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

 **Bulletin for Sunday 14th February 2021**

Very warm greetings to you all on another cold morning.

Let’s pause as we come before God… and remember all the friends with whom we were able to worship freely a year ago… and let’s hold them in our hearts as we hope that soon we will all be able to do so again… and then let’s praise God as we sing our first hymn:

Hymn: O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder (R&S 117)

Prayer: Great God of all creation,

 may we encounter you in worship today,

 and stand in awe….

 may your Spirit lead us forwards

 and may Christ walk beside us…

 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 9 verses 2-9

Reflection: The other day I caught a few minutes of the BBC’s Bitesize lessons for children being schooled at home, including a rather good Shakespeare session. We were looking at the concept of ‘dramatic irony’: when the audience knows something of which those on stage are completely unaware. Of course that happens a lot in Shakespeare; but it also occurs in the Gospels.

Throughout Mark’s account of Jesus’ ministry, his disciples, despite spending so much time with him, struggled to understand Jesus’ real, full identity. Although they had long expected the Messiah, Jesus was different - so much more than they had anticipated - not only sent by God (as they expected the Messiah to be), but actually the Son of God. We, on the other hand - effectively the audience - have known that since the start of the gospel, where Mark describes him in the very first verse as ‘Jesus Christ, the Son of God’.

The disciples were used to Jesus in ordinary every day mode, the Jesus who looked a lot like them, ate with them, talked like them, dressed as they did. They thought they knew him - hadn’t they even met his mother?! But they had so much more to learn. This mountain-top Jesus shocked them so that they didn’t know what to do or to say.

We have the advantage of the dramatic irony - we start with the knowledge that Jesus is both the Messiah and the Son of God. Nevertheless, may we continue to be awed by the Jesus we encounter, who is both as human as we are, and at the same time far, far beyond our comprehension. Amen

Hymn: Christ, whose glory fills the skies (R&S 380)

Prayer: God of glory… and God of compassion…

 as we go through life, finding you in the world around us,

 teach us both to pray and to care as Jesus did;

 help us to love each other as you love us,

 and to be aware that all are made equally in your image.

 We pray for places in the world in need of peace and healing…

 We pray for all your children in need of protection and hope…

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

 and we pray for your light to illuminate all our lives.

 Hear all the prayers of all our hearts… in Jesus’ name, Amen

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you (R&S 474)

Blessing: May we find Jesus among us in the day-to-day

 as well as on the mountaintop…

 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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While our buildings are shut, we continue to worship on Zoom each Sunday at 10.30am and again at 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.

Our series of Zoom Lent meetings on Tuesday evenings, based on the book, ‘God of Surprises’, by Gerard Hughes, start on February 23rd; more details from Gerald or me.

Billingshurst’s ecumenical Lent Lunches will take place this year via Zoom, with speakers from three different charities on Fridays 19th February, 26th February and 12th March.

Trinity’s charity this year will be Mercy Ships, and they will start the series on Friday 19th February at 1pm. More details and joining instructions are available now - if you haven’t had them and are interested, contact Jane or me.

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