

Bulletin for Sunday 28th February 2021

Good morning to you all - and I hope it is a very good morning. As well as being the second Sunday in Lent, we are in the middle of Fairtrade Fortnight, and this Sunday's worship takes as its theme Fairtrade and Climate Justice.

Let's pause as we come before God... and then let's praise God as we sing:

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

Prayer: Creator God, we praise you:

for the beauty and wonder of this world;
for the sound of birdsong and the smell of daffodils,
for the colours in the sunset and the blessings of all our senses....
But give us awareness of the fragility, need, and damage, too,
and show us how to nurture and care for your creation.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Micah ch. 6 verses 6-8 and Matthew ch. 5 verses 43-48

Reflection: Fairtrade Fortnight alerts us to the farmers who work to grow food which is traded around the world and ends up on our plates, or in our mugs. Things most of us will have had for breakfast this morning, like tea, coffee and sugar.

Our reading from the prophet Micah reminds us that God requires of us that we 'do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God'. Surely the Fairtrade movement helps us to fulfil those requirements; especially the principle of doing justice? Trading fairly so that producers are treated with respect and equality is an attempt to bring justice to the system of food production - being prepared to pay a little more, so that others are fairly paid for their work. After all, those others are equally made in the image of God, and their lives are linked to ours, not least by the basic foods that we eat.

But in many parts of the world farmers and their families continue to struggle, threatened now by the impact of climate change (produced largely by the wealthier countries) on their homes, land and crops. They find the catastrophic weather events and the damage caused by changing climate and rising sea levels impossible to adapt to, because they simply don't have the financial resources. By choosing Fairtrade we not only improve their immediate livelihoods, but also their resilience to environmental change.

In our gospel reading Jesus tells us that we need to love and pray for those who are different from us or unknown to us, just as God deliberately gives us all the sun and the rain, caring about us all equally - and fairly. May we learn to do justice.... Amen.

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

Prayer: Compassionate God
We pray for farmers and their families around the world living with the threat - or the experience - of climate change. We pray for scientists, world leaders and aid organisations; and especially today we pray for the Fairtrade movement. Giving thanks for the love and commitment of campaigners, we pray for increased understanding and greater impact. We hold before you our communities and all in need, including those we care for and hold on our hearts. Hear all our prayers, spoken or unspoken, in Jesus' name, Amen

Hymn: In Christ there is no East or West (R&S 647)

Blessing: May the road rise to meet you;
may the wind be always at your back
and the rains fall gentle upon the earth;
and until we meet again
may God hold you in the palm of God's hand. Amen

Spring is nearly here and we are all anxious for more freedom, but of course we need to think of others and be careful of the impact of our behaviour. As Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said, 'Don't wreck this, we are so close'! So while the Elders are looking at the best time to open the churches for limited worship, it will not be for several weeks yet. We are hoping to be able to hold services for Easter, if the situation allows. More details nearer the time.

While our buildings are shut, we continue to worship on Zoom each Sunday at 10.30am and again at 6.00pm, with a chance to chat at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.

The second Zoom Lent Group session, from 'God of Surprises' by Gerard Hughes, will be on Tuesday, March 2nd, at 7.30pm; more details from Gerald or me.

Anne Lewitt