

Come to our circuit Referendum Forum

Empingham Methodist Church

Monday 23rd May at 7.30pm

European Referendum: What's it all about?

Speaker:

Paul Morrison

*from the joint Public Issues Team
(Methodist, Baptist, URC, Church of Scotland)
Based at Methodist Church House, London*

This event is an opportunity to think through the issues before us with a grounded, unbiased speaker.

It is for everyone – whether a Christian or not.

Feel free to bring a friend or three!

See you there.

Connexional News is compiled by Rev Andy Fyall

Any suggestions for items should be sent to Andy by 10th of September.



News from **The Methodist Church**

News from the Methodist Connexion

THE EU REFERENDUM RESOURCE IS HERE!

Think, pray, vote

As Christians we are called to work, live and pray for a better society. This includes participating in the political processes that shape the lives of our communities, our country and our world. It is our identity as followers of Jesus that will both engage us in the referendum and shape our response. How, then, do we allow our faith to inform our answer to one of the biggest political decisions facing the United Kingdom? The gospel accounts remind us that Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind”, while the second is to “love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus reinforces the established Old Testament principle that our relationship with God affects the way we relate to and live with one another. These human relationships are an expression of our relationship with God; the two are intertwined.

But what does this have to do with the European Union, the Schengen Agreement and the single market? The answer is that each of these refers to and directly impacts upon how we relate to each other as individuals, as members of organisations and communities, and as countries. Whether it concerns questions of sovereignty, the free movement of people, or where laws are made and enforced, these are issues that influence and affect our relationships, and as such, our faith has much to share.

The UK has a longstanding relationship with the other nations of Europe. Our churches have well established links with Christian communities and congregations across the continent; these relationships extend to nations that are currently part of the European Union and those that are not. It is not an issue of whether we need and value these relationships, or even whether we belong in Europe, but whether that sense of belonging is best expressed by being part of the European Union.

The real referendum question

The referendum question might therefore be phrased as: "To what extent does the European Union enhance or hinder our ability to love our neighbour and, in doing so, our ability to love God?"

You may like to have that at the back of your mind these other general questions:

- Who, in this context, is our neighbour? Are we talking about neighbours in our local communities, in the UK, in Europe, or in the wider world?
- It is an important aim to have good relations with all countries, in Europe and elsewhere. Does our membership of the European Union help us with this, or hinder us?
- All political and economic structures are made by humans and therefore flawed. The referendum offers us a choice between political and economic structures where the UK is part of the EU or outside the EU. Which would best enable us to fulfil our Christian duty towards God and our neighbour?
- Can the EU, in its current or a reformed state, achieve the ideals we might have for it?

This resource explores some of the key issues in the debate. These may not be the issues which are being covered in the media, but they explore crucial questions about how the UK relates to the EU, now and in the future. There may be other issues which are particularly important to you as Christians in your area, and we encourage you to explore these as well.

On either side of the debate there are individuals with passionately held views on the question of the UK's membership to the EU. Whatever our position as Christians we should work to ensure that our discussions are respectful, our decisions are taken with good grace and that it is God's kingdom that is central rather than our own.

Which neighbours are we talking about: those in our local communities, in the UK, in Europe, or in the wider world? Does economic union help our relationship with some nations while hindering others? Does the way the European Union makes laws aid or impede our Christian duty?

Prayer

Loving God,
In the referendum that lies before us,
in the challenge of seeking an answer,
in our differences of opinion,
in our need to understand,
may you guide us in our decisions,
make us gracious in our disagreement,
and may we join you to work for the
building of your kingdom
rather than our own.
Amen