

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

25<sup>th</sup> April 2021: Fourth Sunday of Easter

### Hazel writes:

I am already meeting many people with mental health difficulties as we come out of lockdown. Our next Inclusive Church meeting will explore how we can enable everyone with such issues to feel a part of our church community. Please do mark the date in your diary and consider any questions that you'd like to pose at the meeting – see below.

Next Sunday there will be a special **Vision Sunday service** which will be held **on Zoom at 10am**. There will be an in-person service in **St Mary's church at 8am**.

St Francis' Church will be **open for private prayer** on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April from 10.30-11.30am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be **live streamed at 10.00 a.m.** on our YouTube channel. 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 – with Rev. Canon Ann Easter and Dr. Krish Kandiah celebrating the gift of relationships.
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St. Matthews Church, Westminster.
  - On BBC 1: Sunday Stories at 10.45 a.m. – Kate Bottley shares stories rooted in faith, hope and spirituality.
  - Songs of Praise **on BBC2 at 1.15 p.m.** – Kate Bottley visits the new Bridgewater Gardens in Salford to celebrate Spring.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need desserts (including tinned rice pudding), biscuits, tinned potatoes, tinned tomatoes, Tinned Fruit, tinned soup, Tinned Cold meat, tinned fish, Toilet Rolls, washing up liquid and clothes washing capsules (but not liquid in bottles). 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>

**Inclusive Church:** The next in our series of Zoom meetings focused on how to further grow as inclusive churches will be at 8 p.m. on May 6<sup>th</sup>, when we will be looking at Mental Health and Wellbeing. Speakers confirmed so far are Robin Thomson, author of "Living with Alzheimers: a love story," Andrew Wilson, former chaplain at The Bethlem Hospital, and our own Kate Dyer, GP. We are hoping also to have a school representative to talk about the impact of Covid on students' wellbeing and other stress factors encountered by young people. Questions to put to the panel should be sent or phoned to Richard Ford: [richard.ford73@ntlworld.com](mailto:richard.ford73@ntlworld.com); 020 8289 2432.

Last week we started a campaign, **United in Giving**. One strand of this is a series of sermons and this week's is 'United in Generosity'. We have also published a United in Giving leaflet for each of our two churches – please do pick up a copy. It would be great if each member of our congregation prayerfully considered their financial contribution to the church at this time, increasing the regular amount given, as well as changing the mechanism by which this happens, as both churches have now signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme, which we believe will benefit us financially. There are details of this scheme in the leaflets published this week and you will hear more about it at the end of our campaign on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May.

Do you feel you are being called to put yourself forward to be on the **Southwark Diocesan Synod**? Elections will take place by the beginning of July. The Synod brings people together from across the Diocese to drive mission, set strategies, shape priorities as well as appoint to a range of positions on boards and committees. It is a body which is advisory and is a place where important topics facing the church can be discussed. If you want to find out more, please take a leaflet which you will find copies of in both churches and speak to Hazel.

We are looking to have a consistent approach to dedicating **pedestal flower arrangements** in our church buildings in the weeks ahead. 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'.

This week the **flowers at St Mary's** are to celebrate the birth of Sophie, a first great-grand-daughter for Margaret Norton and have been arranged by Merri.

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](mailto:rowena.griff19@btinternet.com) /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

The **St Francis' APCM** will be on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May after the Sunday morning services at 11.30am in church and on Zoom further details will be distributed nearer the time.

As we look to support our community as we come out of lockdown, please do remember our **bereavement support bags**, which can be helpful to someone who has lost a loved one, whether this was recently or sometime during the past year (maybe even longer ago than that). If you would like a bag to give to someone that you know who has lost a loved one, do let me know. Hazel

St John's want your empty **crisp packets** to create survival kit blankets for rough sleepers and those in need. Recycling is a great way to save the oceans and this could make a real difference to people's lives! Have a look at our page to find out more ([www.facebook.com/CrispPacketProjectWestWickham](http://www.facebook.com/CrispPacketProjectWestWickham)), or check out this video: <https://youtu.be/L5FWMca5BFY>. You can collect and wash crisp packets and bring them to the Foodbank donation points, or you can follow the video to make a finished sheet - we'd love you to join us!

**Christian Aid Week** this year is from 10-16th May and focusses on Climate Justice. We will not have a door-to-door collection, but (physical and virtual) envelopes can be given to friends and neighbours and we will focus on Christian Aid at our service on Sunday 16th May. Geoff Mussard and Anita Curtis will be co-ordinating our efforts this year. More news will follow soon.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [bbolton@ntlworld.com](mailto:bbolton@ntlworld.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**

Risen Christ,  
faithful shepherd of your  
Father's sheep:  
teach us to hear your  
voice and to follow your  
command, that all your  
people may be gathered  
into one flock, to the  
glory of God the Father.

**First Reading: Acts 4: 5-12**

The next day their rulers,  
Elders and scribes  
assembled in Jerusalem,  
<sup>6</sup> with Annas the high  
priest, Caiaphas, John, and  
Alexander, and all who  
were of the high-priestly  
family. <sup>7</sup> When they had  
made the prisoners stand  
in their midst, they  
inquired, 'By what power  
or by what name did you  
do this?' <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled  
with the Holy Spirit, said to  
them, 'Rulers of the people  
and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are  
questioned today because  
of a good deed done to  
someone who was sick and  
are asked how this man has  
been healed, <sup>10</sup> let it be  
known to all of you, and to  
all the people of Israel, that  
this man is standing before

you in good health by the  
name of Jesus Christ of  
Nazareth whom you  
crucified, whom God raised  
from the dead. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus  
is "the stone that was  
rejected by you, the  
builders; it has become the  
cornerstone."

<sup>12</sup> There is salvation in no  
one else, for there is no  
other name under heaven  
given among mortals by  
which we must be saved.'

**Gospel Reading: John 10:  
11-18**

I am the good shepherd,  
the good shepherd lays  
down his life for the  
sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand,  
who is not the shepherd  
and does not own the  
sheep, sees the wolf  
coming and leaves the  
sheep and runs away—  
and the wolf snatches  
them and scatters them.  
<sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs  
away because a hired  
hand does not care for  
the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the  
good shepherd. I know  
my own and my own  
know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the

Father knows me and I  
know the Father. And I lay  
down my life for the  
sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other  
sheep that do not belong  
to this fold. I must bring  
them also, and they will  
listen to my voice. So  
there will be one flock,  
one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this  
reason the Father loves  
me, because I lay down  
my life in order to take it  
up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes  
it from me, but I lay it  
down of my own accord. I  
have power to lay it  
down, and I have power  
to take it up again. I have  
received this command  
from my Father.'

**Post Communion Prayer**

Merciful Father,  
you gave your Son Jesus  
Christ to be the good  
shepherd, and in his love  
for us to lay down his life  
and rise again:  
keep us always under his  
protection, and give us  
grace to follow in his  
steps; through Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

*The collect and post communion prayer, copyright © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England or reproduced with permission from other copyright owners.*

*Bible reading from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.*

## Sermon: Gabby Parikh – Diocese of Southwark

It is a pleasure to be here with you this morning and be asked to speak as part of your 2021 Giving focus. My name is Gabby Parikh, and as part of my Diocesan role I have the privilege of working with parishes and encouraging their giving so that they can resource and grow their mission.

As you continue your series on giving and turn to our Gospel passage, straightaway we are reminded of what a generous God we have: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

The description of Jesus as a shepherd is often used in the Scriptures such as in Psalm 23. The image was used of the loving care of God for the people.

Jesus is the good shepherd who gives his very life for his sheep. He contrasts his commitment to the sheep with the behaviour of the hired ones who flee at the first hint of danger. He is making a point about the way the Pharisees cared for their people. Unlike them, Jesus was fearless in the face of death in order to save his sheep.

I sometimes find myself watching *The Simpsons* and on one episode I heard Bart say grace before the family meal that went “Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing”. It made me think because - although it made me flinch - it is easy to fall into thinking that way. How easily we forget God’s shepherd-like care for us. 1 Chronicles 29:14 says of God that “all things come from you, and from your own have I given you.” Do we honour God, acknowledging him as the source of all our blessings, money, and possessions? Acknowledging his constant care for us as our shepherd? Is love of money more important to us than loving God? Where is giving to God’s work in our spending priorities?

God has trusted us with gifts and abilities, which he wants us to use. Being generous looks very different for each one of us in our local contexts and areas of our everyday lives. How does God’s generosity flow out through you and me? Think about your *labour - giving labour and time, where are you currently serving God?*

Gary Grant, the founder of ‘The Entertainer’ toy shop says of his work, “We don’t leave church on a Sunday and switch our faith brain off and our business brain on and run for six days and switch over again. We take our faith and what we do in our business and make sure we’re comfortable in the way we’re going about it”. Gary and his wife give away a lot of what they earn financially and speak often about the joy of giving. We may not all be business leaders like Gary, but we can all be generous by giving people time, caring for others, being open to new ideas, encouraging, give opportunities and acting with integrity rather than running away like hired hands.

Christ the Shepherd is a careful guide who participates in the life of his flock. He knows us and we know him. Jesus enfolds us in his loving care, reflecting the close relationship between the Father and the Son. The shepherds of the Israel would have guided their sheep by walking with their flock. Sometimes they led at the front. Sometimes they walked by their side. Often, they held back to gather any lagging behind. Perhaps take a moment to

reflect how over the last year God has walked alongside us, led us, or gathered us up in his arms and carried us through the difficult times. Corrie ten Boom wrote “There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still”.

St Francis and St Mary have been supporting people in many ways this lockdown - through donations to the foodbank, the bereavement support group or, as I saw on your thankyou video, delivering pew sheet papers. All of these ways that you are caring for others are a wonderful response to God’s generosity.

How can we grow in generosity? Are we generous with smaller small things in life, our daily interactions with other people? How do we model generosity in our home and church families to our children and young people? Are we generous drivers or courteous pedestrians? When we shop, do we consider being generous to farmers and producers - buying Fairtrade for example?

As we emerge from lockdown there will be even more enticing ways to spend “our” money. What choices will we make - to give to others or spend on ourselves? Consider “Could I be more generous to my fellow sheep with the food and water that they need to grow and mature?”

The Church of England General synod encourages people to take as an initial target 5% of after-tax income to and through the church and a similar amount to other charities. An easy way to calculate this is that this 5% is a weekly gift of £1 for every £1000 a year we receive. So, if you have £10,000 after tax it is £10 a week, and so forth.

**We are here to be generous in our world - giving our time, money and skills is a way of thanking God for all His blessings and helping to spread God’s good news.**

Jesus said, “I have sheep that are not of this fold.” Jesus cares about those who are outside the church at the moment, and as a community of God in West Wickham, the church, you care about lost sheep. St Francis and St Mary’s wish to be in touch and continue to serve the wider community, your Vision Group have a sense that God is doing a new thing. But to do this you need more financial resources.

Being generous is about our part in the wider ministry and mission of God’s Church. We are part of something much bigger than just ourselves, and Jesus is the Shepherd of all of us. Each parish church in the Southwark Diocese is part of a family, not an independent church but an interdependent one. The money you give to your churches here in West Wickham is used to finance our local ministry and mission; some goes to help others in particularly difficult situations in the wider church; and some goes to our Parish pledge. This goes into the collective pot which enables the Diocese to pay, house and support ministers such as Hazel, and others that work, paid or as volunteers, to support the mission of the Church across the Diocese, including here. The principle is that those with more give to those with less so that all have what they need.

At the moment, your two churches are supported by other churches across the Diocese, and hopefully in time you will return to supporting others by increasing your parish pledge.

Our passage ends with a focus on the Lord's free and generous self-giving. In doing the Father's will he shows the power of his love, which is fully displayed in his rising to new life. The Good Shepherd is risen indeed and shares his new life with us.

God knows how to give good things to his children including his very presence, the Holy Spirit through whom Peter speaks and performs miracles in our New Testament passage.

When we talk about the gift of the Shepherd to his sheep, his generosity stretches across His life, His time, His love, His presence. So, my challenge is for each of us to consider what is our response to God's generosity? When did you last consider your financial giving? Is it time to consider regular giving, changing your standing order, increasing your giving to be in proportion to what God has blessed you with?

Last story!

*When Queen Victoria was staying at Balmoral the story goes that she was caught in the rain when walking and called at a cottage to borrow an umbrella. An irritated occupant, not recognising her caller offered a tatty umbrella. The next day a coachman returned the umbrella with her Majesty's thanks. As he left, he heard the occupant say, "If I had known who she was she could have had my best umbrella!"*

Maybe later the cottage dweller regretted not offering her best umbrella to her monarch.

Part of what it means to be a believer is to be generous, and part of local church membership is supporting the body and work of St Mary's and St Francis. Where are you in your giving? Wherever you are, I encourage you to take the next step.

## **Prayer Pointers**

At a time when many question the relevance of the Church, pray for the strength and power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses in the world - witnesses that speak of the presence of Christ in our communities. Pray that we may be the answer to those questions of relevance by what we do and what we are known for. Pray that we may be a welcoming body of Christ here at St Francis' and St Mary's where people feel that they belong and when people think about our churches they think about the real church, the people of God who worship and join in fellowship here.

Pray that as the focus in our nation moves from containment of the coronavirus to responsible lifting of lockdown restrictions, that decision makers in central and local government will offer good leadership and that society will follow necessary ongoing

restrictions with patience and perseverance. Pray for businesses as they work to modify practices and conditions in their workplaces. Pray that God would give them creativity and the ability to safely and flexibly begin to resume their work.

Pray for all the candidates standing in the Greater London Authority elections on 6<sup>th</sup> May. Give thanks for the work of the Mayor of London and our local councillors. Pray that God would use them to help bring peace, prosperity, righteousness, justice and hope to all who live and work in London.

As we remember Stephen Lawrence who was murdered whilst waiting for a bus in 1993, in the light of the George Floyd court verdict this week, and following the recent BBC Panorama programme on racism in the Church of England, pray for all who work for racial harmony across the world and especially within the church. Inspire our communities, our institutions, ourselves to be the change, to be the love, to be the people you create us to be. May our churches and all of us work as individuals together to inspire a more equal, inclusive society, and to foster opportunities for marginalised young people in the UK.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently – especially for Michael Sanders. Pray for those we know, and those known to God alone, who seek God's healing grace. Pray especially for all those suffering from mental health issues and for their treatment teams and carers. Pray for peace in their pain, strength in their weakness and comfort in their sadness.

Pray for those who have died and help us to trust they are at peace with you. We pray that we too may share with them the joy and light of the Kingdom of Heaven. Pray that we may trust God not for ourselves alone, but for those also whom we love and who are hidden from us by the shadow of death; that, as, in this Easter Season, we believe your power to have raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, so may we trust your love to give eternal life to all who believe in him.