

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

26th June 2022: Second Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

Today is **Refugee Sunday**. We are developing a number of ways in which we can help Ukrainian refugees and here are some current opportunities:

- If you have missed our collection of the following items to be sent to Poland, there will be another opportunity in July: First Aid kits, Paracetamol, Ibuprofen, Antiseptic wipes, Batteries, Torches, Cooking oil, Sanitary products, Canned food, Rice, Pasta, Flour, Salt for cooking, Nappies, Calpol, New blankets for babies, Toiletries and Baby Milk powder.
- If you, or anyone you know, is looking to host Ukrainian refugees, but is yet to be matched, I have heard of two women (related by marriage) who are happy to share a room and would be interested in finding a host in the Bromley area.
- Our women's group is hosting an event in July – see the notice below.

Please do take note of Brian's sermon, which applies to refugees wherever they are from. Both our churches have been registered as Welcome Churches, who give hospitality to all refugees. If you'd like to explore how we can support refugees more, do look at their website (<https://welcomechurches.org>) and tell me if you're interested in doing more in this area.

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

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – My song is love unknown – Make me a channel of your peace -Jesus Christ is waiting – Spirit of holiness – The Spirit lives to set us free.

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis' – Be thou my vision – Jesus good above all other – Will you come and follow me – Such love – The Spirit lives to set us free.

Next **Sunday 3rd July**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Mary's Church and a joint service at 10am in St Francis' Church.

Morning Prayer is held each 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. 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.

Julie Bailey's funeral service will be on Wednesday 29th June, beginning at 11am in St Francis' Church, followed by a burial at Beckenham Crematorium & Cemetery and a reception from 1pm at The New Inn, Hayes. Anyone attending should wear bright colours please. Donations can be made to St. Christopher's Hospice, through a 'Snowdrop Fund' where you can also leave messages, pictures, music. Here's a link: <https://maureenjuliebailey.muchloved.com>.

Thanks to all those who supported me in my **steps challenge for Christian Aid**. I completed 329,000 steps in May and raised £470 on-line, £510 in cash and a further £47.50 in gift aid associated with that. Hazel

In our latest magazine was an article about **Symbiosia**. They have an event at Sydenham Garden, which is a space recommended by Laura at our Mind meeting this week. If you are interested in seeing this space and learning more about Symbiosia, you can sign up for the event on Saturday 2nd July from 2-4.30pm at Eventbrite (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk>) – search for Symbiosia.

An open-air **Passion Play** is happening at Gatton Park near Reigate on 14-17 and 20-23 July. Hazel will be going to the performance on Friday 15 July. Here's a link to the website for details and to book tickets: <https://www.gattontheatre.org.uk/current-production/>.

Together with St John's, the women's group is hosting a **Welcome Evening Event for Ukrainian families** and their hosts on July 19th. We are looking for donations (OF EXCELLENT QUALITY) clothes, bags, jewellery and accessories. You can leave these in either of the churches any time before the event. This evening will be by invitation only, so if you know of any Ukrainian people, please pass on Milly's contact details, or give her theirs (with their permission): linktohopehighams@gmail.com or 07796 338483.

A lady in Crystal Palace is moving to a home as she has dementia and is looking for someone to **give a home to one (or both) of her two cats**. They are around five years old. If anyone is interested in having more information, please contact Hazel.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require cooking sauces, tinned cold meat, squash, coffee, surface spray cleaner, toothpaste and washing up liquid. 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'.

The pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been provided by Audrey Tibbles in memory of her mother and arranged by Merri.

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

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to
you and to your living
Word, Jesus Christ our
Lord.

First Reading:

Deuteronomy 10: 12-21

So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well being. Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it, yet the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not

partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen.

Second Reading:

Luke 9: 51- 62

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³ but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then they

went on to another village. ⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' ⁵⁹ To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' ⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' ⁶¹ Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' ⁶² Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Post Communion Prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son: sustain us with your Spirit, that we may serve you here on earth until our joy is complete in heaven, and we share in the eternal banquet with Jesus Christ our Lord.

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REFLECTION – Brian Griffiths

The Jubilee Weekend has come and gone - full of pageant, colour, music and rejoicing. I wonder what your highlight was. There's no doubt that for me, the highlight of the whole celebration was the 5-minute sketch involving the Queen and Paddington Bear. I have never read the Paddington Bear books or seen the films. However, I was fascinated by the back story to the books.

The author, Michael Bond, saw this bear on a shelf on its own in a shop near Paddington Station on Christmas Eve 1956 and he bought the bear as a present for his wife Brenda. This cuddly toy was the inspiration for the stories and Michael Bond vividly recalled Jewish refugee children arriving from Europe and London children being evacuated away from the Blitz. All the evacuees had labels around their necks and so that's why Paddington had a similar label which read 'Please look after this bear'.

In the stories the middle-class Brown family find Paddington sitting in the station on his suitcase with that label – just like those refugees in World War 2 fleeing from the conflict. Paddington, as you will probably all know, was a refugee 'from darkest Peru'. He claims 'I came in a lifeboat and ate marmalade. Bears like marmalade.'

Paddington's best friend is Mr Gruber who owns an antiques shop on Portobello Road. He calls Paddington 'Mr Brown'. It turns out that Mr Gruber is himself a refugee. Bond based Gruber on his first agent, a German Jew, whom Bond states "was in line to be the youngest judge in Germany, when he was warned his name was on a list, so he got out and came to England with just a suitcase and £25 to his name." In contrast to Mr Gruber, the next-door neighbour to the Brown family was a Mr Curry. Mr Curry doesn't really like Paddington and he calls him 'Bear'. He's a mean type of person and often bad-tempered and nosy. Mr Curry always wants something for nothing and gets Paddington to run his errands for him. He invites himself to several meals with the Browns just for the free food. However, Mr. Curry does occasionally benefit from Paddington's mistakes and sometimes even rewards Paddington for them.

Why am I telling you all this about Paddington Bear? It's because today is Refugee Sunday when the church is asked to think about, and pray for, modern day refugees. There are two refugees in the Paddington stories – Paddington himself and Mr Gruber. As we heard Paddington says that he came 'in a lifeboat' and there's a reminder to us that many modern-day refugees make dangerous sea crossings in little more than lifeboats and often they are rescued by the RNLI.

Today, every minute, 20 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror. A refugee is defined by the United Nations as someone who fled his or her

home and country owing to “a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion”. Asylum seekers say they are refugees and have fled their homes as refugees do, but their claim to refugee status is not yet definitively evaluated in the country to which they fled.

Now, I am not going to include in this sermon the rights and wrongs of refugees who rely on people smugglers to get them across the English Channel or The Mediterranean to Europe and the UK. Neither am I going to touch on the Government’s plan to deport some asylum seekers to Rwanda where their applications will be dealt with, or the idea that some will be electronically tagged to keep track of their movements. I’ll leave that well alone to the archbishops, bishops and politicians to argue the pros and cons. But what I do want to talk about is the Christian attitude to refugees – those fleeing danger to find safety in another country.

Our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy chapter 10 says this:

*For the **LORD** your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

This theme of loving the stranger in the land runs throughout the Old and New Testaments. God reminds the Israelites that they were once refugees fleeing from the cruelty of Pharaoh in Egypt. He protected them on their journey so now, in turn, they must protect and care for the stranger in their land. This is no take it or leave it pronouncement from God – this is a commandment – to love the stranger.

Interestingly, in the very next chapter in Deuteronomy, God says this to the Israelites:

*If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you, loving the **LORD** your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, then the **LORD** will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and mightier than yourselves.*

So, God tells them to love the stranger – the alien or the refugee – and yet the Israelites are now going to drive out nations and dispossess their inhabitants. Those who God’s people will dispossess are going to be refugees themselves. What a contrast – what a contradiction. I’ll leave you to think about that – maybe something our home groups can discuss.

One of my favourite passages in the Bible is found in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24. It's the well known and loved account of two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus after the resurrection and as they walk along, they encounter a stranger. They are naturally downcast by the events of the last few days, but they don't stop the stranger from walking with them. The stranger explains the significance of what had happened. Then they offer the stranger hospitality – they invite him to eat with them – and only then do they realise, during the course of the meal, that the stranger was really the Risen Christ. There's a lovely verse from the Letter to the Hebrews which reads:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Until they demonstrated hospitality to Jesus by inviting him to eat with them the two disciples had no idea who the stranger was. They entertained Jesus himself. We meet God when we break bread with others. Christian discipleship is about being on the way, following Christ, and encountering Christ in the stranger. We as followers of Jesus have little option but to welcome the stranger, and to share good hospitality.

This theme of loving the stranger is not exclusively a Christian concept. Here's a quote from the Quran – the Islamic holy book:

“Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer you meet” (Quran Surah 4 verse 36)

Sikhs also practice hospitality as a fundamental concept in their faith for every Sikh temple (Gurdwara) displays the Nishan Sahib, a visible sign signifying a place of worship and refuge where all are welcome for worship and offered welcome and hospitality without discrimination. Each Gurdwara practices the Langar, an open kitchen and meal.

Immigrants often bring gifts which massively help the society in which they settle. I think about the two surgeons who operated on me just before Christmas in St George's Hospital – one was from Iraq and the other was from Syria. The vast majority of the nurses were immigrants. Indeed, one was Welsh!! Where would we be without immigrants in our NHS?

As well as this Sunday being named Refugee Sunday, it is also known as Sanctuary Sunday. The word “sanctuary” is derived from the Latin word *sanctarium*, a container of holy things to be protected with dignity and respect. There is a very good study Guide available on the internet as a free download on this subject entitled: ‘*Sanctuary – The Hospitality of Host, Guest and Stranger*’

Here is a quote from the guide about offering hospitality to the stranger and the gifts that strangers often bring.

Often when we talk about hospitality, we talk about feeding people or welcoming them into our space, which assumes we are talking about hospitality only from the host’s perspective. But what about the guest? In what ways might the guest reciprocate and offer us hospitality in return? In the practice of hospitality, the most meaningful and transformative experiences are when the guest becomes host, and the host becomes guest. We know each other when we can empathise, put ourselves in each other’s position and share in each other’s experiences. If you are just feeding people in need, that is charity (which is good), but it is not hospitality as it offers no space for mutuality and reciprocity. Guests must be given space to host as well: to offer a story, to get to know the host, to ask questions, to contribute to the meal or offer a gift in whatever form it takes. The gift may simply be a relationship or an experience that enables the host to open up and see the world through the guest’s eyes.

Here we are given a different and refreshing view of hospitality – the guest becoming the host. So, on this Refugee or Sanctuary Sunday let us seek to try and understand the plight of those fleeing to safety. Let us offer hospitality and, in turn, listen to their stories – let us give them a space to be host as well as guest – in the same way that Jesus became the host at the meal with those two disciples journeying to Emmaus, and let us thank God for all the gifts that immigrants may bring to us not only as individuals but also to our wider community.

Prayer Pointers

A Prayer for Refugees from the Church of England

Almighty and merciful God,

whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own;

look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;

*inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your
Kingdom of justice and of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

Pray for our two congregations of St Mary's and St Francis. Pray for the two PCC's as they prepare for a joint meeting on 13th July. Pray all may be open to prompting by the Holy Spirit, to identify opportunities in worship, social interaction and working in our community where we might deepen our fellowship.

Pray for all who are far from home, for prisoners, immigrants, exiles, refugees and all who seek sanctuary, that we will be the shelter of their lives and souls. Help us, and all we work with, to build communities of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary for all.

Pray for places that are suffering real unrest especially for Ukraine, for people in India suffering flooding after monsoons and for the people of Afghanistan now suffering the after-effects of an earthquake. Pray for people close to us who are finding life hard at the moment.

Pray for those who mediate industrial disputes especially for those working to find a solution to the rail dispute. May they listen carefully and speak with wisdom. Pray for patience, consideration and kindness in talks and ask that all involved find a resolution that works.

Hold before God all those we know who are sick, especially those suffering from cancer and undergoing treatment. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Vicky Pearce, Mike East, Pat Allegacone, Jane Smith and John and Anita Curtis – and those known to God alone.

Pray for all who have died recently, especially Julie Bailey and for her daughters Pippa and Zazine and her wider family and friends. Thank God for the example of her life – for her laughter and joy even when faced with illness. For Brian Walshe, father of Deborah Howell, and for all who we have loved and yet see no longer. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings. We entrust to God 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.