



Christians
in Politics

**Careers in Politics
and Government**





Careers in Politics and Government

I THOUGHT THAT YOU HAD TO STAND FOR ELECTION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Far from it! The world of politics is rather like the familiar image of the iceberg. A small part is visible above the surface; these are the elected roles such as government ministers, MPs, and local councillors. But the much larger part lies below the surface. This includes the civil service – the non-political arm of government that is responsible for working out the details of government policy and putting it into practice. There are also people who work for individual MPs or the political parties, and a whole spectrum of charities, campaign groups, think tanks, academic institutions, lobbyists, denominations and para-church organisations who are seeking to engage with and influence the political process.

In many ways, the world of politics is like any other workplace. It requires the right attitude and aptitude. So skills, qualifications, experience and professionalism are all important. Like most workplaces, the day-to-day reality can be mundane and not always glamorous. But unlike most workplaces, a job in politics can mean that you are in a position to influence the future shape of legislation, policy, public services and society from the ‘inside’.

There are numerous job and career opportunities in politics and government. Rather than attempt to cover every possible area, we asked ten Christians already working in the field to share their stories. As you read their testimonies, two things shine through. First, they all see their work as an aspect of calling, mission, and Christian witness. And second, they recognise that they are able to make a small but significant difference through their chosen career path.

WORKING IN GOVERNMENT

The Civil Service encompasses most staff working in central government. It can be thought of as the paid, professional arm of national government in the UK. Unlike government ministers, civil servants carry on in their jobs regardless of which party wins at an election. Some central government workers, particularly those working in non-departmental public bodies (quangos), are not civil servants and are employed on slightly different terms. Staff in the Foreign Office are not civil servants but members of the diplomatic service. But to keep things simple, the term “civil service” will be used to describe all those working in all the departments, agencies and other public bodies forming part of the central government of the UK, wherever they work.

For the sake of completeness, reference should be made to the devolved administrations. Since 1987 a new tier of government has arisen in the UK in the form of the three new devolved administrations – in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each of these administrations has its own recruitment policies and procedures.

The civil service has strict rules regarding political neutrality. Civil servants are expected to advise on and implement government policies regardless of which party is in power, and are barred from most party political activities.

The heart of the Civil Service is located in London, and the main government departments such as the Treasury, Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence, Department of

Health, and so on are often collectively referred to as 'Whitehall'. However, many departments have large processing and service delivery activities within their remit (eg: collecting taxes and paying out benefits) and these functions are increasingly located outside of London.

Although civil servants do not set the policies, they are highly influential both in providing advice and shaping how policy will be put into practice. A combination of Godly wisdom, personal integrity and professional judgement can have a huge positive

My name is Emily Antcliffe and I am secretary to the Council of Food Policy Advisors. In this role I support the Council Chair and members in better understanding the department, I work with senior officials helping them to understand the Council, and I ensure that the secretariat team are aware of key developments. I have always been very blessed in my work, working in policy areas that interest me and are a high government priority. I entered the civil service through the 'fast stream', which is designed to develop people into more senior roles. As a result I was fortunate to be able to move around regularly, something I still enjoy even in the more responsible position I now hold. This increases the opportunity to interact with a range of individuals. God has always been very clear when he is ready for me to move on and has opened (and closed) doors very clearly. I feel I serve God daily at work, both in ensuring I do the best possible job I can but also by being salt and light to those around me. Being able to be open about my faith is a real privilege and a real responsibility.

Emily Antcliffe is a civil servant working in the Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs

effect before a decision ever goes before parliament or after it is passed into law.

Entry into the Civil Service is like recruitment to any other large organisation. It involves preparing a good CV, applications, and interviews/assessments. There are 3 traditional routes to getting a job:

- 1) Direct entry. Normally used for more junior roles such as administrative staff or front line service delivery. These roles are unlikely to have policy responsibilities. Progression 'through the ranks' is possible, but is becoming more difficult unless you have degree level qualifications.
- 2) The 'fast stream'. Each year, the Civil Service recruits a number of individuals (traditionally graduates with good degree results) to be trained for future leadership roles. The recruitment process is extremely competitive. Progress is not guaranteed (you still have to perform well in the job!), but you will be given the opportunity to gain valuable experience in a range of different functions.
- 3) Recruitment from industry and other parts of the private sector. Some specialist positions get filled by recruiting individuals from outside the public sector. This is normally because the relevant skills are not available internally, and Civil Service career paths do not easily enable individuals to develop these skills. Examples have included senior individuals from IT, project, or professional/technical backgrounds such as lawyers and scientists.



My name is Kaushalya Jeyaraj. I am Secretary to the Head of School Funding in the Department for Education. I manage his inbox, help him to utilise his time effectively, arrange meetings and travel, and ensure the diary is consistently kept up to date. Brought up as a Hindu, I became a Christian in 1987. I see now how God had a hand in what has happened in my life. 'God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose'. (Romans 8: 28). My career in the Civil Service began with the Benefits Agency in March 1995, and in November 1999 I transferred to the then Department for Education and Employment. Many changes in the Department settled me into my present position in 2008. I am part of a body, and what I do alongside others has a great impact on Government policy. We are called to be subject to governing authorities, and to recognise that those which exist are established by God (Romans 13:1). This means that we should see government bodies as God-given and having the potential to do good for society. By having a calm spirit in the midst of conflict I have been able to be a witness in the workplace, and in the words of Francis of Assisi, to 'preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary use words.' I don't know what the future holds, but I have confidence in the One who holds the future!

Kaushalya Jeyaraj works in the Department for Education.

There are also opportunities to work on a casual basis. This could involve working on a short fixed term contract or working as a "temp" through an agency. These can provide useful experience in order to support an application for a permanent position in government work in the future.



The Civil Service has a unique culture and ethos of its own. It sees itself as different to the commercial world, and while barriers are slowly falling there is still relatively little movement between the public and private sector in employment terms. This makes it all the more important that Christians see working in this area as a valid calling and mission field.

In recent years, the Civil Service has been at the centre of the 'equality and diversity' agenda being pursued by government. Religious belief and expression in the public workplace has become a controversial issue, arguably to an even greater extent than in the rest of society.

While government departments have made strenuous efforts to accommodate 'external' religious observances such as dietary and dress restrictions and participation in religious festivals, the freedoms most valued by Christians (the ability to share their faith openly with others) have sometimes been seen as coming under threat for risk of 'causing offence'. Christians in the Civil Service have responded by seeking to ensure that their voice is heard through discussion and consultation, operating within the procedures of the departments where they work.

The over-arching body for Christian groups in the Civil Service is called **Christians in Government** UK (CIGUK). CIGUK also represent Christians working in the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland. Its sister body the Civil Service Christian Union for Northern Ireland represents Christians working in the government of Northern Ireland. There are recognised Christian groups in most central and devolved government departments and organisations throughout the UK. These groups organise events including prayer meetings, worship events, bible studies, fellowship meetings, and Alpha-style courses. They also represent Christians on a number of workplace consultation forums.

Having lived and worked in Japan for 4 years, I joined the Civil Service as a change of career in 1998. I started out in the Prison Service, having become interested through the Alpha Course in prison ministry. After 5 years, I left to join the Home Office where I have remained ever since and where I chair the Home Office Christian Network which seeks to support staff, raise awareness of the Christian faith and work with the wider Christian community in pursuit of Home Office objectives of building safe and secure communities. I love the challenge and variety of the work and am convinced that as Christians we need to live out our calling in the workplace. Never has it been more urgent and important for Christians to engage, influence and transform our workplaces and society – and there is no better place to seek to serve Christ and others than in government. The Home Office Christian Network is now recognised by the department as a staff support network and we have opportunities to share our faith within the context of the diversity framework. Last year we held Easter and Christmas services and we have also run community volunteering projects which other members of staff have joined. We have groups meeting across the country and are growing. The most exciting development has been our work to engage and influence policy areas which affect Christians in the community and seeking to uphold freedom of speech and belief in the face of growing intolerance. This is on top of the ‘day job’ which in my case has been working in the Crime Strategy Unit to tackle acquisitive and business crime. Whether working on corporate affairs, briefing Ministers or developing policy, I have always seen a close link between my faith, the call to be ‘salt and light in a fallen world’, and the work I am doing in the Home Office to uphold the rule of law.

Michael Carson is a Business Crime Advisor working for the Home Office in London

WORKING FOR AN MP

All MPs employ staff to help them carry out their constituency and parliamentary duties. The types of role that MPs will generally be looking to fill are:

- Caseworkers, often based locally in their home constituency, who deal with members of the public who come to their MP for help;
- Office managers and administrators, normally based at their office in the Houses of Parliament, who will write and answer letters, organise meetings, and manage the diary;
- Researchers, whose job is to research background information and new developments on issues of particular interest to the MP.

Each MP has an office budget, which is normally sufficient to fill one or two paid posts. Because of the wide variety of work involved and the small size of the team, working for an MP demands a lot of flexibility. It can also involve pressure, unusual hours, and the ability to deal with a wide variety of different people.

In addition to their paid staff, many MPs will employ interns as part of their Westminster team. Some of these are short term volunteers who are looking to gain experience of working in a political environment. Others are provided (and sometimes paid) by a wide variety of external bodies. These can include charities, campaign groups, trade unions, academic organisations, and industry bodies.

Some of these bodies will also provide paid researchers or staff members to help strengthen an MP's team. This normally occurs where an MP has a particular interest in the same issues. Thus, an MP who wishes to campaign on international development might employ a researcher paid for by a charity working in this area. This approach is an accepted part of parliamentary practice over a thousand staff directly, and it has been estimated that there are at least another thousand interns working in Parliament), but to find one takes determination and a creative approach. Some methods that have worked for others in the past include:

I work as Senior Parliamentary Researcher to Liberal Democrat MP Steve Webb, who is currently the party's spokesman on pensions, unemployment and welfare. My work involves briefing my boss for speeches and Parliamentary debates, working on legislation, writing articles, assisting with policy formation, and running the Westminster office. I love the variety and the buzz of Westminster and count it a real privilege to see how policies are made and agendas are shaped within these walls – and to have a part in shaping them. I started out on the CARE Leadership Programme, which gives Christian graduates an opportunity to work for an MP as part of an educational programme. At the end of that year I was offered a permanent job. I see my 'calling' here as supporting my Christian boss in his role as an MP, and praying for and within Parliament as part of a cross-party group of Christian staff. I am also involved with the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum which seeks to be a voice of faith within the Lib Dem party. My aim is to be salt and light in every task from the formation of policy ideas to daily interaction with my colleagues, and to reflect the love of Christ in a tough environment. In the cut-and-thrust world of party politics, people notice if you live by a different set of rules. That is the main challenge; to live differently, and hope that people ask "why?"

Jo Latham is Senior Researcher to Steve Webb MP

1) Through a college or university. Students studying politics often do a work placement as part of their course, and your tutors may be able to help you find opportunities to work in Parliament.

2) Get involved in local politics. Joining a political party is not the big step that some Christians mistakenly believe. It is a perfectly normal way of participating in the democratic process. Most local branches of political parties are not that large, and if you start volunteering you will soon have the chance to meet your local MP or parliamentary candidate and others who are close to him/her.

3) Apply to a charity or campaigning group. Try to find out which organisations are active in public affairs. Their websites will tell you whether they offer internships in Parliament and what the application process is. You may wish to consider both Christian groups and charities which are not specifically Christian but do work in an area that interests you.

4) Through personal recommendation. MPs have a lot of contacts; that's part of the job. It is quite possible that you already know someone who knows someone who knows an MP. Start asking family friends, members of your church, and leaders of any community or voluntary groups you are connected with. They can't necessarily get you a job, but if they are willing to recommend you that can make all the difference.



5) Look for jobs that are advertised. MPs do advertise some of their posts publicly (especially those that are paid for out of their parliamentary allowances). For some jobs (eg: as a diary secretary or PA), experience in a similar role can be at least as important as an interest in politics. One of the best known websites for jobs in and around parliament is www.w4mp.org. The jobs section includes both paid and unpaid roles with political parties, charities, and other organisations. Also, most of the main job search websites now have sections that cover jobs in politics and government.

6) Make a direct approach. A lot of the correspondence received by MPs relates to problems or complaints, and to hear from someone who is offering to volunteer some time or help is quite refreshing. Offering a few hours a week doing basic admin work for your MP in their local constituency may well receive a positive response, and can lead to other things in the future. You can contact them by letter, or in person at the 'surgery' that most MPs hold. There is a Christians in Politics guide to **making contact with your elected representative** which can help you. It is worth finding out a bit about your MP first. What are their political views and the issues that interest them personally? Are they a government minister or a 'back bench' MP? What have they been involved with in their local constituency?

7) The Houses of Parliament employs a number of support staff in non-political roles, covering everything from catering and event management to IT and library functions. These roles do not work directly for MPs, but are still very much on the 'inside' of the parliamentary operation.

I have always had an interest in Global Politics. However, while studying for a BA in International Relations with French and Spanish at Loughborough University, I decided that I wanted to gain more experience in the area of Poverty Reduction. So, I volunteered with Christian International Development Charity called 'Micah Challenge UK'. My work with Micah helped me to appreciate the lobbying relationship between NGOs and the government. Nevertheless, I felt a sense of limitation as to what I could achieve and I wanted to try working from within government itself. I also wanted to catch a glimpse of the bigger picture! So, after university, I started interning for my local MP, whose interests included: Sport, International Development and Christian Engagement in Public Affairs. Since working in parliament, Christian involvement in politics and government has become of increasing significance to me. My experience has given me a genuine passion to see Christians act as Salt and Light in every sphere of public life, and I have gained a deeper understanding of politics as a valid and pivotal mission field. For me now, this engagement is truly about being used 'to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.' (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Francesca Chin-Lewis is currently researcher for the Parliamentary Sports Caucus



WORKING FOR A POLITICAL PARTY

British political parties are primarily voluntary organisations. Up and down the country, activists organise campaigns, deliver leaflets, knock on doors, and debate policy to advance their political beliefs and participate in the democratic process. However, all the parties also have a central organisation, paid for by fundraising, which co-ordinates their campaigns

and activities at a national level.

Political parties employ staff in a variety of different roles. Some of them include:

- 1) Campaign managers and strategists, who organise national political campaigns and help out locally in key target seats.
- 2) Policy advisers and researchers, who test and develop the policies that the party has decided to pursue;
- 3) Media and communications officers, whose job is to get the party's message out to the public;
- 4) Affiliated groups. All the larger parties have membership groups associated with them, for anything from trade unionists to Christians to local councillors. The larger groups will employ full time staff to co-ordinate their activities and support their members to be a more effective voice in the party.
- 5) Administrative and support staff, who help run the party organisation (including all the usual corporate functions such as finance, HR, legal, and IT).

I work as a political researcher for Andy Reed who is a Labour MP. I run his Westminster office and support him in his work in Parliament. The job does vary depending on what is currently before parliament, but it essentially involves managing his diary, organising and attending meetings, drafting letters, writing press releases and producing briefing documents on subjects of interest to the MP. I started working for Andy as an intern through CARE (a Christian charity), and spent my first year learning about the world of politics through the placement in Parliament. This was accompanied by me gaining a theological understanding of Christian engagement in politics through my studies with CARE. Together, these gave me a good grounding for understanding the issues facing Christians involved in the public square, and helped me to understand the importance of having Christians involved in politics. I see politics as very much a mission field. Towards the end of my year a vacancy for a political researcher became available and I was able to apply for the job. Being on the CARE intern programme gave me the knowledge and experience I needed to get the job. I see my work in politics as an opportunity to encourage and equip other Christians to become involved in politics as well as helping Christians understand the way politics works. By working for a Christian MP I help support him in promoting the faith here in Parliament.

John Powner is Parliamentary Office Manager for Andy Reed MP

The majority of people working for political parties started by being an active party member or working for an MP or affiliated group.

It is very unlikely that you will get a job working for a political party unless you are a member of that party. Most roles in political parties require a good deal of flexibility, and when elections come around it is not unusual to find staff who are normally office based out on the doors speaking to the electorate or delivering literature!

Many people who apply for a job in their political party do so because they are interested in pursuing a political career themselves in the future. A number of current

MPs worked in their party HQ prior to getting selected to stand in a winnable seat. This means that competition for jobs can be intense. Some of the ways in which you can prepare yourself for this type of role are:

□ Become active in your local political party. There are many voluntary roles at local level which will give you experience of working in a political environment and enable you to build up relationships of mutual trust with other party members. As well as their local structure of branches and associations, most parties also have a youth wing which provides young people an opportunity to take on substantive leadership roles.

□ Study politics or a related discipline at university. It won't constrain you to following a political path in the future, but it does show that you are serious about the subject.

□ For Christians, a good way to connect with the major political parties is to join one of the in-party Christian groups and get involved in the events and activities that they put on:

- o Conservative Christian Fellowship (www.christian-conservatives.org.uk)
- o Christians on the Left (www.christiansontheleft.org.uk)
- o Liberal Democrat Christian Forum (www.ldcf.net)
- o Christians in politics (the official cross party group)

□ Perform a political role in a voluntary capacity. Working for an MP, pressure group, or charity can enable you to develop experience in a political environment which will be valuable when you come to apply for a paid role. For younger people this can often look like an internship or 'gap year'. For more experienced workers, you may have valuable skills which you could contribute on a part time basis.



For just over four years I was the Director of the Conservative Christian Fellowship. The CCF is a membership organisation based in Conservative Campaign Headquarters, and no work day was the same. My work included speaking at events and writing articles to encourage Christians to get involved in party politics, organising the church service at party conference, meeting with young people and church leaders to resource them, fundraising, setting up meetings between senior politicians and leaders in the Christian community, and organising all manner of events including training for under 35s, MPs, and Councillors. The hallmark of our organisation though is relational. The word 'fellowship' in our title is very important. I invested a lot of time encouraging people, praying for them, and informally advising the party on issues through the internal relationships we have built. When I was 19 years old and living in Ghana I believe God gave me a passion and a heart for government. After studying law at university I spent nine years working as a Barrister in Manchester, and after becoming involved in the local party I stood as the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Stockport at the 2005 General Election. I wasn't elected, but later that same year I had one of those big 'God moves' to come to London to be CCF Executive Director. My greatest joy over the last years has been in building relationships and reaching out to the British black community. Around half this community is involved in church, and we have brought many of the leaders in to meet Mr. Cameron and other politicians. The leadership, staff and membership of our organisation has changed even in the time that I have been involved. It is such a blessing to see many young people who would never have considered politics before responding to our call that Britain desperately needs their contribution.

Elizabeth Berridge is Former Executive Director of Conservative Christian Fellowship

I've been on a journey. From the age of 19 I've known that God has called me to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves". That has never been in doubt. The questions have always been who to speak to, and how to speak.

To get anything done at a local or national level, people need to come together. Political parties are simply people doing that. If you're anything like me, then a large part of the problem will be deciding which party to join. There are probably policies of all the major parties that you disagree with. My advice is to simply get off the fence quickly. This is such a false reason for delaying. It took me ages. I procrastinated firstly about whether I would someday be returning to Northern Ireland, so should join a party there, and then procrastinated about which colour I should pin to my mast. My final decision didn't feel particularly "spiritual" and was based on relationships rather than actual policy decisions. I haven't regretted it for a second. If we're honest we probably don't agree with every word of the doctrinal statement of our chosen church family (if we even know it!), but we know we need to belong somewhere. If we'd rather the parties had slightly different policies then you can bet your life that these will only change with you as a member suggesting it, rather than shouting it from the outside. It's about moving on from the easy duty of postcards to the hard work of relationships.

It has been amazing to see how quickly you get wired into local action groups, policy forums, and other significant events, on joining a political party. Within 3 months the leader of my party was hearing me ask him a question from three rows away. Sure, his answer was political and equivocal, but the key thing is that he heard me. It only takes a few more people to be asking the same question, and suddenly it's a national issue. Much as we love to be cynical about the system, when we engage with it, democracy can work!

This is where hope hits the ground running. Working through the seemingly mundane details of local housing issues or parking is exactly what salt and light are all about. Salt crystals are small and they work themselves into the smallest fibres of the meat to preserve it. He is making ALL things new. Not just the stuff that grabs the headlines. When you spend time at an MP's surgery, you see face-to-face the unbelievable spectrum of needs in an area. Dealing with these issues (with limited local authority) is one of the more thankless and unglamorous aspects of the role. To me that sounds a bit like carrying a cross. Are we up for it?

I also have noticed that the time is ripe for our engagement. All three of the major parties have had their ideological roots pulled up and are scouting around for a set of values to call their own. It is fascinating to chat with people around Westminster and realise how much time they spend casting around for a new big idea. What better time to bring the hope of the kingdom, and its values to bear?

Andy Flannagan is Director of Christians on the Left and Co-Director of Christians in Politics

WORKING FOR A CHARITY, THINK-TANK, OR NGO

Any group which is serious about seeing its aims and objectives become a reality will eventually discover that politics matters. Politics is not the only way by which things are changed, but it is a key area both because of the power to change laws and set government priorities, and the prominence that political decisions get in the media and society as a whole. Sometimes important values and principles are at stake; other times large amounts of money will be involved either directly or indirectly.

There are a huge range of organisations which have a 'public affairs' dimension to their work, including:



- Charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), that recognise that sometimes the only way to achieve lasting change is via political means. For example, humanitarian charities such as Tearfund or CAFOD do a lot of practical work on the ground to help poor communities, but they also campaign on political issues that directly affect the poor such as debt cancellation, international trade, and the impact of climate change.
- Academic units and ‘think tanks’, that are commissioned to carry out research and develop ideas which may become the future policies for a political party or government.
- Trade unions and industry bodies, who try to influence government in favour of their members by a variety of means. Often companies working in specific field (such as pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, or finance) will join together with their partners and competitors to form a ‘trade association’ which promotes the common interests of the sector as a whole.
- Community and ‘faith’ groups (including Christian churches, denominations and para-church groups) that may wish to exert influence either in pursuit of their aims and ideals, or to protect their religious freedoms.
- Publicly funded bodies, that are tasked with implementing a specific aspect of government policy and inevitably have to deliver and justify their work in a highly political environment.
- Professional lobbying and public affairs organisations, that provide a (paid-for) service to groups who need to have their voice heard on a specific issue but do not have the skills or resources internally to do so.

I work as a strategic consultant in humanitarian issues, helping to pioneer works tackling human trafficking, youth offending and international justice issues in government and NGO sectors. Although not engaged in ‘party politics’, my role is increasingly influencing government for the rights of the oppressed and the needy through practical programs at both local and international levels. My motivation is to reflect the value I see God put on human life through his mercy and compassion. My faith encourages me to see the many other influencers throughout history who have been touched by God with the same motivation.

Peter Stanley has led a number of humanitarian projects, including the Stop The Traffik initiative

The same basic principles apply to working for an NGO as to the various other forms of political employment we have already looked at. Most NGOs are not politically aligned, which means that being a member of a political party will not give you any great advantage or disadvantage when applying to work for them (although it does show that you are interested in politics). Some think-tanks are strongly associated with a particular political party, but most NGOs try to maintain a stance of political neutrality because they want to build consensus across party lines (and may expect to be around for longer than the government of the day!)



Most NGOs will advertise jobs openly on their own website, and possibly through other channels as well. As with all employers, they are looking for a mixture of skills and experience. Some of the skills they need are transferable in from other careers (such as marketing, communications, project management, PR, and internet). Others will require previous experience of working in the political sector.

In addition to paid roles, many charities and NGOs offer various forms of internship, educational programmes, or work experience. These can provide a great way to develop your 'political CV' if you are serious about a career in this area.

USEFUL CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Civil service recruitment: <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs>

Civil service 'fast stream': <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs/FastStream>

Christians In Government UK: <http://www.christiansingovernment.org.uk>

Civil Service Christian Union Northern Ireland: <http://www.cscuni.org>

Jobs working in parliament: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/working/jobs/>

Working for an MP or think-tank: <http://www.w4mp.org>

CARE leadership programme:

<http://www.care.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=110645>

Buxton Leadership programme:

<http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/projects/training/buxton-leadership-programme/>