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

Bulletin for Sunday17th May 2020

Dear Friends

Good Morning to you all, whether you are reading this on Saturday or Sunday. The last few weeks have thrown our lives into different, often unwelcome, patterns; like turning a child's kaleidoscope around. But just as twisting a kaleidoscope can produce beautiful new shapes, so there have - for some people - been positive aspects to the lockdown, such as extra time to garden or sew... or time to think... In our reading from Acts, Paul describes how God created all of us such that we would: 'search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us.' (Acts 17: 27)

Hymn:Immortal, invisible, God only wise(Rejoice & Sing 67)Prayer:God of light and life,
we bring to you our joys and our sorrows,
our hopes and our many fears.
We come to you with regrets and uncertainties
and we hand them over to you...
In your love, may we find reassurance, peace and hope. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Acts 17: 22-31 and John 14: 15-21

<u>Reflection</u>: Paul is responding to a question about his new teaching. In Athens, surrounded by ideas and religions, he sensibly takes that as his starting point. Rather than be angry about their many gods, he speaks positively of their interest in religion.

St Augustine wrote of God, 'You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'. This was what Paul recognised - that the Athenians, with all their philosophy, all their variegated worship, were still restlessly searching for the one God whose children they were. The one God who cannot be enclosed in a shrine, but who made the world and everyone in it; the one God 'in whom we live and move and have our being'. They needed to stretch their minds, their ideas, their religions, to see that God was (is!) so much larger and more worthy of their time and worship. Only then could they understand that Jesus was not just another new idea to add to all the others.

Paul's own faith was built on his relationship with the Christ he met on the road to Damascus. Jesus had met and spoken to him and he could never be the same again.

In the gospel reading, Jesus teaches of the relationships between himself and his Father, and - through the Spirit - his continuing relationship with those who love and obey him. Living relationships create faith - for Paul, for the disciples, for us.

'I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you'. The word translated 'in you' could also be translated 'among you'. May the living Christ be among us as we keep his commandments to love and serve each other. Amen

<u>Hymn</u> :	Brother, Sister, let me serve you	(R&S 474)
<u>Prayer:</u>	God in heaven, as we sing - separately, but together - we hold before you all our brothers and sisters, all your beloved children, with their tears and their laughter, and their heartfelt needs particularly those we love and worry about Bless those who are struggling; give them peace and hope in Jesus' name, Amen.	
<u>Hymn</u> :	O Breath of life, come sweeping through us May we be aware of God's love within us so that we can show God's love to others; 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	(R&S 302)

I haven't been including any children's worship material in these short services, but this week I might well have chosen to sing 'Who put the colours in the rainbow?' - and for the young (at heart) among us, there are versions on YouTube to set your feet tapping...

A couple of bits of less happy church family news: Enid's daughter-in-law is unwell – please keep her and the family in your prayers.

Nicky and Dave are unwell - we think of them, and the children, and hope they are soon on the road to recovery.

Please let me know of any other news or prayer requests. Every blessing for the week ahead.

Anne Lewitt