

Clegg welcomes Churches' election guidance



Clegg welcomes Churches' election guidance and admits faith 'hasn't happened to me - yet'

The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, has welcomed the Churches' recent guidance for voters ahead of May's General Election, despite their criticisms of Government policies.

Mr Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, described as “fantastic” the separate guidance letters from the Church of England bishops and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

While the guidance issued last week by the Catholic bishops was uncritical of the present Government, instead asking Christians to rate May's election candidates according to their attitude towards ethical issues, the Church of England strongly criticised market economics, austerity, and Margaret Thatcher.

Mr Clegg told Premier Christian Radio: “I don't agree with some of the assertions made, but in a sense that's a secondary issue. I think it would be odd for the Churches not to speak out from the premise of the values and principles and worldview which people of faith hold.”

He praised church-run initiatives such as foodbanks and said he would like the country to be run according to values he acknowledged were Christian.

“I want my kids to grow up in a country where people are treated fairly; where the vulnerable are looked after and not abandoned; where we don't walk on the other side of the street when we see people less fortunate than ourselves; that we make it our business to reach out and help them,” he explained.

Mr Clegg, a father-of-three whose wife is Catholic, rejected claims that he is an atheist, and said that while his personal attitude towards faith was “complex” he believed humanity had a spiritual side.

He said he regularly attends Mass with his family “with great joy”.

“I think it must be the most wonderful thing to be infused with faith. It's not something that has happened to me, yet,” he said.

Liz Dodd - The Tablet