

**ST. MARY OF NAZARETH/ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM**  
**10<sup>th</sup> December 2023: Second Sunday of Advent/St Mary's Patronal Festival**

**Hazel writes:**

As you know, we have a link with a prisoner, Terry, who is looking to prepare for a return to living in the community. This week he had news that his mother died suddenly, and he is now even more in need of communication with others by letter and by telephone. If you'd like to help, please speak to Hazel to find out more about what this might involve.

This week we have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church, at 9.15am in St Mary's Church (where we will be celebrating our Patronal Festival) and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December**, we will have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Mary's Church, and Carol Services at 10.45am in St Francis' Church and at 4pm in St Mary's 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](mailto: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.

Our **Christmas publicity** is now available and more copies can be printed. If you would like to deliver cards in your locality and need more than you can get in the churches, please let Hazel (hazelos58@gmail.com or 8777 5034) know how many copies you'll need and which roads you'll be covering.

We are holding a **Community Christmas Tree Festival** at St Francis Church, where we will have lots of trees to view, refreshments to enjoy and festive music to listen to. We 2 will be raising money for Welcare in Bromley, a charity that provides practical and emotional support and advice to families in need. The church will be open at the

following times:

- Sunday 10th December – 12.00noon – 3.00pm
- Wednesday 13th December – 10.30am – 1.00pm
- Friday 15th December – 10.00am – 1.00pm
- Saturday 16th December (with Treasure Hunt) – 10.00am – 1.00pm. If you can help with being there as a volunteer at any of these times, please sign up on the sheet at the back of St Francis' Church

**St. Mary's Christmas Parish Lunch** is on **Wednesday 13th December at 12.30pm** in St. Mary's Hall. The list is now full but if you are unable to attend, please contact Beryl Bolton on 0208 289 8097. There will be a sing-along of carols and Christmas songs after the lunch.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 13th December at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room, Emmanuel Church, The Grove. December is a difficult time for anyone who has lost a loved one, so do encourage anyone who would like to talk about bereavement at this time to come along.

**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.

If anyone would like to make a **donation towards the Christingles**, this would be very much appreciated and enables us to send a larger amount to The Children's Society. This can be handed to either of the Churchwardens at St Mary's. Thank you.

**Rowena, Rhys and Gareth** would like to express their grateful thanks to everyone at St Francis' and St Mary's for all the kindness and support shown following Brian's sudden and unexpected death. Thank you also for all the cards, flowers, and messages we received plus all the donations to Macmillan Cancer Care. Killick's have forwarded £880 which they received in memory of Brian, to the charity. Other kind donations were 3 made directly online to Macmillan, so we don't know the full amount raised at this point.

St John's Primary School in Shirley has a **vacancy for a Foundation Governor** who will help guide the school's strategic direction and promote and protect the Christian ethos of the school. It is a very rewarding experience, involving meeting attendance, training and school visits. If you are interested, please email the School Business Manager with your contact details and brief details of why you would like to join our Governing Body:

[sbm@st-johns.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:sbm@st-johns.croydon.sch.uk). They would especially like to hear from you if you have experience within human resources or building maintenance and welcome applications from all sectors of the community.

**Help a Hospice and save a tree:** send Christmas greetings to all your friends in St Francis' congregation by putting a card on the Christmas Greetings board at the back of church. The money you save from not sending cards can be donated to Demelza House, our local Children's Hospice. Please complete a Gift Aid envelope if you are a taxpayer. Cheques should be made payable to Demelza House.

A local woman would like to have some **help in improving her English** and is willing to assist with shopping or gardening, etc. in return. If you would like to be introduced, please speak to Hazel.

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](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 Gifty [office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk).

**Collect**

Almighty God,  
purify our hearts and  
minds, that when your Son  
Jesus Christ comes again as  
judge and saviour, we may  
be ready to receive him,  
who is our Lord and our  
God.

*or*

Almighty God, who looked  
upon the lowliness of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary  
and chose her to be the  
mother of your only Son:  
grant that we who are  
redeemed by his blood,  
may share with her in the  
glory of your eternal  
kingdom; through Jesus  
Christ your Son our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Isaiah 7: 10-14**

<sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to  
Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> Ask a sign of  
the LORD your God; let it be  
deep as Sheol or high as  
heaven. <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, I  
will not ask, and I will not  
put the LORD to the  
test. <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said:  
'Hear then, O house of  
David! Is it too little for you  
to weary mortals, that you  
weary my God  
also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord  
himself will give you a

sign. Look, the young  
woman is with child and  
shall bear a son, and shall  
name him Immanuel.

**Gospel Reading:**

**Luke 1: 26-38**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the  
angel Gabriel was sent by  
God to a town in Galilee  
called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a  
virgin engaged to a man  
whose name was Joseph, of  
the house of David. The  
virgin's name was  
Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her  
and said, 'Greetings,  
favoured one! The Lord is  
with you.' <sup>29</sup> But she was  
much perplexed by his  
words and pondered what  
sort of greeting this might  
be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her,  
'Do not be afraid, Mary, for  
you have found favour with  
God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will  
conceive in your womb and  
bear a son, and you will  
name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will  
be great, and will be called  
the Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give  
to him the throne of his  
ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will  
reign over the house of  
Jacob for ever, and of his  
kingdom there will be no  
end.' <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the

angel, 'How can this be,  
since I am a virgin?' <sup>35</sup> The  
angel said to her, 'The Holy  
Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most  
High will overshadow you;  
therefore the child to be  
born will be holy; he will be  
called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And  
now, your relative Elizabeth  
in her old age has also  
conceived a son; and this is  
the sixth month for her who  
was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For  
nothing will be impossible  
with God.' <sup>38</sup> Then Mary  
said, 'Here am I, the servant  
of the Lord; let it be with  
me according to your word.'  
Then the angel departed  
from her.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Father in heaven,  
who sent your Son to  
redeem the world and will  
send him again to be our  
judge: give us grace so to  
imitate him in the humility  
and purity of his first  
coming that, when he  
comes again, we may be  
ready to greet him  
with joyful love and firm  
faith; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord.

## REFLECTION – Ken Bryan

Today is one of celebration for the people of St Mary of Nazareth, West Wickham. The 8<sup>th</sup> of December was the day in 1954 that this church building was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher. So today, being the nearest Sunday, it is our Patronal Festival.

How special it must have felt for those in the parish and surrounding area who had been worshipping in the hall, which also was used for all their social occasions, since 1934.

The dedication to St Mary of Nazareth is very rare. Why it was chosen I have not been able to find out. It is such a rare dedication that I don't think there is another in this country.

And having searched the web, I could only find five other churches dedicated to St Mary of Nazareth in the world. Four of these are Roman Catholic churches. One in Sestri Levante, Genoa which dates back to a chapel on the site in 1368 and a church built in 1616. One in Venice on the banks of the Grand Canal, one in Amman, Jordan and one in Des Moines, Iowa, USA. And there is the one Anglican Church outside Blantyre in Malawi which we helped to fund some twenty-three years ago so they wanted to name it after our church.

So, our church is dedicated to the most important and significant woman in history. Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

Her parents were probably Joachim and Anne.

We know little about her until the angel came to her to tell of her being chosen to be the mother of Jesus, which she accepted.

What her reaction must have been we can only guess. Yet she accepted what was being asked of her without fully understanding its significance or implications.

We have seen the images of the house or stable where Jesus was born in paintings and on innumerable Christmas cards.

They fled into Egypt. What a hard time to travel distances with a young baby and on a donkey across country.

She gave him guidance as any mother would as he grew up.

She then had to watch as he left home and went out on his missionary work.

She was still concerned for him and even tried to get him out of a large crowd. But he said that his mother and brothers were all people who believed in him. What would that have felt like for Mary? She must have brought to mind what Simeon had said when they had brought the infant Jesus into the temple. That a sword will pierce her heart.

She was with the women who followed Jesus when her family life allowed.

As things became more tense for Jesus she must have ached as a mother not wanting the worst to happen to him. But of course, we know that it did. And she was there at his crucifixion. Utter pain and dismay might have been slightly tempered by the fact that he had said that this would happen and that it was God's work that he was doing.

Little is known of Mary after the crucifixion, but we do know that on the cross Jesus said to Mary 'here is your son' and to John 'here is your mother'.

As John went to Ephesus it is highly likely that she accompanied him there.

She must have been highly regarded there as the first Christian church which was built in Ephesus was dedicated to Mary.

Where she lived must have been known to local people and was passed down the centuries, but the church forgot. The locals still call the building 'The Gate of the All Holy'.

The thriving city of Ephesus lost its importance when its port and river access silted up. The city fell into ruin and was overgrown. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a British engineer began excavating to uncover the remains of the city.

It was in 1812 that a Nun, living in Germany, who had been ill all her life and was virtually bedbound, suddenly found her hands and feet bleeding as signs of the stigmata. Years earlier she had wounds to her forehead like that from an unseen crown.

Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich was her name, and she was 38 when she began to have visions of where Mary had spent her final days on earth. These visions were written down and were eventually bound into a book after her death in 1824. The book wasn't published for half a century but when it was it aroused the curiosity of several people.

Expeditions were unsuccessful until a French Abbot in 1880 followed the descriptions which took him outside the old city of Ephesus and up narrow paths of the hill called Nightingale Mountain. There, he found an overgrown building with all the aspects and dimensions as had been outlined by Sister Emmerich.

His report back to his superiors was ignored and all was hushed up. It was another ten years before an expedition by high-ranking church sceptics took up the challenge to disprove the whole idea and followed the path up the hillside to the building.

They were soon convinced, and the church accepted their findings, so much so that in 1896 Pope Leo 13<sup>th</sup> declared the house a place of pilgrimage.

The house has been visited by thousands of pilgrims and those who are just curious each year.

It was Mary who fulfilled the Old Testament prediction in Isaiah 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child, and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel'.

There are more than two dozen mentions of her in the New Testament either named as Mary or referred to in some other way.

The Jews were looking to the woman who would bear the Messiah that they were promised would come.

Christians revere her as the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Muslims hold her in the highest regard. The Koran refers to her seventy times and explicitly identifies her as the greatest woman to have ever lived.

Including the following quote: 'Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people'.

Koran Ch 21 v 91

Luke 1:38 says: Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

These words reflect Mary's utter trust and submission to the will of God. Through this humble 'yes' we see the wonder of Incarnation made possible. Ultimately, we are presented with a way of life centred around peace and joy made possible through a deep trust in God. Often even in the smallest moments of our daily lives we are

resistant to or intensely seeking even little things; we have ideas of how things ought to unfold, we have the desires of the moment as well as those buried deeper in our hearts that move us. These all may be very good, yet, without trust and submission to what God gives to us day to day, we may easily come to live in anxiety and dissatisfaction. Here, Mary submits joyfully without knowing all that will come to pass because she trusts in God and his care for her and the desires of her heart. Her submission is not resentful.

The most significant woman in history says with confidence in God "let it be to me according to your word." In the daily struggle we too should echo her words, confidently honouring the will of God through trust in his goodness.

Amen

### **Prayer Pointers**

Pray for those who have never had a life-changing experience of God and who have never heard what Advent and Christmas are really all about.

Pray for those in war-torn countries sinking deeper into despair, where lives are fractured, bodies hungry and damaged, infrastructure and homes destroyed; for those whose physical reminders of years gone by have been destroyed; for those in the Holy Land and Ukraine and beyond.

Pray for those who fear the cost of Christmas and the debts they will incur; who dread the family arguments that may ensue. May the significance of a babe born in a stable touch their lives, so they find in you, love, peace and hope for the future.

Pray for those who bear the burden of illness and pain, physical or mental; for those who need care and can't get it; for those stuck in hospital because there is no safe and caring place for them to move to. In our own community, pray for Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Tina Hamilton and Daphne Hurlstone.

Pray for those who will be spending their first Christmas without a treasured loved one, including the family of Jennifer Cooper

As we prepare for this most holy time, may we put together the pieces of our lives that make us who we are and step into each new day hopeful of your promises that are to come. May we know your love and find peace and joy and hope.