

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

## 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021: Bible Sunday

### Hazel writes:

You will all have heard about the numbers of coronavirus cases increasing in the past week, as well as the reducing efficacy of the vaccination after a number of months. This confirms that we have probably relaxed our restrictions for Sunday morning services as much as we are able to at the moment. It was great to include the intinction of the wafer in communion last week and we plan to continue with this practice. However, it is unlikely that we will be making any further changes in the near future.

Next Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October, we will have **Holy Communion services** at 8am in St Mary's church and at 10am in St. Francis' Church. There will also be our annual **Memorial Service** to remember loved ones who have died in the afternoon at 3pm in St Mary's church.

**Morning Prayer** is held in St Francis' Church on Wednesday mornings 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 mornings at 9am.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – This week our service will be **livestreamed at 10am** on YouTube. 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](http://www.churchofengland.org).
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
  - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – An Ethiopian Orthodox Sunday Worship featuring excerpts from a service at Bath Abbey.
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 Choral Vespers live from Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace.
  - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Aled Jones visits Angelsey's Church Island, a Holy place for over 1000 years

Today, 24<sup>th</sup> October, there will be a service for **Churches Together in West Wickham** at 6pm in St Francis' Church when we will be reflecting on the work of the Bible Society. This will also be available on-line via Zoom and will be followed by a meeting where we will discuss plans for celebrating our wider community in 2022. Please do come and support this event either in-person or on-line. The on-line log-in details have been set out on a separate sheet and sent round in hard copy and by email.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need bags for life, cooking sauce, toothbrushes, children's toothpaste, and hair conditioner. They are well-stocked with pasta, cereals and baked beans and 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>.

**Anne Hunter** died on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October. Her funeral will be held on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October at 10.15 a.m. in Beckenham Crematorium with refreshments afterwards at the Warren.

Our annual **Memorial Service** to remember loved ones who have died will be on Sunday 31st October at 3pm in St Mary's Church and also available on-line on our YouTube channel. If you would like the name of a loved one read out at the service, please write it clearly on a list in either of the churches, or send an email to Hazel at [hazelos58@gmail.com](mailto:hazelos58@gmail.com).

We are planning to go ahead with the **Christmas Market on 27<sup>th</sup> November** subject to government rules and regulations.

This year's Market will have a different layout as we must take social distancing into account. The following stalls will be available: Bric-a-brac, Cakes & Preserves, Hampers, Bottle Tombola, Chocolates & Sweets Tombola, Books & Puzzles and Toys. Face painting will be available for both young and old.

The kitchen will be serving a limited menu of delicious soups, filled rolls and jacket potatoes with fillings. The Café will be in operation with tea/coffee and home-made cakes, as well as the Irish Coffees.

The Market does rely on your generous donations and will appreciate donations of chocolates, sweets, baked goods, bottles of any kind (alcoholic, non-alcoholic, etc). Monetary donations for the hampers will be most welcome. We also need someone to run the Toys Stall, as well as other volunteers to help on the day. Please contact Gifty if you would like to volunteer ([office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk) or 07813 797757).

Do contact Merri Womack directly (8777 8772) if you would like to order an Advent ring this year.

Thanks to all those who have contributed stories about '**God with Us**' for the magazines and our special service in July. If you have any further stories to share, please do send them to Hazel (with a request for anonymisation if you'd prefer), so that we can continue to share these in different ways.

Please continue to bring furnishings – sticks and dry leaves – for our new Messy Church **Bug Hotel** at St Mary's so that the bugs to feel at home. If you want to walk with a

purpose, please do collect some of these on your travels, bring them to St Mary's and put them into the Bug Hotel, or leave them beside it and someone from Messy Church will put them into the structure.

Our **bereavement support bags** will be especially helpful in the months ahead. If you would like a bag to give to someone that you know who has lost a loved one, do take one from the back of either of the churches.

**Coffee & Chat** on Zoom is now held every first Thursday of the month and in person on the third Thursday of the month in St Francis' Church, both at 2.30pm. 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](mailto:rowena.griff19@btinternet.com) or 8777 6112).

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 Nicky Nightingale ([nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) for St Francis'. There are vacancies at both churches so please get in touch if you would like a pedestal. There is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Marys.

There are two pedestals this week at St. Marys: the sanctuary pedestal has been provided by John and Merri Womack for their wedding anniversary and has been arranged by Merri, and the pedestal in the porch has been provided by Bob Mason in memory of Jan whose two-year anniversary occurs at this time and has been arranged by Annette.

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

**Collect**

Merciful God,  
teach us to be faithful in  
change and uncertainty,  
that trusting in your word  
and obeying your will  
we may enter the unending  
joy of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**2 Timothy 3: 14 – 4: 5**

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in  
what you have learned and  
have become convinced of,  
because you know those  
from whom you learned it,  
<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you  
have known the Holy  
Scriptures, which are able to  
make you wise for salvation  
through faith in Christ  
Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-  
breathed and is useful  
for teaching, rebuking,  
correcting and training in  
righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the  
servant of God may be  
thoroughly equipped for  
every good work.

**4** In the presence of God and  
of Christ Jesus, who will  
judge the living and the  
dead, and in view of his  
appearing and his kingdom, I  
give you this  
charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the  
word; be prepared in season  
and out of season; correct,  
rebuke and encourage—  
with great patience and

careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the  
time will come when people  
will not put up with sound  
doctrine. Instead, to suit  
their own desires, they will  
gather around them a great  
number of teachers to say  
what their itching ears want  
to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their  
ears away from the truth and  
turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But  
you, keep your head in all  
situations, endure  
hardship, do the work of an  
evangelist, discharge all the  
duties of your ministry.

**Gospel Reading:**

**John 5: 36b-47**

<sup>36</sup> “I have testimony  
weightier than that of  
John. For the works that the  
Father has given me to  
finish—the very works that I  
am doing—testify that the  
Father has sent me. <sup>37</sup> And  
the Father who sent me has  
himself testified concerning  
me. You have never heard  
his voice nor seen his  
form, <sup>38</sup> nor does his word  
dwell in you, for you do not  
believe the one he  
sent. <sup>39</sup> You study the  
Scriptures diligently because  
you think that in them you  
have eternal life. These are  
the very Scriptures that  
testify about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you  
refuse to come to me to

have life. <sup>41</sup> “I do not accept  
glory from human  
beings, <sup>42</sup> but I know you. I  
know that you do not have  
the love of God in your  
hearts. <sup>43</sup> I have come in my  
Father’s name, and you do  
not accept me; but if  
someone else comes in his  
own name, you will accept  
him. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe  
since you accept glory from  
one another but do not seek  
the glory that comes from  
the only God? <sup>45</sup> “But do not  
think I will accuse you before  
the Father. Your accuser is  
Moses, on whom your hopes  
are set. <sup>46</sup> If you believed  
Moses, you would believe  
me, for he wrote about  
me. <sup>47</sup> But since you do not  
believe what he wrote, how  
are you going to believe  
what I say?”

**Post Communion Prayer**

God of all grace, your Son  
Jesus Christ fed the hungry  
with the bread of his life  
and the word of his  
kingdom: renew your  
people with your heavenly  
grace, and in all our  
weakness sustain us by your  
true and living bread;  
who is alive and reigns, now  
and for ever.

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## Sermon – Hazel O’Sullivan

Today is Bible Sunday. I wonder how well you know your Bible.

Don’t worry, it’s not a test – that’s not what we’re here for.

However, if you wanted to learn your bible better, I wonder how you’d go about this. Would it be through pictures, through reading something, having an experience, or maybe it’s by hearing something? These are all different learning styles and we each have a preferred one.

I wonder what it is that you think about when you think about learning. If you’re automatically taken back to your schooldays maybe you have a certain association with books and studying where it’s all about being the one who knows the most or the one who comes top in the class. Have you ever been in one of those situations where someone clearly knows what they’re talking about, such that they are showing off to others? You might at first have been impressed, but then very quickly lost interest in whatever it is that they were talking about. That’s hardly an inspirational approach to learning.

This competitive way of looking at learning was what the Jewish leaders in the temple in Jesus’ day were concerned with. In the gospel reading Jesus recognises that they are studying the scriptures regularly and they knew them really well. But this was all about mastering the text and impressing others, as this was how they recognised who was the holiest amongst them: who knew their scripture the best? I wonder if that’s how we look at holiness?

However, just because you could recite a text didn’t mean that you understood what it was saying. Jesus points this out in v39 of the gospel reading – there were many prophecies in their scriptures which testified on his behalf. Last week we looked at one of these in Isaiah, chapter 55 and Ken explained how each of the verses was fulfilled by Jesus. But when Jesus was still alive, they didn’t recognise this prophecy fulfilment. So, concentrating on reading and study in the traditional sense doesn’t necessarily bring about a very effective way of looking at learning and looking at life.

I wonder how you’ve gone about the process of applying your learning to life, rather than to being able to pass an exam. Have you made sense of your life through study of a topic and then use of that in a career? Or maybe there have been particular people who’ve been role models or teachers for you; or maybe you’ve heard about something and learned about it not through study, but by talking about it with others; or has it

been visual things that have shaped you, whether that is pictures, films, fashion, whatever ...

Whichever is your preferred learning style, you'll have been influenced by other people, who probably engaged with you in this preferred way. So, who is it that has had a strong positive impact on your life in the past? Spend a few moments now thinking about someone who holds this position. And how was it that they engaged with you – experiences, discussion, sending cards, recommending books or films.

And now, think about whether this person has been close to you, or distant from you. Think about whether your relationship with them has been a warm one or a cool one. When you meet, is there, or was there one-way or two-way conversation. Did you feel that they really knew you?

I suspect that your answers to these questions reveal that anyone who's had a positive impact on your life was someone that you're close to.

St Paul in his letter to Timothy, recognises that Timothy has learned some good things, but he's not thinking about learning from an academic standpoint. He's not seeing learning as a competition. He's thinking about what Timothy learned from his mother and his grandmother about faith and God, both in scripture and in other writings, which today we might know as prayers, poetry or liturgy. All the different ways in which we connect with God. And this is what we are trying to do when we are reading scripture today. The bible is one of God's ways of talking to us and in reading it we are coming before him, not so that we can learn and recite a text, but so that we can make sense of something in our own lives.

Jesus makes a real difference to how we might study scripture compared to the Jewish leaders who were around when he was still alive as a human. What difference is this? Well, to start with Jesus shows us how the Old Testament scriptures point to the Messiah. We've already thought about how this is illustrated in Isaiah and in v46 of today's gospel reading, Jesus says that Moses wrote about him as well. But it's not only about learning the text and being able to point to those places in the Old Testament where Jesus is foretold to make you look good. No, it's more about bringing you to Jesus himself. It's in the scriptures – both New and Old Testament, where Jesus is talked about, that we can see who Jesus was. And in seeing who Jesus is, we see who God is and we can begin to understand something about our own lives as people made in the image of God.

Reading the bible is not about studying a text and looking at different interpretations (and gaining status as a result), but about allowing the text to bring us into the presence of the living God.

So, whatever way in which you learn best, the bible is about bringing us into the living presence of God. That might come through pictures, (in many art galleries you can see those pictures which have been inspired by stories in the bible, or you might create one in your own mind or on paper). You might come into God's presence through reading a passage in the bible: there are so many different translations, you're bound to find one that you feel is accessible. Or you might enter the living presence of God through an experience, such as seeing a play like *The Life of Christ* in Wintershall that some of us went to see a few years ago, or through talking about a passage with someone else. Or you might find it best to engage through listening to the bible being read here in church and then an explanation being given in the sermon.

Our home groups offer an opportunity to engage in all these different ways. It's not about studying the bible in an academic way but is more like finding Jesus there in the picture, in the writing, in the experience, in the sounds. Jesus was telling the Jewish leaders that they needed to come to him to have life. For us, this life starts with the words that people wrote about Jesus, the background to his human existence and the impact that he had on the early church. If you're looking for a new way to engage with all of this, you need look no further than the bible and approach it with your preferred learning style. Oh, and if you can find a group of people who can help you with this, just like Timothy, you'll find a strengthening faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen

## Prayer Pointers

With the Climate Change conference of Cop26 taking place next month may those who attend take on board the seriousness of the effects of global warming and be prepared to make hard decisions about the future wellbeing of our planet. Pray that all parties will listen to each other.

Pray for Zimbabwe as she emerges from her third lockdown, for St Andrews' Gweru our link parish and her new priest Rev Fr Meso Sabastian who asks for energy and protection while they bring God's presence to parishioners during these trying times.

Continue to pray Afghanistan, for her Leaders, that they rule with justice, integrity and impartiality and for her people as they continue to adjust to a new regime. Pray for those fleeing from the new regime that they will be kept safe, and for them and all refugees that wherever they find themselves they will be made welcome. Pray that the Country will receive the Aid it needs.

Pray for the people of La Palma in the Canary Islands as the volcanic activity shows no sign of slowing down and more land and property is destroyed, thank God that so far no one has been killed.

For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce, Julie Bailey, Carole Hubbard, Robert Davis, Brian Griffiths and Linda Keynes – and those unknown to us but known to God alone.

As Covid numbers rise pray for wisdom for our politicians and their medical advisors as they consider any future actions that may have to be taken. Pray for all who work in the NHS.

Sadly, young Connor Owlett has died (having been home for his 9<sup>th</sup> Birthday, his condition then deteriorated). Pray for his family and friends at this time. Pray also for Christine Harley, and Ann Dakin who died recently and whose funerals were this week, and for Anne Hunter: may they rest in peace and rise in glory. Pray for their families and friends as they mourn their passing.