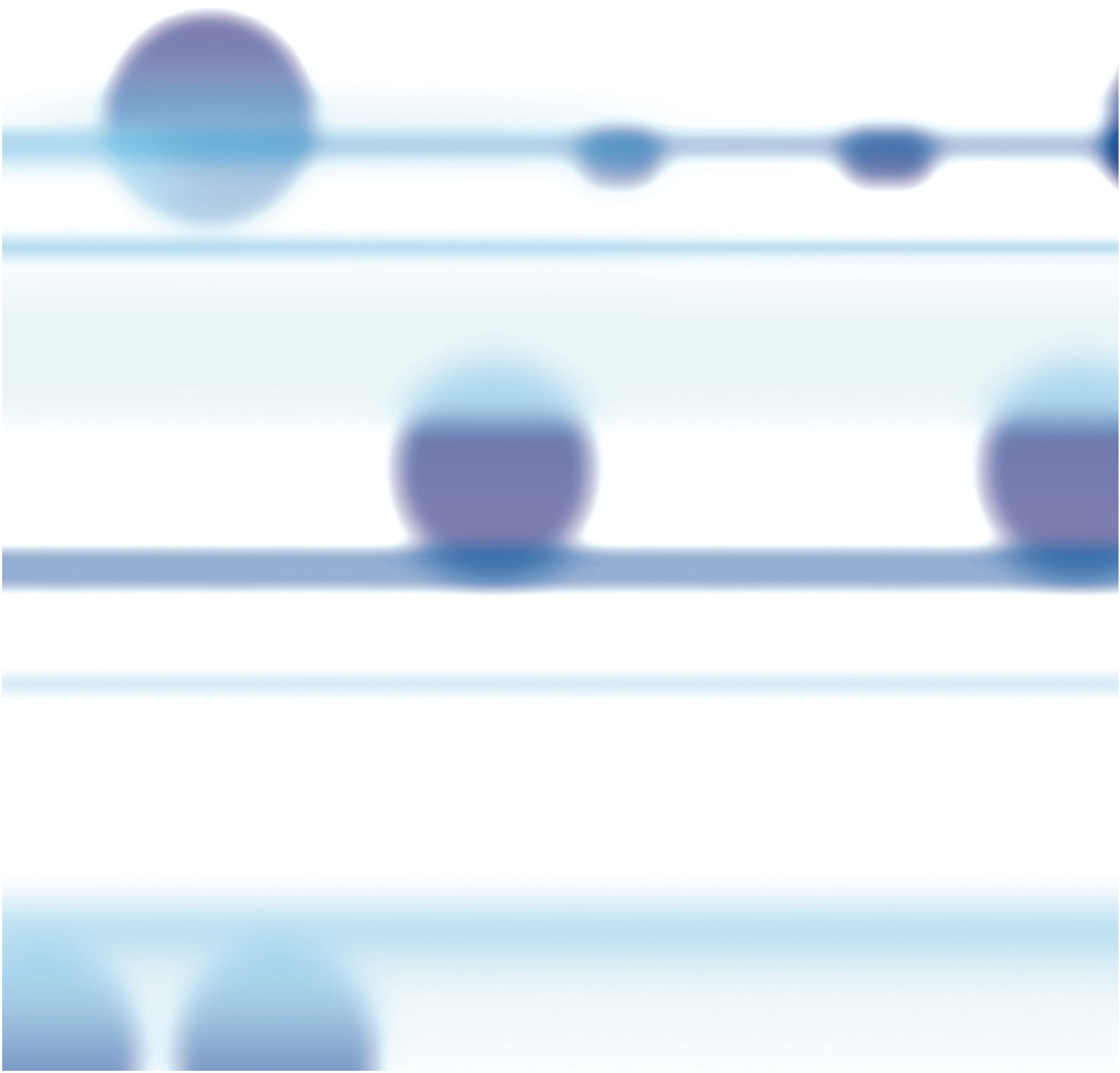




getting involved: in the Christian Peoples Alliance



getting involved: in the Christian People's Alliance

and in other Christian Democratic parties

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF A CHRISTIAN PARTY IN POLITICS?

The Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA) is the first party of direct Christian inspiration in modern British politics. A party rooted in the historic Christian faith, it seeks to demonstrate the love of God through political service. The faith and principles are drawn from the Bible, especially the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, as well as from Christian political insights through the centuries. The CPA positions itself as the British contribution to the European Christian Democratic tradition. The party never claims to be the only political option for Christians.

WHY GET INVOLVED WITH A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

Having more Christians in Parliament is said by some to be the answer to the secular assault on Christianity in public life. Though the CPA prays for Christians in all political parties, the stark reality is that Christian MPs struggle to be heard. CPA believes that their consciences can be compromised by the party whip and the tempting prospect of the good that can be achieved from being in power. Consequently, CPA contends that Christian MPs do not always use their votes in response to Church warnings on key issues, such as growing social inequality, the invasion of Iraq, renewal of Trident, opposing more access to abortion and Sunday trading.

By standing as an electoral option at voting time, the CPA also provides the means to renew democratic consent for the important place Christianity has in Britain's ancient Constitution. Rather than dismantling the Christian aspects to British public life, the CPA wants them reformed for the modern age.

Changes to the electoral system are gradually taking the UK towards the European model of multi-party politics, where parties are more values-based, compared to the grand coalitions that are Labour and the Conservatives. Across Europe, the voice of Church social teaching is provided by Christian Democratic parties in almost every Parliament. Evangelical politicians (working in alliance with Roman Catholics) have succeeded in securing policies closer to the heart of the Gospel by entering coalition governments. In time, CPA believes that churches here in Britain will recognise they are just one voice among others in the body politic. Rather than unelected bishops in the Lords, there should be politicians sitting as Christian Democrats. Christian Democratic parties such as the Christian Peoples Alliance are a means to advance Christian values and priorities, with the democratic mandate elections provide.

WHAT ARE THE ROOTS OF THE CPA?

The CPA was founded in 1999 by leading members of the non-party Movement for Christian Democracy (MCD), which was formed in 1991 by a group of cross-party Christian Members of Parliament. These were David Alton MP (Liberal Democrat), Ken Hargreaves MP (Conservative) and Derek Enright MP (Labour). The aim of MCD was to respond to the drift to secularism in British politics by organising a Christian Democratic response, in the spirit and tradition of European Christian Democracy.

The CPA adopted the same principles and social vision of the MCD, summarised as the Six Principles of Christian Democracy. These are:

- Active Compassion
- Respect for Life
- Social Justice
- Wise Stewardship
- Empowerment
- Reconciliation.

The first activists in the Christian Peoples Alliance included the Chair and Vice-Chair of the MCD, Dr Alan Storkey and David Campanale. The 'father figure' in British Christian Democracy, Professor Michael Fogarty, was honorary President of both Movement and party. The question of whether to form a Christian Democratic party or not was debated by Christian political activists and church leaders convened by David Alton through the 1990s. The final decision about forming a party was taken when proportional representation became not just a theoretical possibility, but a political reality. The MCD set up the Christian Democrat Electoral Committee, chaired by David Campanale, to consult about the new party. He became the first Federal President of the CPA. Economist Alan Storkey went on to write policies and principles for the CPA.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CPA?

The Christian Peoples Alliance believes that Christianity gives a vision for the whole of politics - through principles, policies, peacemaking, economic policy and ethics. The party sees the Bible as God's revelation and Jesus' words and life as our central guide. We see the death and resurrection of Jesus as the central event in human history, bringing peace with God, and renewed life. We want to live within God's love and forgiveness, rather than remain within the old patterns of human failure in life and politics.

From the outset the Christian Peoples Alliance puts faith at the centre of politics. Our aim is to follow and fulfil these principles in British political life:

- Recognition of Christ's sovereignty over the nations and in politics.
- Respect of God's law as the basis for constitutional government and a stable society.
- Reconciliation among nations, races, religions, classes, gender and communities.
- Respect for human life given by God.
- Social Justice to address wrongs and provide restitution to the wronged.
- Careful economic stewardship of God's creation.
- Commitment to the fairness of markets and patterns of exchange.
- Peacemaking, by addressing the causes of wars.
- Open, transparent government, which subjects itself to debate and critique.

HOW DOES THE CPA FIGHT ELECTIONS?

The advent of proportional forms of voting for the Scottish, Welsh, London and European elections gave the opportunity to CPA to run as Christian Democrats in elections. The first contest fought by the party was the London elections of 2000. Party leader, Ram Gidoomal CBE stood for London Mayor on a ticket of bringing inner-city renewal, jobs and ending racial discrimination in London. The CPA continues to be the only party to have adopted an ethnic minority candidate for London Mayor. We also have had continuously high numbers of women and ethnic minority candidates in other elections.

The aim of CPA was to make its presence known in politics by winning a seat to the London Assembly, where the threshold for election is 5 per cent. The CPA Assembly List won 3.4% - putting the party ahead of better established parties such as UKIP, the BNP and all the socialist groupings. Ram Gidoomal also came ahead of the Greens in the Mayoral race, polling votes from 100,000 people in London.

Significantly, the Christian Peoples Alliance received backing from church leaders across the denominations in the capital, as well as groups in the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities. Church leaders who gave support to Ram Gidoomal's fight in the Greater London Authority elections included Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, Roger Forster of Ichthus, Rev Dr Rob Frost, Rev Steve Chalke, Dr David Muir, Matthew Ashimolowo, Rev Colin Dye and Rev Sandy Millar, among many others.

In 2002, Alan Craig became the first person in electoral history to be elected as a Christian Democrat in a principle local authority in Britain. In the London Borough of Newham, the CPA has 3 councillors, and the group forms the Official Opposition. They represent the old docking community of Canning Town, which is one of the most deprived districts of the capital.

Like all parties, the CPA is a vehicle to pursue a key set of policy objectives. It offers its 'brand' to Christian community activists who want to make a difference where they live. So, the party welcomes anyone who agrees with our values and objectives, who wants to serve their community, to set-up a branch of the CPA. The party has seen people stand for local office across Britain under the CPA banner and continues to encourage the formation of local groups.

To date, the CPA has fought elections to the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales, to the European Parliament and in all the GLA elections. Individuals have also stood for Parliament in by-elections and in General Elections. The CPA dialogues with supporters about the possibility of running candidates for Stormont, where it believes it can demonstrate a Christian alternative that is both visionary and non-sectarian.

HOW IS THE PARTY ORGANISED?

The party is organised on a federal basis – devolving as much decision-making and policy formation as possible to local groups. Working with local churches and Christians active in their communities, these groups choose Council candidates and which issues to campaign on. Candidates have stood for election in many, but not all parts of Britain.

Area parties can elect delegates to the CPA Council, which meets regularly to discuss policy and decide strategy. With other national members, they sit for a 2 year period of office. In turn, the Council elects members of the Federal Executive and the Policy Committee.

The Executive is chaired by the President, who is elected by all members of the national party for a 2-year period of office. The Executive takes decisions about the day to day functioning of the party and where no formal area parties exist, has the final say on the adoption of parliamentary candidates. All List and parliamentary candidates go through a two-stage selection process, to establish their political credentials and Christian standing with their local church leadership.

The Policy Committee develops policy proposals and prepares the General and European election manifestos. However, CPA Council can initiate policy proposals and the Annual Conference also provides a means for ordinary members to get their concerns and issues raised and debated.

Scotland and Wales are area parties in their own right. The CPA has contested elections to the National Assembly of Wales and to the Scottish Parliament.

WHAT ARE THE CPA POLICIES?

One major reason the CPA formed was to demonstrate that Christian politics is different to the right-wing moralism so often associated with the US Christian Right. The idea was to fill the values vacuum before extreme 'Christian' groupings came onto the scene to take advantage of PR. So, our policies aim to reflect the breadth of Church social teachings, not just 'moral' issues. We base them on our values document, The Mayflower Declaration, which is available at www.cpaparty.org.uk.

The Christian Peoples Alliance became one of the first political parties in Britain to publicly oppose going to war in Iraq at our conference in October 2002. We said then that a pre-emptive war would be immoral, illegal and unjust. We have developed policies for the economy, trade justice, ending global reliance on carbon, marriage and families, localised trade, transport, Europe, local government and values-based schooling.

Our manifestos have been 'market-tested'. The Times ran a story saying that our policies were closer to what Londoners were looking for, when contrasted with either Ken Livingstone, the Conservatives or Lib Dems. And before the last General Election, BBC Newsnight conducted an exercise which found that more people preferred the Christian Democratic policies of the CPA to the policies of any of the big parties in Britain.

WHICH ORGANISATIONS DOES CPA PARTNER WITH?

Since our formation, the CPA has carried the backing of Christian Democratic parties across Europe, where Christian Democracy is a long established and successful political fact. Close, regular contact with these groupings is important to CPA. We also stay in touch with Christians engaged in politics around the world, from Lebanon to Pakistan, to US academics and Christian Democrats in Africa.

While developing contacts with Christian politicians in the European Peoples Party - The Christian Democrats, we are full members of the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM), which is an association of Christian Democratic parties and think-tanks. Groups such as the Jubilee Centre and the Evangelical Alliance sit as observers in the ECPM.

Although different in style and policy commitment to the Christian Party (which calls itself 'conservative'), the CPA has contested elections with them on two occasions to avoid two Christian parties fighting against each other at the same election. In 2009, the CP-CPA polled votes from almost a quarter of a million people in Britain in the European elections.

CONTACT:

The Christian Peoples Alliance

CPA Federal Office ,

St. Luke's Community Centre,

85 Tarling Road,

London,

E16 1HN

Call 0845 4565 478 or 07873 625396.

Email press@cpaparty.org.uk or visit www.cpaparty.org.uk

For more information about the **Christian Party**, visit: www.christianparty.org.uk



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: DAVID CAMPANALE

David Campanale is Federal President of the CPA. David has been active in national and local politics for nearly 3 decades. He works in international broadcast journalism and sits on the board of Tearfund, a charity which serves and campaigns on behalf of the world's poor.