

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

**8<sup>th</sup> May 2022: Fourth Sunday of Easter**

### **Hazel writes:**

Congratulations to the Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Archdeacon of Croydon, who will be the new Bishop of Croydon, together with the Revd Greg Prior who will take her position as Archdeacon of Croydon. Rosemarie will be consecrated in a service at Southwark Cathedral on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June, but prior to that she will be visiting us at our joint service on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June at 10am in St Mary's. If you'd like an opportunity to meet the new Bishop of Croydon before she takes up the post, please do note this date in your diary.

**Today**, we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church and 'Songs of Praise' services at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church, which will be followed by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

**Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's** – All people that on earth do dwell – A new commandment – Be still for the presence of the Lord – Do not be afraid – It is well Lord (when like a river) – My Lord what love is this (Amazing love) – Purify my heart – Thine be the glory.

**Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis'** – Angel Voices ever singing – Blest are the pure in heart – Will your anchor hold – Be still for the presence of the Lord – Hymn for Ceylon – Make me a channel of your peace – Tell out my Soul.

Next **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. These will all be focussed on Christian Aid Week which starts on this date.

**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.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May at 2.30pm in Emmanuel Church. Please do tell people about this group if you feel they might benefit from being able to talk to others about their loss.

**Messy Church** is on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May at 3.45pm in St Mary's Church, with our celebration being livestreamed at around 4.40pm. This month we are thinking about God's guidance and how he used cloud and fire to help the Israelites while they were travelling in the desert.

The **Bromley Boy Singers** have a concert in St Francis' Church on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm. You can book tickets on-line via their website:

<https://bromleyboysingers.org.uk/events/> or they will be available on the door.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – This week our services will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at 9.15am and from St Francis' at 10.45am 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](http://www.churchofengland.org).
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
  - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – A celebration of the life and works of the priest and poet George Herbert.
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from the Chapel of St. John's, Cambridge.
  - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at **1.20 p.m.** – Claire McCollom joins thousands of Christians at the Spring Harvest Festival in Minehead.

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

Our next **women's event** will be on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 8pm in St Francis' Church. This is during Christian Aid Week, so we will be focussing on their 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 are pleased to say that we are commencing our **lunchtime concerts at St. Francis** on Thursday May 19<sup>th</sup> with our very own Jacqueline Turner bringing a programme of varied music to entertain us. Francesca will be accompanying her at the piano. There will be leaflets giving the dates of subsequent concerts available in our churches.

**A Coffee Morning in aid of the DEC Ukraine Appeal** is to be held at St Mary's on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:anndrew@hrbt.org). There will also be a ' Silent Auction'. Several companies have offered their services for free so any money raised will go directly to our coffee morning appeal. It doesn't cost anything to enter. The winning bid qualifies for the service such as a car valet, garden maintenance, relaxing facial, drone photos of your home or chiropractor assessment. Details of the auction are at the back of the church.

In May I am aiming to **walk 300,000 steps for Christian Aid**. Christian Aid week is from 15-21 May and the focus this year is on Zimbabwe which has been hit by rising food prices. Christian Aid supplies water taps, teaches people to grow food, and provides seeds that thrive in drought. This way dry, dusty land can be turned into a garden of hope. Here is a link to my fundraising page: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan3](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan3), or you can leave donations in either of the churches. Hazel

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](mailto: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](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) and items for the websites to [brian.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.griff19@btinternet.com) or Gifty [office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk).

**Collect**

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father.

**First Reading:****Revelation 5: 11-14**

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> singing with full voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!' <sup>13</sup> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth

and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!' <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the elders fell down and worshipped.

**Gospel Reading:****John 10: 22-30**

<sup>22</sup> At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not

believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one.'

**Post Communion Prayer**

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## REFLECTION – Richard Ford

### Sermon: John 10. 22-30

Have you ever tried googling an image of the Good Shepherd? Many of the pictures are somewhat sentimental or romantic in appearance. Some include small children, for no apparent reason. And in some the sheep themselves surround the figure of Jesus, rather like some kind of doting, ovine fan club.

All of this is, of course, a long way from the picture we get of shepherds in the Bible – think, for example, of David, whom we are told had to defend his flock from attack by lions or bears, and Jesus' comment about the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. So, when Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd, those listening would have known the reality of the life of a shepherd. But they would also have known that the word "shepherd" had meanings which can easily escape us today.

In the Near-East in biblical times, kings were commonly referred to as the shepherds of their people. But more than that, we find that three of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, speaking on behalf of God, accuse the Jewish leaders – their kings, officials and priests - of neglecting the people. Ezekiel writes, "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves. Should not the shepherds take care of the flock." And he goes on to say, "You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured." Finally God, through Ezekiel, proclaims:

"I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.... I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak...." Ezekiel 34. 12,16

So when Jesus told the parable of the shepherd going after the missing sheep and rejoicing on finding it, or when he referred to the hired shepherd who ran away when the wolf attacked the flock, his hearers would have been familiar with the imagery used by these prophets and would have had a deeper understanding than perhaps we do of what Jesus was getting at, as well as having a fuller understanding of the hardships of a shepherd's life and the sacrifices required of them.

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus doesn't actually refer to himself as "The Good Shepherd" – that comes just a few verses earlier in John's Gospel – but when he refers to his sheep hearing his voice and following him, it is clear that the idea of the "Good Shepherd" lies behind these words.

And the good news for us is that if we are among those who hear his voice, then we can never be snatched from his hand. This is an idea that we find echoed in Paul's letter to the church in Rome, where he writes:

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Romans 8. 37-39)

But what does hearing the voice of the shepherd, Jesus, mean? After saying this, Jesus adds that he knows his sheep and they follow him. And that's key: if we belong to his flock, then we don't just have to hear what he says, and I would add, watch what he does, we have to *follow* Jesus – we have to let his teaching and his example guide the way in which we lead our lives.

Now being human, we won't always manage that. There may well be times, to continue the sheep imagery, when we will go astray, but we have the Shepherd's assurance that he will come searching for us and when we're found, we shall be welcomed back into the flock.

So far what I've said has focused on Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd, but there's another claim running through this passage.

We're told at the beginning that this takes place during the festival of the Dedication of the Temple, known to the Jews as Hanukkah. This was the festival that celebrated the freeing and cleansing of the Temple by the Jewish leader, Judas Maccabeus after it had been desecrated by the Greek king, Antiochus Epiphanes. This had happened 164 years earlier and was the last time that the Jews had been freed from foreign occupation. And now they were looking for deliverance from the Roman occupation, so it is no wonder that, when they were celebrating the success of one such leader, some were minded to ask Jesus to tell them plainly whether or not he was the Messiah.

To our minds, perhaps, his answer seems somewhat enigmatic: "I have told you and you do not believe." How has he told them?

He has told them in "the works that he does in his Father's name" – the healings and the miracles, such as the feeding of the five thousand. But I would want to add that when he goes on to talk about his sheep hearing his voice and following him, he is alluding to God's promise in Ezekiel that he, God himself, will become the shepherd of his people. Jesus is fulfilling the promised role of the Good Shepherd. And in case

anyone still has doubts, when Jesus says that no one can snatch his sheep out of his hand, he concludes by stating, "The Father and I are one." If the Messiah is the Son of God, then Jesus is the Messiah.

So, as we gather here this morning, we can rejoice that, being among those who hear Jesus' voice, the voice of the Good Shepherd, there is nothing that can separate us from his loving care, and that consequently we can look forward to spending eternity in his company.

Amen.

### **Prayer Pointers**

Jesus, said, 'I am the good shepherd', and gave his life for us all. Thank God that Jesus cares for all of us and that no one is excluded from his love and protection. Pray for those who have been excluded, often from within the church, especially those who are victims of bullying and abuse and those who have spoken out but been told to keep quiet.

Pray for those who don't feel they belong anywhere; for refugees, asylum seekers, homeless people on the street. Help us not to look the other way when we see them.

Pray for the Venerable Dr Rosemary Mallett to be consecrated as the next Bishop of Croydon and the Reverend Greg Prior who is to be the next Archdeacon of Croydon as they prepare for their new ministries in our episcopal area.

Pray for all those who were elected local councillors and for the newly elected Mayor of Croydon. Pray that all will be granted wisdom as they seek to represent their communities.

Lift to God all the places in our world that are suffering right now. Pray especially for Ukraine, still in the grip of war. Pray for those trying to bring peace and harmony to a very difficult situation.

Pray for those who work in caring professions in hospitals, nursing homes and residential homes; those suffering from exhaustion; for those feeling demoralised; for those they aim to support and care for.

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

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.