

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

6th September 2020: Climate Sunday

Hazel writes:

This week marks the start of 'creation-tide', a season in the church calendar when we are encouraged to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversation, and commitment together. This is an ecumenical, but not well-publicised, season, which the World Council of Churches agreed would extend from 1 September until 4 October – the Feast Day of St Francis. So, this month, let's take time to care for creation. Richard has a number of suggestions in his talk of things that we can do, as individuals and as a church together. What is it that you will do?

On Wednesday 9th September **midweek Communion** will be at St. Mary's at 10.45am.

Messy Church at Home is live on Friday 11th September

at <https://www.facebook.com/MessyChurchWestWickham> - live at 3.45pm and for catch up afterwards.

Next Sunday 13th September there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St. Francis at 8am and at 10am in St. Mary's. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am.

Please note the location of in-person services above is different to that stated in the magazines.

Now that we have been open for **public worship** for a few weeks, more people are familiar with the arrangements within the buildings and we are hoping to make up rotas for volunteers to be involved in the 10am services. These volunteers will ensure that all the necessary social distancing and hygiene precautions are taken by everyone in the building. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Beryl at St Mary's on 020 8289 8097/bbolton@ntlworld.com or Joan at St Francis' on 020 8777 2034/jandbburford@talktalk.net.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wed 9th September at 2.30pm in St Francis' Church. An opportunity to share any events or feelings connected with bereavement with others.

The **St Francis' APCM** will take place after the service on Sunday 20th September, beginning at 11.45am. This meeting will be held both in church and on Zoom. All the papers for this meeting have been sent out by email, with hard copy to those who normally receive a paper copy of the pew sheet. If you would like a copy of these papers, but have not received something by 7th September, please contact Nicky Nightingale on 07771 782914/nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, Instant Whip, mashed potatoes, jam, coffee, washing detergent, male and female shampoo, shaving gel/foam, adult & children's toothbrushes & toothpaste. There are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls 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 – Neil MacGregor on religious art from the National Gallery
- Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh.
- On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.00 a.m. and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. from the Eden Project with Claire McCollum

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.

We will be holding a **MacMillan Coffee Morning** on Friday 25th September in the gardens at St. Mary of Nazareth from 10.30 to 12noon, weather permitting. Cakes and donations will be gratefully received. We will be adhering to all government regulations. Please bring your own mug. There will also be a Zoom gathering for those who feel unable to make it in person.

Will members of St. Mary's please note that **donations** can now be made directly from our website using the link on the first page. Bob

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

Almighty God,
you search us and know us:
may we rely on you in
strength and rest on you in
weakness,
now and in all our days;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Psalm 108

1 *O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name
in all the world!*
2 Your majesty above the
heavens is praised
out of the mouths of babes
at the breast.
3 You have founded a
stronghold against your
foes,
that you might still the
enemy and the avenger.
4 When I consider your
heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the stars that
you have ordained,
5 What is man, that you
should be mindful of him;
the son of man, that you
should seek him out?

6 You have made him
little lower than the angels
and crown him with glory
and honour.

7 You have given him
dominion over the works of
your hands
and put all things under his
feet,

8 All sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the
field,

9 The birds of the air, the
fish of the sea
and whatsoever moves in
the paths of the sea.

10 *O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name
in all the world.*

**First Reading: Genesis 1.
24-28, 31: On the Sixth
Day:**

God said, 'Let the land
produce living creatures
according to their kinds: the
livestock, the creatures that
move along the ground, and
the wild animals, each
according to its kind.' And it
was so.

²⁵ God made the wild
animals according to their
kinds, the livestock
according to their kinds, and
all the creatures that move
along the ground according
to their kinds. And God saw
that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us
make mankind in our image,
in our likeness, so that they
may rule over the fish in the
sea and the birds in the sky,
over the livestock and all the
wild animals, and over all
the creatures that move
along the ground.'

²⁷ So God created mankind
in his own image,
in the image of God he
created them;
male and female he
created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and
said to them, 'Be fruitful and
increase in number; fill the
earth and subdue it. Rule
over the fish in the sea and
the birds in the sky and over
every living creature that
moves on the ground.'

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Gospel: Matthew 6. 26-33:

²⁶ Jesus said, “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Post Communion Prayer

God our creator,
 you feed your children with
 the true manna,
 the living bread from
 heaven:
 let this holy food sustain us
 through our earthly
 pilgrimage until we come to
 that place where hunger
 and thirst are no more;
 through Jesus Christ our
 Lord.

TALK:

A 2013 report commissioned by the World Bank revealed that hundreds of millions of people in the developing world are likely to be displaced by rising sea levels this century, and accompanying economic and ecological damage will be severe for many. Countries most at risk include China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan and the United States. So it's not just developing countries that will feel the impact.

Climate change is already leading to more extreme weather. Only last month we experienced, for the second year running, a heat wave with temperatures in the thirties. The 2019 heat wave was regarded as being responsible for around 900 extra deaths in this country and nearly 1,500 in France.

Earlier this year, drought and high temperatures worsened the 2020 bushfires in Australia. And reduced rainfall leads to desertification of agricultural land, so that it can no longer support the populations that depend on it, leading to displacement of people and increased migration.

More intense storms are another product of global warming, leading recently to catastrophic flooding in Bangladesh.

So far I've focused on the impact of climate change on humans, but the natural world is also suffering. The excessive melting of polar ice is threatening the habitat of polar bears. The thawing of permafrost is releasing more methane into the atmosphere, and since methane is a key greenhouse gas, this is adding to the impact of global warming. And mild winters have led to an increase in pine beetles, which in turn has led to the destruction of large areas of forest – forest which is needed to absorb carbon dioxide created by the burning of fossil fuels.

I could go on, but I think you've got the picture. And a catastrophic and disturbing picture it is.

So what, not just as humans, but as Christians should our response be?

Whilst the majority of Christians no longer read the creation story in Genesis as an historical document, although interestingly the order of events – first plants, then life in the sea and sky, followed by animal life on land and eventually human beings – the order is the same as that understood by evolution... whilst most Christians don't read Genesis literally, we do believe that, like the rest of the Bible, its writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit and that God speaks to us through it.

And the writers of the creation story have three key messages to get across: first, that the world was created – it wasn't an accident – and the creator we know as God; second, that the created world was not just good – “God saw all that he had made and it was very good” and thirdly that God had made humankind responsible for caring for his good creation, as our reading this morning makes clear.

We're told as God contemplates creating human kind that they “will rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Then after they have been created, God charges them to:

“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

There's a similar message in the psalm we heard earlier. As the psalmist looks in wonder at the vastness of the universe, he is amazed that its creator also takes an interest in little old humankind. But God isn't just mindful of them, he has ennobled them and given them:

“... dominion over the works of his hands
and put all things under their feet,
All sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, the fish of the sea
and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.”

“Rule over,” “subdue,” “dominium” and “put under their feet!” What power God has given us! But with power comes responsibility. God has made us stewards of this creation. And there is another insight which the writer of Genesis has included in his creation story. We are made in God's image. We are to be like God in the way in which we care for his good creation. We are not to exploit it, waste it or destroy it.

Yet that is exactly what we are doing. If we read on in Genesis, we come to the account of the Fall – how humankind's disobedience separates us from God. And we can see the working out of the Fall in the way in which we are treating, or rather mistreating our environment.

We can date that mistreatment from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. At the time, we were ignorant of the real damage that we were doing. And the Bible teaches us that God is forgiving to those who act in ignorance – Jesus prays from the cross, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

But we are no longer ignorant; we have a very clear idea of what we are doing to our environment, to God’s creation.

So what should we do?

There’s a real risk that we find the whole problem so overwhelming that we feel helpless, that there’s nothing that we can do. But that’s to ignore the “Starfish principle.” If some of you have heard this before, I apologise.”

A boy was walking along the seashore one evening, when he came upon thousands of starfish washed up on the beach. Concerned, he started picking them up and throwing them back into the sea.

Just then a man came along, saw what the boy was doing, turned to him and said, “You’re wasting your time. You’ll never make a difference.”

The boy completed throwing back the starfish which he had just picked up, turned to the man and said, “It’s made a difference to that one!”

So how do we make a difference? Let’s start big.

Next year the United Nations will be holding a climate conference in Glasgow. It should have been held this year, but has been postponed because of Covid-19. The climate talks will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted, bringing together over 30,000 delegates including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change.

We can write to the prime minister and our MPs to express our concerns, encouraging them to participate constructively in the discussions and to agree to implement the policies that are considered necessary for the survival of our planet. We can pray for the success of the conference, that all countries will be prepared to play their part. These are things that Churches Together in Britain and Ireland are asking us to do.

As a church, we can join Eco Church, an award scheme, supported by our diocese, for churches in England and Wales who want to take steps to protect the environment.

At an individual level, we could support the Woodland Trust, which has a target of increasing the UK's woodland cover from its pitiful 13% to at least 17%. This would be major contribution to achieving the UK government's 2050 target to become carbon net zero – that's removing as much carbon as we're producing.

We could switch our electricity and gas supplier to ensure that we use green energy, energy that comes from renewable sources such as wind farms.

And then there are one or two other ideas that I suggested a couple of years ago.

- Reduce the amount of meat you eat. Meat and dairy production is responsible for 14.5% of climate changing gases. That's more than all forms of transport produce. Even cutting out meat once or twice a week will make a difference.
- Burn less fuel: let your food do the leg work. Ordering a weekly food delivery can cut down on separate car journeys – reducing your climate change emissions. Or buy locally produced food.
- Find a driver going to the same place as you. By sharing a ride with others, once we're free of Covid 19, you will be helping to reduce air pollution as well as burning less fuel.
- Consider switching to an electric car – they're becoming increasingly popular and are particularly good for short journeys around town.

And back to the Bible. The writer in the book of Exodus writes that God punishes the children for the sins of the fathers, to the third or the fourth generation.

If we don't get our approach to climate change right, our sins will impact far beyond our great-great grandchildren and we won't be able to plead ignorance.

Amen.

Prayer Pointers

Pray that we may learn to treasure our world and be responsible in our choices of travel, food, clothing and other necessities, favouring those companies who are trading ethically and caring for the environment.

That we may learn to grow and work together for a new future. That God will use the talents in both congregations to make fresh links with our community and spread the message of Good News here in West Wickham.

Continue to pray for Governments around the world – for a renewed sense of responsibility towards the environment and for all non-governmental organisations that campaign for a reduction in pollution and ending destruction of valuable wildlife habitats.

As the number of job redundancies increases almost daily, pray for all those who, through no fault of their own, suddenly find themselves with no work – especially for those with families to support and those who may face eviction if they cannot pay their rent. Especially pray for all those working for Croydon Council who face redundancy in the next month. May they not lose hope and find new fulfilling work quickly.

For all those who are ill, remembering those we know and love who are closest to us. Pray especially for all those anxiously awaiting the results of hospital tests and those affected by the backlog in treatment for serious illness. Pray and give thanks for our local NHS healthcare professionals who work hard to arrange treatments in these challenging times.