

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

19th February 2023: Sunday before Lent

Hazel writes:

This week we begin our Lent program with a talk from Brian (which will be distributed after the morning services) on unanswered prayer. I am sure that we will all have experienced it. You may even still be experiencing it. You've been praying for something for a really long time; you're sure it would be in God's interest for this thing to happen (or at least it wouldn't do any harm), but you've had no sign from God that the prayer is going to be answered (not even a clear 'no'). And so, you keep on praying, but all the time feeling that God is silent. After this introductory talk, there will be others that follow, working our way through the days of Holy Week as we get closer to these in real time:

- Maundy Thursday: How am I going to get through this?
- Good Friday: Why aren't my prayers working?
- Holy Saturday: Where is God when heaven is silent?
- Easter Sunday: When will my prayers be answered?

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

Next **Sunday 26th February**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 10.45am in St Francis' Church and at 9.15am in St Mary's Church.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am. It is also held in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

This week there will be a service of **Holy Communion and Ashing on Ash Wednesday** (22nd February) at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. There will also be another Churches Together Service at 8pm in Emmanuel Church, The Grove.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Lent Groups this year will reflect on unanswered prayer, following our sermons during Lent. Why not make a commitment this Lent to follow the sermon series. If you are not already a member of a Home Group and would like to join one of the following groups to go a bit deeper in our understanding of how prayer works, please contact the following:

- Monday evenings: meet on Zoom – 8-9.30pm (contact Richard Ford on 020 8289 2432 or richard.ford73@ntlworld.com)
- Thursday mornings: meet at St Francis' – 10.30am – 12noon (contact Debbie Adams on 020 8777 7834 or debadams64@icloud.com)

The World Day of Prayer is on Friday 3rd March. There will be a Churches Together Service at 10.30am on that day in Coney Hill Baptist Church. All are welcome.

St Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Sunday 12th March after the 9.15am service. As well as a report on the past year, we will also be looking to recruit new members of the PCC. If you are interested in being a Deanery Synod rep (including opportunities to visit other churches and see what they are doing) or to help with administrative activities associated with running our church (and so gain a greater insight into how God is working through the church), please do speak with any current members of the PCC. We are a friendly group who would appreciate anyone with new ideas to offer.

We are slightly changing how we run our **Sunday morning communion services** to get an appropriate balance between returning to previous traditions and enabling everyone to feel safe in the church buildings:

- We continue to distribute communion by the priest dipping the wafer in the wine, but will review whether to return to the common cup at Easter. If we do, then those who do not want to share the cup can still receive communion in one kind only. Please do speak to Richard or Hazel if you have a strong view one way or the other.
- On any livestream we show what is happening in the church during communion. If you do not want to be seen on the livestream when receiving communion, please speak to Hazel, Richard or a warden on duty and we will bring communion to you.
- Sharing the peace can now be done in closer proximity, with a handshake or similar, but please be mindful of what each individual will feel comfortable with.
- With smaller numbers of people attending the services in the church buildings, it will help us to feel part of one community if we sit closer together. Please sit towards the front and in the middle of the buildings. This will also make it easier for you to sing along with the hymns.

Churches Together in West Wickham are opening up **Warm Spaces** on five days each week (normally 9am-5pm) providing somewhere warm for people to meet in for free. This is also an opportunity to meet with volunteers from other churches and share some social time together, so if you are looking for some company, do join in at the following locations: ·

- On a Monday at West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church
- On a Tuesday at Coney Hill Baptist Church

- On a Wednesday at St Francis' Church
- On a Thursday at West Wickham Methodist Church
- On a Friday at Emmanuel United Reformed Church

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require milk (long life), coffee, sweets, cooking sauces, soup, rice, tinned potatoes and other vegetables. They are well stocked with pasta, cereal, tea and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen 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.

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

Holy God,
you know the disorder
of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked
hearts, and bend our
wills to love your
goodness
and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Phil.4: 1, 4-7

¹ Therefore, my brothers
and sisters, whom I love
and long for, my joy and
crown, stand firm in the
Lord in this way, my
beloved.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord
always; again I will say,
Rejoice. ⁵ Let your
gentleness be known to
everyone. The Lord is
near. ⁶ Do not worry
about anything, but in
everything by prayer
and supplication with
thanksgiving let your
requests be made
known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God,
which surpasses all
understanding, will
guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ
Jesus.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 18: 9-14

⁹ He also told this
parable to some who
trusted in themselves
that they were
righteous and regarded
others with contempt:

¹⁰ 'Two men went up to
the temple to pray, one
a Pharisee and the other
a tax-collector. ¹¹ The
Pharisee, standing by
himself, was praying
thus, "God, I thank you
that I am not like other
people: thieves, rogues,
adulterers, or even like
this tax-collector. ¹² I
fast twice a week; I give
a tenth of all my
income."

¹³ But the tax-collector,
standing far off, would

not even look up to
heaven, but was beating
his breast and saying,
"God, be merciful to me,
a sinner!"

¹⁴ I tell you, this man
went down to his home
justified rather than the
other; for all who exalt
themselves will be
humbled, but all who
humble themselves will
be exalted.'

Post Communion Prayer

Holy God,
we see your glory in the
face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are
partakers at his table,
reflect his life in word
and deed,
that all the world may
know his power to
change and save. This
we ask through Jesus
Christ our Lord.

Collect

Holy God,
our lives are laid open
before you: rescue us
from the chaos of sin,
and through the death
of your Son, bring us
healing and make us
whole, in Jesus Christ
our Lord.

First Reading:

**2 Corinthians 5:20b –
6:10**

²⁰ We entreat you on
behalf of Christ, be
reconciled to God.

As we work together
with him, we urge you
also not to accept the
grace of God in
vain. ² For he says,
'At an acceptable time
I have listened to you,
and on a day of
salvation I have helped
you.'

See, now is the
acceptable time; see,
now is the day of
salvation! ³ We are

putting no obstacle in
anyone's way, so that
no fault may be found
with our ministry, ⁴ but
as servants of God we
have commended
ourselves in every
way: through great
endurance, in
afflictions, hardships,
calamities, ⁵ beatings,
imprisonments, riots,
labours, sleepless
nights, hunger; ⁶ by
purity, knowledge,
patience, kindness,
holiness of spirit,
genuine love, ⁷ truthful
speech, and the power
of God; with the
weapons of
righteousness for the
right hand and for the
left; ⁸ in honour and
dishonour, in ill repute
and good repute. We
are treated as
impostors, and yet are
true; ⁹ as unknown,
and yet are well
known; as dying, and

see—we are alive; as
punished, and yet not
killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful,
yet always rejoicing; as
poor, yet making many
rich; as having
nothing, and yet
possessing everything.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

‘Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² ‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ ‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and

pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ ‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹ ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us, both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life: give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive these his inestimable gifts, and also daily endeavour to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Brian Griffiths (to follow)

Prayer Pointers

Pray for God's help in those difficult times in our lives when he seems to be silent - those days when we do not hear his voice no matter how we listen for it - those times when we feel alone and far from God. Pray that we may see beneath the surface and recognise that God is at work and is able to transform even the most hopeless of situations.

Hold before God, our link parish of St Andrew's in Gweru in the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe. Pray that following Covid, people will feel brave enough to return to worshipping in church and for the growth of the church.

Pray for everyone trying to bring some relief to the suffering in Turkey and Syria. Hold before God those who are involved in the ongoing rescue and recovery effort, give them the resilience and patience they need to keep going. Pray for the medical teams arriving to tend the wounded.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for the congregation of Holy Trinity, Eltham – their vicar Brett Ward; Assistant Curate, Daniel Wyman and Karen Wood, their Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary.

After another week of violence, continue to pray for an end to street violence in our City. Pray for all those involved in bringing the perpetrators to justice and for those caring for the victims and their families.

Pray for those we know and love, our family, friends, and neighbours who are in need this day especially for those who are ill. In our congregations pray for these by name – Mark Outten, Vicky Pearce, Mike East, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Karen Plummer, Keith Morley and Nina Tilling – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died in the faith of Christ crucified. Pray especially for Barbara Plummer and Stuart Froment and their families.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings - all those things that worry us; those situations we feel helpless in; those decisions that burden us; those losses that overwhelm us, and all that we are thankful for.