



Is St Paul's Parish liberal or conservative?

St Paul's is neither ... and it is both!

St Paul's is neither liberal nor conservative in the popular sense of those words. St Paul's is theological. That is, it takes the historic theology of the Universal Church very seriously; and faithfulness to Catholic theology – not partisan politics or “being PC” – is the basis for all judgments, decisions, teaching, formation, and practice here.

Legally the Parish is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt religious corporation, and the IRS Code forbids tax-exempt bodies promoting partisan political causes. Furthermore Anglicans have generally held that the Church's expertise (its *auctoritas*) is Catholic theology, not the highly technically sophisticated fields of Political Science and Economics. It is the responsibility and competence of the Church to form theologically knowledgeable, committed Christians who as Stewards of God's creation have the God-given duty to vote and take their place in the secular body politic in theologically responsible, carefully thoughtful, and seriously engaged ways, utilizing the best possible objective data from the most competent non-partisan experts.

On the other hand, St Paul's is *both* liberal and conservative in the sense that the parish family is made up of persons literally all across the liberal-conservative political spectrum. (And interestingly enough some of the most politically conservative are the youngest, and some of the most politically liberal are the oldest!)

Virtually all St Paul's parishioners are in complete agreement that what they want is the best for the most people possible. That is the “strategy,” and it is formed by Catholic theology. Where there are differences they are in “tactics”: the question of what constitutes the most effective means of achieving the goal of the best use of God's creation for the good of His people. For example, some people make a good case for providing immediate direct services to those in need as the most effective way of providing care and exercising the best Stewardship. Others make a good case for longer-haul, systemic solutions as the only effective and lasting solutions to what are generally long-time systemic problems. In the same way some believe that legally established appropriate boundaries and common-sense limits provide the most good for the most people for most of their lives. Others believe that we only become responsible self-policing adults by having the freedom to learn from our own experience (mistakes included, as long, of course, as it does not hurt others).

But at St Paul's there is no disagreement whatsoever on the goal, which is formed by the historic theology and social teaching of the Catholic Church to which virtually everyone here is firmly committed, only on what constitutes the most effective means of achieving that goal. And because it is recognized by everyone at St Paul's that life is complex, the norm here is to take seriously everyone's ideas and points of view because experience shows that the best solutions almost always come from non-judgmental group brainstorming and cooperation.