

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

2nd August 2020: Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

I have been away on holiday this week, so nothing new to say, but a favour to ask:

As well as being our in-house video-editor each week, my daughter, Olivia, is midway through her A-level studies. This summer she is doing a Geography project which includes a couple of surveys that she'd really appreciate your help with. They are about how much you use facilities in West Wickham and what your opinion on them is. They shouldn't take too long and will be completely anonymous - you just need to click on the links below and complete the questionnaire. For those who are receiving paper copies of the pew sheet, the questionnaire is attached – please complete and let me know that you have a copy to be picked up by telephone 020 8777 5034, or you can post it back to me at St Mary's Vicarage, The Avenue, West Wickham BR4 0DX.

Do also forward copies to other friends and family in the West Wickham area. Thank you very much for your help.

1. This survey can be taken by one member of your household, on behalf of everyone else. It is factual and asks about how much you use West Wickham for your daily activities.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HJ3H6DC>

2. This survey can be taken by multiple members of your household, preferably as many as possible, to get an idea of how different age groups feel about West Wickham. It asks about your opinions of West Wickham, how it serves you and what it is like as a place to live.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HTSWK3Q>

Next week there will be a service of **Holy Communion** on Sunday 9th August at St Francis' at 8am and a **Morning Praise** service at St Mary's at 10am. This will also be available **on-line** from 9am.

The church buildings will continue to be **open for private prayer** in August at the following times:

- Tuesdays – St Francis' from 2 to 3.30pm;
- Thursdays – St Mary's from 10 to 11.30am.

We are also planning to open for midweek communion from Wednesday 12th August. More details to follow next week.

The **St Francis' APCM** will take place after the service on Sunday 20th September. The venue is to be decided (in church or on Zoom). Everyone is welcome to join us at this meeting, but only those who are on the electoral roll can vote for matters that need approval, such as new members of the PCC. If you would like to be added to the electoral roll, please would you contact our Electoral Roll Officer, Rowena Griffiths at rowena.griff19@btinternet.com or on 020 8777 6112 before Sunday 30 August.

Please do bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need long-life fruit juice, squash, cold meat, mash potato packets, custard, rice pudding, jam, biscuits, men's toiletries, clothes wash detergent and nappies (sizes 5&6). There are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

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 and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. 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.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 exploring the relationship between the visual arts and faith;
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Hereford Cathedral;
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 9.30am and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm on faith and sport.

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 /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.

Collect

Lord God, your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake: when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-5

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' ¹⁷ They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' ¹⁸ And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves

and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Post Communion Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for ever.

TALK: A MINDSET OF ABUNDANCE, NOT A MINDSET OF SCARCITY

It's been a strange four months since lockdown started at the end of March. Who would have thought that our churches would be completely closed for worship? As soon as that happened we were faced with a challenge – how do we keep in touch with our congregations of St Mary's and St Francis - how do we sustain and nurture our faith – how do we keep worship going? We did what the vast majority of churches in the UK did – we made the decision to go online. None of us had any real experience of how to do this. We didn't even know at the outset that it was possible to upload video to our websites.

We could have said “We don't have the expertise to do this. The technology is beyond our capability. It isn't possible. So we'll just send out paper copies of sermons and notice sheets every week and wait until our churches can open before we get back to worship.” However, we, along with many other churches, took up the challenge and, by perseverance, we learned how to embrace the technology. Many times we developed entirely new skills we didn't think were possible. We had a ‘Can Do’ attitude. So, we have been able to develop an imaginative, stimulating and challenging online worship - not just Sunday services but Messy Church as well. Not forgetting just how we have all fallen in love with ‘Zoom’, without which we would have struggled with Ministry Team Meetings, Pastoral Care Meetings, Vision Meetings, debates and ‘Coffee and Chat’ sessions on Thursday afternoons. We love ‘Zoom’ so much that we often feel ‘Zoomed Out’! We are still learning and our next challenge is to record the service as it happens and put it on our websites later in the day. Watch this space.

Believe it or not, we have had some fun doing this – it sounds unlikely, but it's true. I shan't forget recording the Maundy Thursday meditation in my summerhouse with peaceful birdsong in the background – that is until the local parakeet population started fighting on the summerhouse roof. Who can forget the plaintive phone call from Hazel at 8.30 on a Saturday morning? “You couldn't do me a favour and come back to St Francis this morning and robe up again? I accidentally deleted the communion bit of the service!” So we did “take two” an hour or so later. And will we ever get over recording the sermon for our NHS service? I think we did it in four takes in the end – in between me getting the nationalities of the nurses looking after Boris Johnson mixed up and then recording “365 years a day” instead of “365 days a year. You may not know that our videos have subtitles. We didn't know either until someone pointed out that in the NHS sermon, they translated “Aneira was born” as “An IRA was born”

Instead of having negative thoughts of “We can't do this”, we set out from the beginning to be positive and think: “We can do this – this is not impossible”. We could

have had a mindset of scarcity, but instead we had a mindset of abundance. Now, I know what you're thinking "Why is he wittering on about audio and video recordings, outtakes, and pottering with computer technology in St Mary's and St Francis? What's the connection with our Bible readings today?"

Well, the reason is that in our Gospel reading (the feeding of the five thousand) the disciples have a mindset of scarcity. They think that feeding all those people with five loaves and two fishes is completely and utterly impossible. Jesus, however, shows them that they should have a mindset of abundance. So, the meagre five loaves and two fishes is multiplied and is so abundant that there are twelve baskets of leftovers (one for each disciple). We see here what Jesus does with very little. This miracle is so important that it's the only one that makes it in all four gospels. The extent of the abundance in this miracle is quite astounding. If you think that we get about 200 people in St Francis on Christmas Eve for our Lighting the Lamps service, 25 times that congregation are fed from just from five loaves and two fish. This is a truly staggering miracle. It's a miracle worked through the disciples. Here's how it pans out:

"You give them something to eat"

Jesus did not feed 5000 - the disciples did

Jesus uses the resources we have - ABUNDANCE

not what we don't have - SCARCITY

The disciples could only find 5 loaves and 2 fish – SCARCITY

They ended up with twelve baskets of leftovers - ABUNDANCE

The disciples wanted to send the crowd away – SCARCITY

The crowd remained as a community and followed Jesus – ABUNDANCE

The disciples see a need – like Jesus they are touched with compassion. The people need to be fed and they want to help in the same way that Jesus has helped the crowds. They come up with what appears to them to be a logical solution – send the people away to the villages to buy food. Jesus doesn't dismiss this idea at all. In fact what he does is turn it back to them – he says, "You give them something to eat" and when Jesus says: "You give them something to eat", it's as if he's daring the disciples. He's saying "I dare you to take me at my word. Do that and see what happens."

Even though they only have this meagre amount of food, they give it to Jesus. And here's the great bit. Jesus takes what appears to them to be small and insignificant, lifts his eyes to heaven, blesses it, breaks it and gives it back to the disciples. It's mysterious and awesome because through breaking and blessing and giving back, there is abundance.

How often do we get ideas or hear pleas for help and think to ourselves "I'd like to do so and so, or I'd really like to help here, but what can I offer? I don't seem to have any skills in that task and even if I did my contribution would be pretty insignificant." That's exactly how the disciples felt until Jesus got involved in the situation. They had this brilliant logical idea to feed the people, but it wasn't quite focussed. They focussed on scarcity - and the transformation to abundance happens when the disciples offer what little they have to Christ to do with it what he will. And now their problem is solved - the solution was in their hands all the time - but it needed to be offered to Christ first before it became effective. When ideas are offered to Christ in this way, he gives them back to us multiplied many times and empowers us to serve him in a way that we could never dream of.

It works whenever we are close enough to him to catch a glimpse of what he's doing and how we can help too. We dive in headfirst with our ideas - we offer what little we have. In this miracle it was five loaves and two fishes - but it might just as well be a sense of humour, money, time, energy, practical skills, artistic gifts or even a listening ear. Whatever we have to offer, Christ takes it, holds it before God, blesses it, breaks it ready for use and gives it back to us so that we can then take that and share with those who need us. And what we originally offered to Christ is both ours and his - what we originally thought of as scarce Jesus makes abundant and energises it. It comes back to us as something much greater, more powerful, and more mysterious. That's what happens when we offer what we believe to be our meagre talents and resources to Christ in faith.

So, we here in St Mary's and St Francis are in a new phase of our ministry. We've been able to cautiously worship as a physically gathered community again, even though the way we do this seems alien and uncomfortable for many of us. We have the germ of a new vision for our two churches. Now is the time for us to have this mindset of abundance not scarcity. It's the time for us to have a 'Can Do' attitude not simply thinking that it's too difficult to reach out to, and engage with, our community - that it's too difficult to grow our congregations - or even that there are too many barriers to St Mary's and St Francis working far more closely in 'one bubble' as Ken mentioned in

his sermon last month. Let us pray that Jesus can transform us all from people fixated with scarcity to a people filled with the abundance and energy of the Holy Spirit. We have already proved during lockdown that our gifts can be multiplied beyond our wildest dreams if we offer them to God to be blessed, broken and given back to us. Let's carry that mindset on as we develop our new vision for mission here in West Wickham.

Heavenly Father, may we find many signs of abundance all around us in our lives. May our hearts fill with gratitude for the many blessings and gifts we have already been given and that you have multiplied. May we be ready and open to receive even more abundance in our lives, our churches and our community.

AMEN

Prayer Pointers

That all at St Mary's and St Francis may be energised by the Holy Spirit to have a spirit of abundance. That we can work together as one body, united in Christ, to bring the Kingdom of God to our community in West Wickham and that we may see possibilities not barriers in our new vision project.

As we think about the miracle of feeding the 5000, we hold before God all in our world who go hungry at this time – especially those in refugee camps who are also struggling with disease. We pray for aid agencies working to bring relief in these situations.

We continue to pray for all those in our country and abroad dealing with the Covid-19 situation especially for governments putting in place measures to try to halt its spread. Help us all to be responsible in the things that we do in our lives to prevent the spread of the virus by taking heed of the recommended precautions and avoiding situations that may make things worse.

Continue to pray for all those without work as more and more people are made redundant every week. For those seeking work where fewer and fewer jobs are available. Pray especially for those with families to support and who are worried about how they are going to pay bills and buy enough food. For all in Job Centres and voluntary agencies who work to help find new work for the unemployed.

We pray for those who have committed crimes and especially today we pray for those who broke into St Francis' last week. Whatever their problems may be, we pray that

they may be helped to see the consequences of their actions. We also offer them our forgiveness. We pray for the police whose difficult job it is to bring criminals to justice.