

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

11th June 2023: 1st Sunday after Trinity/St Barnabas

Hazel writes:

We have just had two great events focussed on our **congregation** where God was so clearly present:

- At Messy Church we were thinking about baptism and preparing for Theo Jacques, who is a regular member of the Messy Church congregation, to be baptised on Saturday 24th June at 1pm in St Mary's Church.
- In the prayer event on Saturday morning many were able to share how God has spoken through prayer of different types.

This week we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church and non-eucharistic services recognising the Feast of St Barnabas at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 18th June**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

This Thursday's **lunchtime concert** at St Francis sees the welcome return of Arnaldo Cogorno who delighted us with his piano-playing last year and is back by popular request. He will play a varied programme, including Bach and Chopin, and ending with a lovely Spanish piece by Granados. The concert starts at 12.45 with free admission and tea and coffee available beforehand. Voluntary donations towards expenses are welcome. Come along for a relaxing lunch hour with music and bring a friend!

St. Mary's Garden Party and Barbecue is on Saturday 17th June from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. Donations of cakes, plants, etc. would be much appreciated and also offers of help on the day.

Hard copies of **The Bridge** – Southwark’s Diocesan newspaper – are available in the churches. You can read an electronic copy here: <https://southwark.anglican.org/news-events/news/the-bridge-newspaper/>.

A Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving for **Pat Allegacone** will be on Wednesday 21st June at 3pm in St Francis’ Church following a private committal service and with refreshments following the service in the North Aisle of the church.

The **Hayes Symphony Orchestra** have a concert at St Francis’ on Saturday 24th June at 7.30 p.m. The theme of this concert is British Sounds with pieces by Coleridge-Taylor, the ‘London’ Symphony by Haydn and Vaughan Williams’ 5th Symphony. You can get tickets here: <https://hayes.makingmusicplatform.com/Summer23> or on the door.

We have a **Comedy Night** at St Francis’ Church Hall on Friday 7th July. Doors open at 7pm with a bar available. The evening will be hosted by Carly Smallman, and will feature other guests, Stefano Paoloni and Alyssa Kyria. You can get tickets from <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-francis-of-assisi>. All profits will be in aid of local charities (including Bromley Foodbank).

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis’ Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, cold meat tins, desserts (e.g. sponge pudding, jelly, Angel Delight), coffee, ladies’ deodorant and toothpaste. They have plenty of pasta, cereal and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here: <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary’s (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary’s) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis’.

The sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary’s this week has been provided by Joan Baker for her birthday and wedding anniversary and has been arranged by Merri.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Bountiful God, giver of all gifts, who poured your Spirit upon your servant Barnabas and gave him grace to encourage others: help us, by his example, to be generous in our judgements and unselfish in our service; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:**Acts 11: 19-30**

¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists^l also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. ²² News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain

faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. ²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they associated with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'.

²⁷ At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. ²⁹ The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; ³⁰ this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Gospel Reading:**John 15: 12-17**

¹² 'This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal Father,
we thank you for
nourishing us with these
heavenly gifts:
may our communion
strengthen us in faith,
build us up in hope,
and make us grow in love;
for the sake of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

REFLECTION – Richard Ford

Acts 11.19- end; John 15. 12-17. 11.06.23

It's the summer of 1936 and twenty-two year old Fred Clayton, a brilliant academic, from a middle-class background, who has just received a fellowship at King's, Cambridge, is arriving in Dresden.

Why? What has made him abandon for the time-being the academic life. The answer: he wants to find out why people are being radicalised by the extraordinary and frightening revolution called National Socialism. Curiosity and his interest in politics have made him want to see first-hand what was happening in Germany under the rule of the "Nazis."

To earn his keep, he has arranged to teach in one of Dresden's schools, and it is while he is working here that he gets to know a German family by the name of Buttner-Wobst, two of whose five children, the sons, Goetz and Wolf, attend the school in which Fred is working. Although the husband is no friend of the Nazis, eventually the family are warned that their relationship with Fred, who is not a Nazi sympathiser, is dangerous, and so the familiarity of their relationship comes to an end.

On his return to England, Fred and his friend, Alan Turing, yes, he who broke the enigma code, become instrumental in getting two young Jewish boys out of Austria to safety just before war breaks out.

As a consequence of the war, Fred lost contact with the Buttner-Wobst family, but when the war came to an end, he wrote to the family in the hope of re-establishing contact. Eventually, in 1946, he received a letter from the youngest member of the family, Rike, who had been a child when Fred was visiting the family. From Rike, Fred learned that both her parents had died shortly after their eldest son, Goetz, had been killed in battle. Her reason for writing was to ask if Fred could help her find out what had happened to her other brother, Wolf, whom she believed might be a prisoner of war.

Fred, through his contacts, is able to confirm that that is the case. And so a correspondence develops between Fred and Rike, the correspondence develops into a relationship, despite the age gap between them, and eventually after many months of bureaucracy - Rike was living in East Germany, the Communist part - she arrives in England and they get married in 1948.

If you want to know more about this couple and their families, you can read about it in the book by their grandson, Andrew March, a vicar in Coventry.

And, no doubt, you're wondering what this has got to do with today's readings. The answer lies in the title of the book, "Loving the enemy, building bridges in a time of war."

Twice in our reading from John, Jesus commands his disciples, and so us, that they and we should love one another. However, war can do strange things to the way in which we understand and practise our faith. In our reading from John we heard Jesus say, "Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." It's a quotation that we frequently find on war memorials, and in the First World War, many preachers and others used it in sermons and lectures to encourage young men and others who had not yet joined up to do just that and to fight for their country.

Now what I am about to say is not to disparage or dishonour those who, in the genuine belief that they are fighting for justice and freedom and democracy, give their lives on the battlefield – and it may be that at times war is the lesser of two evils - but I do think it important to point out that using these words in those ways – on war memorials and as an encouragement to fight – is to ignore the context in which they were spoken.

Jesus was talking about loving one another and there is nothing loving about killing one another in battle. It's also worth noting that the Bible is not the personal property of the British only. The same Bible is used by German Christians and Italian Christians and Russian Christians and Ukrainian Christians. Jesus' command to his followers then and so to his followers today is that they should love one another.

I haven't got time now to look in detail at what Jesus means by "loving one another," but it includes acting in other people's best interests, in avoiding doing them harm, in putting their needs above our own.

In fact, Jesus demonstrated this in his own life, when he laid down his life on the cross, in order to bring us back into a right relationship with God. When the Temple Police came to arrest him, rather than resisting arrest, he healed the wound sustained by one of those arresting him, instructing Peter, who was responsible for the wound, to put his sword back in its sheath. Matthew, in his gospel, adds: "Do

you not think that I can appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had taught his listeners that they should love their enemies and do good to those who hate them. (Luke 6.27). Someone who understood exactly what this meant was Fred Clayton, as I demonstrated earlier, but I didn't mention that when the Second World War broke out, he was determined not to hate the enemy, so determined that he decided to write a book to remind people that the Germans were humans, just like themselves. The novel, now out of print, was "The Cloven Pine." The title is a reference to Shakespeare's "The Tempest," in which one of the characters, Ariel, is trapped in a cloven pine by the witch Sycorax as a punishment for ignoring her commands. Fred saw the German people as being trapped by the policies of Hitler and the Nazis and in need of rescuing.

And this brings us to what we heard in our reading from Acts. Another group of people who needed rescuing were the Gentiles, or Hellenists, as they were referred to in our reading, non-Jews. We tend to forget that the first members of the early church were Jews, and Jews were brought up not to mix with non-Jews, Gentiles. They wouldn't go into their houses, they wouldn't eat with them – in many ways they were seen as the enemy.

But as we heard, there were some Jews who were prepared to tell non-Jews, Gentiles, the good news about what Jesus had done for them on the cross, how his resurrection from death was the proof that he was the Son of God and how his death had paid the price for our sins, our wrong-doings.

But as we also heard, the Jewish members of the church in Jerusalem, when they heard that non-Jews were turning to Jesus, sent Barnabas to check out the situation.

Barnabas, whose real name was Joseph, had been given the name Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement," by the apostles, because that was the kind of person he was. He was also generous and loving, as he had shown when he sold a field belonging to him and gave the money to the church leaders to use in supporting the needy.

And now we read how he encouraged those non-Jewish Christians to grow in faith, even going to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him back to Antioch so that these new Christians could benefit from his teaching, another loving act.

And clearly, he must have been regarded as trustworthy as he, together with Paul, was tasked with taking the Antioch disciples' gift to their fellow Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding area to help them cope with the soon-to-arrive famine – another act of Christian love.

What I've tried to do in these last few minutes is to underline these examples of how those early Christians tried to live out Jesus' command that they should love one another, and especially how this love was demonstrated in so many ways by that great encourager, Barnabas, not to mention that modern example, Fred Clayton, whose approach to living out his faith is an example to us all. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

Pray that we may encourage others to be the people God wants them to be. May we bring love to all of our interactions with others this week.

Pray for the church throughout the world, that Christian communities take light and hope to the places of conflict, of darkness, of indifference, of despondency. Pray for the people of St Francis' and St Mary's as we seek to offer a welcome to those in our communities and to reach out to all in need.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for St Andrew & St Mark, Surbiton for their Vicar, Robert Stanier, their Priest, Janice Price, their Reader, Jacqueline Robbs and their Pastoral Auxiliary, Sarah Stokes.

Hold before God all those who are homeless and vulnerable on the streets of our city and ask for God's blessing on all those who work to help rough sleepers. Pray for the soul of Ion Radu, a homeless man found murdered in Crystal Palace last week.

Pray for those in places of continuing and escalating violence, for children caught up in violence, for families divided by war, for refugees facing hostility and hardship. We remember those affected by the breach of the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine. Pray for all with the power to silence the guns.

Pray for those in the public eye whose struggles and mistakes are shared around the world and for journalists and broadcasters with all the responsibilities and opportunities those professions bring.

Pray for those who yearn for God's comfort and sustaining love right now. Pray for those who are ill, in sadness or in confusion. In our congregations pray for these by name – Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell and Sue Jones – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died. Pray especially for Pat Allegacone and Martin Rees and their families. Hold before God those for whom it is a time of anniversary and those for whom the pain never seems to get any better.