

**Bulletin for Sunday     30th August 2020**

Good morning! I trust you are all having a relaxed Bank Holiday weekend. I should have been camping at the Greenbelt Festival this weekend. Sadly it has had to be postponed this year, but I'm still taking the weekend off and doing other things for a few days - I hope you all have a chance for some recreation time doing things differently, too.

Hymn:             For the beauty of the earth                     (R&S 41)

Prayer: Gracious God, as the world speaks of your glory,  
we look around us, and we praise you.  
When life feels bright and hopeful - we praise you;  
when life feels dark and frightening  
we hold firmly to your presence with us.  
We come to worship you, bringing ourselves:  
our hopes, our fears, our confusion and our concerns.  
Speak the word we need to hear; and make us listen.....  
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:             Matthew chapter 16: verses 21-28

Reflection: Peter has just recognised Jesus as the Messiah. He, along with everyone else, is certain that he knows who the Messiah is, and how he will drive out the Romans by spectacular force. That is not an easy or comfortable sort of leader to follow, but Peter has steeled himself for the (presumably violent) struggle to come. Then, almost with his next breath, Jesus turns all Peter's expectations upside down. Gone are both the violence and the triumphal glory. Instead Jesus is talking about 'taking up his cross'; something which we tend to talk about metaphorically, but was all too real a prospect to Peter and the other disciples: something both fearful and shameful. Poor Peter - the change to his imagined picture of the future is too much to take in straight away.

Over the past few months it feels as though our own picture of the future has not just changed, but almost disappeared into a fog... We used to have a level of certainty that left us feeling at least partly in control - but no longer. Now nothing seems certain, and everything keeps changing. John Habgood, when Archbishop of York, said "Has it ever occurred to you that the lust for certainty is a sin?" But we yearn for predictability and certainty because it's what we have been used to.

We, like Peter, are on a very steep learning curve. Christ calls us to follow - not necessarily to see or to understand the road ahead, but to take our cue from him, as disciples stepping into the

unknown. May God give us courage to stop looking for certainty, and start listening for Christ's voice, calling us onwards... Amen.

Hymn: Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart (R&S 497)

Prayer: God of compassion,  
Peter just wanted to protect his friend from harm...  
We pray for those who work and worry constantly  
for those they love: parents, partners, friends...  
May they know that they are never alone,  
and that they aren't the only ones who care.  
We hold before you those we ourselves love and worry about,  
those who need our protection and our prayers.....  
We pray for our neighbours.... and for ourselves...  
In Jesus' name, Amen

Hymn: The king of love my shepherd is (R&S 552)

May we learn to follow you,  
accepting that there can be no certainty  
about where that will take us...  
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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There will be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom this evening, led by Brenda Hornden.  
All welcome, online or using a landline phone.

Preachers for this week (Sunday 30th August):

Billingshurst: Revd John Jennings

Pulborough: Karen Kelland

Petworth: Jonathan Rodell

Anne Lewitt