

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

12<sup>th</sup> July 2020: Fifth Sunday after Trinity

### Hazel writes:

We will be making our first steps towards having public worship in both churches next week with a service of Holy Communion at 10.45am at St Francis' Church. There will also be a video made live on our websites at 9am that morning using the same material, so you will not miss out if you cannot make it to St Francis'.

If you come, please be prepared: there will be music but no singing, seats are arranged in a socially distanced fashion and communion will be received standing up (wafers only).

Last week we had a **celebration of the NHS. Many joined in with having a blue bow inside or outside their home, as shown here.**

### Is it Black Lives Matter or All Lives Matter? Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8pm.

The death of George Floyd at the hands of US policemen has

galvanised people around the world to take more seriously the inequality of people of colour and the injustice that they suffer, not just in America, but also in this country.

Here in West Wickham, and particularly in our two parishes, we may not feel that this is a major issue, but we belong to a Church whose missionary arm, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century owned 400 slaves in the Caribbean, who were treated no better than slaves on other plantations. And even today there are accounts of discrimination against black priests in appointing clergy to parishes.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, we shall be holding a Zoom meeting to hear about the experiences of black members of our church community and to discuss how we as individuals and as a church should respond to the Black Lives Matter movement.

If you have questions or points that you would like to have considered during the evening, please email them to me at [richard.ford73@ntlworld.com](mailto:richard.ford73@ntlworld.com). If you wish them to be used anonymously, please make this clear, or you can put them through my door at 7 Sylvan Way, Coney Hall, West Wickham, BR4 9HA.



The church buildings will continue to be **open for private prayer** in July 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.

**Wendy Carvalho** would like to say thank you for all the care and communication which she has had from the church family following Ken’s death. This has been a great support to her at this difficult time.

Please do 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.

Here's an example of one of the **Churches Together bereavement packs**. If you know someone who is recently bereaved and you would like to give them one of these, please do be in touch with me. Hazel

Our plans for a **new audio-visual system** at St Mary’s have now been approved by the diocese and the PCC agreed a schedule for installation this week. If you pledged an amount to be put towards this project or would like to make a donation now, please would you be in touch with Bob West:

[robandlinwest@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:robandlinwest@tiscali.co.uk) or 020 8776 0210 to arrange payment.



**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 from South Wales Baptist College;
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from King's College, Cambridge;
  - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.45am and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm revealing the UK's favourite hymn.

Each week our **"coffee/tea & chat"** on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. 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**

Almighty God,  
send down upon your  
Church  
the riches of your Spirit,  
and kindle in all who  
minister the gospel  
your countless gifts of  
grace;  
through Jesus Christ our  
Lord.

**First Reading: Revelation  
22:1-6**

Then the angel showed me  
the river of the water of  
life, bright as crystal,  
flowing from the throne of  
God and of the Lamb  
<sup>2</sup> through the middle of the  
street of the city. On either  
side of the river is the tree  
of life with its twelve kinds  
of fruit, producing its fruit  
each month; and the  
leaves of the tree are for  
the healing of the nations.  
<sup>3</sup> Nothing accursed will be  
found there any more. But  
the throne of God and of  
the Lamb will be in it, and  
his servants will worship  
him; <sup>4</sup> they will see his

face, and his name will be  
on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And  
there will be no more  
night; they need no light of  
lamp or sun, for the Lord  
God will be their light, and  
they will reign for ever and  
ever.

<sup>6</sup> And he said to me, 'These  
words are trustworthy and  
true, for the Lord, the God  
of the spirits of the  
prophets, has sent his  
angel to show his servants  
what must soon take  
place.'

**Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> And after getting into a  
boat he crossed the water  
and came to his own town.

<sup>2</sup> And just then some  
people were carrying a  
paralysed man lying on a  
bed. When Jesus saw their  
faith, he said to the  
paralytic, 'Take heart, son;  
your sins are forgiven.'

<sup>3</sup> Then some of the scribes  
said to themselves, 'This  
man is blaspheming.' <sup>4</sup> But  
Jesus, perceiving their

thoughts, said, 'Why do  
you think evil in your  
hearts? <sup>5</sup> For which is  
easier, to say, "Your sins  
are forgiven", or to say,  
"Stand up and walk"? <sup>6</sup> But  
so that you may know that  
the Son of Man has  
authority on earth to  
forgive sins'—he then said  
to the paralytic—'Stand  
up, take your bed and go  
to your home.'<sup>7</sup> And he  
stood up and went to his  
home. <sup>8</sup> When the crowds  
saw it, they were filled  
with awe, and they  
glorified God, who had  
given such authority to  
human beings.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Grant, O Lord, we beseech  
you,  
that the course of this  
world may be so  
peaceably ordered by  
your governance,  
that your Church may  
joyfully serve you in all  
godly quietness;  
through Jesus Christ our  
Lord.

## Talk on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020: Healing from God

**Texts: Revelation 22:1-6; Matthew 9:1-8**

This Sunday was due to be the end of our Festival of Art – Art as a way to well-being. We were going to be looking at many different ways to well-being. I thought that thinking about this would be especially relevant to us now. It's been tough in lockdown. I know many of you have suffered and may still be suffering – limited social contact, maybe physical pain and being unable to get treatment, mental pain – anxiety – about how the world and we as individuals will cope with this pandemic. Finding a way to well-being might be something that will help you.

I use that term 'well-being' purposefully because this emphasises the all-encompassing nature of God's healing touch. Healing from God is not just about the medical healing that we were celebrating last week. It's about a complete transformation of humanity. Brian alluded to it at the end of his talk last week when he said that we may not be doctors or nurses – but we all can work together to heal society. We've all been given the free gift of care and love and compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves. We can heal relationships and we can heal our community – it's all in our hands as followers of the greatest healer – Jesus Christ. Christ is our healer and today I want to look at how we can benefit from this healing.

In our gospel reading we see Jesus, the greatest healer, helping the paralysed man. But before he physically heals him, he tells the man (in verse 2) 'your sins are forgiven'. Why does he do this before bringing about the physical healing? I think it's something to do with wanting to make sure that the physical healing will hit the right spot. He's interested in the whole person and recognises that healing has to be spiritual as well as physical. Even today, when you're physically ill, it's often the mental and spiritual side that's more debilitating than the physical side. Yes, there might be pain or discomfort, but the questioning of "Why me?" or "What have I done to deserve this?" and "will life ever be the same?" can intensify this pain and

can make it difficult to move on from this place, even after a physical recovery.

In Jesus' day there was a belief that any physical illness resulted from a sin, either your own sin, or that of your parents, or even grand-parents. In saying that the man's sins were forgiven, Jesus is recognising that the paralysed man needs to be set free, not only from the physical pain, but also from his mental and spiritual pain. Jesus wants us all to be free of whatever it is that binds us (or what we might term burdens) as he says in Matthew 11:28: 'Come to me all who that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'. This is not about rest from hard physical work, but about coping with the trials that life lays upon us.

I wonder what it is that binds you ... is it physical pain; is it mental pain; is it a relationship pain – a friendship that's just not right; is it a political pain - knowing that something in our church, or our local or national community isn't right; is it an emotional pain – maybe through having been let down by someone. God can heal all these pains, through Christ, because his healing is a holistic, spiritual healing, which helps us to cope with pain of any sort better.

Many of our pains or burdens spring from being parted from God in some way and this reflects the biblical source of pain – original sin as it is sometimes called. In the story of the Garden of Eden we hear how humans were first parted from God. The Garden of Eden was a place of peace and abundance, but when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the Tree of Life, they were banished from this peace and abundance and had to work the ground to gain food, meaning they were in a place of scarcity, where relationships were in jeopardy – it was every man and woman for themselves from this moment on.

The bible goes on throughout the Old Testament to tell of how humans continued to live in this place of scarcity, where there was constant conflict between different peoples. There were all sorts of rules and rituals that had to be followed if you wanted to be brought back into a relationship with God – that place of peace and abundance.

When Jesus came into the world, he brought the opportunity for people to come back together with God through the cross: the Tree of Salvation. No longer is it necessary to follow those rules and rituals to be in relationship with God. Through Jesus we now have a way of being reminded that God forgives any sin any time when we've been parted from him. We come and say sorry to God for being in a place of conflict, or only seeing scarcity and thinking of ourselves instead of others, and we make that commitment to do better and to find peace and abundance in the future.

God created a perfect world of peace and abundance at creation. In Jesus he's given us the opportunity of renewal today to live in that kind of world – something which we call the kingdom of God and which Jesus taught so much about. And he's also given us a promise of further renewal at the end of time. In our reading from Revelation, we're given a vision of a place where there's another tree of life. This tree of life is a promise of complete restoration – what's called the healing of the nations in verse 2. This is not just for those who recognise their partition from God and make changes in their life, but for anyone who wants to be a part of that place of peace and abundance.

The important thing to remember about this picture of the future in Revelation is that this new earth that's promised is not something that's brand new. It's not that the old earth is thrown away. No, it's about that same earth being recreated, being made new. The kingdom of God is all about healing our world today through Jesus.

It's through Jesus that we can live in a better way. We can live in our current world better by turning away from seeing only scarcity, and therefore being in competition with others so that you can get the best, and turning instead towards being in harmony with the earth, being at peace with your neighbour and being reconciled with God, through the cross.

I wonder how you see the world: in your household, in our church, in our country. Is the world a disposable resource, a place of scarcity, or is it a place that can be made new through Christ's healing power being brought to bear, so as to create places where there's a mindset of abundance and peace – places where everyone is welcome and everyone wants to belong.

It's a slow work, but it's God's work. This picture of God's kingdom is the kind of thing that I was talking about in the recent vision meetings. These will be summarised in an article in the magazines next month and I'd like everyone watching this video to join with me in bringing it to fruition. Rather than returning to that place of looking out for ourselves, let's bring God's healing touch to our lives and our community so that we can see glimpses of God's kingdom here in West Wickham. Amen

## **Prayer Pointers**

As churches gradually return to gathered worship together may we not lose the opportunity to see beyond the walls of our buildings. May we have a renewed sense of vision and mission to engage with our community more closely. We give thanks for all those who have worked to maintain online worship and pastoral care in our benefice. We thank God for the inspiration and energy of the Holy Spirit at this time.

We continue to give thanks for all who dedicate their lives to physical, mental and spiritual healing. We pray that our two churches of St Mary and St Francis may be seen as beacons for healing and wholeness in our community.

Continue to pray for governments across the world as difficult decisions have to be made to deal with the Covid19 pandemic. May all their decisions be wise and for the good of all.

Continue to pray for all those who have lost their jobs as more businesses in the past week have closed or entered administration. Especially we pray for those who will lose their jobs through major redundancies at Croydon Council – for those with families to support and who are going to find it difficult to cope without employment. May they not lose hope and may they be supported to find new jobs.

For all those who are still shielding because of Covid19 restrictions, especially those who worship with us and who are concerned about returning to services in church. May we all reach out to them and let them know that they are loved and cared for.