



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Sunday 23 January 2022

Please join in with the Reflective Service for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this Sunday at **10.30am**, in solidarity with all those within Thatcham churches.

Birthdays

Gill's daughter's partner Leigh, on 23rd.

Church family news

David's son Mark tested positive on Wednesday now confirmed by a PCR test. Despite being fully vaccinated he, like many others, is quite poorly. Please think of him, Kate and William in your prayers.

David and Irene Witts are on a cruise to celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on January 27th. Congratulations from us all.

If you know of anyone who would appreciate receiving the church flowers, please let Gill know.

Please give any family news to the welcomer on Sunday mornings so that it can be shared with the congregation at the start of the service.

If you have any birthdays or news for next Sunday, please ring Gill on 827103 or 07899 897741.

CTIT Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Our service on 23rd will be led by Revd Nicola Hulks from St Barnabas, with music by Karen and readings by Esther. Revd John Lee will lead the service at the Methodist Church.

Sunday 30 January 2022

Our Cafe service will be led by Revd Keri Eynon along with Alan & Gill, with music by Karen.

Church meeting

The next Church Meeting will be held on Sunday 13 February following the morning service.

Church spring clean!

Helpers needed to help sweep the cobwebs away!

Monday 21st February 2.00-5.00 or Saturday 26th February 9.00-12.00

Come along for an hour or whatever time you can offer, we will be pleased to see you.

Sign up sheet in the Vestibule or contact Esther

Full Covid guidelines will be followed so please bring a mask & gloves if possible.



Church Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3JL
www.thatcham-urc.org.uk

Cleaning rota

I'm about to restart the church cleaning rota so please let me know if you are willing to be a part of this, whether or not you were on the list before. The more people we have on the rota the less often any of us have to do it! Thanks. Gill

URC Prayers during the pandemic

Weekly prayers from the United Reformed Church to help bring you comfort and spiritual support during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The tunnel is longer than we thought,
More winding than we thought,
Harder and more painful than we could have imagined.

Multiple lights have appeared
Seeming to illumine the way,
Then cast long and heavy shadows
Across our path.

Loving God, we cry to you.
Healing God, we cling to you.
Compassionate God, we seek refuge in your arms.
You have journeyed with us this far - You journey with us still.

You always will. Amen

By Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global & Intercultural Ministries

Wessex Prayer Calendar – 23 January

Wareham; The Spire Church, Farnham

Help us as we strive to live and love by your example. As we meet people who aren't our "favourite" people, Remind us that we are all loved equally by you, and we are called to do the same. Help us make every person we interact with feel like they are our favourite. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today's writer: Kirsty-Ann Mabbott, Church Related Community Worker, Coventry, West Midlands

Please remember that the Elders and I are here for you should you have a concern or need help, or if you become ill. You have our contact numbers, so please do not hesitate to call one of us. John: 0118 957 3964

One day from URC daily devotions

St Luke 6: 27 - 36

‘But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

‘If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.’

Reflection

Oh dear! When I read this teaching of Jesus I so relate to what the Apostle Paul wrote, “I do not understand my own actions.... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.” (Romans 7. 15a & 19) – how about you?

The teaching of Jesus is challenging, setting a very high standard for his followers, a standard that too many of us fail to reach. Yes, there are those who do set an example in the way they live which attracts others to Jesus, but are you among them? I know that I can make no such claim.

Two quotations from Mahatma Gandhi also come to mind, “If I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, ‘O yes, I am a Christian.’” (quoted by Homer A Jack) and, “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” (quoted by William Rees-Mogg).

Our passage today is about “love” and it is helpful to remember that “the Greek language has three words for love, which enable us to distinguish Christian love (agapé) from passionate love (eros) and warm affection (philia). Jesus did not tell his disciples to fall in love with their enemies or to feel for them as they felt for their families and friends.” (G B Caird, Commentary on Luke). Christian love is a positive concern for the true welfare of others, “We love because (God) first loved us.” (1 John 4. 19)

Even as we are honest about our failure to be the people we should be, we must still remember that God loves us and that our sins are forgiven as we forgive those who sin against us.

Prayer

Gracious God: you know us as we truly are, and still love us! Help us, we pray, to be honest with you and with ourselves so that we may be released from past failures and enabled to be more and more the people you want us to be; in our Saviour’s name and power - Amen.

Today's writer: The Rev'd Julian Macro, retired Minister, member of Verwood URC

Thatcham URC – Worshipping Together (Gathered and Separate)

A Simple Reflective Service

Pulpit Swap Sunday – 23rd January 2022, at 10.30am

Revd Nicola Hulks, St Barnabas

Welcome and Introduction

Call to Worship

Come and join the body of Christ.
Come whether you feel weak or strong.
Come whether you are suffering or rejoicing.
Come whether you feel oppressed or free.
All are welcome here.
Whether we see each other in person or through
a screen
we all stand together in the body of Christ.

Amen

Today, Lord God, we come before you as is our
custom;
as was the custom of Jesus growing up in
Nazareth.
We await your Word to us now, just like those
who waited
while he spoke in the synagogue after his
ministry had begun.
May we hear your call and stand with him and
with one
another, to serve freely in the work you have
given us.

Amen.

Prayer of Thanks, Confession and Praise

Lord, by your spoken word you brought the
world into being. You created it perfect and
entrusted it to our care. Yet we have not always
cared for it. We have exploited its resources and
mistreated its creatures.

In your mercy forgive us.

By your word, restore your world.

Lord, through your living Word you came into
our world. Christ incarnate lived among us and
showed us the path of salvation. Yet we have not
always listened to him. We have lived for
ourselves rather than following his ways.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Through your Word, restore your world.

Lord, in your written word you declare your love
for the world. As we read it we discover the way
of life. Yet we have not shared it. We have kept
it secret from others who long to hear the
promise of love and restoration.

In your mercy, forgive us.

In your word, speak love to the world.

Amen.

When we come near to God,
When we listen to his word,
When we respond with our hearts
And confess to him.
He hears us.
Receive God's love and forgiveness,
That is available to us all without limit.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer (modern version)

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – O God, you search me and you know me

O', God, you search me, and you know me
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I walk or lie down, you are before me
'Ever the maker and keeper of my days

You know my resting and my rising
You discern my purpose from afar
And with love everlasting, you besiege me
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord
You have known its meaning through and through
You are with me beyond my understanding
God of my present, my past and future, too

Although your Spirit is upon me
Still I search for shelter from your light
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight

For you created me and shaped me
Gave me life within my mother's womb
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new
Mmm, all creation is made new

Bernadette Mary Farrell

Dedication of our Offerings

(we still dedicate our Offering with a prayer although we currently don't take up an offering in the service. During Covid times we have given by other various means eg, by post, S/Os, envelope scheme, collection bowl in foyer, etc)

We give you thanks, Lord, for the offerings made to this community that allow us to reach out to those around us.

Bless these gifts as we seek to use them in your service.

And bless all those who offer them.

Amen

Bible Reading - Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Reflection

As I mentioned at the start of the service the majority of my time is spent ministering at St Barnabas and St Marys Church but there is also another side to my role. I am also in the middle of a large research project with children, based in one of our local primary schools. My research explores how children make meaning in their lives, particularly through exploring stories. As part of this I spend a lot of time reading and thinking about the question of meaning. What makes life meaningful to us? Is a meaningful life important? What difference does it make in life to know who you are and why you are here?

Interestingly a whole raft of psychological research tells us that having a sense of meaning in our lives is one of the biggest indicators of good mental health. A lack of meaning in life has been linked to a whole range of challenges both mental and physical. Seeing our lives as purposeful and meaningful seems to buffer us against many of the challenges life inevitably throws up. It makes us more resilient and stronger in who we are. And the good news is that those who have a religious faith seem to have a head start on this and generally have a greater sense of their life as meaningful and purposeful.

It was fascinating, then, to read this passage of one of Jesus' experiences early on in his ministry. Right out of the gate we see that Jesus' understanding of his life is full of meaning and purpose. He knows that he has been called, he knows that God's spirit is upon him and he knows what the job at hand is, to 'bring good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'.

Of course, prior to this reading that we have had the stories of Jesus' baptism and then his forty days in the wilderness. Both stories strike me as times when Jesus was deliberately clarifying the meaning and purpose of his life. He goes out into the wilderness to reflect on what is coming for him and he is challenged there, challenged to take an easier path, to evade the difficulties that are coming and take an easier path. Being clear on his purpose Jesus is able to overcome these temptations and to emerge, back in his hometown of Nazareth, with a clear understanding of his purpose and what he is here to do.

I don't think it is possible to underestimate how important this time was for Jesus at the start of his ministry, and we see him continually going back out for mini wilderness moments throughout the gospel stories. Jesus is often described as going off to quiet places to pray. Perhaps in these times he was renewing his sense of purpose as he faced the challenges around him.

It strikes me that sometimes we need to do just that same, as individuals and as a community. That there are times when we need to take time to connect with God, to connect with our sense of meaning and purpose. And that this is so vital for us to be able to move forward with the confidence that Jesus shows.

But of course, we are also lucky to have somewhat of a head start. Jesus' mission is also our mission. His identity is also our own. Through him we know that God calls us too, to 'proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' and to continue the mission that Jesus started. We also know through Jesus that our identity, purpose and sense of meaning is rooted firmly in God's love for us. In the light of that love the whole world looks different and our lives truly can be filled with meaning and purpose.

So perhaps this week you might find some time to reflect on what matters most to you? To consider what makes your life purposeful and meaningful? Through taking this time out with God we can only strengthen ourselves as we go forwards.

Hymn – Here is Love

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
loving-kindness as the flood,
when the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
throughout heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion
fountains opened deep and wide;
through the floodgates of God's mercy
flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
poured incessant from above,
and heav'n's peace and perfect justice
kissed a guilty world in love.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
by Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
and Thy grace my need is meeting
as I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and pow'r on me
without measure, full and boundless,
drawing out my heart to Thee.

William Rees

Prayers of Intercession

Dear God, as food prices rise and fuel costs increase, we pray for wisdom in how we use our resources. Guide us and help us not to overspend. We pray for those who struggle to pay their bills and those in debt. We ask your blessing on food banks, debt counselling services and credit unions. Help us all to be generous in supporting one another and sharing what we have.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Dear God, we pray for our justice system, for the police, lawyers, judges, probation officers and those who work in our prisons. May justice be served in the courts. May all be treated with fairness and equity. Be with those who have been convicted and those serving prison sentences and support their families and all whom they love. May your presence bring comfort and hope.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Dear God, sometimes the way forward is unclear, we hope for easing of restrictions, but we wonder about the timing or risks. Give insight to scientists and politicians that we may be led in the right direction and be encouraged by the hope which your Spirit offers us.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Dear God, we thank you for the mission and ministry of Jesus, for the challenge he offers, the peace with which he fills us and his love which inspires us. We pray that we may find imaginative ways to share his love and to proclaim his good news. Bless the church throughout the world. Enable the stronger to support the more vulnerable that Jesus name may be known and honoured in every place.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Hear us for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

Hymn – Before the Throne of God Above

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea;
a great High Priest whose name is Love,
who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands,
my name is written on his heart.
I know that while in heav'n he stands
no tongue can bid me thence depart,
no tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see him there
who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died,
my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the just is satisfied
to look on him and pardon me,
to look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb,
my perfect, spotless righteousness,
the great unchangeable I AM,
the King of glory and of grace.
At one with him, I cannot die;
my soul is purchased by his blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
with Christ my Saviour and my God,
with Christ my Saviour and my God.
Charitie Lees Bancroft

Closing Prayer and a Blessing

God, you call us to be the body of Christ in this place.
Help us to stand together,
to stand with our neighbours,
to break free from all that holds us back
from making the world as you want it to be.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.