

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

28<sup>th</sup> June 2020: Third Sunday after Trinity

### Hazel writes:

I have had a number of sharings recently: in response to my message about racial inequalities, my Trinity Sunday sermon on relationships, or because of things that are happening in people's lives. Thank you to everyone who has been in contact, as this really helps me to understand where you all are and how what is going on in the world is affecting you. I am especially grateful to the team of people who are keeping in touch with you – Richard, Rowena, Debbie, Brian, Ken, Nicky, Lesley, Sarah, Kim, Paul, Beryl and Gifty – and the insights that they are able to provide.

Some of these insights will be reflected in my talk at today's meeting, which is intended to set the scene for our churches during the next months and years ahead. This **Zoom vision meeting** is today at 11am, followed by a repeat with more time for questions, on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June at 8pm.

Next week we will have a special **celebration of the NHS** which was formed on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1948 – 72 years ago. If you have a connection with anyone who has been involved in healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic, or you, yourself have worked in the NHS in the past, please do call, email or write to Hazel ([hazelos58@gmail.com](mailto:hazelos58@gmail.com), 020 8777 5034 or at St Mary's Vicarage, The Avenue, BR4 0DX) with details of that connection or what you've done and the challenges and blessings that you'd like to share. We'd like to include a note of as many as possible in the service.

To show that you're taking part in this national day of celebration, hang a blue bow outside your home. Send a picture of this to Hazel if possible to indicate your support. Here's mine to start us off:



The churches are **open for private prayer** at the following times:

- Mondays – St Mary's from 10.30am to 12noon
- Tuesdays – St Mary's from 2 to 3.30pm
- Wednesdays – St Francis' from 2 to 3.30pm
- Thursdays – St Francis' from 10.30am to 12noon
- Fridays – St Mary's from 9 to 10.30am

- Saturdays – St Francis’ from 9 to 10.30am

The spaces are very safe with sanitiser and social distancing measures in place and are supervised, so that these measures can be appropriately maintained.

Please do continue to bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage if you cannot get them to other places. Currently they need cold meat, custard, rice pudding, tinned potatoes and squash, as well as baby wipes, toiletries and liquid/powder for dish & clothes washing.

I have given a number of **Churches Together bereavement packs** now to people who I have been in contact with and they have found them very helpful. If you are able to contribute by creating small crosses, a handmade ‘thinking of you’ card or any craft with a forget-me-not theme, please do be in touch, so that we can get these resources into more packs. Hazel

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – An audio file of the sermon and a video of the service have been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined together and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Please tell someone if you know of somebody who is not accessing this material.

Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England’s national virtual service will be available on their website at [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org).
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
  - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 with John Bell of the Iona Community;
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Manchester Cathedral;
  - On BBC 1: Sunday morning live at 10.45am; Sunday Morning Stories at 11.45am; and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm from Northern Ireland.

Each week our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursday at 2.30 pm attracts 12 or more. As well as this larger number we also split into small groups to share our news. It is just 40 minutes and you don’t need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena ([rowena.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:rowena.griff19@btinternet.com) /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Hazel and items for the websites to [brian.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.griff19@btinternet.com).

**Collect**

God our saviour,  
look on this wounded  
world  
in pity and in power;  
hold us fast to your  
promises of peace  
won for us by your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Reading: Acts 2:42-47**

<sup>42</sup> Those who heard Peter's message devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

<sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**Gospel: Luke 10:1-11**

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

<sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" <sup>6</sup> And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid.

Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near."

**Post communion prayer**

Loving Father, we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son: sustain us with your Spirit, that we may serve you here on earth until our joy is complete in heaven, and we share in the eternal banquet with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Recently Brian spoke of getting out of our boat and Hazel spoke very movingly of relationships. So with me about to talk about bubbles it may seem very strange indeed, but bear with me as there are links with their talks and our readings today. They spoke of going out into our community and serving where there is need and of building relationships between ourselves and with others.

Bubbles seems to be one of the words that has come to the fore during this time of lockdown. Who can you see for any length of time? Who is in your bubble?

Now schools have their bubbles where groups of pupils are kept together all day to the exclusion of other children. This is where they learn in small groups together.

Social bubbles for families or friends are where people can be together and where they can enjoy and develop their relationships.

Our two churches seem to me to be a bubble. We are a joint benefice after all.

We heard in the reading from Acts that those who heard and believed Peter's message then devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

These are the four strands that Luke is telling us that are fundamental to be followers of Jesus, and why the growth of the new believers was so rapid.

The new Christians were constantly listening and learning from the apostles, they had a strong fellowship which could be seen by others through the love shown in their common life and for the example they set in their prayer and worship. Because of this God was adding to their number on a daily ongoing basis.

For us in this time of lockdown we have had more time to read and study the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, plus the letters of Paul and Peter and learning about how the disciples lived their lives and guided and encouraged the new Christians now that Jesus was not with them in person.

We can also spend more time in prayer. Talking to God about all that is on our heart and our mind and also spending some time just listening to what He might be saying to us.

We might not be able to join each other in church or in each other's houses for the breaking of bread but in new ways, with many thanks to Hazel for her ingenuity and her hard work we are able to share in services remotely by audio recordings, by photo copies and by videos on YouTube.

Our two church bubble has been receiving the same services. Together with the Zoom meetings for all of us and for our joint online coffee and chat as well as our joint Home Groups which means we have been growing closer together.

As a joint fellowship in our bubble we have probably spent more quality time with each other since we have not been able to get into church.

People looking out for each other. Contacting to see if there is anything that they can do, buying food, collecting medicines etc. and just having more and deeper conversations. Really getting to know people we rarely talk to even at coffee after a service.

We are demonstrating that we are a loving, caring community. Now can we do more and can we show this to our friends and neighbours. Can we be more generous with our time to meet the needs of others?

Where the passage talks of holding all things in common for us today might mean that all we have, we offer to be used for the good of others if called upon.

Having the courage to let go of things and use the money to help others.

I know how difficult this is for me and a challenge that I rarely have to face because I give out of relative plenty.

In Mark chapter twelve it says <sup>41</sup> Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup> Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup> For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

What a challenge it is to be like the widow who gave her last two copper coins to the service of God leaving her with nothing and relying on God for everything.

As we move forward together in our bubble we might not sell all our goods but we can certainly use our financial possessions to help those in need.

And we can have generous hearts.

Looking out for where we can help the lonely, the isolated, the displaced, the lost, the oppressed, the sick and all those in need.

It will be in our church bubble that we learn together the will of God and where we develop our relationships together and where we build up our courage and we develop our ways of taking God's word out into West Wickham and to wherever each of us goes.

As we go out into West Wickham we know that our membership is few and of a certain age but we must remember that the seventy sent out by Jesus were few and they had a huge impact on the people that they met and they changed the world. Surely our few can change our town and let everyone know the Kingdom of God has come near to them.

I am sure that if we want to do more in the community then God will provide the people to help us in His work. More labourers for His harvest.

As Tom Wright the past Bishop of Durham has written 'Where the church today finds itself stagnant, unattractive, humdrum, and shrinking it's time for us all to read and reread the passage from Acts, then get down on our knees and ask what isn't happening that should be happening. The gospel hasn't changed, God's power hasn't diminished. People still need rescuing. What are we doing about it?'

Surely having endured this time of upheaval to our lives it is time to look forward to a new future. We mustn't let our bubble burst but take up every opportunity that God puts in our path.

Amen

## **Prayer Pointers**

For our two congregations of St Mary's and St Francis. May we seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to enable us to work together as 'one bubble' working to bring Christ's message of compassion, love and care for our community.

For our local businesses who have been unable to trade for the last three months as they prepare to open after lockdown. For those who are struggling to pay bills and have had to lay off their staff.

For Governments across the world as they gradually allow life to return to some kind of normality. For all who advise them on how to deal with Covid19. May all their decisions be wise, balanced and for the common good.

For all those who are still shielding, especially those in our congregations, and afraid of the consequences of leaving their homes. May they bring their fear to God in prayer and trust in him to protect them.

For harmony in our communities especially in race relations. We pray that all may be valued especially in our churches. May all who feel marginalised know that God's love is for everyone and may we in St Mary's and St Francis be sensitive and inclusive in our care and worship.