

**Bulletin for Sunday 26th September 2021**

Good Morning, Friends.

I hope you have all had a chance this week to enjoy the warm, sunny, gentle slide into Autumn. May this season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' be one of good health and increasing confidence for our churches.

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

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

Prayer:      Gracious God, as we choose to take time to worship you -  
                        to be aware of your presence with us...  
                        to remember with joy what you mean to us...  
                        and to listen for your word to us...  
                        help us to find you at the very heart of our lives.  
                        Stay with us as we try to live our best lives -  
                        to be the people you made us and call us to be.  
                        We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
                        and everything we give, in your service,  
                        now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings:      Mark chapter 9, verses 38 to 50

Reflection: "Whoever is not against us is for us," said Jesus. The disciples were finding that hard to accept. They thought they had been sticking up for Jesus by trying to stop an imposter or a rival. Surely Jesus was unique, and only he could cast out demons properly? But no; Jesus said that the important thing was that the demons were cast out, and people healed - that God's will was done. We can get so wrapped up in our own group, that we don't appreciate that others are also doing good work. God's work, in fact. If homeless people on the street are hungry, it doesn't matter whether they are fed bacon sandwiches by church volunteers, or a vegetable curry by members of the local Sikh temple - the important thing is that they are fed. It's worth noticing how open and inclusive Jesus is here.

Jesus goes on to use some really dramatic, emphatic language to make his point - that it is vital that we open up, rather than blocking, the way to him; that we never say or do anything that might deter someone from approaching God. We have a responsibility to use God's gifts wisely, not to compete with or to obstruct each other, but to work together to do God's will and to open up the way for all to approach him. Amen.

Hymn: Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart (R&S 489)

Prayer: God of life and love, you have given us so much -  
teach us to treasure and to nurture your gifts  
that they may become a blessing to others.  
Pour out your Spirit on us, that we may  
have the courage to speak honestly of you  
and of your calls to justice, mercy, kindness and love...  
Show us how to bring hope and healing  
to broken people and communities...  
As we hold before you all those in need today,  
Loving God, hear all our prayers,  
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake! (R&S 574)

Blessing: May we be a blessing to others  
in all we think and say and do;  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love  
now and always. Amen

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Please continue to remember that we all have a part to play in caring and doing what we can to keep each other safe from Covid. Sadly it's impossible to make our churches completely risk-free.

There will be an evening 'Sunday at Six' service on Zoom at 6pm as usual. All welcome.

Anne Lewitt

phone (01798) 872535

email [ailewitt@gmail.com](mailto:ailewitt@gmail.com)