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

## **Bulletin for Sunday** 13th September 2020

Greetings to you all, and especially (as today is Education Sunday) to those of you starting a new year in school or college. We wish you an enjoyable year of interest, growth and achievement, whether this is your first term or your umpteenth!

Hymn: O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder (R&S 117)

Prayer: God of creation, of awe and of wonder,

we come to you with praise and with heartfelt thanks!

We come also aware that we haven't appreciated or protected and cherished your creation as we should, but continually relied on your patience and forbearance...

Forgive us our self-centred way of seeing, and open our eyes to the possibilities for today and tomorrow if we work with you, rather than against you...

We ask your blessing on everything we do, and everything we bring to you or give in your service, today and every day. In Jesus' name, Amen

## followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Psalm 103: verses 1-13 and

Matthew chapter 18: verses 21-35

<u>Reflection</u>: This, like most psalms, is a song designed to be sung, a poem designed to be memorised, and worship intended to be given to God. It contains a mixture of praise and confession and much else besides, and it would have been well known to Jesus - and, of course, to Peter, too.

To me, reading it through repeatedly, it's a wonderful psalm with rich and memorable language and images. Have you ever sung the song 'Our God is a great big God'? It comes with emphatic actions to emphasis that God is big - both high and wide - and this psalm reminds me of those as I read that 'as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us'. So graphically does it remind us of God's extraordinary generosity in forgiving and healing and loving us.

Peter wanted a simple rule that he could keep - if I forgive someone seven times, can I then have carte blanche to not forgive them on the eighth, please Jesus?! But Jesus doesn't answer with a sum - he tells a story... a story which reminds us that God's love and generosity should inspire us to forgive... really forgive, from our hearts... not just keep counting!

<u>Hymn</u>: God is love: let heaven adore him (R&S 95)

Prayer: God of compassion,

on this Education Sunday we pray for teachers:

that they may have the wisdom and the energy they need;

and also for students:

that they may grow and learn with good friends beside them.

God of compassion and creation,

as fields, gardens, orchards and hedgerows

produce food for our needs, and far more than we need,

we pray for those who are still hungry...

We hold before you our neighbours, friends and families...

those we love; those we miss;

and those we particularly worry about.....

Hear our prayers, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness (R&S 96)

Now may God who initiated creation, who inhabited creation, and who sustains creation, teach us truly to love and care for it; 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

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We can continue as we have been on Sunday mornings - the new rules don't prevent worship in church. What they do mean, however, is that we must be sure to leave at the end of the service without lingering to chat with friends. The 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' meetings on Zoom are a better opportunity to catch up safely with news.

There will again be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom on Sunday evening. All welcome, online or using a landline phone, contact me for details if you want to join us for the first time. This is your chance to sing hymns to Ellen's piano accompaniment!

Billingshurst News - Kath sadly died this week. Please hold her family and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

Anne Lewitt