

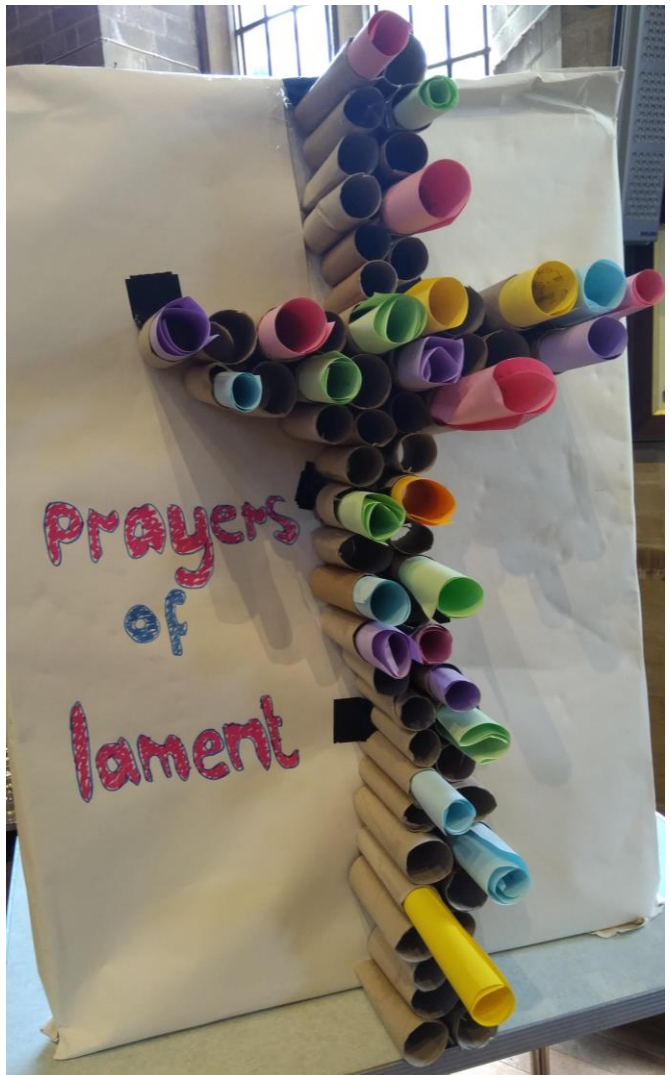
ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

8th August 2021: Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

Have you noticed how joy so often follows sorrow in the Bible? Jesus himself brought good news and healing, especially to those in difficult situations. His resurrection is a great story of good coming out of a bad situation. If you were following our services in July, you may have contributed a prayer of lament to our wall of lament. If you haven't seen it, this is what that looked after the healing service - rainbow coloured and a sign of hope. Over the coming weeks we have great hope that we can continue to heal many of the wounds created by the restrictions we have been under through greater social interaction and meeting together in prayer and worship.

If you have any particular issue that you would like to discuss pastorally with someone, please do contact me and we can talk about what might be appropriate.



Next Sunday we have Holy Communion services at **8am in St Mary's church** and at **10am in St Francis' Church**.

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

The **Bereavement Support Group** meets on Wednesday at 2.30pm in Emmanuel Church, The Grove.

Messy Church is on Friday from 3.15pm in St Mary's Church and at 3.45pm online at www.facebook.com/MessyChurchWestWickham/

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.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – the Rev. Richard Fraser of Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh at the start of the City's festivals.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St. Peter's, Eaton Square, London with the BBC singers.
 - Songs of Praise **on BBC2 at 1.15 p.m.** – Aled Jones visits the church in a former nightclub which is helping regenerate Bradford.

This Thursday's **Lunchtime Concert** at St. Francis will be given by Stefan and Arjang Byron, who entertained us so brilliantly during our last series with their piano playing and folk songs from around the world, not forgetting Stefan's inventive improvisations on popular melodies. The concert commences at 12.45 - bring your lunch and a friend for an entertaining lunch hour. Future Lunchtime concert dates for your diary are August 26th and September 23rd.

We are looking for volunteers to help with some **gardening at St Francis'** from 9.30am on Saturday 14 August to help clear the area around the back of the church and hall. An opportunity to be out in the fresh air, getting some exercise, as well as a social time with others. Refreshments will be available and if you are able to spend a couple of hours or longer please contact Lin Tullis on 0208 289 6525 or by email lindatullis1960@gmail.com. Thank you.

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.

Our **Messy Church** in August will be face to face, mostly outside. We are praying for good weather and would like to include an activity with a paddling pool. If anyone has a paddling pool which could be lent to us for the day (Friday 13th August), please let Kay Mussard (kay@mussard.org.uk or 8650 8389) know.

Freedom from legal restrictions have enabled us to make changes in our public worship, but Covid 19 is still a threat. Please do come to one of the services to see how we are maintaining safety by asking everyone to observe the following:

- Keep your mask on, unless exempt or if you are leading the service in any way.
- Observe social distancing and only sit where there is a green tick, so maintaining at least 1m between people from different households.
- If, when you are sitting, you are concerned about others being too close to you, feel free to move to another seat.

One-way systems will remain in place. The sharing of the Peace will continue in a socially distanced format and arrangements for administering Communion, bread only, will remain the same for the time being.

An **afternoon tea** is taking place on Sunday 22nd August from 3-5pm in the gardens at St Mary's. This is primarily a social event, but we will be looking forward to other events and activities that can now be restarted in both church buildings and elsewhere. If you would like to donate sandwiches and/or cake for this event, please contact Gifty Nortey office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk or Liz Raper stevelizbraemar52@sky.com.

Alternatively, tell one of them that you'll be coming and make a monetary donation at the event.

Congratulations to **Mavis Page-Wood** who will be celebrating her 98th birthday on Sunday with her family. Mavis is a remarkable lady who has many happy memories of West Wickham. She remembers St Francis' Church being built in 1936 and has been part of that community ever since. She has a happy, good sense of humour and is always ready to share her many life experiences and to help others. Much of her time these days is taken up with knitting and gardening. A true Christian example to us all.

Booking has now opened for the **Bishop's Certificate Course** starting in September.

There are five taught modules and a final residential weekend module as follows:

- Following - about the New Testament
- Remembering - about the Old Testament
- Exploring - about the history of the church and what it means to be Anglican
- Believing - about what Christians believe
- Deepening - about living, serving and praying as a follower of Jesus
- Expecting - about putting your future into God's hands

For 2021/2022, there are four options to participate. Tuesday evenings at Trinity House, near London Bridge, Wednesday evenings online via 'Zoom', Thursday evenings online and Saturday mornings at Trinity House. The cost of the course is £220 which includes the residential event at Wychcroft. For more information about the course speak to

Brian Griffiths our Reader who is also a course tutor, or Debbie Adams who has completed the course. To request an application form and a schedule of dates, visit bishopscertificate@southwark.anglican.org or telephone the Diocesan Office on 020 7939 9400 and ask for the Discipleship and Ministry Department.

Some of us will be going to **The Southwark Diocesan Spirituality Day, 'Wells of Salvation' on Saturday 9th October, 10.00 am-1.00 pm, in Southwark Cathedral. Cost £5.00.** This is a morning of meditations, prayer, sung worship and restoration. Speakers include - the Venerable Justine Allain Chapman, the Archdeacon of Boston, author of *The Resilient Disciple*, writer and broadcaster Nick Mayhew-Smith, Bishop Christopher with oboe player Amy Roberts and members of Southwark Cathedral choir. Tickets available from: <https://spirituality-day.eventbrite.co.uk>. If you would like to join us and are not on the internet or need help with booking your ticket, please contact Rowena Griffiths for further information on 8777 6112 or rowena.griff19@btinternet.com

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>.

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 or 8916 9855) for St Francis'

The pedestal at St. Marys this week has been provided by Joan Baker in memory of her sister Ena and has been arranged by Beryl.

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.

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

Lord of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Ephesians 4: 25- 5: 2

²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath

and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading:

John 6: 35, 41-51

³⁵ Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ⁴¹ Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' ⁴² They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' ⁴³ Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last

day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

Post Communion Prayer

God of our pilgrimage, you have willed that the gate of mercy should stand open for those who trust in you: look upon us with your favour that we who follow the path of your will, may never wander from the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon: Words that feed us – Brian Griffiths

There's a theme running through the lectionary readings for today's service. All the readings are about feeding. If we had listened to the Old Testament reading from the First book of Kings we would have heard about how Elijah was fed when he was absolutely exhausted. He had just defeated the prophets of Baal and Jezebel was seeking him to kill him. Elijah is at the end of his tether, and he sits down under a broom tree, and he just wants to die. Angels come and feed him with cake and water. He now has enough strength to go on for another 40 days to Mount Horeb.

Again, this theme of feeding is found in our Gospel reading from John. Just prior to our scripture reading, Jesus has fed five thousand people with loaves and fishes. Now he talks, not of physical food, but of spiritual food.

'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Unlike the food that Elijah ate, the food that Jesus offers us will never run out. Look at the role bread plays in this story and in the Bible more generally. There always seems to be a link between a physical food and spiritual nourishment? Jesus is speaking about feeding on his words and his example – about putting our whole trust and faith in him. His body and blood are our spiritual food and drink. He goes on to say:

'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

Here we have this wonderful promise of eternal life which is what we are assured of if we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

So, what of our New Testament reading from Paul's superb letter to the Ephesians? How does this link into this theme of feeding? Paul is writing about what will build and sustain the community of Jesus' followers. The food here is not bread, but words of kindness and forgiveness and Paul emphasises the importance of our use of words and language. For words are the way that we feed each other.

'Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.'

Words are very powerful – they can be used to build each other up or knock each other down. I don't know how many of us listen to Thought for The Day on Radio 4, but recently Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds and former Bishop of Croydon broadcast this:

“Actions speak louder than words”. I hear that quite a lot; but, although I know what is meant, I think it is wrong. To speak is to act. Language does something, changes something. For example, it is the speaking of the vows in a wedding that makes the marriage. The story goes that St Francis of Assisi told his friars to “Go out and preach the Gospel; use words, if you have to.” Well... if he did actually say it, was he right? We use words all the time to think and speak and make sense of the world; so, language matters – words matter. They do something. Words matter because they unconsciously shape how we see and look and think and act. The question I am left with is: do I pay enough attention to the words and metaphors I use – and the way they shape the world?’

So, words are really important. We feed each other through our use of words and language. Words can evoke the whole range of emotions. They can certainly make us laugh, but they can also make us feel upset, angry, offended and rejected. They are certainly very powerful. In our Ephesians reading Paul insists that we are members of the same body – the Body of Christ - and therefore we have a responsibility toward one another. That responsibility applies as much to the way we speak to and about one another as to any other aspect of life. Paul says that our words should convey “truth” and “grace” to each other – building each other up not knocking each other down. This seems to be in stark contrast to the anger and bitterness and strife that we often see in the media. In our modern times we have many ways to use words – both in speech and in written words like social media. I don't know about you, but I was shocked at the abuse on social media aimed at the England footballers who missed penalties against the Italian team in the Euro finals a few weeks ago. A classic example of how words can really offend and abuse.

As followers of Jesus, our words should be distinct and different. Paul urges us to:

‘Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven us.’

If we use gracious words that build each other up, complement each other, thank each other and praise each other then we will get along much better. In morning prayer recently, the readings have been from the letter of James. James says a lot about what

is wise – what real wisdom looks like. Here’s a quote from James using The Message version of the Bible:

‘Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honour.’

So, if we really want to build up our community of faith here in St Mary’s and St Francis’, we need to use gentle, reasonable language with each other that overflows with mercy and graciousness. This is how we feed each other – build each other up. As James says, this is not easy work – it is sometimes hard to get on with each other – especially if we have different views and opinions. But we need to treat each other with dignity and courtesy.

We see how words can make us smile and laugh, inspire us or make us cry and the words that we use can have a marked effect on those who hear them. Words can be kind or unkind. Here are some examples of kind words: ‘I love you’; ‘Thank you’; ‘I’m sorry’; ‘You did really well’; ‘Can I help you’. Conversely, these words are hurtful: ‘I can’t stand you’; ‘I’ll never forgive you’; ‘I couldn’t care less about you’; ‘I’m far too busy to help you’; ‘You didn’t deserve to win’. I’m sure you can think of many other examples of words that have built you up or knocked you down. So, how can we control what we say so that we use kind, helpful words?

Before we say something to someone (or put it in an email, or post it on Facebook, or ‘tweet’ it) let’s all think:

T Is it **t** true?

H Is it **h**elpful?

I Is it **i**nspiring?

N Is it **n**ecessary?

K Is it **k**ind?

If what we are about to say fails on any one of these criteria then it is better not to say it at all. What we say has consequences. Words, once spoken cannot be taken back. With them we can encourage or run down; we can praise or criticise; we can hurt or help to heal. Words are how we feed each other. Mother Teresa summed it up succinctly. She said:

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.”

Let us pray that the echoes of our words may build up all who hear them, and may we imitate the Christ who we follow as our living bread and promises us eternal life.

Let us pray:

Father, help us to always bring out the best in others.

Help us to bless people with our kind words,

to give the gift of encouragement,

and to always speak words of life.

Thank you for filling our hearts with your blessing

so that we can bless those around us today and every day.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- That our words and the way we use them may build each other up. May they be kind-hearted words that are full of grace.
- For all the ministers of the churches in West Wickham that they may inspire us to bring God's Kingdom into our community.
- Continue to pray for our two churches of St Mary's and St Francis' – that our worship together may be blessed and lead us to develop strong bonds of love and understanding.
- On the 10th anniversary of the London Riots, we pray for all who work with young people in our city trying to help them have a sense of purpose and achieve their full potential.
- For countries where food is scarce, and people rely on aid from other countries to survive.
- For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce and Julie Bailey – and all those unknown to us, but known to God alone.