

## The Bishop of Peterborough writes

### The Gospel of Unity

23 June was my father's birthday. He died in 1983, but I always remember and honour him on his birthday (rather than on the December day he died, which would seem to me rather mawkish).

This year on 23 June Janice and I will be on our summer holiday, walking the West Highland Way in Scotland. I'm looking forward to that. But before setting off on that week-long walk I will have used a postal vote to take part in the EU Referendum.



I have already put on record three thoughts about the referendum, and I briefly repeat them here.

First, I regret that we are having one. We elect a government and it is their job to govern. I am so glad that we do not practise direct democracy with plebiscites on everything. We have representative democracy where people are chosen and set apart to make decisions and lead.

Second, since the government has handed the decision to us, we have a clear duty to do the research, then to think, pray, and vote. I am encouraging the diocese to observe a day of prayer on 16 June, one week before the referendum. It is important to bring this matter and our own voting intentions to God.

Third, there is a real danger of a disunited country and parliament after the vote, and a real duty for all of us, but especially politicians, to work at staying united as a nation.

Please note that there isn't a fourth point: I'm not suggesting which way you should

vote, nor telling you which way I am voting. That is not the job of church leaders, though doubtless some will try. Don't listen to them. Make up your own mind.

The Christian Gospel does have something very important to say on this though. It does not of course deal with whether the UK should be in some sort of economic or political union with the EU. It says something much more important. It tells us of God's great plan to unite all people, indeed all creation, in Christ.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum (and I do have a very strong view about it), much more important is that through the debate and in the aftermath we as Christians can be talking about the great unity plan, God's plan, to bring together all people, tribes, races, and languages, to know and love and worship and bow before Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

With best wishes

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