

**Bulletin for Sunday 2nd May 2021**

Good Morning!

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (R&S 663)

Prayer: God of love,  
we offer you praise and thanks  
for the life and growth we see around us;  
as plants draw nourishment from their roots, and thrive,  
may we always stay connected closely to you,  
the reliable source of life-giving love,  
so that we may learn, and grow, and bear fruit.  
We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
and everything we give in your service,  
today and every day.  
Through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Gospel John 15 verses 1-8 and Epistle 1 John 4 verses 7 to 21

Reflection: We know that we need to stay in contact with others to thrive - we've seen over the last few months the truth of this. But we each have the ability to cut ourselves off, if we choose to. When children are small, we insist that they hold hands with an adult to cross the road; with toddlers we may even attach them with some form of 'reins' for their own safety. They feel the desire to explore - we know they need to stay attached.

I lived once in a house with a very old (and ramshackle) greenhouse, containing a very old vine. Being sheltered for so long, the vine had grown enormously and was inclined to escape its crumbling greenhouse shelter, vigorous branches reaching out into the garden. Inside the greenhouse the stem of the vine was massive and gnarled; and it was this strong stem and its well-spread root system which allowed the branches to grow so rapidly each summer, to cover so much ground and to produce so much fruit.

Jesus wants us to stay connected to him, not to limit our explorations or to curtail our freedom, or even to keep us safe (like a human parent's cautious hand) but so that we can share in the abundant, vigorous life of the God of love. So that we can be part of something bigger than ourselves; and grow and bear fruit beyond anything we could do by ourselves. So that we can be connected to each other through him... and connected to him with each other. So that we learn how to love - how to love God, and how to love our neighbours... Amen

Hymn: Now the green blade rises (R&S 243)

Prayer: Compassionate and caring God,  
We hold before you this hurt and suffering world.....  
the parts, such as India, where the pandemic is raging...  
and the places where war and violence spread misery...  
We pray for all in need - the lonely, sad, and anxious;  
the hungry, the sick, and the grieving;  
all are your children and all are our neighbours.  
We pray, too, for those closest to us,  
and for the burdens we carry on our hearts...  
Caring God, hear our prayers, spoken or unspoken,  
in the name of the risen Jesus. Amen

Hymn: Lord, for the years (R&S 603)

Blessing: May we stay connected in love to God and to one another;  
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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As we return to worshipping together, please remember that for now we still need to wear masks; to maintain a distance from each other; and to avoid chatting, especially indoors. Singing is not allowed indoors, services must be short, and extra ventilation is important, even if it does sometimes make it chilly! Also please remember to let your Church Secretary know you want to attend.

In our Billingshurst and Petworth buildings worship is being held indoors.  
In Pulborough it is held outside on the grass. All services start at 10.30am.

On Zoom, the evening 'Sunday at Six' service, with hymns, is at 6pm. We continue to explore the book of Genesis - all welcome.

For all of us there is a chance to chat at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.

Anne Lewitt