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

Bulletin for Sunday 5th July 2020

Dear Friends

A very warm Good Morning to you all! I hope you are able to set aside time for worship today, however and whenever you choose to do it; and remember, one of the best things about using this order of service is that when you sing, you choose the tune, the accompaniment, and the number of verses, all for yourself!

<u>Hymn</u>: All creatures of our God and King (Rejoice & Sing 39)

<u>Prayer:</u> Creator God, we thank you for the beauty... for the complexity... and for the wonder of the things we see around us, and of the things we feel within us. We thank you for the love of family and friends and for the chance to learn more about you and your love the chance to move closer to you. As we respond to your love, we offer back to you what we have and what we are please bless all the gifts we bring. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Matthew 11: 27-30

<u>Reflection</u>: When I was a teenager my father was the manager of a hardware store and builders merchants, and my brother and I vied to be able to lift hundred-weight bags of sand or cement into car boots or onto barrows. I certainly wouldn't want to try that now!

Lifting heavy physical weights may leave you red in the face, or even with a strained back, but usually the effect is only temporary. Some of the mental burdens that life can pile onto us have a longer-lasting and far more damaging effect. It would be easy to see this as a recent problem - a consequence of the 'modern pace of life', or something on those lines - but here we see Matthew recording Jesus referring to the same problem two thousand years ago. Historians tell us that many of the people in the crowds listening to Jesus were poor day labourers, who had no job security, and all too often no food to put on the table. They lived in a society largely without healthcare; and they were the lowest of the low in a distant outpost of the Roman empire - heavily taxed, politically oppressed, and with very few rights. Their burden weighed them down.

Jesus understood their situation - he knew their fears, felt their frustrations, and sympathised with their resentment of the Roman soldiers. His words, however, weren't a political analysis. Rather, he proposed a solution based entirely around their relationship with him (and, through him, with

the Father). He taught that if they followed and learned from him, if they got right alongside him, like a young draught animal yoked to an older, experienced animal, they would find that their burdens felt lighter.

We are all inevitably weary and weighed down by stress after the last few months; but Jesus says to us, too, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'. Such important words. Amen.

Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say (R&S 349) God of compassion and gentle understanding, Prayer: we hold before you those bearing heavy burdens: burdens of responsibility; burdens of guilt; burdens of grief... or fear... or indecision... Hold them close and safe and bless us with sensitivity to their needs. We hold before you the deepest concerns of our own hearts, trusting you hear our prayers. Amen I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship (R&S 265) Hymn: May we learn to share our burdens with Christ, and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and with all those we love this week and every week. Amen

Remember there will be an evening service on Zoom at six o'clock tonight; information from Karen or me.

Please let me know of any news or prayer requests to be shared. Every blessing for the coming week - stay safe.

Anne Lewitt