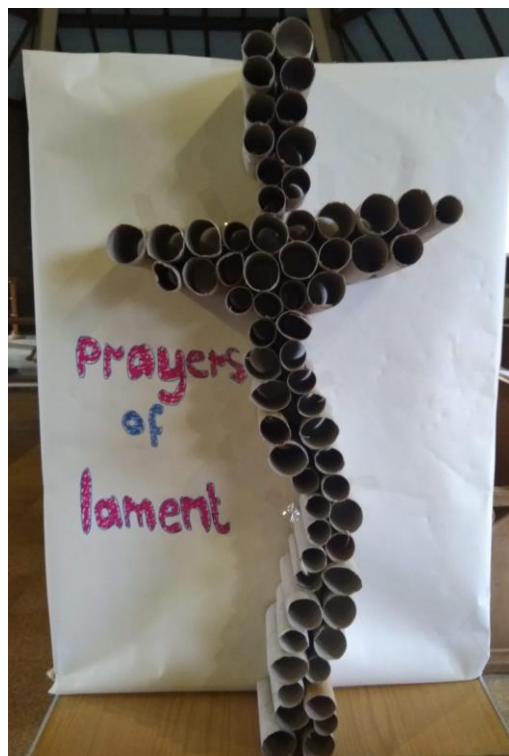


ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

4th July 2021: Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

Our services this Sunday are the start of a series which I wrote about in the magazines to help ease us out of the pandemic restrictions. Today we spend some time recognising the pain and sorrow in some of what we've been through over the past 16 months. To help us do this, I have created a **pandemic prayer wall**. At each of the services (and with hard copies of the pew sheet) you will receive a coloured piece of paper for you to write a prayer of lament on – the things in life that don't seem right; complaints that you've been crying out to God recently. You can bring this written prayer to any of the services over the next three weeks and put it into one of the cardboard rolls shown here in the shape of a cross. There will be opportunities at each service to do this, as well as on the way in or out of whichever church it is where the service is. In three weeks' time, we'll have a colourful cross to symbolise the healing that Christ can bring to these situations.



There is also a different liturgy sheet for the communion services during this time which is being sent out with this pew sheet. There will also be copies available in the church buildings over the next three weeks.

Our two PCCs will be meeting later this month to discuss what activities we might re-start in September and the autumn, assuming that all restrictions are lifted, and no further lockdowns are called for. We have devised a **questionnaire**, which is attached to this pew sheet, to find out what people would like to see continued from the past months and what might be restarted or might form a new venture. Please could you complete one of these questionnaires and return it to me, either by email to hazelos58@gmail.com, or in hard copy to one of the church buildings by the end of next week – Friday 16th July – or to my letterbox at the vicarage so we can know what it is that has been most helpful during the pandemic and what you've missed the most, or want to help with in the future.

Next Sunday we have a Holy Communion service at **8am in St Francis church** and a non-eucharistic service at **10am in St Mary's Church**. These will be special services focussing on how God has been with us during the pandemic. Do join us in some way.

Morning Prayer is at St Mary's Church on Tuesday morning at 9am and at St Francis' Church on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am, followed by the church building being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be **available from 1pm** 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.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – Rt. Rev. Libby Lane, lead Bishop for Sports looks ahead to the Tokyo Olympic Games.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from the Chapel of Selwyn College, Cambridge.
 - **On BBC 1:** Sunday Morning Live at 10.30 a.m. - Sean Fletcher and Kate Bottley explore the ethical and religious issues of the day and
 - Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Brenda Edwards explores Chatsworth House and introduces music from Lesley Garratt.

June was Pride month our next **Inclusive Church** meeting ties in with this through a focus on gender identity and sexuality. The event will be held on Thursday 15th July at 8pm online via Zoom. In the past Christians who have understood themselves to be homo- and/or transexual have felt an inner turmoil. On coming out some have lost leadership positions in their church, faced social rejection and suffered mental health issues. Three speakers with very different personal experiences of these issues will form the panel for this event. Questions for the panel should be sent to Hazel by Thursday 8th July - hazelos58@gmail.com, or by phone: 020 8777 5034. All questions in advance will remain anonymous. A Zoom invitation will be sent out next week.

St Mary's are hosting a **Prom Praise Watch Party** on Saturday 17th July at 5.45pm. An opportunity to gather with others, bringing your own picnic to watch and (restrictions allowing) sing along to live hymns and worship songs being streamed from All Soul's Langham Place. Tickets are free, but must be booked in advance, as capacity is limited, either on-line at www.stjohnsww.com/prompraise or through Geoff at tickets@mussard.org.uk or 020 8650 8389.

If you would like a **bereavement support 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.

Our **United in Giving** campaign, which ran during April and May has resulted in some people signing up to the Parish Giving Scheme. If you would rather increase your financial contribution to St Francis or St Mary's churches by other means, please note that we can receive on-line donations through our websites, as well as through machines in both churches which accept contactless payment cards. Please do ask about these ways of donating if these would suit you better than using cash, direct debit or a standing order.

The **gardening group** at St Francis' will be meeting next weekend – Saturday 10th July at 10am. If you'd like to join with others in doing some weeding and clearing, do come along.

St Francis and St Mary's are working with the St John's Community Befriending Team to help tackle loneliness in the community by providing volunteer **Telephone Befrienders** for people referred by NHS Social Prescribers. More volunteers are always needed to give regular support to someone on the telephone. When asked about this opportunity, one befriender said:

I have found it very rewarding and so easy to do. The person I support says "it's so nice to hear a different voice and talk about different things". We normally have a lovely chat about what we've been up to and what's going on in the world and exchange ideas about gardening. Today she advised me to use porridge and garlic paste to help ward off snails. It's great to know that my volunteering has benefited both of us'.

If this is something you think you might want to be involved in, please contact Kate Dyer katedyer41@hotmail.com.

We are delighted to be able to commence our **Thursday lunchtime concerts at St. Francis** this year and, although it will be a shorter season than usual, we have some very talented musicians happy to come and play for us. The dates for your diary are: July 15th, when Paolo Rinaldi will play a popular programme of Chopin; then August 12th, August 26th and September 23rd. All commence at 12.45. Further details of programmes soon.

Following the recent Refugee's Journey immersive exhibition at Coney Hill Baptist Church Deacon Laura MacBean has set up a JustGiving page to raise funds for **Hope Health Action's emergency appeal** for refugees in Uganda's BidiBidi settlement through a sponsored walk. She will walk 25 miles in the first week of July 2021 (the distance some of the refugees said they had fled to BidiBidi from their village in South Sudan) and build up to 128 miles by 31 July 2021. Please sponsor her here: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/laura-macbean>.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently their biggest need is "bags for life". They also need jellies, instant whips, biscuits, tinned tomatoes, coffee, squash, deodorant, cleaning spray, antiseptic wipes and washing up liquid. 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>.

Are you keen to **help a small independent business** survive as they emerge from the pandemic? A young couple with a carpentry business are about to lose their current workshop space. If you have a spare garage or workshop space with an electric supply, which you would be happy to let them use, with costs covered, please contact Toby and Saffron at TM12358@outlook.com or 07872 938235.

During **Christian Aid** week this year the donations that we raised were similar to those from last year: a total of £1,357. Thank you to Anita and Geoff for co-ordinating our efforts and to everyone who made a donation or encouraged family, friends and neighbours to do so.

Glebe Housing Association are looking for a volunteer minibus driver for any of the following mornings each week: Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri. You could make a real difference for residents who value being able to access local community activities and shops. You must have had a FULL UK Driving License for 2 years or more and this must include category D1, with no serious driving convictions. If you are interested, please contact the HR department at hr@glebeha.org.uk or call 0208 777 1122.

A reminder for those at St. Mary's who have a **Children's Society box** to please hand in to Dave or Wendy Taylor for the annual count. Thank you.

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 /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

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) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855).

This week Hazel has dedicated the pedestal at St Francis' in celebration of her husband John's 60th birthday this week.

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

Collect

Mother and Father God,
as your children we have
been saddened to be apart
and felt denied human and
Divine love.

But we know you are
always closest to us in need,
so restore us from isolation
to your community of
broken and reclaimed souls,
your church redeemed by
your saving love,
through Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Psalm 13

How long will you forget me,
Lord? Forever? How long will
you look the other way when
I am in need?

² How long must I be hiding
daily anguish in my heart?
How long shall my enemy
have the upper hand?

³ Answer me, O Lord my God;
give me light in my darkness
lest I die.

⁴ Don't let my enemies say,
"We have conquered him!"
Don't let them gloat that I am
down.

⁵ But I will always trust in you
and in your mercy and shall
rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord
because he has blessed me
so richly.

Gospel Reading:

John 11:30-44

³⁰ Now Jesus had stayed
outside the village, at the
place where Martha met
him. ³¹ When the Jewish
leaders who were at the
house trying to console Mary
saw her leave so hastily, they
assumed she was going to
Lazarus' tomb to weep; so
they followed her. ³² When
Mary arrived where Jesus
was, she fell down at his feet,
saying, "Sir, if you had been
here, my brother would still
be alive." ³³ When Jesus saw
her weeping and the Jewish
leaders wailing with her, he
was moved with indignation
and deeply troubled.

³⁴ "Where is he buried?" he
asked them. They told him,
"Come and see." ³⁵ Tears
came to Jesus' eyes. ³⁶ "They
were close friends," the
Jewish leaders said. "See how
much he loved him." ³⁷⁻³⁸ But
some said, "This fellow
healed a blind man—why
couldn't he keep Lazarus
from dying?" And again Jesus
was moved with deep anger.
Then they came to the tomb.
It was a cave with a heavy
stone rolled across its
door. ³⁹ "Roll the stone
aside," Jesus told them. But
Martha, the dead man's

sister, said, "By now the
smell will be terrible, for
he has been dead four
days." ⁴⁰ "But didn't I tell
you that you will see a
wonderful miracle from
God if you believe?" Jesus
asked her. ⁴¹ So they rolled
the stone aside. Then Jesus
looked up to heaven and
said, "Father, thank you for
hearing me. ⁴² (You always
hear me, of course, but I
said it because of all these
people standing here, so
that they will believe you
sent me.)"

⁴³ Then he shouted,
"Lazarus, come out!"

⁴⁴ And Lazarus came—
bound up in the grave
cloth, his face muffled in a
head swath. Jesus told
them, "Unwrap him and let
him go!"

Post Communion Prayer

Healing God, we who have
shared this bread and this
cup have shared a long
time in the wilderness;
help us Lord, now, to
spread your love into the
world we now return to:
may those who have felt
sad or lonely be comforted
by your people once more;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

LAMENT – Brian Griffiths

A few months ago, I was part of an online seminar organized by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity entitled 'The Church in a Post-Covid Landscape'. One of the themes was 'How does the Church reset after all the changes we have had to make during the pandemic experience?' The course leader suggested that the reset should involve three phases – Respond, Recover and Renew. However, before we can reimagine how we can work as a worshipping and serving community in the future, we need to reflect on and acknowledge all that we have experienced. This is why we are having these three special services – we can look back and acknowledge the trauma of the pandemic, we can thank and praise God for all the good things that have happened to us since that first lockdown and we can pray for healing for all of this so that we can move forward to a positive future. Today, we reflect and acknowledge what has happened to our world as a result of the Covid virus. This process is called 'Lament' and it is a very human and biblical response to the situation we have found ourselves in.

Tom Wright, who was formerly the Bishop of Durham, wrote a brilliant article about lament for 'Time' magazine in the early stages of the pandemic. He explains lament like this: **Lament is what happens when people ask, "Why?" and don't get an answer.**

For many Christians this has been the conundrum of the pandemic – Why did it bring so much suffering and so much grief? Lament can be an outlet for our frustration, sorrow, loneliness and sheer inability to understand what is happening or why. The only thing we can do is bring this to God and trust in him. So, a good definition of lament is this: **"A lament is an implicit act of faith in which the community of faith turns to God as its only source of hope and comfort."** It's when we come to the end of our limited resources and turn for comfort to God whose resources are limitless.

I have just been marking some assignments submitted by students that I tutored on the Bishops Certificate in Discipleship Course. These students have produced some brilliant writing that demonstrates the depth of their faith. One of them wrote about how she reacts when feeling that faith is difficult for her and she wrote this: **"I know that when I am in a period of lament, finding myself bowing down to Him is my only source of comfort that will support me."**

For many of us this has been especially true during the pandemic.

The bible is littered with laments. 60 of the psalms (which is 40% of the book) are psalms of lament. Jesus recited a psalm of lament as he hung on the cross – we hear it when the altars are stripped on Maundy Thursday. Psalm 22 starts ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’ There is an entire book dedicated to lament – believe it or not, it’s called ‘Lamentations’. These are laments for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people in Babylon.

You may think that lament is all about doom and gloom. Actually, lament is often about moving from a dark place to a confident future. Hopefully, during these next three Sundays, we can move to a positive, expectant future after the darkness of the pandemic.

When we look at the Psalms of lament, we can see a structure emerging.

Let’s look at our first reading today – Psalm 13. It’s only 6 verses, but it is a complete lament. It’s a movement from little hope to confident hope. It’s a turning to God when we are at the end of our resources – it’s an acknowledgement that this is the only way we can deal with the issue.

- How long will you forget me, Lord? Forever? How long will you look the other way when I am in need? How long must I be hiding daily anguish in my heart? How long shall my enemy have the upper hand? **(Complaint addressed to God)**
- Answer me, O Lord my God; **(Request for an answer)**
- give me light in my darkness lest I die. Don’t let my enemies say, “We have conquered him!” Don’t let them gloat that I am down. **(Why God should help)**
- But I will always trust in you and in your mercy and shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has blessed me so richly. **(Confidence and hope in God’s limitless resources)**

The element of complaint is often a protest – it’s often an expression of anger, despair and frustration. We can lament at injustice in the world – and certainly, the pandemic has highlighted injustice – so, in lament, we can stand alongside those who have suffered injustice. The complaint is a cry to God when we feel that we are powerless to alter the situation. Nothing we can do will make things better. However, lament is not an admission of failure. Neither is it blaming God for the bad things that happen. Lament is raw and honest. There is no pretence in lament. It isn’t about pretending that things are OK really. Lament happens when we realize that we are not invincible – that we are often very vulnerable. Lament is about grieving with those who grieve –

those who grieve for family and friends who have died, those who grieve for lost jobs, those who grieve for lost livelihoods and those who grieve for lost freedoms – the freedom to embrace each other and the freedom to meet each other because of lockdown and shielding.

As I mentioned earlier, lament, on the face of it, is doom and gloom, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Lament always ends up with turning to and relying on God whose love and care never fails. As that student wrote: **"I know that when I am in a period of lament, finding myself bowing down to Him is my only source of comfort that will support me."** Psalm 13 ends climatically **"But I will always trust in you and in your mercy and shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has blessed me so richly."** This hope in God is very much as if we throw ourselves on Him. He is our only strength and comfort. He can bring light from darkness. If we want to see how Jesus does this, we only need to look at our gospel for this morning from John, Chapter 11 – the raising of Lazarus. Mary laments to Jesus **"Sir, if you had been here, my brother would still be alive."** Jesus is moved to tears by her cry from the heart and he weeps too. Jesus shares in her lament and he answers her in the most wonderful way. Mary's brother, Lazarus, walks out of the tomb. From the depths of despair Jesus brings hope and new life.

Lament shows us that even in the worst of situations, we are not abandoned. We don't need the world to be as it was; in fact, after the pandemic the world will never be the same. We do need God to be as he is – the one we turn to when we are at the end of our tether – our resources have dried up, but his resources are limitless. This is wonderfully expressed in the words of one of our hymns for this service and it seems entirely appropriate as we reflect and lament on all that we have been through in the past 18 months: **"Father I place into your hands the things I cannot do; Father I place into your hands the things that I've been through. Father I place into your hands the way that I should go, for I know I always can trust you."**

Next week in St Mary's we shall offer praise and thanksgiving for those times when we have turned to God – usually in prayer – and found that God has been good to us – how he has brought light and comfort in often unexpected ways. Let us always have that hope in God – that good can come out of bad situations.

So we pray:

Creator God, we join you in your lament over the Covid pandemic. We lament over all the suffering in the world. We consider all the pain and fear being experienced in the

world right now. We think of our neighbours, near and far. We bring before you now all our honest and real emotions. We lament, oh God! Yet, we trust in you as our comforter. Renew our hope and our strength as we look to you, the God who cares and embraces us in our pain. Lord God, let your kingdom come. Let your will be done. Amen

Prayer Pointers

- Pray for the faith and strength to put our trust in God when we are at the end of our resources, and we have no answers to our questions.
- Hold before God all those who are grieving as a result of the Covid pandemic – those who have lost loved ones, those who have lost their jobs, those who have lost their livelihoods and those who have lost their freedom because of shielding and isolating.
- For those who feel excluded from churches because of their sexuality or gender identity. Pray that St Mary's and St Francis' may always be places of welcome where all feel included, and everyone can experience the love of God.
- For an end to violence on the streets of our city. Pray especially for the family of Tashawn Watt murdered in Sydenham on June 25th, for the family of Jason Nyarko murdered in Bermondsey the following night and for the family of the young boy murdered on his doorstep on Shrublands Estate in the early hours of Thursday morning.
- For integrity and truth in Government. Pray especially for the new Health Secretary, Sajid Javid, as he leads the response to Covid in our country.
- For people living in Western USA and Canada who are suffering from the heatwave at the moment.
- For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce and Julie Bailey
- For all those who have died and for their loved ones who mourn at this time – especially pray for the soul of Sheila Green and for her husband Ron as he comes to terms with her passing.