

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

9th January 2022: Baptism of Christ

****PLEASE READ THIS MESSAGE****

Today, we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church but are unable to have any other services in the church buildings, as members of the ministry team are unwell or have tested positive for COVID. There will be a video released at 10am on our YouTube channel and a Zoom coffee afterwards at 11am. If you have given us your email address, you will receive details of this. We hope that we will be able to revert to our scheduled services next week.

Hazel had previously written:

We are continuing with our in-person services and moving to a pattern where we have a joint service on the first Sunday of each month and then services at 9.15am in St Mary's and 10.45am in St Francis' on other Sundays, except in weeks when there is a good reason to have a joint service (such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity later this month). Hopefully this will bring a regularity to our worship that will help each person to form a closer connection with God. We will also continue with livestreaming each week: sometimes from both St Mary's and St Francis' church buildings, but this is reliant on having the volunteers to assist with it.

As a consequence of this change in the pattern of our worship we will be needing more volunteers to support these services. If you feel able to add any of the following roles to your schedule, please let the following people know:

Welcomers at St Mary's - Beryl Bolton - berylbolton@hotmail.com

Welcomers at St Francis' - Joan Burford – jandbburford@talktalk.net

Readers at St Mary's - Kay Mussard - kay@mussard.org.uk

Readers at St Francis' - Joan Burford - jandbburford@talktalk.net

Intercessors at both churches - Hazel O'Sullivan - hazelos58@gmail.com

Refreshments at St Mary's - Beryl Bolton - berylbolton@hotmail.com

Refreshments at St Francis' - Marion Barry - whitelandm@yahoo.com

Livestreaming and slides at St Mary's - Gifty Nortey - office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk

Livestreaming at St Francis' - Nichola Nightingale - nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk

Next **Sunday 16th January**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St. Mary's Church and at 10.45m in St Francis' Church.

Morning Prayer is held this 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 available on YouTube from **10am** on Sunday. 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 – Canon Ann Easter leads a service for the season of Epiphany. Preacher: Dr Amy Orr-Ewing.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Winchester College on the Eve of Epiphany.
 - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Sean Fletcher visits Liverpool to discover the importance of baptism for Christians.

Coffee & Chat is on the first Thursday at 2.30pm on Zoom and our next in person date is on Thursday 20th January in St Francis' Church. 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 or 8777 6112).

Messy Church is on Friday 14th January at 3.45pm in St Mary's Church and a link to the YouTube livestream (from 4.40pm) will be given on the Messy Church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/messychurchwestwickham>

Our **Bereavement Support Group** will meet this week on Wednesday 12th January at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room at Emmanuel Church in The Grove.

An augmented St. Mary's Church Choir hopes to present a concert on **Saturday evening 29th January at 7.00 p.m.** in aid of church funds, including Roger Jones' "Three Wise Camels" – an alternative story for Epiphany. Tickets at £7 each can be requested in advance – refreshments will be provided at the end. Please book via tickets@mussard.org.uk or 0208 650 8389. Geoff Mussard

Barbara Plummer and family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and messages of sympathy on the death of her son Chris.

Bromley Foodbank – Thank you so much to all the volunteers who delivered Foodbank Christmas hampers to people in need in our area on Saturday 18th December. Thanks also to Kim Teare for being our point of contact with the foodbank for this purpose and for organising such a smooth operation.

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>. Thank you for your continuing support.

St Francis and St Mary's Arts events 2022: supporting mental health.

As you may know, we cancelled plans for a Festival of Arts in 2020 due to the pandemic. Instead, we would like to have two arts weekends this year, linking these to how the Arts can have a positive influence on people's mental health, which will be so important in 2022:

- The first would be a Visual Arts weekend and might include a photography exhibition, film night and art exhibitions and will be 9-10th July 2022.
- Then a Written Word weekend will be 24-25th September 2022 and might include a book exhibition, poetry and other readings.

This is all in the very early planning stage and we would like many people to contribute ideas, plan and organise these events. If you would like to get involved please contact any of us: Ken (kennethabryan@aol.com), Kay (kay@mussard.org.uk), Debbie (debadams64@icloud.com), Tim (tim.shingler@ntlworld.com), Nicky (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) and Kate (katedyer41@hotmail.com).

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 sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been provided by Margaret Bond in memory of Richard and arranged by Beryl.

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

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

First Reading:

Isaiah 43: 1-7

But now thus says the LORD,
 he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.
³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
⁴Because you are

precious in my sight, honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, ‘Give them up’, and to the south, ‘Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—
⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.’

Gospel:

Luke 3:15-17; 21-22

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son: by the power of your Spirit complete the heavenly work of our rebirth through the waters of the new creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

I wonder what refreshes or restores you. Where do you go, what do you do? Here are some pictures that might provide some ideas of what your response to that question might be.



Our theme today is about receiving spiritual refreshment or restoration through being known and loved by God – something I think that we all need today. Some of those places that you have just thought about being in might also work for spiritual refreshment, but there might be others too.

Our first reading from Isaiah was written when Jews had been in exile in Babylon for many years. Some had probably given up all hope of getting back to the land of Israel. They were definitely not feeling refreshed.

Maybe some of you can associate with this feeling – you’ve been stuck at home for so much of each day and have been unable to get out to do many of the social things that you were doing before the start of the pandemic. I wonder if you’ve now given up hope of ever getting back to doing some of these things again.

In July last year we had a series of three services, to help in easing us out of the pandemic restrictions, and I’d like to briefly remind you of the themes now, because I think that we’re in a similar situation today.

The first service was all about Lament and how it’s important to cry out to God when all seems hopeless, and you feel that you’ve come to the end of your resources. In such a

situation, turning to God is maybe the only thing that we can do to deal with the difficulties that we're facing. And when we do turn to God, reminding ourselves of what we might do better, as well as what God has done in the past, our small level of hope can be transformed into confident hope in God's resources.

The second service was all about recognising how God has been with us – both in the past and now. There is always something that shows you God's blessings: this week I've seen a marvellous sunset lighting up the sky and I've shared a wonderful community lunch with some of you, which I know many find very helpful. There is always something that enables me to recognise how God is with us. That's not to say that we can sit back and wait for God to do stuff for us to resolve the difficulties that we're in, but he is there with us and will provide help if we're open to looking out for what he's offering.

When Jesus came to be baptised, he was about to start out on his ministry. He knew that it was going to be tough and so knew that he needed to turn to God to do what he needed to do, and to gain that confident hope in his Father's resources that I spoke of just now. And when Jesus made that turn towards God, look at the affirmation that he received in v22: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

We similarly see God giving a promise to the Jews in exile in the reading from Isaiah where he says in v5: "Do not fear, for I am with you" and he goes on to promise that he will gather together his people from North, South, East and West. That's why we started the service today with that prayer: North, south, east, west, wherever we go, wherever we are, the Lord is near.

So, today at the start of 2022, I'd like to think of God giving us a promise that he'll be with us and an affirmation that each one of us is a beloved child of his.

And that brings me onto the last of the three services that we had in July last year, for which the theme was all about rest and recovery. The only way that we can know that promise and affirmation that I spoke about just now is to take some time out to rest and recover. Maybe some of you found that you did get an opportunity to rest and recover over Christmas. However, that won't be the case for everyone and, even if you did, you may not have used that opportunity to draw close to God. Today we are going to renew our baptismal vows and have some time reflecting on how we have received the light of Christ, signifying the love of God, and how we might use this moment for committing to turn to God during the coming year, trusting in his promise to be with us

and to affirm his love for us. Please do take home the candle that you have received (and which we'll light later) and use it in a quiet moment to recognise that God has called you by name and you are his. Reflect on what this tells you about how God values and loves you and this community of faith, as well as remembering those spaces, people or activities that you might draw strength from, so making a commitment to spending some time there to gain spiritual refreshment and restoration during the year ahead.

Times of rest and recovery are critical to surviving in difficult circumstances. This might seem to be counter-intuitive: in a crisis we need to be taking action and doing stuff. But no, having talked to and listened to others, I believe that this is the time when we should be preparing for a year when we can truly start to come out of the pandemic into a new world where there's still evidence of the virus around, but we can begin to live our lives in a way that's sustainable: one where there are times for refreshment and restoration. It might be different to what your life was like before all of this started, but hopefully that's in a way that makes it more possible to keep going: a way in which we find moments when we can turn to God and recognise his promise to be with us and to love us, so that we can regain confident hope in what he's shown us in Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer Pointers

That we may have hope and faith as we experience yet another Covid crisis. For all scientists and politicians who make decisions as to how to control this new variant.

For all who work in NHS as they struggle with staff absences and isolations due to Covid. We pray for those suffering from stress as a result of the covid pandemic; for hospitals having to declare critical incidents; for those suffering with long Covid;

For family and friends of Zaian Aimable-Lina 15-year-old boy murdered in Ashburton Park on 30th December. For an end to violence amongst young people in our city and for the police who investigate these senseless crimes.

For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce, Carole Hubbard, and Robert Davis. Thank God that Brian Griffiths' surgery went well and continue to pray for a good recovery.

For the soul of David Hurt and the family of Daphne Dack as they mourn him and look to the future.

Loving God, you have called each of us by name, we belong to you.

Pour out your Spirit on us, we pray, that we may know your love this week and always. May we listen for the ways God speaks to us and look for the signs of his presence. May we be surprised by grace as we go on your way.