

Statement from British Church leaders and representatives as the UK prepares to leave the European Union

We, the leaders and representatives of ten British Church denominations and networks, speak together as the UK prepares to leave the European Union on Friday 31 January 2020.

Three and a half years after the UK voted to leave the European Union, the point of departure has now been reached. The process of arriving at this point has been bruising and divisive. For some this date will mark the realisation of a long-held ambition and a moment of celebration. For others, however, it will be an occasion of great loss, marking the moment when deeply held desires for the nations of the UK are placed beyond reach.

Church members in good conscience continue to hold a wide range of views about Brexit. As Church leaders and representatives, we are united in wishing to seek God's guidance and a sense of common purpose as we move from this chapter of the Brexit process into the next.

As the UK leaves the EU there are important choices to be made about the values that we as a country live out. As Christians, we affirm our belief that all people are equally created in God's image. Our country should be one that offers sanctuary to refugees and is intolerant of those who hate because of a person's race or nationality. Both Leave and Remain campaigns agreed on this – we must now make it a reality.

The continuing challenges of the climate crisis, global inequality and conflict will require both resolve and close international cooperation to be addressed effectively.

We greatly value the love and friendship of our sisters and brothers in other European churches, and [a group of us are writing to them publicly today](#) to assure them that these relationships will continue. We also recognise that 31 January will bring uncertainty and anxiety to many EU citizens living in the UK and British citizens living in the EU. Leaving the EU cannot mean abandoning our responsibilities towards these families.

Brexit exposed and exacerbated divisions in British society. The deeply held convictions that fuelled the Brexit debate will not simply go away, but our Christian faith urges us to be people of peace and reconciliation. If the bitterness of the last four years is not to persist in polluting our national life, we will all need to resist the temptation to hold on onto the hurts of the past, or to act in ways which will be perceived as triumphalist.

We will only be able to move towards having a sense of common purpose, despite our differences, when we choose to act with kindness, humility and respect towards those with whom we disagree. We call on our political leaders to set an example over the next weeks and months as we move towards negotiations which will require further decisions about priorities for the nations of the UK.

For our part, our Churches will be working and praying for:

- a society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
- a society that welcomes the stranger
- a just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
- a planet where the environment is renewed
- a world which actively works for peace
- a politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness.

We pray for the people of the UK, for our leaders, and for the whole of Europe, as we mark this significant moment together.

Revd Dr Barbara Glasson and Professor Clive Marsh, President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

Revd David Mayne, Moderator of Council, Baptist Union of Great Britain

The Right Revd Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Revd Nigel Uden and Mr Derek Estill, Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

Most Revd Father Olu Abiola OBE and Archbishop Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri, Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK

Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary, on behalf of the Council of the Congregational Federation

Revd Dr Noel A Davies, Chair, Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales' Working Party on Wales and Europe

Bishop Simon Iheanacho, Overseer, UK World Evangelism Churches

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

Most Revd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

24 January 2020