Political Engagement in Overcoming Conflict – Steve Webb

1. Nothing is impossible with God

* Even seemingly intractable conflicts can be resolved – think about Northern Ireland, South Africa;

1. There is a Christian imperative to engage

* Christians around the world are caught up in these conflicts; we owe a particular duty to our brothers and sisters facing persecution, but can build alliances with all who stand for liberty of religious expression;
* “Whatever you do for the least of these my children, you do for me”

1. The Political Process can be part of the solution – but don’t just delegate to the politicians! Pray for courageous political leaders at home and abroad, willing to take the first step for peace.
2. Apply pressure through the political system to:
   1. Tackle the causes of conflict
      1. Global inequality and injustice
      2. Poor governance, corruption, lack of democracy
      3. Breeding grounds for radicalisation at home and abroad
   2. Mitigate and deal with the consequences of conflict
      1. An open-hearted approach to the victims of conflict, especially with regard to migration and asylum
      2. The rebuilding of broken relationships between communities, tribes and nations
      3. Rebuilding physical infrastructure
3. The messages and policies of political parties and the media are shaped by their perception of public opinion:
   1. Reliance on Focus groups
   2. Dependence on advertising revenue
4. So: make your voice heard, don’t be the ‘silent majority’
5. Engage with the political process:
   1. Via your local MP – persistence, personal contact, informed engagement;
   2. Via political parties – they are made up of individuals like you!
   3. Via the media – why should the voices of division and hatred be heard the loudest? Write letters, phone phone-ins, be in the audience!
   4. Via campaigning organisations – a source of up-to-date information – ‘news you can use’; have a ‘critical mass’;
   5. As a church – honour and support those engaged in politics, host events, don’t be afraid to be ‘political’, pray persistently;