

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

**11<sup>th</sup> February 2024: Sunday before Lent**

### **Hazel writes:**

We have a Valentine's theme this week for our services, which was mirrored in Messy Church on Friday and at the Valentine's lunch on Saturday, showing that all our **congregations** are part of the same church **community**. Having Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday on the same day in the week ahead is a little disorienting, but I hope that you will have been able to recognise both appropriately, with our service at St Francis' in the morning and nothing planned for the evening, unless you are starting the Wednesday evening Lent group, which has an appropriate chocolate theme anyway.

This week we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church, and non-eucharistic services at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February**, 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](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.

This week is the beginning of Lent, with Ash Wednesday when there will be a service of **Holy Communion with Ashing** at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 14th February at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room, Emmanuel Church, The Grove. Do encourage anyone who would like to talk about bereavement at this time to come along.

**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.

St Mary's are hoping to re-site their **defibrillator machine** outside the hall, so that it is available 24/7. Following a WhatsApp survey, it seems that local residents would be willing to support this project financially, so we are now seeking to gain donations by a

door-to-door leaflet drop. Packets of leaflets have been printed and are available at St Mary's. If you are willing to deliver some of these, please pick up a packet and deliver them this week. Many thanks.

**St Mary's electoral roll** is now being updated. If you consider yourself part of the church, but are not on the roll, please ask Chris Fitzgerald for an application form for enrolment. Those who return forms by Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> will also be able to vote at the APCM next month.

We will have three **Lent Groups** meeting this year, all looking at a film "Chocolat" to explore what it means to be human and to grow. There are more details in the magazines. The groups which can take additional people will both meet at St Francis' Church in the refurbished choir vestry as follows:

- Wednesday evenings at 8pm (starting on Ash Wednesday). Please contact Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 07771 7682914) if you'd like to join this group.
- Friday mornings at 10.15am (starting on Friday 16th February), with one exception when the meeting will be on a Thursday. If you want to join this group, please contact Debbie Adams (debadams64@icloud.com or 07943 330244).

There are also sign-up sheets at the back of both churches if you'd prefer to sign up in this way.

**Easter Egg Outreach** Once again, I am happy to order "**The Real Easter Eggs**" for those who would like to buy them for children, grandchildren, great-nephews and nieces, or even spouses, etc. The eggs are made from Fairtrade chocolate and include a copy of the Easter story in colourful book form. There are three kinds available:

- Original (milk chocolate) - £4.50
- Dark - £5.50
- Special Edition - £9.99 (includes Easter card, an extra chocolate bar and the Easter story)

Order forms will be posted in both churches from Sunday, but you can also contact me by email or phone ([richard.ford73@gmail.com](mailto:richard.ford73@gmail.com), 0208289 2432). In order to get free delivery, I need orders by Sunday February 25<sup>th</sup>, at the latest. Richard Ford

We have a **wedding** at St Mary's on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February at 3pm, when Matt Owen and Yuliya Gantseva will be marrying. All are welcome to join us for a very special celebration joining two people from UK and Ukraine in a bond of love, with a message of hope for all.

The **Croydon Area Lay Conference** is on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March from 9.30am to 5.30pm at St Bede's School, Redhill. RH1 2LQ. This is a day to celebrate what's happening in our churches and to be inspired for the future. It includes a key-note speaker, Elaine Storkey, a prominent feminist evangelical lecturer, writer and broadcaster. There will also be a variety of workshops, lunch, an address from Bishop Rosemarie and time to mingle with those from other churches in the Croydon Area. If you'd like to go, please book a £10 ticket on-line by Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February at <https://croydonlayconference2024.eventbrite.co.uk>.

The **Croydon Male Voice Choir** will be giving a concert at St. Francis Church on **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30 p.m.** The choir has recently acquired a dynamic new musical team and have an extensive repertoire, including classical choruses, hymns and choral anthems, so this is one not to miss. Tickets are £12 including refreshments and are available on line at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/StFrancis-of-Assisi/concert-by-croydon-male-voice-choir/2024-03-09/19:30/tdvxgrdn> and will also be available after services from David Wada and Valerie Hamilton.

February's edition of **The Bridge**, the Southwark Diocesan newspaper, has been published with an article about The Big Christmas Sing and the Christmas Tree Festival on page 5. Here's a link to the electronic copy: <https://southwark.anglican.org/newsevents/news/the-bridge-newspaper/>. Paper copies are available in the church buildings.

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**

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**1 Corinthians 13: 1-8a**

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all

things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

**Gospel Reading:**

**Luke 10: 25-37**

<sup>25</sup> Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>26</sup> He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' <sup>27</sup> He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

<sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite,

when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denari<sup>l</sup> gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' <sup>37</sup> He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

**Post Communion Prayer**

Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ: may we who are partakers at his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

How do you know that someone loves you? It may be things that they say, things they do, it might be the way that they look at you, or maybe they tell you outright ‘I love you’.

Someone who I know loves each and every one of you is Jesus. I wonder how you know that Jesus loves you. I don’t know if you ever sang it as a child, but there’s a song called “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so”. So, that’s the first way – if you read the bible, it tells a story of how much Jesus loves us. He does this in two ways:

Firstly, we know that Jesus loves us because he came to show us a better way to live our lives. He did this through helping others – in healing them, in teaching them, in being a friend to them. The story of the Good Samaritan is one of the parables that he told to illustrate what this better life should include.

And then, secondly, he died on the cross and rose again for us, which was a really loving thing to do – to die for us, his friends.

After his resurrection the disciples, and all followers of Jesus since, were offered the opportunity to live this kind of life through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can be summarised as loving one another, and Paul explains what this looks like in his letter to the Corinthians. So, let’s think a bit more about what living in the power of the Spirit looks like in terms of loving one another?

The first thing to be aware of is that the ‘others’ that we are asked to love aren’t just people who look like we do and who believe the kind of things that we believe in. No, when Jesus asks us to love one another, he means all people. And this might come as a shock to those who were taught that ‘same is safe, and different is dangerous’. This did work for many centuries, as people spread out across the world, with different tribes staking out their territory and driving others further and further away. Eventually, however, because the earth is a sphere, our dispersing tribes had to come full circle and encounter one another again. Today we have to find a way to live together on our crowded planet as brothers and sisters in one family of creation.

Paul realised that people aren’t different because they’re trying to be difficult or evil, but because the Spirit has given them different gifts. The Spirit of God is a team spirit, and our unity is energised when we have diversity. Our societies operate better when they operate on love, not fear.

Of course, love needs to be made specific and not remain a generality. Love needs to be translated into practical, specific, concrete, down to earth actions. Each of us has something to give and much to receive, so the term 'love one another' might, for example, mean replacing prejudice with openness to one another; feeling superior with serving one another; resenting another's good fortune with forgiving one another, being isolated from others with being connected with one another, and replacing hostility with offering hospitality to one another.

We need to do more 'one-anothering', especially with people who seem different to us. The only thing that counts in this world is faith working through love.

So, how do you know that Jesus loves you? Well, we can read about it in the bible, but better than that, we can go out into the world to see it being shared between people in what they say and what they do and, even better than that, we can love others ourselves, showing them that Jesus loves them, and, if you do so, it's quite likely that the love will come flowing back to you too.

Amen

### **Prayer Pointers**

In a quiet moment, replay the week just passed in your mind. Ask God to show you people, places and moments in which you were able to see something of his love.

Pray for the places in the world where God's love is difficult to find, including Ukraine and the Middle East where conflict is a part of daily life, Ethiopia and other parts of Africa, once again facing famine. Where there is need, pain, hunger and despair, may there be a new revelation of God's love.

Pray for all who have hit the headlines this week ... whether for good, painful or unpleasant reasons, as well as those who were prominent in the news just a few days or weeks ago but have now faded from the front pages. Thank you, Lord, that you never forget anyone. You know our stories and love us throughout our lives.

Pray for those who are sick, remembering King Charles among them. Also pray by name for Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Tina Hamilton, Daphne Hurlstone, Tim Curtis, Barry Burford, Pam Tabner and Mark Christy. Lord, may they know the revelation of your healing power.

Lead us this week into moments of opportunity where we can share your love with those who need it so deeply.