

Dear Friends

Bulletin for Sunday 22nd March 2020

It is only a couple of days since I wrote to you, but feels longer. I hope you are all well - remember that anxiety is inevitable at the moment, and we all experience and show it differently - so we need to be kind to each other! And keep in touch - someone wisely said that what we need isn't really social distancing, but physical distancing combined with social cohesion and care.

The Bible readings for this Sunday are John chapter 9 (whole chapter) and Psalm 23.

Reading this story of Jesus giving sight to a man born blind, I was amazed and impressed by the obstinate courage and honesty of the man, as well as how articulate he was. After the extraordinary and unexpected gift of sight, which would surely be difficult enough to take in (just imagine it - being able to see for the first time...), Jesus disappears from the scene and the man is left to explain what has happened to a sceptical and critical crowd. They ask him the same thing repeatedly, and they refuse to accept what he tells them. Basically they bully him, because they don't really want the truth of what happened - they want it to fit with their view of the world. A view in which he or his parents must be bad, or he wouldn't be blind. He sticks bravely to the truth, and is rewarded when Jesus comes back, seeks him out, and reveals himself to him.

May we remain open to the truth, even when our world has been turned upside down and inside out; and may we know that God loves us infinitely and always, that God's love doesn't depend on our behaviour (or our parents'), and that we are safe in God's hands no matter what happens. Amen

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
we pray for the lonely, the sick and the grieving,
and for those who have lost jobs and incomes and fear the future.
We pray for all who are fragile or anxious...
and we realise that we are all included in that, so we pray for each other.
On this Mothering Sunday we remember those who have cared for us,
mothered us, guided us through life; whoever they were;
and we pray for children and their parents and carers today.
Caring God, help us to truly see and love all your children - which is to say, everyone.
Amen

Psalm 23 is very familiar to all of us, I expect. I know I remember learning to sing it at school, for a school service of some sort. It is worth reading; and worth praying (read it through quietly, imagining God setting a table for you...) and definitely worth singing!

Another hymn I would have chosen, had we all been worshipping together, would have been 'Be thou my vision'.

There are many other worship resources available via TV, radio or online.

I still don't have details for the extra BBC worship broadcasts, but have been assured that they are coming, on TV and on BBC local radio, so watch out for them.

Roots (the worship resource which we use in all three churches now) are offering a free sheet of thoughts relating to the readings for each Sunday:

https://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/20383/liveyourfaith_106_22_march.pdf

and also an activity sheet for children:

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/20318/22-mar-2020-childrens-sheet.pdf>

which those with internet access could look at.

A URC resource is the Daily Devotions available from <https://devotions.urc.org.uk>

and from this Sunday there will also be a Sunday Service from there.

Finally (for now) Churches Together in England have called for us to make this Sunday, 22nd March, a National Day of Prayer and Action, and suggest that at 7pm we light a candle (safely!) in the windows of our homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

I'm hoping to share a bit of our church family news each week - but that means you need to let me have some! I'm sorry to say that I have no news yet of funerals for either John or Audrey.

I do have some good news: Hugh was rushed into hospital this week with appendicitis, but had the operation and is already home and recovering. He says friends are welcome to call him for a chat, or email.

I was due to be away in Devon next week on holiday, but it has been postponed for now, so I will be here and available by phone.

For those able and willing to volunteer to help more actively in the community, I've been asked to point you to the Horsham District Council page where they are co-ordinating this safely: https://www.horsham.gov.uk/community/coronavirus-community-support?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

I'm sure Chichester will be doing something similar.

On Mothering Sunday we usually share flowers with each other. Today we might take time to reflect on and appreciate flowers in our gardens, or visible from our windows. Spring is coming, and nothing will stop it!

Blessings

Anne Lewitt