West Sussex Area Ministry, United Reformed Church (Billingshurst, Petworth and Pulborough)

 **Bulletin for Sunday 14 August 2022**

Good morning friends, I hope you’re managing to keep as cool as possible.

Let’s pause as we prepare to worship… and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Let all the world in every corner sing (R&S 114)

Prayers: God of peace, this world is yours:

 you created it and saw that it was good…

 but it has become too often a place of conflict.

 We thank you for the blessings of variety,

 for the richness added by difference -

 of outlook and talents, humour and experience,

 between friends, neighbours and communities.

 Teach us how to live and grow together in peace.

 We ask your blessing on everything we do,

 and on everything we give in your service,

 today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord’s Prayer

Readings: Jeremiah 23: 23-29 and Luke 12: 49-56

Reflection: The Gospel is good news - but not always comfortable news. These uncomfortable passages remind us that the Gospel is not sweet and fluffy, like candyfloss, but solid and important and concerned with challenge and change. Through Jeremiah, we are reminded that God’s word, when rendered truthfully, is like fire which burns, or a hammer which breaks rocks. Burning and breaking may be painful and destructive, but they are also creative. Fire is essential to forge metal or to cook dinner; and stone - cut and dressed - literally provides the building blocks of great churches and houses, as well as the surface of the roads on which we travel.

Building, forging, travelling - they all represent positive change as we move into the future that God intends. Jesus, in this passage, is at a crisis point, heading for Jerusalem and all that he knows it will bring. He is affected by emotion as he warns that following his way will often result in conflict and division. How can he make the crowd (and the disciples) understand that following his way carries a cost, as well as a promise?

Are we, perhaps, also living through a moment of crisis, as things in our world change and shift? We must be prepared for challenges, as we move into God’s future……

Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace (R&S 629)

Prayers: God of compassion, we pray for your divided world.

 We hold before you

 those suffering in areas of war and conflict;

 and those working for a just and permanent peace…

 those forced from their homes by fires and floods;

 and the emergency workers struggling to help…

 those unable to get the medical care they need;

 and the doctors, nurses and other staff working

 under constant pressure with inadequate resources…

 We hold before you our communities,

 and all those we love and especially care 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 the Prince of peace

 guide us into the ways of peace;

 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

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NO Zoom service this evening. During August there will be Sunday at Six Zoom services on alternate weeks only - next one on Sunday 21st.

Forward date for everyone: We have a Group Service planned for 16th October at Petworth, when we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the URC. This will be followed by a (bring and share, buffet) meal. More details later, but keep the date!

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