

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

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2023: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent**

### **Hazel writes:**

We cannot imagine what it is to be caught up in the disaster that has struck Turkey and Syria this week - the news is heart-breaking. Many of you will already have made donations in some way, but for those who have not done so, we will be taking a monetary collection at the end of the services this week to pass on to the Disasters Emergency Committee. If you are not in the churches, but would like to make a donation, you can do so using this link: <https://donation.dec.org.uk/turkey-syria-earthquake-appeal>.

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

Next **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. The sermons will begin our Lent programme on unanswered prayer.

**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.

**Barbara Plummer's funeral** service is on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February at 11.15am in St Francis' Church. Kati and the family would like to thank everyone for the many cards and letters of condolence. It has been very comforting to read so many different memories of mum and to feel that others are missing her too. Mum was a supporter of The Children's Society for many years, so donations in her memory will support their work, and can be made by visiting her tribute page at [barbaraplummer.muchloved.com](http://barbaraplummer.muchloved.com).

Come to our **coffee morning at St Francis' Church Hall** on **Saturday 18th February** 10.30- 11.30am. There will be tea, coffee and cake and an introduction on how to do CPR and how to use our defibrillators in an emergency. Any funds raised will be donated to the British Heart Foundation. Please contact Nicky

([nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) or Liz ([stevelizbraemar52@sky.com](mailto:stevelizbraemar52@sky.com) or 8777-2745) if you would like to provide any cakes.

**St Mary's electoral roll** is now being updated. If you consider yourself part of the church, but are not on the roll, please ask Chris Fitzgerald for an application form for enrolment. Those who return forms by Sunday 12th February will also be able to vote at the APCM next month.

**Lent Groups** this year will reflect on unanswered prayer, following a series of sermons to be given in the next few weeks. Why not make a commitment this Lent to follow the sermon series. If you are not already a member of a Home Group and would like to join one of the following groups to go a bit deeper in our understanding of how prayer works, please contact the following:

- Monday evenings: meet on Zoom – 8-9.30pm (contact Richard Ford on 020 8289 2432 or [richard.ford73@ntlworld.com](mailto:richard.ford73@ntlworld.com));
- Thursday mornings: meet at St Francis' – 10.30am – 12noon (contact Debbie Adams on 020 8777 7834 or [debadams64@icloud.com](mailto:debadams64@icloud.com)).

**Ash Wednesday is on 22nd February** and there will be two services of Holy Communion and Ashing held for Churches Together in West Wickham on that day:

- In St Francis' Church at 10.45am
- In Emmanuel Church at 7.30pm.

Do join us for this important date when we start Lent.

**The World Day of Prayer** is on Friday 3rd March. There will be a Churches Together Service at 10.30am on that day in Coney Hill Baptist Church. All are welcome.

We are slightly changing how we run our **Sunday morning communion services** to get an appropriate balance between returning to previous traditions and enabling everyone to feel safe in the church buildings:

- We continue to distribute communion by the priest dipping the wafer in the wine, but will review whether to return to the common cup at Easter. If we do, then those who do not want to share the cup can still receive communion in one kind only. Please do speak to Richard or Hazel if you have a strong view one way or the other.
- On any livestream we show what is happening in the church during communion. If you do not want to be seen on the livestream when receiving communion, please speak to Hazel, Richard or a warden on duty and we will bring communion to you.

- Sharing the peace can now be done in closer proximity, with a handshake or similar, but please be mindful of what each individual will feel comfortable with.
- With smaller numbers of people attending the services in the church buildings, it will help us to feel part of one community if we sit closer together. Please sit towards the front and in the middle of the buildings. This will also make it easier for you to sing along with the hymns.

**Churches Together in West Wickham** are opening up **Warm Spaces** on five days each week (normally 9am-5pm) providing somewhere warm for people to meet in for free. This is also an opportunity to meet with volunteers from other churches and share some social time together, so if you are looking for some company, do join in at the following locations: ·

- On a Monday at West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church
- On a Tuesday at Coney Hill Baptist Church
- On a Wednesday at St Francis' Church
- On a Thursday at West Wickham Methodist Church
- On a Friday at Emmanuel United Reformed Church

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require milk (long life), coffee, sweets, cooking sauces, soup, rice, tinned potatoes and other vegetables. They are well stocked with pasta, cereal, tea 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](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

The pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been donated by Miriam and John Richards for their wedding anniversary and has been arranged by Merri.

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

**Collect**

Almighty God, give us  
reverence for all creation  
and respect for every  
person, that we may mirror  
your likeness  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Micah 6: 6-8**

‘With what shall I come  
before the LORD, and bow  
myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him  
with burnt-offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased  
with thousands of rams,  
with tens of thousands of  
rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for  
my transgression, the fruit  
of my body for the sin of my  
soul?’

<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O mortal,  
what is good; and what  
does the LORD require of  
you but to do justice, and to  
love kindness, and to walk  
humbly with your God?

**Gospel Reading:**

**Luke 14: 16-23**

<sup>16</sup> Then Jesus said to him,  
‘Someone gave a great  
dinner and invited  
many. <sup>17</sup> At the time for the  
dinner he sent his slave to  
say to those who had been  
invited, “Come; for  
everything is ready now.”

<sup>18</sup> But they all alike began  
to make excuses. The first  
said to him, “I have bought  
a piece of land, and I must  
go out and see it; please  
accept my apologies.”

<sup>19</sup> Another said, “I have  
bought five yoke of oxen,  
and I am going to try them  
out; please accept my  
apologies.”

<sup>20</sup> Another said, “I have just  
been married, and  
therefore I cannot come.”

<sup>21</sup> So the slave returned and  
reported this to his master.  
Then the owner of the  
house became angry and  
said to his slave, “Go out at  
once into the streets and  
lanes of the town and bring  
in the poor, the crippled,  
the blind, and the  
lame.” <sup>22</sup> And the slave said,

“Sir, what you ordered has  
been done, and there is  
still room.” <sup>23</sup> Then the  
master said to the slave,  
“Go out into the roads and  
lanes, and compel people to  
come in, so that my house  
may be filled.”

**Post Communion Prayer**

God our creator,  
by your gift  
the tree of life was set at  
the heart of the earthly  
paradise, and the bread of  
life at the heart of your  
Church: may we who have  
been nourished at your  
table on earth  
be transformed by the  
glory of the Saviour’s cross  
and enjoy the delights of  
eternity; through Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

## REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

You will have heard me speak about metanoia (or changing your mind) which was something that I was exploring as part of my sabbatical. Our minds, and how we think, are built up over our lives by the experiences that we have and what we know about. All of this combines to make us who we are. We can’t help but be shaped by other people, in particular the groups that we are part of – our families, our educational and work colleagues, our church, etc. Over time we’ll take on aspects of those groups, but that will exclude a huge amount of experience that we can never know about.

And then, sometimes something will happen that brings another group to the fore, and we might get to know something about what it is to be a part of that group and we might feel closer to, or at least understand something more about, people from that group.

God, of course, knows everything about everyone. Whilst we can’t do this, we can take an interest in those groups that we don’t know anything about. For example, we knew little about Ukrainians before February last year, but now we understand a little more. Those who have hosted Ukrainian families will know even more.

During the past three years at St Francis’ and St Mary’s we have been doing some of this getting to know others through a series of meetings that we’ve held which we’ve called Inclusive Church.

The first meeting was in response to the Black Lives Matter protests and we gained an insight into some of the different experiences that black members of our own congregations have had. Some of us also watched a film in Black History Month 2021 and last year we had a service on Racial Justice Sunday which introduced the Diocese of Southwark’s Anti-racism Charter. But I wonder just how much we really understand about what it is to be someone from a different ethnic group in our church community. I wonder what news stories might resonate with them, that don’t with us, and so we have no mention of them in our conversations.

Our second meeting looked at disability (or being differently-abled) and how there is (maybe unintended) discrimination against some. We are all made in the image of God and disability is part of one’s identity. Much better to be seen as someone with a different ability to others rather than someone who is unable to do something. We should be able to celebrate anyone who brings glory to God, no matter what it is that they’ve done.

Our next topic was mental health and we considered how, where someone is less able due to a mental health problem rather than a physical ailment, people may be slower to make allowances for differences in the way we approach life. There is still a stigma attached to poor mental health. I wonder if anyone here has not wanted to own up to their own experiences in this respect. How can we make it more acceptable to talk about these issues, so that we can become a more supportive community for those who do face mental health challenges?

The fourth area that we looked at was sexuality and gender identity. Since 2017 the Church of England has been exploring questions such as how sexuality, relationships and marriage fit within the good news of Jesus Christ. This has included the Living in Love & Faith course which some of you participated in during 2021. Last week the General Synod agreed proposals made by the bishops in the Church of England for services of blessings for same-sex couples to be held in churches. For some, this is a step too far, while for others, it does not go far enough towards including same-sex couples in the life of the church.

There are two other aspects of inclusion that the organisation Inclusive Church deals with which we have not had a separate meeting on. These are:

- Gender – The Church has long been seen as a patriarchal institution which has reinforced beliefs about inequality between gendered roles, and specifically discrimination against women in leadership. Do we assume that certain ‘jobs’ in the church are only for men, or only for women? Do our leadership structures fairly represent those who are part of our congregations?
- Economic power – Churches offer great support to those who live with a lack of economic power. However, people who are living in poverty can be seen as the object of charity rather than being empowered to make changes in their lives. We ‘do to’ others, rather than ‘being with’ them.

The parable in this week’s gospel reading illustrates how a change in the way of thinking about inclusion might operate. The story gives a picture of God’s kingdom where all the rules of power, as to who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’, are turned upside down. The parable comes after a time when Jesus was having an argument with the Pharisees about healing a man on the sabbath. The Pharisees were focused on the letter of the law, which said that some need to be excluded from the community that worshipped God.

In the parable someone was hosting a great dinner and they invite some important guests, all of whom are friends of theirs, but these guests all find excuses why they

can't come. There's the guest who's just bought a piece of land; today this might be someone who's just landed a new job. He or she wants to be seen as doing the best that they can and they don't want a late night at their friend's dinner to jeopardize that. And what about the guest who has bought some new oxen? Well, today, this could be someone who's part of a sports team and has just bought a new piece of kit to play in, so wants a chance to try this out, rather than go to this great dinner that their friend is putting on. And the one who's just got married? Well, it could be the same – maybe they see a new relationship as more important (maybe more fragile) than the one with their old friend.

So, instead of having these important, friendly (and probably wealthy) people, the person holding the great dinner invites those who are poor and disabled. The opposite of a person with a new job – someone who's unemployed. The opposite of a keen member of a sports team – a disabled person. The opposite of a newly-wed – maybe a single mum. We are all part of God's kingdom, no matter who we are. God wants to include everyone in the activities that we're involved in as a church community. And that's not just our worship on a Sunday morning. And if someone drops out of what we're doing? Well, we'll still do it, but find others to include and maybe do this in a different way to what has gone before.

We've done a lot over the past two years to include others in our church community. For example, we have built up our Messy Church as a place where families can feel they belong, we have a Youth group for older children, and our livestream capability and maintaining a weekly paper-based communication means that those who can't join in here on a Sunday morning can still feel a part of the congregation.

Keeping up these links with groups of people who are different to us requires long term and consistent effort, but it's something that's required if we are to build the kingdom of God here in West Wickham. This can be where that great dinner is held a number of times each week. It's also important to be open to those opportunities when we can give an invitation to others to join us in any of the activities that we're involved in – worship, community lunches, coffee mornings and other events.

I wonder what you understand by the term 'inclusive church'. Maybe for you it means that you feel that everyone is welcome here. But does that mean that everyone who comes to be part of our community feels welcome and fully supported amongst us? That's a different matter altogether. It's not a case of sitting back and hoping that this happens, but rather everyone, as a community together, making a point of welcoming those who are different and coming alongside them to engage in

discussion, so that we know what it is that they are looking for in a church community. In time this will enable us to celebrate our differences, whilst recognising the challenges that some of us face.

We need to be clear and explicit about those who we are including in our community. Can we say that it looks like the great dinner of Jesus' parable (even if some are only part of the community virtually), or is it more of a collection of separate groups with common interests who rarely speak to those from other groups? Something to reflect on maybe.

Prayer:

Dear God, you made us in your own image, and then became one of us, proud of those you have made. Make us proud of being part of that worldwide family, and eager to discover and celebrate your image in every person, every culture, every nation that we are privileged to encounter.

### **Prayer Pointers**

Pray that the doors of St Mary's and St Francis may be wide enough to receive and include all who need human love and fellowship, but narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and prejudice. Pray that the doors may be the gateway to the Kingdom of God.

Hold before God, our link parish of St Andrew' in Gweru in the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe. Pray for God's guidance, inspiration, wisdom, and strength for the incumbent Rev Father Sebastian Messo.

As the death toll rises following the deadly earthquake in Turkey and Syria and rescuers struggle to cope with the level of devastation, pray for the injured, the grieving, and for those who have lost everything and for the aid agencies trying to bring some relief from the suffering.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for the congregation of St Michael and All Angels, Blackheath Park – for their Reader, John Clark, and their Pastoral Auxiliary, Carolyn Watkins.



With Valentine's Day in the coming week, give thanks for the people we love and all who love us.

Pray for the politicians and those who have power locally and nationally that they may see the consequences of their words and be driven by a desire for peace. Hold before God the continuing war in Ukraine and conflicts in other countries around the world. Pray for just and peaceable solutions.

Pray for those we know and love, our family, friends, and neighbours who are in need this day especially for those who are ill. In our congregations pray for these by name – Mark Outten, Vicky Pearce, Mike East, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Karen Plummer and Keith Morley – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died in the faith of Christ crucified. Pray especially for Barbara Plummer and Stuart Froment and their families.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings - all those things that worry us; those situations we feel helpless in; those decisions that burden us; those losses that overwhelm us, and all that we are thankful for.