



Image of the day - Carlisle Cathedral

Reports

‘We have to make young people feel seen, even online’ – Ecumenical Bible Week Youth Panel



Photo by [Ehimetalor Akhere/Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/photos/9m3v1v1v1v1)

“It was easier to send young people a Zoom link rather than pick up the phone and ring them during the pandemic.”

These are the words of one of the panelists on the first ever youth panel during Ecumenical Bible Week. Under the theme of ‘The Once and Future Church’ third level chaplains and young people reflected on their faith and how they

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engaged with it when churches were not open for public worship.

Some young people, as we might expect given that they are 'digital natives' and have grown up with the internet, were happy with their online church experience. However, others found it difficult to engage online and missed the connection with others that comes from being in a physical space together.

The panel consisted of three third level chaplains – Scott Evans (UCD), Eric Hughes (DCU) and Sr Bernadette Purcell (TU Dublin) – and three young people – Dave Donnelly who is studying applied theology, Alvina Jacob of St Thomas' Indian Orthodox Church in Dublin and Amy Costello a student and parishioner in Springfield Parish, Tallaght.

Eric Hughes began his work in chaplaincy in November 2020 when there were no students and no staff. He spoke of the struggle to connect with people without being face to face and learning to cultivate real connections in the digital space. Scott Evans added that chaplaincy is a ministry of presence, of loitering with intent. "But loitering has become dangerous so if not this, then what? How do we be faithful in the new reality and what are our values?" he asked. Sr Bernadette Purcell added that when the pandemic struck everyone was in a spin. "When I paused I thought: This is a huge liminal space. Now new expressions are coming alive," she said.

Dave Donnelly, who was social media coordinator in his church in Rathmines said they were looking at bridging the gap so that they could remain a community while people

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were at home. He agreed that this is a liminal space but people hadn't really committed to it. "The difficulty for students is when you try to do education, social and church all online, it stops feeling fun. You can't separate those boundaries. You can't engage in all the online events and there is guilt around that," he commented.

He added that his faith wasn't nurtured in the way he thought it would be. "I was the person who streamed the service and to do my job I had to tune out which meant that church wasn't a place to develop spiritually. A number of other young people I spoke to also tried online church but it didn't feel personal because being in church is being known and recognised," he explained adding: "People got away with lazier communication.

It was easier to send a young person a Zoom link than to ring them on the phone. We have to go out of our way to make young people feel seen even in the digital community."

Both Amy Costello and Alvina Jacob reported different experiences. Amy said she was able to connect online and enjoyed a parish WhatsApp with a daily reflection. Alvina added that she attended Masses over Zoom and enjoyed podcasts from her church featuring messages from people in the church which helped nurture her faith. Looking to the future Amy said it was important to make young people aware of their gifts and ask them to lend their gifts to the Church. Alvina said she was happy with the Church the way it is although she questioned how willing churches were to accept LGBT+ people.

Croagh Patrick pilgrimage 2021



“Quieter yet no less significant Reek Sunday. Glorious morning as Archbishop Neary of Tuam Archdiocese blessed and greeted early morning pilgrims. Three Masses were celebrated on the summit this morning at 8am, 9am and 10am. Blessings and gratitude to all.”

The annual Reek Sunday Pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo, which was cancelled last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has been going ahead this year in an extended format from Wednesday to Saturday, throughout this month of July, instead of the traditional focus on the last Sunday of the month, Reek Sunday. This change of format was made in the interest of public health due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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In thanking priests and pilgrims for their support in making the 2021 Croagh Patrick pilgrimage so far a success, the Administrator of Westport Parish, Father Charlie McDonnell, said: "The 2021 Croagh Patrick pilgrimage, which is operating differently this year, continues to work well. By spreading the pilgrimage out over the month, we have placed safety first and have given tremendous flexibility to pilgrims who wish to climb Ireland's holy mountain.

"In previous years, the pilgrimage season has stretched from June to September and religious facilities were only afforded to pilgrims on the last Sunday of July, Reek Sunday. However, this year's novel and adventurous departure has successfully broadened the availability of sacramental and other faith ministries provided by the Church, not only on the summit of Croagh Patrick, but also for the first time ever at the base of the mountain where Adoration and Confessions have been made available. I sincerely wish to thank priests and pilgrims for all their support and cooperation in making the 2021 pilgrimage season a success to date."

Father McDonnell concluded: "There is now one week left for pilgrims to avail of what is being provided for this year's pilgrimage, throughout Wednesday to Saturday. We thank God that it has been a case of 'so far so good' and I encourage pilgrims to plan their trip carefully from a personal safety perspective. This year the pilgrimage will conclude on the morning of 31 July, the day after Garland Friday, when by tradition the last Friday in July is dedicated to local people who wish to climb Croagh Patrick."

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Croagh Patrick, Ireland`s holy mountain, (2,510ft/765m) lies within the parish of Westport about 8km outside of the town. Croagh Patrick dominates the landscape of southwest Mayo both spiritually and physically. The Croagh Patrick pilgrimage is associated with Saint Patrick who, in 441AD, spent 40 days and nights fasting on the summit, following the example of Christ and Moses. The name 'Reek Sunday' comes from Patrick's ability to Christianise many pagan customs including the festival of Lughnasa, which previously



The Bishop of Achonry met some of the pilgrims on their peace walk from Derry and Belfast to Knock as he was on his way to Kilkelly to say Mass in Kilkelly. One of the walkers being being Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry

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had heralded the start of the harvest festival honouring the ancient pagan god Lugh. whose name is incorporated in the Irish word for August: Lughnasa. The festival's tradition became absorbed into the new Christian beliefs and locally become known as Domhnach na Cruaiche (Reek Sunday). The Reek pilgrimage has been undertaken for 1,500 years and an estimated 100,000 pilgrims visit the holy mountain annually.

A virtual tour of the mountain can be viewed on the website of the Archdiocese of Tuam: [www.tuamarchdiocese.org.]

For more information see: [www.westportparish.ie] - [www.mayomountainrescue.ie] and [www.mountaineering.ie]

Young Anglicans to expose scandal of gender-based violence with 16-Days video campaign

Anglican Communion plans viral video campaign for 30th annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25 Nov to 10 Dec).

The Anglican Communion has launched a social media video campaign to mark this year's 30th anniversary of the annual international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. Young Anglicans from around the world are being invited to take part in the campaign by submitting a video which the Anglican Communion Office can release during the 16 Days, which runs from 25 November to 10 December. Entries for the campaign –



“Exposure – Focusing the lens on gender-based violence” can be submitted until 31 October.

The Anglican Communion’s Project Director for Gender Justice, Mandy Marshall, said: “sadly gender based violence is still with us 30 years after the campaign started, yet there is amazing work going on around the Communion to address it.

“We need to hear the voices and views of young Anglicans to challenge us into prioritising ending GBV in our churches.”

Young Anglicans – defined for this campaign as Anglicans aged 35 or under – are invited to submit videos of up to two-minutes duration by email or WhatsApp. The selected videos will be published by the Anglican Communion Office

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during the 16 Days of Activism. Full details of the campaign, and information about how to submit videos, are available at [anglicancommunion.org/exposure] .

People and places

Kilbroney Centre welcomes first residential group



Earlier this month, the team at the Kilbroney Centre gave a joyful welcome to its first residential group since the pandemic began. From 13–15 July 11 family bubbles stayed for the Kilbroney Summer Family Break.

“Psalm 100 comes to mind,” says Jan Peach, the Centre’s Development Officer. “We entered His gates (or Kilbroney gates anyway!) with praise and worshipped the Lord with gladness after 16 long months of no groups in residence.

“June 2021 had been brilliant as we welcomed primary schools nearly every day for non–residential activity days in churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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conjunction with our friends at Cloughmor Extreme, but it was really joyous and somewhat emotional having our first group to stay in the buildings, under hospitality guidelines.”

The families enjoyed an action–packed 3 days that included paintballing, campfires, a nightline, outdoor cinema and waterslide, archery, football, volleyball, kayaking, paddleboarding and the playpark!

Every evening there were Bible devotions with Revd Peter Munce and worship led by Laurence Bellew. In the morning the Centre ran a primary school age Bible Club in the forest with Sarah Anderson. To top it all they had Ann Wilson’s delicious food plus the best weather we’ve seen in a long while.

Jan continues: “God was so so good to us, and we had a brilliant time catching up with old friends and making new ones. Here are some of my favourite feedback quotes:

‘Can we do this for 4 days next year? Or a week?’

‘Blessed beyond belief.’

‘We all had a ball! Kids are devastated to be home!’

‘So many good memories and laughs with people that I hadn’t seen in a long while...Jack and I both love the place.’

‘Best time ever #kilbroney #fellowship #slice of heaven.’

“The last verse of Psalm 100 says, For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. “I agree!”

Hot end to canon's Mahajanga cycle marathon



"I'll never do one of those again," the Rev Canon David Crooks said, as he climbed off his bicycle at the end of the last of his three marathon charity cycles around the Raphoe and Inishowen Deaneries to raise funds for the Diocesan 'Mahajanga Calling' Appeal.

The sweltering final leg covered a 40km route from St Eunan's Cathedral in Raphoe to St Lugadius' Church in Clonleigh (Lifford), then on to Raymochy Church in Manorcunningham, before returning to the Cathedral. Canon Crooks was accompanied on Monday by five

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parishioners: William Laird, Colvyn Beattie, Rodney Carson, Tanya Carson and Rodney Lindsay.

Canon Crooks, who is Rector of the Taughboyne Group of Parishes, has a particular affinity with the 'Mahajanga Calling' Appeal. His brother-in-law, the Rt Rev Hall Speers, is the Bishop of Mahajanga and proceeds will be used to help his ministry in Madagascar.

Canon Crooks' first two cycles had taken him from Moville to Newtowncunningham (a distance of 41km) and from Convoy, via Donaghmore and Monellan, back to Convoy (27km).

Donations to the 'Mahajanga Calling' Appeal will be gratefully received c/o Taughboyne Rectory, Churchtown, Carrigans, Lifford, Co Donegal.

Ballybay parishioner embarking on an important mission trip to Papua New Guinea.

A parishioner in the Church of Ireland Ballybay Group of parishes in Co. Monaghan is shortly about to embark on an important mission trip to Papua New Guinea.

Donna Geary, from St. Colman's Church, Clontibret, is scheduled to set off at the end of August but has to finance her trip as all funds go directly to the mission rather than on overheads.

This is her story:

churchnewsireland@gmail.org



“At the end of August 2021,

I will be travelling to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to join the MV YWAM PNG Medical Ship and the new YWAM ‘Jetty’ base in Port Moresby. There I will serve alongside the teams already working within communities providing training and medical care. There are many opportunities to help in different ways and my heart is open for whatever challenges are ahead. I am so excited to take this step and see how it all unfolds.

“YWAM stands for Youth

With A Mission and is an international missionary organisation. YWAM began in the 1960s and now has 1,500 bases in 180+ countries, each with different expressions of the central trifold ministries of training, evangelism and mercy ministries. The base I will be connected with is YWAM MS Townsville. Their focus is North Queensland and Papua New Guinea, engaging as a registered training organisation, and with a medical ship in the waters of PNG. All the work undertaken is in partnership with, and on the invitation of, the PNG Government as part of the National

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Healthcare Plan and in collaboration with local health care authorities and health workers.

“After three years of teaching, at both secondary and college level, I still wasn’t content and was looking for more. Then, after spending nine months in Australia completing a Discipleship Training School (DTS) with YWAM MS Townsville, I found a way where I could use my teaching skills to improve and enhance peoples’ lives. As part of the holistic healthcare Community Engagement Programme that the medical ship runs on outreach in PNG, I went into villages teaching young children how to take care of their own health and welfare. I was also able to be part of the Community Action Programme which, through a series of interactive lectures based on areas the elders had highlighted, helped the people of the villages to improve aspects of village life to the benefit of the district.

“The model YWAM was founded on means that everyone involved works on a voluntary basis. This means there is no form of salary for what we do and we pay our own way (rent, food etc.). This ethos has served the ministry in many ways – helping it rapidly expand and ensuring all money raised goes directly towards the mission rather than overheads. This means that each individual YWAMer volunteer is responsible for raising the ongoing funds to do the work they do. Each full-time volunteer is supported by people that partner with them and, as such, I would like to invite you to consider partnering with me in one, or all, of the following ways.

“I will be emailing updates in which I will include Prayer Points. I would love if you were to incorporate these points

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into your own prayers and join with us on specific areas as a ministry. I will also include praise reports and results of prayers so you can see the effect your prayers have had!

“I would appreciate it if you would consider partnering with me by donating a regular sum on a monthly basis – or even donating a once off amount.

Every little helps! If you feel you would like to do this email me at

[donnainmissions@gmail.com] donnainmissions@gmail.com and I will send you the relevant details to be able to support me in this way. This is the link to my GoFundMe page: [<https://gofund.me/afbaa430>]

“It would be really great if you would share my story with someone else. I’d love to see more people come, get involved and join me on this journey!”

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Climate and pastoral care: processing grief for the planet

"We lament first, and then we are in a space where we can act." Read the new resource produced by Green Christian about climate and pastoral care.

Here you can find resources to help you consider how we can be further equipped to acknowledge and face issues of grief and loss around climate change in our church



communities; and to help us identify resources for how we can do this. This resource has been produced by A Rocha UK.

This resource packet includes:

A short introduction to the issue

Advice for holding a climate and pastoral care focused service, including a section exploring lament and guidance for supporting communities pastorally

Suggestions for committing to long term action

Campaigns to support calling for a greener future

Further resources

Learn more:

[<http://climatesunday.org/climate-and-pastoralcare>]

Down & Dromore Bible Week Taster

‘A Confident Church’. Bible Week speaker Revd Mark Aldridge gives a taste of his series on Jonah...

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...when participants will explore why we can be confident in God and the Gospel as we emerge from a global pandemic into whatever the future holds.

Mark is an Assistant National Leader for New Wine and Director of Church Leadership Development.

Join Bible Week in-person in Shankill Church Lurgan at 7.45 pm from Wednesday 1– Friday 3 September with a special online evening for Select Vestries on Tuesday 31 August.

In-person at Shankill Parish Church, Lurgan

Wednesday 1 September

Grace, resurrection and a bolder confidence (Jonah 2:8–3:3)

Thursday 2 September

Confidence in the toughest places (Jonah 3:4–3:10)

Friday 3 September

Confidence in the compassion of God (Jonah 4:1–11)

Link to Revd Mark Aldridge's introductory talk at -

[[] <https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2021/07/revd-mark-aldrige-introduces-bible-week-21->]

Summer Music

Organ Recitals at St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork

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A series of Lunchtime Organ Recitals each Friday in August at 1.10pm. This is the third year in which the cathedral has run such a series, and the second year in which it will be held under the strict health guidelines which churches are following. The capacity is limited to 50 people, seating is by social distancing, and masks are required.

The first recitalist (Friday 6th August) is Andrew Johnstone, Assistant Director of Music at St Bartholomew's Church, Dublin and also part-time Assistant Professor of Music at Trinity College, Dublin. His recital is based around the various musical forms of the Magnificat and will include Bach's fugue on that theme, as well as music by Dutch composer Piet Post, and Rheinberger's Fourth Organ Sonata.

Professor Gerard Gillen, Titular Organist Emeritus at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin will perform on Friday 13th August, and he will continue the Marian theme with music by Louis Vierne, Naji Hakim's Mariales and the Flor Peeters Toccata, Fugue and Hymn on 'Ave maris stella'.

David Adams, one of Ireland's leading organ tutors and Professor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, will give the third recital (Friday 20th August). This will be his first visit to play the organ in Cork, which is one of the largest in Ireland after its extensive rebuild in 2013 by Trevor Crowe, one of Ireland's leading organ builders.

Robbie Carroll will conclude the series on Friday 27th August. Robbie has been Assistant Director of Music at St Fin Barre's Cathedral for two years, and he recently gave a recital on the cathedral organ as part of the Cork

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International Choral Festival. He has also performed recitals this summer in Galway Cathedral and in the Dún Laoghaire Organ Concerts.

Further details at -

[[] <https://churchofirelandcork.com/>]

The Wondrous Machine

Recitals on the organ of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

[[] <https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/07/06/the-wondrous-machine-summer-2021>]

Summer Music at Sandford

[[] <https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/07/06/summer-music-at-sandford>]

Opinion

Why I'll never vote Tory again by Giles Fraser

The Conservative Party has become a vessel for personal ambition

I'm not sorry for voting Tory on 12 December 2019. If I were to go back, I'd do it again. Like millions of others, I had two main reasons for doing so. First, Brexit. And, the Conservatives delivered. It was the most important political decision of my lifetime and je ne regrette rien.

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Second, the state of the Labour Party, riddled with anti-Semitism and personal vindictiveness, with people cancelled for the slightest ideological slip, with its gender wars obsessions, with its hatred of the very idea that one might love one's country. It was a huge personal relief to leave all that behind. Good riddance.

At first, my switch of allegiance to the hated Tories came as something of a relief. And in the early stages of our relationship, it was easy to keep on making excuses for the things that did not sit quite right with me. I found myself, less than a month after the vote, inwardly cringing at the refusal of Tory MP's to support the bid to reunite unaccompanied child refugees with families in the UK. It seemed heartless and unnecessarily petty — a kind of unvirtue signalling designed to send a strong message to the faithful that this government wouldn't be manipulated by any of that sentimentalism so beloved of the Left. Perhaps you just have to take the rough with the smooth, no party is ever going to be perfect. And with this sort of unconvincing blah, I soldiered on, morally embarrassed.

I've had other wobbles. But now, with the reduction of the aid budget to 0.5% of GDP, the romance is well and truly over. The idea that we export our Covid-related economic pain to the most vulnerable is just too much for me to swallow, especially as the Conservatives made a clear electoral commitment on this one. Not only was their previously stubborn defence of the 0.7% figure a bunch of garlic that could ward off the "nasty party" tag, it was also a promise to some of the poorest people on the planet. Theresa May was right when she spoke against this £4 billion drop in funding, warning that: "Fewer girls will be

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educated, more girls and boys will become slaves, more children will go hungry and more of the poorest people in the world will die.”

An instinctive distrust of grand, over-arching theories of morality is one of the principle features of the Conservative mindset. Practice trumps theory. Utopianism is dangerous. Human beings are messy, complicated, conflicted creatures, and strict moral prescriptions are often inhospitable to the lived reality of human life. I get all of that. I agree with it. But one of the inherent weaknesses of this position is that morality can become so bendy and pragmatic as to be practically non-existent. And there is nothing Conservative about the abandonment of guiding moral ideals, however qualified they might have to become when they bump into reality.

What distinguishes this government from so many Conservative governments of the past is that this one doesn't seem to do morality at all. One suspects they think that morality is for lefties. Which is just rubbish. Because Conservatism has always had a moral core, albeit a different one from that of the Left. It honours the implicit moral tone of communities, customs and institutions – monarchy, law, military, the family. Traditionally, it has had a close relationship with the Church of England and its establishment.

It has a ready affinity with environmental concerns, with its instinctive preference for the countryside over concrete. And while it does not typically appreciate the way modernity has formatted the moral instinct, it nonetheless holds important things like honourable conduct, something that used to be

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called character, keeping your word, being fair, even that much derided idea of noblesse oblige, which, when sympathetically understood, is a sense of social responsibility by those who have much, towards those who do not. All of these add up to a powerful conjunction of obligations — something we used to be comfortable describing as implicit in what it was to be British. And they are deeply conservative instincts.

But what do we have with this government? No one can say that Boris has ever made any great play of being constrained by morality, certainly not anything like a Judeo-Christian one. Perhaps he thinks that the air has gone out of this particular balloon. But if that's the case, another one of the bulwarks of moral Conservatism has been dislodged. I wonder if he thinks that the sense of honour implicit in keeping one's word is equally old fashioned. Green MP Caroline Lucas is right to be concerned that with Boris Johnson there has been a gradual "normalisation of lying to the house". And this normalisation is highly corrosive of one of key institutions that Conservatives have traditionally respected: Parliament itself.

I don't care so much about the money spent on soft furnishings, but it's that creepy conjunction of greed, entitlement and sexual licence that eats away at the integrity of our public life. I am not terribly judgmental about a bit of old-fashioned hypocrisy; the gap between what we want to be and who we are is there in most of us. What I find so deeply dispiriting is its, yes again, normalisation — as if, for instance, there was nothing about Matt Hancock's bit on the side that should concern proper grown-ups. And such was the normalisation of this corrosive and amoral me-first

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philosophy that it seems Boris genuinely thought he could get away with there being one Covid isolation rule for him, and another for the rest of us, the little people. Pilot project? More Pontius Pilate, if you ask me.

I have discovered and nurtured my inner conservative since 2019. People like Roger Scruton have become central to how I look at the world. But the more conservative I become, the less I like the Government. It is true that the very different values of market-led liberal individualism have been hollowing out more traditional Toryism since at least the Thatcher revolution. But there were hopes of a fightback. The Brexit vote was a refusal to put the values of economic growth over those of democracy and sovereignty. It was a repatriation of distant unaccountable power and the first great break with the Thatcherite economic consensus. And there is still a long way to go to undo the damage it did.

I won't return to the Left. But I won't be voting Conservative next time either. They have forgotten the values of being conservative. And without those values, the Conservative Party is little more than a vessel for the personal ambitions of the depressingly self-entitled.

Giles Fraser is a journalist, broadcaster and Rector at the south London church of St Mary's, Newington

[<https://unherd.com/2021/07/why-ill-never-vote-tory-again/>]

Pointers for prayer

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14.22-33



Immediately after feeding the crowd with the five loaves and two fish, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in

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the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

That the power of Christ may uphold us in peril and in our weakness, we pray in his name.

¶The Church of Christ

Lord, your Church finds itself in the midst of a tempest, as did that boat on the Sea of Galilee. The pounding waves that we hear are in part attempts by the world to understand and live harmoniously with the Church, and in part attempts at submerging the Church once and for all by those who have lost patience with what seems like hypocrisy and intransigence. The Church itself, for its part, causes turbulence in its dealings with the world in which we all live and move and have our being by seeming to seek only to condemn. Oh God, we ask you to help us raise our gaze once more heavenwards.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority

Lord, when we see conflict between nations on every side, we feel powerless to help and fear to intervene lest we only exacerbate the situation. If there is a way to build understanding and to reduce fear, please show us how we might help to do this. Calm the storms, we pray, that trouble the world and deliver us from fear so that we may see love and faithfulness coming together, and justice and mercy embracing. Then may the world live in peace with each other, based on your love, truth and light.

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Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶The local community

Lord, give us the wisdom to know that so many of our difficulties are beyond our abilities to resolve unaided. In the storms of life, bid us come to you so that we, who are aware of our weakness, may be made strong in you. Give our community the confidence to believe that you will guide the future as you have the past. When we set out in faith to join you in the storms of life, let us not hesitate, lest we begin to sink, and need a miracle to survive.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶Those who suffer

Lord, buoy up all those who feel themselves sinking beneath the waves of pain and sorrow. When we are in danger of being overwhelmed, increase our faith, and through every storm of life help us to keep our gaze fixed on you. If we should falter, or look down at the perils below us, we ask you to stretch out your hand to raise us up once more. So may we learn to hold fast to you, through good or ill, until we have passed through the valley of the shadows.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶The communion of saints

Lord, we bring before you all those who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of this mortal life to reach the heavenly

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harbour of peace and felicity. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

Speaking to the Soul

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2:1-2 NLT

One of the biggest problems with unity is that it looks so easy. If you listen to a fine orchestra playing harmoniously or a watch Premier Football team playing with skill and precision, it all looks so very straightforward. Surely anyone could do it! But I then recall the hours that I spent in our school orchestra and those regular Saturday afternoons when I played football, and I can assure you that unity is the result of incredibly hard work. Paul was equally clear about this. He knew that the Philippian Christians had received the gift of unity in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. But they still needed to work incredibly hard to ensure that their lives reflected the unity that Jesus had achieved for them.

In these verses the apostle Paul pleads for unity. He tells the Philippian church that if they have been touched by Christ's love in any way or experienced the fellowship of the

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Spirit, then it was their responsibility to do everything possible to build up the unity of the church. In the course of normal life it is often extremely difficult. Agreeing wholeheartedly with one another might be easy if we were the same age and had similar backgrounds, but churches are never like that. And they never should be! Agreeing together is the product of lashings of love, grace and patience but is never easy. Working together with one mind and purpose is so important for every fellowship and I have seen that happen time and again. However, it only occurs when there is an atmosphere of encouragement and forgiveness. Our task is not to dream of a distant vision of harmony but to think through our words and actions to ensure that we are only ever contributing to the unity of the church right now.

QUESTION

What are you able to do to build unity amongst the Christians you know?

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you that you are the source of all unity. Help me to work hard to preserve and strengthen the unity that you give us by your Spirit. Amen

