

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

12th November 2023: Remembrance Sunday

Hazel writes:

Remembrance is an important time for our **community** engagement. Please do speak to anyone visiting our churches on Sunday, encouraging them to come back to an event such as the St Mary's Christmas Market or The Big Christmas Sing.

Our support for local foodbanks on Saturday is another opportunity to get out into the community and show our **compassion** for others, so please do support that as well if you are able.

Our recent welcome services for Debbie and Carol have strengthened our **congregations** and there is a write up of Debbie's licensing at Southwark Cathedral in The Bridge, which is now available on-line here: <https://southwark.anglican.org/news-events/news/the-bridge-newspaper/> and in hard copy in the churches.

This week we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church, and Remembrance Sunday services at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church when we will be joined by the 7th West Wickham Scout Group.

Next **Sunday 19th November**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

We meet to **pray for growth of the Church** on Tuesday mornings between 10-11am at 130, The Avenue. Please contact Jean Pogose for more information: (dennis.pogose@ntlworld.com or 8289-5996).

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 in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Advent Calendars available. As well as being made from FAIRTRADE chocolate, they include a colourful book telling the Christmas Story. They're aimed at primary aged children, but I know from personal experience that teenagers feel neglected if they don't get one – I give them to grandchildren and great nephews and nieces. If you're

interested, let me know. They cost £4.50 each. Richard Ford (richard.ford73@gmail.com; 020 8289 2432).

There is a **Service of Thanksgiving for Welcare**, who work with supporting children and families in the borough of Bromley, at 11.30 am on Monday 13 November 2023 at Bromley Parish Church, St Peter and St Paul Bromley, Church Road, Bromley, BR2 0EG. This is the charity that we will be supporting with our Christmas Tree Festival, so it will be good to make additional connections to those we have already. All are welcome.

The Men's Group are doing a **High Street Foodbank collection** outside Croft Radio on Saturday 18th November from 10am - 1pm. Please bring food and household donations and/or monetary support. If you are able to help with being there for an hour on Saturday morning, please contact David Wada (stfranciswwtreasurer@gmail.com or 020 8777 6355) or Stephen Howe (aireyowe@gmail.com or 020 8249 0315) so that they can put together a rota.

We welcome back **The Hayes Symphony Orchestra** to a concert at St Francis' Church on Saturday 18th October at 7.30pm. Their winter-themed programme includes music by Humperdinck and Tchaikovsky and Clara Schumann's delightful piano concerto which will be played by Simon Ballard. Tickets cost £12.50 (under 18s free) either on the door or through the website at <https://hayessymphony.org.uk>.

We have a **women's event** on Tuesday 21st November at 8pm in St Francis' Church. We will be joined by Jane Coia who will have some wonderful jams and chutneys available to taste (with cheese and biscuits) and to purchase ready for Christmas. Lyn Eustace will be talking about Memory Box - a very successful regular group that meets locally for those suffering from memory loss and their carers. Come on your own or with a friend and enjoy some refreshment and fellowship with others.

St. Mary's Christmas Market is on **Saturday 25th November**. If you are interested and can help in any way at all, please contact Gifty: gifty@nortey.com. If you are new to the Market and can spare an hour or so to man a stall, please contact Gifty. We are also looking for a face painter if you know anyone who could help. Now is the time to start making any donations you are able for the various stalls. We need the following and your generous donations will be very much appreciated.

- Good quality bric-a-brac
- Alcoholic and Non-alcoholic bottles
- Bottles for the Wines stall

- Chocolate
- Packets of sweets
- Books
- Good quality toys
- Gifts, boxed toiletries, etc for Annie's Bazaar
- Home-made cakes, biscuits, jams, marmalades, pickles (nearer the date of market).

Please sign up on the lists in the vestibule at St Mary's where you are able to help with this event and please advertise the event as much as possible by handing out the flyers available in both churches.

If anyone would like to place an order for **an advent ring**, please contact Merri Womack on 020 8777 8772.

Donations of biscuits and mince pies are gratefully received for the **Big Christmas Sing** which will take place on **Saturday 2nd December**. If you would like to help with refreshments on the day that would also be very welcome. Lists are in both churches for people to note their donation or intention to volunteer. There is a box for the donations. If you would prefer to donate money, then please give this to Gill Kehoe at St Francis' or Kay Mussard at St Mary's.

Last week we blessed the refurbished **Choir Vestry at St Francis' Church** and hope that it will be well used for meetings, prayer groups and other small gatherings. We would like to add a table into the space which can be used in a meeting, but which can be put to one side when the room needs to revert to being a choir vestry. Ideally a gate-leg table that folds down. If you, or someone you know, has one of these that they are looking to donate or sell, please contact Barbara Goodchild (020 8777 8782 or goodchild854@gmail.com). Many thanks.

The **Guild of Church Flower Arrangers** have their next demonstration locally on **Monday 4th December** at West Wickham & Shirley Baptist church at 2 p.m. with entry £5. All are welcome.

St Francis' Community Christmas Lunch is on **Sunday 17th December** at 12.30pm in St Francis' Church Hall. A three course Christmas lunch for £12.00 per person. If you wish to attend, please contact Barbara Goodchild on 0208 777 8782 with payment by Monday 11th December.

It is time for the **St Francis' Children's Society Boxes** to be brought into church for opening. I can arrange to open the boxes at home if this is more convenient. With many thanks, Christine Morton (020 8777 9213).

Some of you will know of **Terry Leggatt**, who had escorted visits to St Francis' from Bethlem Royal Hospital before he returned to prison in late 2019. He is now able to prepare for a return to living in the community, but this will be a long process. One of the things that would help him is writing to people of faith who are fully engaged with the community and dealing with transport, shopping, friendships and family relationships. If you'd like to know more about what this might involve, please speak to Hazel.

The House of Bishops met last week and discussed two issues which are significant for The Church of England:

- They issued a statement on the war in Gaza, condemning the terrorist actions of Hamas on 7th October and recognising that Israel's response needs to adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law. They also condemned the rise in anti-semitic and Islamophobic attacks in the UK and called for sustained and faithful prayer by all Christians for peace and justice. The full statement is available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/pressreleases/statement-house-bishops-war-gaza>.
- Following the Living in Love and Faith process, which some of us took part in, it was agreed that blessings of same-sex relationships would be introduced for use in churches. At a General Synod meeting this week, it is proposed that prayers asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples will be available very soon, but special, standalone services for same-sex couples will only be considered for formal authorisation at a later stage. Pastoral guidance on whether clergy can enter same-sex civil marriages is also being delayed. There is likely to be much press coverage of these discussions, as there is deep disagreement within the Church of England on this matter, and it is important that we are aware of the current situation.

The **Diocese of Southwark published their annual report** in the summer and this is available on their website at <https://southwark.anglican.org/about-us/who-weare/governance-synods/annual-reports/>.

We will continue to collect items for the **Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme** for those starting out in a new home with nothing. Starter packs for families in need include cutlery, crockery, duvet covers (not duvets), pillow slips, tea towels, saucepans, frying pans, bath towel, toothbrushes, etc. Please continue to bring any excess items that you have in cupboards at home.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, hot and cold meat tins, cooking sauces, UHT milk, squash,

UHT fruit juice and jam. They have plenty of 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 sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been donated by Elizabeth Barclay in memory of Vernon and Mary Habberfield and arranged by Merri.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

God, our refuge and strength, bring near the day when wars shall cease and poverty and pain shall end, that earth may know the peace of heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:**Romans 5: 1-11**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we¹ boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps

for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.

¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Gospel Reading:**John 15: 9-17**

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I

have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.

¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Post Communion Prayer

God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ proclaimed the kingdom and restored the broken to wholeness of life: look with compassion on the anguish of the world, and by your healing power make whole both people and nations; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION – Richard Ford

The reading that we have just heard, from St John's Gospel, contains a verse that was frequently quoted both during and after the First World War: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

During the war it was used to encourage young men to sign up to join the army; after the war it was frequently used on war memorials.

The problem is that in using this verse in this way, there is a risk of taking it out of context, because as those of you who were listening carefully will have realised, the context in which Jesus was speaking was one in which he was talking about the importance of love – the love which God the Father has for his son, Jesus, and the love which he, Jesus, has for his followers, both those who were listening to him 2000 years ago and those who are his followers today.

And the kind of love which Jesus is talking about has very little to do with what is happening on the battlefield.

Now that is not to devalue the sacrifice made by all those who have given their lives in battle over the last hundred years in the various wars in which we and other nations have been involved. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone to war on our behalf.

So it is right that we should remember them; it is right that we should take care of those who have been injured; and it is right that we should look after those who have lost a child, a parent or their partner as a result of their fighting for their country.

But it is also right that we should acknowledge that war is not what God wants for us. Yes, we see many heroic deeds in battle and it is right that we should honour those who perform them, but as one of our major poets, T.S. Eliot, put it, "Virtues are forced upon us by our impudent crimes."

And war is a crime, if crime is sin and sin is when we act in ways that are contrary to the will of God.

And this takes us back to that statement of Jesus, that no man has greater love for his friends than that he lay down his life for them.

As Christians we recognise that in Jesus, God took on human flesh and lived a human life. To put it another way, God, in Jesus, experienced what it was like to live and die as a human.

And the way in which he died enables him to identify with all those who have died in horrific ways on the battlefield. The First World War poet, Wilfred Owen was at great pains in his poetry to show that war, whilst it might give rise to heroic deeds – he himself won the Military Cross – was far from glorious or glamorous.

In his poem “Dulce et Decorum est” he describes what happens when a soldier is caught in a gas attack:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.

But we don’t need to turn to poetry to encounter the suffering that war produces. We only need to turn to our TV scenes to see all too graphically the suffering of those Palestinians caught up in the conflict between Israel and the Hamas terrorists.

Owen wrote of the suffering of soldiers; we see the suffering of civilians. And I’m sure that you, like me, find yourself crying out as you see this suffering, “Enough – nothing justifies what is being done to these people, especially the children.”

And as we listen to the representatives of the two sides, we may find ourselves thinking, “What hope is there that this can be brought to an end?”

In our reading from Romans we heard Paul talking about hope. And, interestingly, he starts with suffering. Whether he is talking about suffering in general or about suffering for one’s faith is not clear, but I think what follows can apply in both cases. Suffering produces perseverance and perseverance produces character.

And this is something that we can see being demonstrated in Gaza today, in the way in which doctors continue trying to save lives in bomb-damaged hospitals; in the way in which paramedics tend to the injured in appalling situations and emergency workers seek for the injured in collapsing buildings. And in the way in which the relief agencies continue providing humanitarian aid at great risk to their own lives.

And yes, this does produce hope. Hope for those injured; hope for those homeless or facing starvation; hope for those awaiting news of their missing loved ones.

And the way in which so many are risking their own lives to help others gives us hope that good can come out of the evil that we see in the news reports from the Holy Land day by day.

And we can also see hope coming from what Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers who crucified him. So extreme was his suffering that we're told by two of the gospel writers that as he died, he cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me."

It is in that cry that we know that Jesus is able to identify with those who feel themselves lost and abandoned as they die on the battlefield or crushed under a bomb-destroyed apartment block, for their suffering is his suffering.

Jesus, too, was involved in a battle, the battle to overcome evil and death, but he was not prepared to use violence to achieve his goal. When, prior to his trial and execution, one of his disciples tried to prevent his arrest by drawing his sword and attacking those who had come on behalf of the Jewish authorities, Jesus not only told him to put it away, but healed the wounded ear of the person that he had attacked.

No, his way of winning the battle was the way of love: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

And the confirmation that he won this battle against evil and death is his being raised from death on the third day, his resurrection. And the fact of the Resurrection is the guarantee that he is the Son of God.

But if Jesus was the Son of God, why was it necessary for him to die a human death?

The answer takes us back to today's reading. Jesus dies in order to demonstrate just how great is God's love for us.

We humans drive a wedge between ourselves and God, who is perfect goodness, by sinning, by going against his will. But God, who created us and loves us, doesn't want to be separated from us and so allows his Son to take, on the cross, the punishment that is rightly ours, thus opening to us the hope of spending eternity in the presence of God in his Kingdom, heaven.

So where does that leave us this Remembrance Sunday?

The answer to that is to be found in what Jesus has to say at the end of our reading this morning, when he addresses his disciples, and by implication us, as follows: "I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

The command is to love, not to fight.

War is always a poor second best to peaceful and just reconciliation, but because we are human, there will always be times when we fail to achieve this reconciliation and war will be the inevitable result.

It is then that we need to be grateful to those who fight on our behalf and to honour what they achieve, whilst at the same time recognising that what we are doing is contrary to the best that God wants for us.

That best is set out by both the prophets Isaiah and Micah:

In days to come... shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. (*Isaiah 2. 3-4. Micah 4.1-3*)

And when we fail to live up to that best, it is then that we need to seek God's forgiveness for our failings and to ask for the salvation that Jesus won for us, not through war, but through a supreme act of love.

Prayer Pointers – focussed on Remembrance Sunday

Remember those whose lives have been torn apart by wars, by terrorism and inhumanity.

Remember Holocaust victims and victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Pray for the United Nations and peacemakers everywhere.

Pray for the Red Cross and the Royal British Legion, and all who care for the wounded and weary.

Pray for people of faith everywhere, that we might make fewer errors of judgement, and a greater effort to live lives that please God and give a glimpse of his glory.

Pray for healing to those who are sick in body, mind and spirit, including Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, and Tina Hamilton.

We think of those who have recently lost loved ones, remembering especially the family of Sheila Weir, Sandra Morrison and Christine Haggart.