

CHURCHES TOGETHER FOR CHIPPING BARNET

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EU REFERENDUM SPECIAL

The EU referendum is the most important decision Britain will make for many years to come. It is not about party politics. It is not about single issues such as immigration. It is about the kind of country we are and what sort of place we want it to occupy in Europe and in the world. For Christians, it is not just about what will be best for ourselves but what it will mean for our obligation to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

Archbishop Justin Welby, in *The Mail* on Sunday on 12th June wrote:

The vision for our future cannot be only about ourselves. We are most human when we exist for others.There is no official Christian or church line on which way to vote. Voting is a matter for each person's conscience.Two things are sure. Each of us should turn out and vote if we can. And after the referendum we must come together as one people to make the solution we choose work. In no sense do I have some divine hot line to the right answer.....But for my part, based on what I have said and on what I have experienced, I shall vote to remain.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey, wrote in the *Daily Mail*:

Christians should vote to leave the EU because it is bringing about division rather than unity.....many of us feel that the current structures and arrangements are now causing the very division, conflict and unhappiness that they were created to cure.

Former Archbishop Rowan Williams joined with leaders of other faiths to write in the *Observer*:

Faith is about integration and building bridges, not about isolation and erecting barriers.

The Bishop St Albans, Alan Smith, in his *Bishop's Letter*, says:

".... much of the popular discussion in the media so far has been narrow-minded and mean-spirited. It has tended to focus around two main themes:

- Are we going to be economically worse or better off if we stay or leave?
- Which option is going to help us keep the most migrants and asylum seekers out of our country?

Virtually no one seems to be grappling with the big questions about what sort of society we want. Few people are asking how we can all co-operate to build a better, fairer world. Only a few voices are asking how a reformed EU could contribute to solving some of the big challenges facing us, such as climate change and poverty."

www.stalbans.anglican.org/referendum.

See also 'Think, Pray, Vote' at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/eu-referendum.

Opinions at St John the Baptist's are divided also. Jenny Winsor writes:

On June 23rd I will be voting to leave the EU because I want to bring back democracy and sovereignty to our country and to no longer be ruled by 'Brussels'.

There is no doubt that the EU has done a lot of good in many respects such as citizens' rights, scientific research and environmental issues and there is no reason why such developments should not continue if we leave.

We pay huge sums of money into the EU every week. We get some of this returned in various ways - but far less than we put in. I believe that this money should be spent on our own country and we should decide what to spend it on.

On another issue: London has been highly rated in the world of finance for many years, long before there was any concept of a European Union. If we leave the EU, does this mean the banks will stop doing business with London? Many believe that London will prosper more by being out of the EU as more trade develops with the rest of the world.

Then there is the ever growing fear of immigration which I can see getting worse if we remain in the EU. Britain does not have the infrastructure - housing, schools, hospitals etc - to cope with the influxes we are currently experiencing, and the quality of life for many UK citizens is suffering as a result. For me it is a priority to take back control of our borders.

When we joined the European Common Market in 1973, along with seven other countries, we had no idea that this trade agreement would become the dictatorial machine we are part of today. My father fought in WW1 and my mother and husband in WW2 for our independence - which we are now losing. I hope they did not fight in vain.

Sir Michael Franklin writes:

The EU is a collection of like-minded countries with a commitment to peace, democracy and respect for human rights. Britain plays an important part in its decision-making, and our standing and influence in the world would be diminished if we left.

We could limit the number of people coming to Britain from the EU by leaving, but we would then lose the benefits of being in a single market. We would have to settle for a free trade area agreement which would be less satisfactory for our traders and could disadvantage the many British people living and working on the continent.

Less than 20% of our laws are made in Brussels. The EU regulates the things that are better controlled on a Europe-wide level, like common standards and dealing with the environment.

What we pay to Brussels is about ½% of all public expenditure, and some of this goes to help the poorer member states.

Other countries such as Turkey cannot join the EU unless all the member countries agree.

During our 40 years of membership of the Common Market and its successors, Britain has prospered, and most experts agree that our economy will suffer if we leave.

Britain is not committed to 'ever closer union'.

The EU will never become a 'United States of Europe'.

The support of Britain is important to the EU in pushing for international agreements on climate change.

The EU is a remarkable example of shared sovereignty which has brought about reconciliation and prosperity to the nations of Europe. It is not 'undemocratic'. The Commission can only propose: decisions are taken by elected Ministers in the Council and elected members of the European Parliament.

(For the full text of this article, apply to the Editor, jennyremfry@btinternet.com.)