

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

15th May 2022: Fifth Sunday of Easter

Hazel writes:

So far this month (midday on Friday 13th May), I have walked over 125,000 steps of my **300,000 steps for Christian Aid**. Many people in the world walk miles each day just to get water and food. My walking is done more to save the planet and to keep fit. Many countries have been especially hit by rising food prices, making their situation even worse. The focus of our Sunday services will be on this Christian Aid appeal, and we will explore some of the issues in more depth at our women's event on Tuesday. Do support us in some way. Here is a link to my fundraising page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan3>, or you can leave donations in either of the churches. Hazel

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

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – Praise to the holiest in the height – Let there be love – When I needed a neighbour – A new commandment – Brother, sister, let me serve you.

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis' – Praise to the holiest in the height – A new commandment – From heaven you came – Bread of heaven on thee we feed – When I needed a neighbour.

Next **Sunday 22nd May**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 10.45am in St Francis' Church and a Holy Communion service with a Baptism at 9.15am in St Mary's 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.

A **women's event** will be on Tuesday 17th May at 8pm in St Francis' Church focussing on the Christian Aid appeal, which is about how we can help those in poverty who are hungry to change their lives. We will also have a healthy eating theme, sharing fruit, so do bring some fruit of interest, as well as a friend.

We start our **lunchtime concerts at St. Francis** on Thursday May 19th with Jacqueline Turner bringing a programme of varied music to entertain us. Francesca will be accompanying her at the piano. There are leaflets giving the dates of subsequent concerts available in our churches.

The Coffee Morning in aid of the DEC Ukraine Appeal is at St Mary's on Saturday 21st May from 10.30-12noon. There will be a number of stalls including plants and cakes. If you could make a cake or some biscuits please sign up on the list at the back of church or contact Ann Herbert by phone 0208 464 1609 or email: anndrew@hrbt.org. There will also be a 'Silent Auction' for services such as a car valet, garden maintenance, relaxing facial, drone photos of your home or chiropractor assessment. Any money raised will go directly to our coffee morning appeal. Details of the auction are at the back of the church.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at 9.15am 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.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require cooking sauces (URGENT), tinned cold meat, squash, coffee, surface spray cleaner and men's deodorant. They are well stocked with pasta, cereals, 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.

There will be an **Ascension Day Service** on Thursday 26th May in St Mary's Church at 7.30pm, when we will be hosting other churches from the Croydon Addington Deanery.

Over the bank holiday weekend both our churches are hosting a **Queen's Platinum Jubilee event**:

- On Friday 3rd June, The Avenue Street Party is happening outside the church. Please bring your own picnic lunch (or buy from the street vendors) and meet some of our neighbours. There will be an acapella group singing in the church at around 2.30pm and lots of games for children.
- On Sunday 5th June, St Francis have an open-air event from 3pm, featuring The Whiskey Sours, with a bar and refreshments available in the hall.

Churches Together in West Wickham have a **Pentecost Service** following the St Francis' Queen's Jubilee event on Sunday 5th June at 6.15pm. Come and sing some traditional 'Songs of Praise'. A short AGM for CTWW will follow the service.

St Mary's have a **defibrillator** in the church hall, and we recently had a brief session with Carly from Carly Heart Trust on how easy it is to use and the benefits of having

one of these machines available. It was also clear how important it is for CPR to be done as soon as possible whenever someone collapses, so here is a link to a St John Ambulance YouTube video which we recommend everyone watches:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_QPCauSmvc.

There is an event in late June when different **environmental groups** in the West Wickham area will be joining together to share what each of them are doing to help nature. Churches Together will be hosting a stand at the event and if you would like to contribute to this with information on what is happening at either (or both) St Francis' and St Mary's, please contact David Pickering - david.pickering@urcsouthern.org.uk.

Barbara Colpus gives thanks that her arm has almost completely healed. She would like to thank all those who have prayed for her in church and at home.

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'.

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

Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father.

First Reading:**Acts 11: 1-18**

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God.² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers¹ criticized him,³ saying, ‘Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?’⁴ Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying,⁵ ‘I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something

like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me.⁶ As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air.⁷ I also heard a voice saying to me, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.”⁸ But I replied, “By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.”⁹ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.”¹⁰ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.¹¹ At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were.¹² The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a

distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.¹³ He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, “Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter;¹⁴ he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.”¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning.¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?¹⁸ When they heard this, they were silenced. And they

praised God, saying,
‘Then God has given
even to the Gentiles the
repentance that leads to
life.’

Second Reading:
John 13: 31-35

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one

another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

REFLECTION – Ken Bryan

Day by day we see in the news the devastating war in Ukraine. And we've heard heart breaking stories of people fleeing violence, not knowing when they'll see their loved ones again.

Meanwhile in Zimbabwe and so many other countries around the world another crisis, the climate crisis, is causing aching hunger for families.

Even though it's 7,000 miles away, the war in Ukraine will drive up food prices in Zimbabwe and around the globe. Ukraine and Russia produce large amounts of the world's fertiliser and food, like wheat and cooking oil. Without them, vulnerable families will be pushed even deeper into hunger.

But hope does not disappoint. Hope lives in us all. Every prayer, every gift, every action brings hope to people facing disaster, from conflict to climate chaos.

This is the beginning of Christian Aid Week and they have given us this story from Zimbabwe.

What makes you smile? For Janet Zirugo who is 70 years old, it is seeing her grandchildren's faces light up as she hugs them tight. Janet has a big heart. She is the mother of ten, grandmother of 28 and great grandmother of eight. Many of the children in her family are orphans, and she is their sole provider. She says '*In my family, children look up to me and I must give them food. I am more than glad to share what I have*'.

In her village in Zimbabwe, Janet and her family live in a group of single-story simple huts in a parched landscape.

She has seen how drought pushed her family into desperate hunger.

She says '*One year, there was so little food. Rains had not fallen. We ate things which we wouldn't eat in normal times. My heart was so painful thinking that my family would die. By God's grace we did not die. We soldiered on.*'

With faith, hope and love, Janet brought her family through this painful time. Through Christian Aid she was given drought-resistant seeds that can grow in this harsh climate and taught new growing techniques. Her garden is now bursting with life. She is proud of the food she has grown – bowls full of groundnuts, wild fruit, golden corn; a rainbow of colour. Now, she is strong and resilient. With all her strength, she works on her farm, so her family never again go hungry. She has built a storeroom to keep her harvest safe and secure, to help her bounce back in future droughts. She knows when changes are coming and can adapt before crisis hits. '*My life is changing*,' she says. '*We are*

thankful. It makes me happy to see my family are strong and well fed.' As she reflects on how her life has changed, Janet sings with joy. She dresses smartly as she walks her small great grandchildren across the fields to school. She wants them to have a good education to do well for themselves and to be able to look after her in the future.

For those in poverty and relying on feeding themselves day by day the changing climate has been an added challenge for them. Previously the sun and the rain have only been essential allies but are now becoming adversaries.

In Zimbabwe, the dry seasons are becoming increasingly difficult to predict or even to define. Vulnerable communities face the threat of everything being more intense; droughts, floods, and storms which seem to be increasing year on year. This coupled with the daily minimum temperatures continuing to climb.

The changes in the climate have resulted in more challenging conditions for farmers and makes the successful production of crops next to impossible. It is not solely the scarcity of food that brings concerns. This ever-changing weather is accompanied by the presence of diseases such as malaria, cholera and dengue fever. As if things weren't tough enough as they are.

When crops fail for those relying on their small gardens or fields the threat of hunger and starvation are immediate. Not something that we find easy to relate to when we can go to many shops to buy so many different tasty foods. With no crop there is no food and no extra money from selling any excess crop. The situation is stark. A real struggle for survival for families. Decisions to be made which can be a matter of life and death.

People facing such difficulty look to others to help and there are people and organisations around the world trying to help as much as they can. To feed people in the first instance but also to provide ideas and resources for people to develop and work for their own survival and flourishing. These people and organisations need to be supported by those who are in a position so to do.

It is often the case that for the poorest they have little control over their lives and are exploited or face other injustices. This also is where help from the outside is needed. To right, wrongs and side with the oppressed.

The verse before our gospel reading starts says ‘after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night’. This is more than just a comment that it was dark outside as Judas left the room, but an indication that things best covered by darkness are happening, evil is about and more so that this is a time of spiritual night.

Jesus now teaches the disciples who will be left behind after his crucifixion about who will be the ones to continue his message of spreading the gospel that the kingdom of God is at hand.

And he begins with a new commandment ‘That you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another’.

He is giving them a blueprint for the way that they should love each other. Not just in any old way but in the way that he has loved them. They are to follow his example of love and service.

Jesus teaches them that love must be visible: ‘By this love, everyone will know that you are my disciples’. They were to follow his instructions and so must we, our love therefore must be manifest in real actions. The world will see who and what we love by observing how we spend our time and resources. Fine words and thoughts count for little.

Jesus has faced difficulties in his ministry and will be facing the ultimate very soon and he knows that life will not be easy for his disciples. But he still says that they should show love to the world.

The idea that new things may come out of difficulty is well known. Necessity is the mother of invention, and we sometimes only know our true potential in adversity. And that is true as individuals, as a community, and as a world. The global issues of the pandemic, of climate change and of the war in Ukraine continue to call forth new creativity. And the quality of our discipleship of Jesus will be revealed in the quality of our love: our love revealed in real actions to care for those both near and far away, and for those yet to exist in generations to come.

When problems seem too large to confront, God’s grace is there for us and so often it manifests itself in our weakness and in the dark times of our lives. We should look for God’s grace in the dark times of our lives.

Consider that in John’s gospel Jesus reigns triumphant long before Easter Sunday. As Judas leaves Jesus declares, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified.’ And his last word from the cross – ‘It is accomplished’ – is a shout of victory.

Easter does not promise us a quick exit from our darkness and difficulties. Neither is it an anaesthetic to take our pain away. We cannot bypass Good Friday. We affirm glory to come, but not in a way that denies glory in the present. So, let's not flee from the pain and darkness in our lives and in the world; rather, turn and face it. For it is there that we may sit with Jesus, break bread with him, receive his most intimate and profound teaching, and know his glory.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Pray for those elected to our two Church Councils and our Churchwardens. Pray for guidance as they discover together what it means to be one united vine which bears much fruit. Pray for new ways of working and worshipping that breaks down barriers and embraces what binds us together.

Give thanks for all who give their time and talent to raise money for Christian Aid Week especially in West Wickham and Shirley. Give thanks that they are a witness to the risen hope of Jesus in our communities.

Pray for the people of Zimbabwe as they face drought and food shortages. Pray the resilient people of that country who are determined to lift their families out of hunger. Pray that justice will be restored to our world, and the future protected for our children and grandchildren.

Lift to God all the places in our world that are suffering right now. Pray especially for Ukraine, still in the grip of war and for the developing unrest in Sri Lanka. Pray for those trying to bring peace and harmony very difficult situations. Pray for the victims of the flooding in South Africa and for those searching for survivors.

In the aftermath of more knife crime on our streets in the last week, pray for the victims, their families and their communities. Pray for those caught up in gang violence and post code wars, that they may find someone to talk to and positive role models who help them choose peace.

Hold before God all those we know who are sick. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Julie Bailey, Chris Parish and Vicky Pearce.

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.