

So Parliament has concluded the debate over Theresa May's Brexit deal and we are in a state of some confusion at the present time. Far from being united, what will be the future of the *United Kingdom*, the European *Union* and indeed as we look across the Atlantic the *United States*? Can politicians ever create and be *united* in a vision for nation states affecting generations to come?

'Unity' .. Derived from the Latin for one.. oneness, is deeply sought, seen as bringing peace and security. It is often, however, a manipulated word used to hide behind national, political, local and personal interests or agendas..

Essentially what type of unity do we want... yours or mine?

And what of unity in the world Church, when it is so often accused of dividing peoples and nations? Beginning on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January the Church locally and across the world celebrates "Unity week," but what does this really mean in what is seen by many as a divided Church? From a historic free church perspective of the Baptist Church we may claim our forebears in the United Kingdom as among the original separatists, calling for freedom from state control of conscience and religious belief. Far from unifying, the Baptists were classed as dividers of the nation, breaching the peace, and in their search for freedom, paying the price, as did many others. Thankfully the Church (in the UK and wider world) today can aim for and seek to live out a deeper unity than political or ethnic contexts might allow as we seek in all our ways to work with and for others, whilst each expression of faith maintains unique gifts and character. So ...What might unity look like? What's 'my unity'?

This Christmas my Granddaughter tried to help me play her tablet computer game - swiping the figure on the screen running and jumping through various challenges – in frustration at my inability, slow fingers and brain she grabbed and "drove" my finger for me . . . with a degree of success. However, true unity cannot be forced or driven for the sake of the game. I recall, much simpler times, before the complex technology on which we and our children rely for entertainment and "down time". I recall, the kaleidoscope, a long cardboard tube with multi coloured pieces of glass in the end which, when held up to the light and turned, created patterns which reshaped with each turn. Simple,... yet satisfying.

Maybe the unity we can seek is one of kaleidoscopic freedom, an ever changing collage of colour that we might all participate in. The kaleidoscope only works, however, as it is held together and turned freely in caring, slow, patient hands.... and held up to light.

The life, teaching, death and resurrection, of Jesus, holds the Church together – he is also and should be the true light that enlightens everyone ( John 1 v9) . He can shine through all our multi coloured mixed motives, agendas and even or attempts at 'union' ... if... we look to him, are turned around in his hands and so produce patterns which can delight all.

Now where did I put that Kindle fire!? (Other tablets are available!)

Prayer; Multi coloured, ever moving Kaleidoscopic God we thank you for your kaleidoscopic world church, for the Spirit equipping the church with gifts, from hospitality and service to spiritual and prophetic insight. May your Church always proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ- May we be held in and by his life teaching, his death and resurrection and look to him as our light and inspiration in all we do

**Andrew Dodd**