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**CNI**  
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## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019

### Indonesian insights for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019

Resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were produced by Christians from Indonesia, the largest churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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country in South East Asia, made up of more than 17,000 islands, 1,340 different ethnic groups and over 740 local languages, united by one national language Bahasa Indonesia.

With some 86% of its 260 million people estimated to be Muslim, it has the largest Islamic population of any country. About 10% of Indonesians are Christian. Indonesians have lived by the principle of *gotong royong* which is to live in 'solidarity and by collaboration', regarding all Indonesians as brothers and sisters.

The Christians of Indonesia found that the words of Deuteronomy, 'Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...' (see Deut. 16:18-20) spoke powerfully to their situation.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity runs from January 18 to 25. In Dublin & Glendalough the inaugural service for WPCU 2019 takes place in the Church of St John the Baptist, Seafield Road, Clontarf on Friday January 18 at 8pm. This service is organised by Dublin Council of Churches and all are welcome to attend.

The theme of WPCU 2019 is 'Only Justice' based on Deuteronomy 16: 18–20: "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue". Materials have been prepared by Christians from Indonesia.

There are numerous services and events taking place around the United Dioceses during the week.

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On Sunday January 20 in Sandford Church, Ranelagh, there will be an RSCM workshop at 2pm led by Blánaid Murphy, chairperson of RSCM Ireland and director of the Palestrina Choir at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. This will be followed at 4pm by an ecumenical service. All are welcome to both. Those interested in attending the workshop should contact [secretary@rscmireland.com](mailto:secretary@rscmireland.com) for further information.

Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise and Pobal an Aifrinn will hold their annual Interdenominational Service on Friday January 25 in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin at 8pm. The service will be led by the Revd Gary Hastings.

Indonesia is the largest country in South East Asia. About 10 percent of Indonesians are Christian with 86 percent of its 260 million people estimated to be Muslim. Indonesians have lived by the principle of *gotong royong* which is to live in 'solidarity and by collaboration', regarding all Indonesians as brothers and sisters.

But *gotong royong* sits ill at ease with the neo-liberal approach to economics that has led to economic growth, and corruption infecting politics and business, often with devastating effects on the environment. Meanwhile those who are supposed to promote justice and protect the weak fail to do so. As a consequence, a country rich in resources bears the burden of many people living in poverty. Particular ethnic and religious groups are often associated with wealth in ways that have fed tensions.

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The resources place a strong emphasis upon the need for unity in Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity. The resources also highlight issues of economic injustice and how religious pluralism can face challenges in the face of radicalisation. Resources can be downloaded from [www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer)

You can share details of events in your parishes on Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Twitter wall](#) – simply add the #wpcuwall hashtag to your Twitter post. You can also find updates about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Twitter by following the [#wpcu2019](#) hashtag.

Christian Aid provides *Go and Do* action points for each day of the week, linking into its work in the relief of poverty and advocacy of justice: [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

## **C of I bishop puts on the boxing gloves**

A bishop doesn't usually need boxing gloves when he visits one of his parishes, but Bishop Harold gamely put on a pair when he recently dropped into St Columba's Kilcooley to share his testimony.

For the next 10 weeks the church building is hosting an amateur boxing club as part of its 'Fight the Good Fight' outreach to the surrounding community.

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It's hoped that the mix of boxing training and testimony will draw men, young and old, from the estate, which is the largest of its kind in Northern Ireland.



The club is run by King's ABC, a group of Christian men who take their boxing ministry to churches all over North Down. It's the first step in a new vision for St Columba's with other events planned to run alongside regular Sunday worship.

Kilcooley is in the parish of Bangor Abbey and curate, Revd Mark Gallagher, spends around seventy percent of his time on the estate. Mark has a particular interest in boxing and his own story of transformation to tell.

"I have struggled with my weight pretty much all of my life. Over the last four years I have been performing what I jokingly refer to as 'the slowly disappearing curate illusion'. So far, I have lost more than 7 stone which is over a third of my bodyweight. It's been quite a journey!

"In the last 6 months, my weight loss and toning has been achieved with a new personal trainer, who is using boxing as the main tool in our sessions. He is also a Christian (who [churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)



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happens to be the son of a local Church of Ireland minister!). He has changed my view of the sport and helped me to see the discipline and focus needed for real boxing. The 'Fight the Good Fight' vision was borne in no small part through discussing some fairly deep theological and biblical principles while I was hitting the pads he was wearing!"

The club evenings begin and end with prayer and include a testimony each week. They are open to men over 18 from 7.30–9.00 pm on Tuesday evenings for 9 further weeks from 15 January.

## **Former Sinn Fein TD says Nationalist and republican parties now 'anti-Catholic'**

A former Sinn Fein TD who is setting up a new party says that a 'new sectarianism' in republican and nationalist politics has left people finding it difficult to admit they are committed Catholics.

Peadar Kirby held a public meeting in Maghera, Co Londonderry last month to gauge support for a new party after leaving Sinn Fein over the issue.

"At the Maghera meeting I was really taken by the level of pain and hurt in nationalists with regards to the two main [nationalist] parties," he said. "One of the key issues for sure was the feeling of a new sectarianism in the nationalist and republican community, where it is difficult to say in public that you are a practising Catholic, attend mass and are raising your children as Catholics."

He added that three or four people at the Maghera meeting were nationalists or republicans who now vote DUP because it is the only NI party with clear pro-life stance; and some of them were Irish language enthusiasts "who speak the language in their own homes".

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It could be that this pattern of a minority of nationalists voting DUP on account of its pro-life stance might be reflected across NI, he added.

The SDLP and Sinn Fein declined to comment on his claims, as did Amnesty International, which campaigns to relax abortion legislation in NI.

Pro-life campaigner Bernie Smyth agreed with his assessment of rising anti-Catholic sentiment in nationalist political parties. “Yes, absolutely, it makes sense,” she said. “We have met many pro-life nationalists/republicans, but who now vote for DUP.

With increasingly liberal views on divorce, same-sex marriage and abortion, analysts noted that during his visit to the Republic of Ireland last year, Pope Francis encountered a radically different country to that which Pope John Paul II visited in 1979.

Fr Patrick McCafferty said Mr Toibin’s analysis is correct. “Last year, around April, before the [southern] Abortion Referendum, I was asked by [a Belfast newspaper] to provide an opinion piece on abortion. “I was rounded upon by a certain politician who said the Church should “keep its nose out” of the abortion debate.

“In responding to this politician, I referred to a ‘new anti-Catholicism’ as vicious and virulent as what we had experienced in the past... except this is coming from within our community and is driven by an aggressive secularism which would like to silence the Church’s voice.

## **Oxford diocese in meltdown as clergy reject bishops' view on sexuality**

Christianity Today reports that the Church of England's Oxford diocese is facing an uncertain future after a large



group of its serving clergy publicly rejected their [bishops' views on sexuality](#).

A letter to the bishops signed by a wide grouping of more than 100 church ministers says that 'the situation [in the diocese] is serious. If not addressed, we would all struggle to support the leadership of our bishops in this matter and a number of our churches may want to seek alternative means of receiving episcopal ministry, in recognition that your position is seriously differentiated from theirs. This would be a tragedy.'

The warning comes in response to the Oxford bishops' offer of 'interim LGBT guidance and support' in their diocese last October, in a move seen by many as pre-empting the outcome of the official Church of England 'Living in Love and Faith' discussions on sexuality, which will not conclude until 2020.



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The letter to the bishops was sent before Christmas, and in turn the bishops have responded to the signatories with a [statement of their own](#). Christian Today understands both letters are to be circulated to all clergy in the Oxford diocesan email news today, Wednesday. They are now also in the public domain on the [website](#) of the Oxford Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship.

Clergy signatories include conservative evangelical Canon Vaughan Roberts, Rector of St Ebbe's Oxford, who has openly spoken of his celibacy despite same-sex attraction, and the leading charismatic churchman Canon Charlie Cleverly, Rector of St Aldate's, Oxford. Their two congregations are among the largest in the diocese. There are also signatories who are lay people and retired clergy, including the distinguished author, evangelist and lecturer Dr Michael Green.

The letter says: 'Our overriding concern is with the direction of travel which the Diocese is taking as revealed by this letter. In its desire for new expressions of "inclusion", it could end up excluding those who hold to the traditional teaching of Scripture and doing a great disservice to those of us who experience same-sex attraction. We are not here simply stating an aversion to change; we are, however, convinced that failing to hold the Bible's teaching out to everyone, including those who identify as LGBTI+, is to show a lack of that very love the letter urges us to exhibit.'

They continue: 'As Bishop William Love of the Diocese of Albany in the Episcopal Church of the USA said last month in relation to the introduction of "blessings" for same-sex couples, it 'does a great disservice and injustice to our gay

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and lesbian Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by leading them to believe that God gives his blessing to the sharing of sexual intimacy within a same-sex relationship, when in fact He has reserved the gift of sexual intimacy for men and women within the confines of marriage between a man and woman.'

In response, Bishop Steven Croft, Colin Fletcher, Alan Wilson and Andrew Proud, write: 'There is no desire on our part to diminish support for those who are seeking to uphold and to live within the Church of England's current teaching. We have specifically included a commitment to undertake some further listening here.'

They add: 'There is no intention either to exclude in any way those who hold to the traditional teaching of Scripture now or in the future... If the Church discerns that some further development in polity is needed at this point on human sexuality, we will need to take equal care both locally and nationally to honour and respect those who continue to hold the traditional view.' However, such reassurances are likely to be greeted with scepticism by traditionalists, as similar promises about the ongoing place of 'two integrities' in relation to the issue of women's ministry have **not been honoured** by the Church of England.

Oxford diocese is the largest in the Church of England, with 626 parishes. The population is 2.2 million, but only 55,000 attend Anglican churches regularly. There are 816 churches and around 400 paid clergy.

Last week the Church Times reported that the Living in Love and Faith group 'will not pronounce on the rights or wrongs of same-sex marriage'. Some interpreted this as an

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indication the existing conservative position of the church would effectively be ongoing, whereas others argued the decision not to make a pronouncement was itself a de facto change in teaching.

The report also quoted the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, who chairs the group, as saying the project would be 'as much to do with heterosexuality' since he believed people generally were 'in need of wisdom to order their loving and sexing well'.

## **Morning Prayer on RTE led by Clontarf**

Morning Prayer will be broadcast from the RTÉ studios on Sunday, 20th January, between 11am and 11.45am. The service will be led by the Revd Lesley Robinson, Rector of Clontarf, with parishioners from St John the Baptist Church, Clontarf. It will also be available after broadcast through the RTÉ Player.

## **New format C of I Gazette**

The first issue of the Church of Ireland Gazette as a monthly is now available. The 44 page full-colour magazine includes news and pictures from around the Church of Ireland, practical advice for parishes, features, opinion pieces and world news. Well-known Christian writer Philip Yancey is interviewed inside and contributes the first guest column.

## **January 10 in Christian history**

**January 10, 236:** Fabian is elected bishop of Rome. He served until 250, when he became the first martyr under Decius, the emperor who initiated Empire wide persecution

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of Christians. After Fabian's death, Decius is reported to have said, "I would far rather receive news of a rival to the throne than of another bishop of Rome".

**January 10, 1645:** The controversial archbishop of Canterbury and leader of the Church of England, William Laud, is beheaded. An enemy and persecutor of the Puritans and a staunch defender of the "divine right of kings", he found himself on the wrong side of history when the Puritan revolution began in the 1640's

## **News Links**

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Belfast Telegraph

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Lifesite

"I'm not a person personally for protest, what the **Church** should be doing is strengthening its resolve to help women in crisis and to educate people," ...

[Irish missionary nun who nursed Pope Francis as a baby](#)

Independent Catholic News

She could not have imagined then that the baby boy would grow up to be the Pope and Leader of the Catholic **Church** which she had chosen to serve ...

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Belfast Telegraph

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ChristianToday

As the furore continues about the **Church of England's** new 'gender ... But also (and this is also good **news**), we're not even what we call ourselves.

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