefore, engaging well with your public representatives doesn't necessarily mean that you have to join a political party or march in protest rallies. In fact, we believe that one of the greatest ways to show support to our representatives is by praying for them regularly and with them when possible.

So, before you begin, take a moment to **pray for your public representatives.**



How do I connect with my public representative?



Your public representatives are ordinary people, so you don't have to be afraid to approach them. Start by introducing yourself; a major part of their roles as public representatives is to get to know their constituents, and they will be more willing to engage with someone when they have a better understanding of who it is that is contacting them. You can mention your job, the church you go to, and the community projects with which you are involved.

It is so important to contact public representatives regardless of the political party to which they belong. The starting point should be to contact your local representative regardless of their party affiliation, but you may like to widen the conversation and get a full perspective of the issue from all political angles. You may be surprised by where you find common ground and support for your issue.

Make sure you communicate a positive message in your conversation, something that will encourage your public representative before you go on to voice any opinions or complaints that you might have.

Some questions to consider in any interaction that you have with your public representative, whether that be online or in person, are:

- Is what I am saying constructive?
- Would I speak to a colleague the way I speak to my public representative?
- Is this how I want Christians to be perceived?
- Am I representing my church well?

Who are the individuals that represent us in Wales?



Councillors

There are 1,254 councillors in Wales. Examples of what councils are responsible for include: local planning, parks and leisure, off-street parking and registration of births, deaths and marriages. You can find out who your local councillors are here: gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors

Aelod Seneddol (ASs)/Members of the Senedd (MSs):

You are represented by five Members of the Senedd (MSs). One for your local area and four for the region of Wales in which you live. The people of Wales elect Members to represent them in the Senedd. Some of the powers that the Senedd has include health and social care, housing, education, transport, business, economic development, social services, language and culture, the environment, local government, and more. However, unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland, Wales does not have its own separate legal jurisdiction with its own system of law, police and courts. MSs scrutinise the work of Ministers and hold Departments to account. MSs sit in Senedd, in Cardiff; however, they will also have an office in their constituency where you can discuss local issues with them. You can find out who your local MS is by clicking on the map at senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd

MPs

Members of Parliament sit in the House of Commons (or the House of Lords) in Westminster, representing the interests of their constituents in Wales. There are 40 available seats in Westminster for Welsh MPs. Like MSs, MPs have offices in their constituency, where individuals can discuss issues with them. You can find out who your MP is here: members.parliament.uk/constituencies

Who should I contact?

Sometimes it is not clear who is best to contact about which issues. Generally, contact your local councillor about local services, facilities and planning. If your local councillor is not able to help you, they will gladly direct you to your local MS.

Contact your local MSs for any issue that is governed by law such as education, health, and justice. Your local MS will be happy to hear your concerns about all issues even if it is not their area of interest. Sometimes it is worth finding out which MSs are members of the committees or all-party groups that are relevant to your issue as these MSs will have a particular interest in and understanding of the issue that concerns you. You can speak to MSs outside of your constituency if you feel they have more interest or expertise in the issue.

You should contact your local MP if you have an issue that is governed centrally by Westminster such as national security or the UK tax system.

writetothem.com is a helpful website that makes emailing your representatives easy.

You can also check your public representative's website or social media accounts for the date, time and venue of their constituency surgeries. These are times when you can drop in to see your public representative without having to make an appointment.

How can you support your public representatives practically?

Pray for them

Support your public representatives by praying for them. You could pray that they might have peace during stressful moments, or wisdom when they have to make difficult decisions. In addition to your personal prayers, you could hold church prayer meetings specifically for your political leaders, or simply pray for them more regularly during mid-week Bible studies.

Email them

It's good to be in regular contact with your public representatives and sending an email is the easiest way to do so. Get into the habit of sending an email to your public representative to encourage them, not only when you have a complaint. You could let your public representative know that you are praying for them, and you could also ask for specific prayer points to share with your church. You may be surprised by how much your public representative would appreciate this.

Send them a card

Like an email, a letter or card can be used to encourage your public representative, and it is more likely to be remembered. Lots of public representatives put cards up in their office as reminders of the support and encouragement they receive from their constituents.

Visit them

The best way to get to know your public representative personally, and for them to get to know and trust you, is to meet with them face to face. Don't be intimidated by this approach; your public representative is an ordinary person after all.

Take them a gift

Being a public representative is stressful, and the overtime and community work that public representatives do can often go underappreciated. So, why not give your public representative some baked goods or a small gift, to show your appreciation for the effort they are making?

Invite them to church

By inviting a public representative to your church, you're showing them that they, like anybody, are a welcomed and valued member of your community. You could invite them to a special service, such as a celebration of a community project or a church anniversary. But, don't just limit invitations to special days; invite your public representative to be part of your church and help them to witness the value that the church adds to their constituents' lives.



May we be *one*
so that the *world* will know

Since 1846 we've been a trusted voice in society,
uniting the church for the sake of the gospel.

Become a member today
eauk.org/joinus

wales

evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known



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