

Bulletin for Sunday 24th January 2021

Warm greetings to you on this chilly morning! Please see the notices for this week and the times of online services etc at the end of this Bulletin.

We are nearing the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; and this Wednesday (27th) is Holocaust Memorial Day. Along with many others in this country and around the world we will remember both of those this morning.

So let's pause for a minute, to remember all those who have worshipped alongside us...

And to focus ourselves on God... on listening in prayer... and on worship...

Then let's praise God as we sing:

Hymn: New every morning is the love (R&S 536)

Prayer: Loving God, you call us to follow, as you called the disciples:

help us to hear the call and to recognise your voice.

We praise and thank you for the blessings we've received -
for the beauty and wonder of your creation...

for the love, laughter and care of friends and family...

and for the opportunity to share the Good News of your love.

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 14-20

Reflection: It wasn't an easy or obvious time to leave their fishing careers and start following Jesus - after all, John the Baptist had just been arrested for exactly that sort of thing! But when Jesus said it was time, they didn't hesitate. He called them to come along behind him, and to listen and learn from him - and they did.

On Holocaust Memorial day we remember the millions of Jews (and others) murdered by the Nazis; and the millions more who have died in more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. This year's theme is 'Be the Light in the Darkness', and it's accompanied by personal stories. We each have a responsibility to share our own stories of what we've experienced, and I know the personal witness of people I've known has had a deep and profound effect on me. Brave, honest witnessing can change things - it can be a real light in the darkness, bringing hope of a better future.

The fishermen were called to witness: called to work with Jesus, to listen and to learn, gradually coming to understand him. The skills they had developed in fishing - patience and observation, teamwork and endurance - would make them great witnesses.

We too are called to witness to the love and the work of God in the world, as we see it and as we experience it. May we respond to that call to follow, to hear, to see and to experience; and then to bear witness. May we be light in the darkness. Amen.

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

Prayer: Compassionate God
We pray today for this world which you created, and you love...
We pray for those who bear the scars of genocide and violence,
echoing down the generations and rippling ever outwards.
We pray for those who are deterred from the gospel
by disunity and lack of love between Christians.
And we pray especially for all those who still fail to see you
in the stranger, the foreigner, the one different from themselves.
We hold before you our communities and our loved ones,
and the many who are anxious, lonely, ill or grieving;
and we pray for ourselves, that we may follow when you call.
Hear all the prayers of all our hearts... Amen

Hymn: Thy hand, O God, has guided (R&S 567)

Blessing: May we use all we have and are to be witnesses to the gospel;
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

We continue to worship on Zoom each Sunday at 10.30am and 6.00pm.
And there's a chance to chat at the 11.30 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.
All are very welcome - contact me for more details if you need them.
We hope to run a series of Lent meetings on Tuesday evenings, based on the book, 'God of Surprises', by Gerard Hughes. More details to follow.

Anne Lewitt