

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

16th January 2022: Second Sunday of Epiphany

Hazel writes:

Last week was an important step in learning to live with Covid. Although some of us tested positive recently, it did not stop our ministry and we are now well on our way to complete recovery. This has reminded us of the need to be flexible in the way we operate, so as to keep others safe.

Clearly the message about the virus easily spreading is correct. No-one should feel obliged to come to an event in person, even if you are due to be volunteering. It is OK to say 'no' and we will continue with our on-line provision, telephone contact and paper-based communications to keep our community together. This will not stop because restrictions are lifted. If you are coming to an event where many people are likely to be present, please do be mindful of others and consider taking a lateral flow test beforehand, as well as wearing a face mask while you are inside our buildings.

Today, we have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St. Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. at St. Mary's – Give me Joy in my Heart – Jubilate - Love Divine, all loves excelling – I watch the sunrise -One shall tell another

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. at St. Francis – Let all the world in every corner sing – Lord of all Hopefulness – Christ be our light – One shall tell another.

Next **Sunday 23rd January**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St. Francis' Church and at 10am in St Mary's Church, when Rev. David Pickering from Emmanuel Church will be preaching as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Morning Prayer is held this 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 at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at **9.15am** on Sunday. All other files for this week 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 – a service of Choral Matins from the Church of St. Mary le Tower, Ipswich.
- Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St. Albans Church in Holborn with Genesis Sixteen.
- On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Aled Jones is in Bristol visiting SS Great Britain and the city's Christian street art.

Coffee & Chat is on the first Thursday at 2.30pm on Zoom and our next in person date is this Thursday 20th January in St Francis' Church. If you would like to come and meet others for a chat, please do join us. If you would like to do this, but cannot make the date, or would like the log-in details, please let Rowena know (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com or 8777 6112).

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require bags for life, cooking sauces, toothbrushes and children's toothbrushes and hair conditioner. They are well stocked with pasta, cereals and baked beans. Please do not bring any fresh 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.

Barbara Plummer and family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and messages of sympathy on the death of her son Chris.

Concert at St. Mary's including "Three Wise Camels" 29th January. It has been decided to postpone this concert for the time being and a future date has yet to be decided. Watch the pew sheet for further details.

It is **hoped** to go ahead with the **Valentine's Ploughmen's Lunch at St. Mary's – Saturday 12th February, 12.30 for 1 o'clock**. This is an event organised, usually annually, by the men of St. Mary's. Tickets at £10 each are now on sale from Beryl Bolton 0208 289 8097 or berylbolton@hotmail.com. Numbers will be limited to 40 so book early if you hope to come along. We will need to know if you would like ham or cheese with your ploughman's.

We are now holding more in-person services in both churches on Sunday mornings, which we hope will create a much greater sense of regularity in our worship. As a consequence, we will be needing more volunteers to support these services. If you feel able to add any of the following roles to your schedule, please let the following people know:

Welcomers at St Mary's - Beryl Bolton - berylbolton@hotmail.com

Welcomers at St Francis' - Joan Burford – jandbburford@talktalk.net

Readers at St Mary's - Kay Mussard - kay@mussard.org.uk

Readers at St Francis' - Joan Burford - jandbburford@talktalk.net

Intercessors at both churches - Hazel O'Sullivan - hazelos58@gmail.com

Refreshments at St Mary's - Beryl Bolton - berylbolton@hotmail.com

Refreshments at St Francis' - Marion Barry - whitelandm@yahoo.com

Livestreaming and slides at St Mary's - Gifty Northey - office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk

Livestreaming at St Francis' - Nichola Nightingale - nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk

St Francis and St Mary's Arts events 2022: supporting mental health.

As you may know, we cancelled plans for a Festival of Arts in 2020 due to the pandemic. Instead, we are planning two arts weekends this year, linking these to how the Arts can have a positive influence on people's mental health, which will be so important in 2022:

- The first would be a Visual Arts weekend and might include a photography exhibition, film night and art exhibitions and will be 9-10th July 2022.
- Then a Written Word weekend will be 24-25th September 2022 and might include a book exhibition, poetry and other readings.

This is all in the very early planning stage and we would like many people to contribute ideas, plan and organise these events. If you would like to get involved please contact any of us: Ken (kennethabryan@aol.com), Kay (kay@mussard.org.uk), Debbie (debadams64@icloud.com), Tim (tim.shingler@ntlworld.com), Nicky (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) and Kate (katedyer41@hotmail.com).

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 or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

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

Collect

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end:
bring us with the whole
creation to your glory,
hidden through past ages
and made known in Jesus
Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Revelation 19: 6-10

⁶ Then I heard what seemed
to be the voice of a great
multitude, like the sound of
many waters and like the
sound of mighty thunder-
peals, crying out,
'Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God the
Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the
Lamb has come, and his
bride has made herself
ready;

⁸ to her it has been granted
to be clothed with fine
linen, bright and pure'
for the fine linen is the
righteous deeds of the
saints. ⁹ And the angel
said to me, 'Write this:
Blessed are those who are
invited to the marriage
supper of the Lamb.' And
he said to me, 'These are

true words of God.' ¹⁰ Then I
fell down at his feet to
worship him, but he said to
me, 'You must not do that! I
am a fellow-servant with
you and your
comrades who hold the
testimony of Jesus. Worship
God! For the testimony of
Jesus is the spirit of
prophecy.'

Gospel Reading:

John 2: 1-11

On the third day there was
a wedding in Cana of
Galilee, and the mother of
Jesus was there. ² Jesus and
his disciples had also been
invited to the wedding.

³ When the wine gave out,
the mother of Jesus said to
him, 'They have no wine.'

⁴ And Jesus said to her,
'Woman, what concern is
that to you and to me? My
hour has not yet come.'

⁵ His mother said to the
servants, 'Do whatever he
tells you.' ⁶ Now standing
there were six stone water-
jars for the Jewish rites of
purification, each holding
twenty or thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to them, 'Fill the
jars with water.' And they
filled them up to the brim.

⁸ He said to them, 'Now
draw some out, and take it
to the chief steward.' So
they took it. ⁹ When the
steward tasted the water
that had become wine and
did not know where it came
from (though the servants
who had drawn the water
knew), the steward called
the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said
to him, 'Everyone serves
the good wine first, and
then the inferior wine after
the guests have become
drunk. But you have kept
the good wine until
now.' ¹¹ Jesus did this, the
first of his signs, in Cana of
Galilee, and revealed his
glory; and his disciples
believed in him.

Post Communion Prayer

God of glory, you nourish
us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of
your glory may shine in all
the world. We ask this in
the name of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

REFLECTION – Ken Bryan

What a lovely start to a new year. A reading about a wedding. And no ordinary wedding at that, because it was a wedding that Jesus had been invited to. We don't know if it was a relation, or a friend of the family, or just close friends from the town or village of Cana. But what we are sure of is that Jesus was there. And this was to be a very auspicious time not just for the marrying couple but for Jesus whose ministry was about to begin in earnest. He had just called his new disciples to come and follow him and all together they went to join the wedding celebrations.

For the newly married couple it will be a time of change as they come to work out their new relationship with each other and with the outside world.

And for us entering a new year it is a time of change as we wonder how this year will be different from the last.

And especially as we are in a changing situation with regards to the pandemic. It is evolving and we are discovering ways to fight it with science and with our actions.

Each of these brings its own uncertainties.

What will the new normal look like for the newly married couple? What will the new normal look like for us in 2022 socially, politically and economically? And what restrictions to our lives will we be enduring because of the pandemic? Will we make the most of what we can do after nearly two years of restrictions?

Change is a constant in our lives with the ups and downs of life as well as the ebbs and flows of our lives of faith. We might not be sure what tomorrow will bring but we hope for the best. Just as the newly married couple will hope for the best and work together for a better life.

And in this time of increased uncertainty, it is good to realise that we can't lock ourselves away, even if we are indoors for a lot of the time, but we can and must keep active and keep in touch with others and keep in touch with God.

Our reading is a big change in the life of Jesus.

With this first miracle Jesus' life changed for good. He then relied totally on his relationship with his father. God guided him through some good times but also many challenging times and towards the most daunting and challenging time of all at his

arrest, trial, beating and crucifixion. Which of course we know had to happen for there to be that glorious moment of his resurrection and the new life for all who followed him then and down the centuries to us now.

What a celebration a wedding can be. And in first century Jewish times and in many places round the world today people come from far and wide to join in the celebrations and the festivities can go on for several days. Lots will be eaten, and lots will be drunk.

A foretaste of the great heavenly feast. This event points to that time. The water jars used for Jewish purification rites are a sign that God is doing a new thing from within the Jewish system bringing purification in a whole new way.

When the water is turned into wine it can signify the water of the Jewish faith being turned into the new wine of all who follow him to become the new Christians. And this is for all people.

For there to be six jars is also a sign. Six being an imperfect number according to the Jews, so these jars represent imperfection but when filled by Jesus they are not only filled with the finest wine but there is so much more to go round than anyone could possibly need.

John began with the words 'on the third day' and for him that is significant as his whole gospel points through signs to Jesus as the Messiah. So, this could well be John signifying the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth which culminated with the three days in the grave after his crucifixion and before his resurrection to a new life?

Baptism is another time of change and last week Hazel asked us to renew our baptismal vows and have some time reflecting on how we have received the light of Christ, signifying the love of God, and how we might commit to turn to God during the coming year, trusting in his promise to be with us and to affirm his love for us. Some of us lit a candle which we were encouraged to relight in a quiet moment to recognise that God has called us by name, and we are his. And to reflect on what this tells us about how God values and loves us. I wonder if we have done that this week or will do it in the coming week?

Jesus can do new things in our lives if we let him. If he can turn six stone jars full of water into the finest of wines, what can he do for us and with us? Turn us into fine human beings to do his father's will. And for his church to be a reflection of his

goodness. And as it says in Revelation: blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the lamb. And the saints will do righteous deeds.

Jesus can do the unexpected if we just let him.

How can we be open to listen to Jesus? By prayer, reading the scriptures and seeking guidance for what it is saying to us. And even listening to friends and those we meet as they may be giving us some wisdom from God even if they may not realise it themselves. Don't just accept everything you hear so do test out what you think is being said to you but don't ignore the promptings from God. You may be surprised at the generosity of God in showing his love to you. In good and bad times.

I don't say this flippantly as I realise many people are going through very difficult and even tragic times. But offer yourself to God and seek his love for you which is immense.

I do like the Revelation reading that talks of a great multitude crying out 'Hallelujah. For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.' Not just one or two people feeling they are on their own and probably a little shy about speaking out, but a great multitude giving each other confidence. Are we among the many as promised and are we feeling confident enough to shout, not whisper or just speak but to shout 'Hallelujah'?

Finally, Mary is here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the only other time we see her in this gospel is at the foot of the cross. What changes she has endured in her life.

There is a richness of life on offer that we can only imagine. It is sheer gift and requires only our co-operation. If we listen to Mary's message 'to do whatever Jesus tells us' we will find the strength to proclaim his wonders. We will be empowered by God's Holy Spirit to begin to change the sadness in our lives and the injustice in our world so that we can truly celebrate and cry out with joy, 'Hallelujah our God reigns.'

Amen

Prayer Pointers

As Jesus changed the water into wine at the wedding feast, we pray that through our faith, our community here in West Wickham may be transformed by his love so that we may all become more like him day by day.

Pray for our Government as they make difficult decisions especially in relation to the Covid pandemic and the country's economy. That the actions of those in power may be an example to all.

Continue to pray for all who work in NHS as they cope with the pressure due to Covid. We pray for those suffering from stress as a result of the covid pandemic; for hospitals having to declare critical incidents and for all who work in the emergency Covid Hubs, especially for the Hub at St George's Hospital.

Pray that the transforming power of Christ's love will be released, where people see no way of paying off their debts, where queueing at the food bank is all the future seems to hold, where homes or jobs seem nothing more than a distant dream. As you turned water into wine, transform despair into hope.

For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce, Carole Hubbard, and Robert Davis. Continue to pray for a good recovery for Brian Griffiths.

For the soul of David Hurt and the family of Daphne Dack as they mourn him and look to the future.

Creator God, abundant giver, at a wedding in Cana you turned the ordinary into the extraordinary. We come to you, ready for you to turn our ordinariness into something extraordinary for you this week and always.