

Bulletin for Sunday 16th May 2021

Good Morning, friends.

I hope you've had a good week, but however you feel, please know that you are included in the prayers of the church. The theme of this week's service is the potential of prayer, and prayer is not only part of our worship, but available to all of us, every day and any time.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Fill thou my life, O Lord my God (R&S 406)

Prayer: God of day and night, and of every part of life,
 we praise you for the beauty of the world around us...
 we praise you that out of nothing you created everything,
 from the stars in the sky to the spring flowers,
 with their colours and fragrance...
 and you created us and hold us in your love.
 We ask your blessing on everything we do,
 and everything we give in your service,
 today and every day.
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: John chapter 17 verses 6-19

Reflection: Has anybody ever said to you, 'Say one for me', meaning that they would appreciate you saying a prayer for them, although often they disguise the request with humour? Our reading today comes on the evening of Jesus' arrest, when he prayed at some length for his disciples as they all sat at the supper table, before heading out to the garden of Gethsemane. It was a time of huge tension and fear for all of them, and Jesus prayed that his friends might be protected. Over the last few years he had taught them about the importance of prayer by his example (creeping off in the early hours of the morning to pray), and, at their request, he had given them some lessons in prayer (what we know as The Lord's Prayer). But at the supper table he wasn't in teaching mode: he was praying for people he cared about. He had a relationship with God which included prayer as a conversation between them. This prayer wasn't the sort that has set words and formal language - it was serious, and heartfelt, but definitely an ordinary conversation.

The world is sadly only too full of people who are fearful, anxious, traumatised or in danger. People who we could pray for, whether they are our friends and family, or faces full of pain and panic which we see on the TV news. When Jesus knew he wouldn't be able to be beside his friends in their need, he prayed for them and handed them into God's protection. We can do the

same, whenever we think of it, praying in whatever sort of language or conversation that we feel happy with. God is always listening.

Hymn: What a friend we have in Jesus (R&S 413)

Prayer: Compassionate God,
in prayer we hold before you our world,
thinking this morning of those in the news:
Palestinians and Israelis and especially all peacemakers...
the people of India and Nepal and especially medical staff...
and scientists pressing for action on the climate crisis.
We pray too for our local communities:
local businesses and community groups
and all those who care for their neighbours...
and for those close to us and the concerns on our hearts....
Loving God, hear our prayers, spoken or unspoken,
in Jesus' name Amen

Hymn: Blessed city, heavenly Salem (R&S 559)

Blessing: May our lives be strewn with prayers;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
now and always. Amen

In Billingshurst and Petworth morning worship is being held indoors, in Pulborough it is held outside on the grass if weather permits. All services start at 10.30am. Please remember masks and social distancing; singing isn't allowed indoors, services are short and well ventilated! Please let your Church Secretary know you want to attend. On Zoom, the evening 'Sunday at Six' service, with hymns, is at 6pm. We continue to explore the book of Genesis - all welcome. For all of us there is a chance to chat at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.

Anne Lewitt