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

 **Bulletin for Sunday 7th February 2021**

A very good morning to you all.

This morning I spent a few minutes in the church garden here in Pulborough. The sun was shining and I found snowdrops and crocuses flowering happily - along with one large, bold and brightly cheerful dandelion! This evening the weather forecast is full of warnings about snow and ice. The Spring is coming, and it can’t come too soon - but we’re not quite there yet. Stay in the warm and take care, this coming week.

Let’s pause, to prepare for worship……… and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Fill thou my life, O Lord my God (R&S 406)

Prayer: God of day and night; of every hour of our lives:

 may we use the time we have been given wisely,

 working and caring, praying and listening;

 and may the hope of Spring, with it’s new life from you,

 lead us safely through this end of winter.

 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

Reading: Mark chapter 1 verses 29-39

Reflection: The shops are selling off this year’s diaries at reduced prices, since most people have got one by now. Where would we be without a diary or calendar to remind us when to go to the dentist, or when to send a birthday card? But Jesus didn’t have one. Many of us have alarms to wake us up, and some of us have alarms on our phones to remind us when to put the bin out, or make an important phone call. But Jesus managed his time without one. He cared for those in need when they came to him - sometimes for hours at a time - but he also made time to stop… time to go away from the noise and constant activity, to somewhere quiet, where he could pray - where he could hear God’s voice, and be refreshed by the peace around him.

Long before the phrase ‘work-life balance’ was coined, Jesus understood that he needed to balance the exhausting work of healing and teaching, with quiet time with God. His life had to include both. He didn’t allow one to take priority over the other, but rather prioritised getting a balance, even if it meant tip-toeing out of the house before everyone else was awake. We need that same balance, that same time with God; we need to still our activity so that we can become aware of God’s presence and voice.

“The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.”

Psalm 29:11.

Hymn: I lift my eyes to the quiet hills (R&S 64)

Prayer: Loving God, our Shepherd, leading us forwards:

 we pray for the pain, the hunger and the fears of this world;

 for the grief, the loneliness and the despair known by too many.

 We pray for both the quiet hills and the city streets…

 for health and healing, laughter and love, for all people.

 We hold before you our communities and the people we love;

 and we pray for ourselves, and your priority in our lives.

 Hear all the prayers of all our hearts… Amen

Hymn: Put peace into each other’s hands (R&S 635)

Blessing: May we be helped to get and keep our priorities sorted…

 and may the blessing of God,

 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

 be with us and with all those we love

 this week and always. Amen

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Please hold Linda Huggett in your prayers following the death of her husband.

**Please note** our buildings are still shut, and we continue to worship on Zoom each Sunday at 10.30am and 6.00pm, with a chance to chat at the 11.30am ‘After Church Coffee’ Zooms. All are welcome - contact me for more details if you would like them.

We intend to run a series of Lent meetings on Tuesday evenings, based on the book, ‘God of Surprises’, by Gerard Hughes. Starting February 23rd, more details available.

Billingshurst also intend to continue their ecumenical Lent lunches in support of charity. This will be online (we’ll have to get our own soup!), with a 30 minute talk from our charity, followed by questions. Trinity’s charity this year will be Mercy Ships, who provide medical care in parts of the world where there would otherwise be none; their talk / lunch will be on 19th February at 1pm, with others later in Lent. Note the date - link to follow.

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