

The UK acceded to the **EEC** (as it was then) on 1 January 1973 joining 6 other nations (partners since 1957). It is planned that the UK will leave the **EU** on 29 March 2019 (48 years later and now 28 nations) although there is still much debate about this. Many commentators believe that we are facing the biggest peace-time crisis for generations, so, unsurprisingly, Brexit dominates our news. It is unclear whether the government will get support for the terms of our withdrawal or whether we will have a 'no deal'. Political fallout, defections and bitter divisions give an increasing sense of crisis. There is a saying: *'It is very difficult to make predictions, especially about the future'* but perhaps we can expect some individual and national impacts - both positive and negative. Two impacts that concern me are, admittedly, negative:

1. **Freedom of movement:** whilst some guarantees have been given about EU Nationals being entitled to remain in the UK, this is predicated upon UK nationals being able to remain in the EU. This issue continues to be a worry for many in the UK who hail from other EU countries.
2. **National division:** a poll by the Lord Ashcroft Polls organisation found that:
 - Christian v others - nearly 60% of those who identified as Christian voted for Brexit (compared with 52% who voted for Brexit across the nation); 70% of Muslim and Hindu voters voted to remain.
 - Ethnicity - although numbers have fallen, 93 % of Christians in the UK are white; two-thirds of British Muslims are from an Asian background; 67% of Asians and 73% of black people voted to remain compared to 47% of white people
 - Age - 20% self-identifying Christians in the UK are over 65. 50% of Muslims in the UK are under 25; 73% of 18 to 24-year-olds voted to remain but only 40% of over 65s.

So how should we respond as Christians? The four basic institutions that God has clearly established are **marriage** (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5), the **family** (Psalm 68:6; Ephesians 3:14-15), the **church** (Acts 2; Ephesians 1:22-23) and the **state** (Romans 13:1-7). We should therefore be involved in whatever happens to these institutions. *'Moreover as Christians we recognise that God does not just rule through marriage, family, church and state, he rules over them and so they are to function as his servants. This means that the state is to function within a role delimited by God.'*¹

We will differ in our opinions about Brexit but we can personally and collectively as a church respond within biblical principles:

1. No one knows the outcome of BREXIT but Psalm 11:3, 4 is very relevant *'...if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven...'*
God is in control.
2. We have an opportunity for more focussed prayer: *1 Timothy 2:2 'First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.'*
Government needs to have an orientation towards God.
3. The TCF Family is multi-cultural and some of our brothers and sisters are nationals from other EU Countries. Some are worried how Brexit will affect them. Looking after strangers is a big issue in the Bible: the word for stranger appears almost 50 times in the Pentateuch, not least in a number of specific provisions for their active support. Also, Jesus affirms the need to treat the stranger as they would treat Jesus Himself: *'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'* Matthew 25:34-37. **We need to demonstrate our welcome to people of all individual characteristics and love them in Christ's Name because 'God so loved the world'.**
4. Romans 12:18 says *'If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all'* and Hebrews 12:14 says *'Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.'* No matter our national status with the EU we should continue to live as good neighbours and pursue peace within the community of nations but individually, we are also to maintain good relationships with each other in the family of God despite agreements or disagreements about political decisions. **We should continue to show our love for one another (John 13:35) in mutual respect and courteous consideration** despite differences in our personal outlook on Brexit.



¹ Joe Boot of the Ezra Institute