

17th January 2021

Dear all

Tomorrow marks the beginning of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The week always begins on the 18th and ends on the 25th of January, the feast of the Conversion of St Paul. It is ironic that, of all the things that Jesus prayed for His disciples, He chose to pray that 'they might be one'... but we are so bad at it.

Christian history is littered with violence and persecution that belies this desire. And while we probably don't burn anyone at the stake anymore, we 'burn' them instead on social media! (Contrary to popular perception, we didn't burn witches in England, we hanged them. Burnings were reserved for 'heretics'!).

Christian Unity is absolutely crucial for the church today, and the CofE is not always good at it! Many years ago, a friend of mine said to me "I've just been invited to an ecumenical tea. Great! I love weak tea!" And, sadly, this is so often true. Ecumenical events can so often be a bland 'lowest common denominator' event. I was previously Ecumenical Advisor for the Croydon Episcopal Area in Southwark Diocese, and I have always firmly believed that we can celebrate our differences by bringing the richness of our own tradition to bless and encourage our brothers and sisters in other denominations. That, in my mind, is true unity. Acceptance and celebration of variety and diversity.

As I mentioned in the notices today, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity reflections and service may be found here: [WPCU-2021-English-pamphlet-Final.pdf](https://www.ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WPCU-2021-English-pamphlet-Final.pdf) ([ctbi.org.uk](https://www.ctbi.org.uk))

This is the posh pdf version. The simple text is in the document [attached](#). I would encourage everyone to follow these reflections.

This evening our livestreamed Evening Prayer will be adapted from the service included in this document.

I mentioned in my last letter links for other services. A reminder that the Church of England's online service may be found at [Church online | The Church of England](#) as well as some other resources.

Nicky Fisher gave me the link to the Lincoln services, which may be found at [Video reflections - Lincoln Cathedral](#)

Bible Study: In our bible study, we will be looking at the Gospel of Mark. This week we will be looking at Mark 1: 1-13.

We will meet on Zoom, Thursdays 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1Mnl0bjJ2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

This is an excellent overview of the Gospel in the context of the liturgical year: [The Voice of Saint Mark: Year B and the Gospel of Mark | Thinking Faith: The online journal of the Jesuits in Britain](#)

An image from last Sunday...



Jeshophaphat Jenkins took the celebration of Plough Sunday very seriously, and made sure that the vicar couldn't forget it in the prayers at Matins.

...or perhaps not!

My musical bit this letter is from the CD I'm listening too as I type. I love Handel's vocal music – so beautifully written, and exquisite harmonies. Here is a duet from the CD 'Enemies in Love' – Händel - Addio, mio caro bene duetto of Arcane & Clizia from Teseo HWV 9, sung by Jakub Józef Orliński (countertenor) and Natalia Kawałek (mezzosoprano). Il Giardino d'Amore, conducted by Stefan Plewniak.

[G.F.Händel - Addio - Jakub Józef Orliński, Natalia Kawałek - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark