

20 July 2016: Susanne Irving, Life Church Petersfield

Loving our neighbour

I suspect that most of you know people in all camps: Those who are passionate about the Brexit, those who are equally passionate about remaining in the EU and those who did not or could not vote. Some are now doubting their decision whereas others are convinced that they know what God wants.

I don't know whether God is pro-Brexit – all I know is that he is always pro-love. Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. That neighbour may be the person down the road who put a sticker in their window to urge you to vote differently from the way you voted. It also includes the stranger, whether they have been here for decades or have only arrived yesterday. Most challenging of all, it even includes our enemies.

How can we learn to love each other? There is an inspiring example from East Germany. In the 1980s, people were divided into those who wanted to leave and those who wanted reform the existing system. In Leipzig, citizens started to get together in a church for weekly prayers and discussion. The meetings involved all levels of society - the first major prayer meeting was dominated by disaffected young punks! Over time, attitudes towards the other changed. What happened in the church spilled out onto the streets and ultimately cumulated in the peaceful reunification of Germany.

I believe that God has given us free will and so genuine choices. The referendum has shown that our choices – even the decision not to choose - have consequences. Our choices will continue to have consequences for the future. If our attitude is wrong, we will ultimately all be losers. What could we achieve in Petersfield and beyond if we were committed to praying and working together?