

Bulletin for Sunday 13 February 2022

Good morning, friends.

Even if it's a bit chilly and damp, there are signs of Spring appearing all around us, so I think it's appropriate to sing cheerfully (if slightly unseasonably) our first hymn of praise:

Hymn: Awake, awake to love and work (R&S 608)

Prayer: Creator God, originator and giver of everything,
we praise you for the beauty and intricacy,
the sights, sounds, scents, of the world around us.....
we praise and thank you
for the people you put us in community with:
for those like us, and for those with different
backgrounds and experiences...
Help us, increasingly, to appreciate the diversity
of those made in your image...
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and on everything we give in your service,
today and every day. In Jesus 'name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Acts 13: 1-3

Reflection: I find the Bible fascinating - it's such a rich resource for life and faith, filled with things which I somehow never noticed before... These three verses from Acts are easy to overlook, seemingly just a list of names, introducing the main action in later verses; but they repay unpacking with care (and possibly with a map)...

We are introduced to the leaders of the thriving Antioch church. Five people are named: Barnabas was from Cyprus, and Saul from Tarsus (in modern-day Turkey). We know little about Manaen except that - surprisingly for a Christian - he had been associated with Herod. Then there was 'Simeon called Niger' and 'Lucius of Cyrene'. 'Niger' is Latin for 'Black', and scholars suggest that Simeon was a Black man, probably an African Gentile. Lucius was from Cyrene in modern day Libya, and therefore another African. So from these few verses we can see that Christianity, with its roots in the Jewish communities of Jerusalem and Galilee, soon had a vigorous presence in a congregation based in Syria, which was being led by believers from Asia Minor, Africa and the Mediterranean - most of the known world! Diversity of race and language was no barrier to following Christ, or to leadership in their community, led by the Holy Spirit. May we emulate their confident acceptance of both diversity and unity. Amen

Hymn: Brother, Sister, let me serve you (R&S 474)

Prayer: God our maker, in whose image we are made,
on this Racial Justice Sunday, especially,
we pray that all your children may catch a glimpse
of your vision and intention for your world...
We pray for the powerless and the abused,
that they might receive respect and equality...
We hold before you the sick, the anxious and the bereaved;
our neighbours, churches and communities;
our families, and all those we love and worry about...
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts... Amen

Hymn: For the healing of the nations (R&S 620)

Blessing: May we appreciate the blessing of diversity
and the beauty of difference...
and may the blessing of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this week, and always. Amen

There will be a ' Sunday at Six 'Zoom at 6pm this Sunday - all welcome.

We all have a part to play in caring for each other in a continuing time of Covid - wearing masks, giving people space and having plenty of ventilation, do all help. Remember, some people may be much more vulnerable than others. Please also let us know if you have a positive Covid test after recently being in church.

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