

**ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM**  
**20<sup>th</sup> December 2020: Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Hazel writes:**

It's very clear that it will be a very different Christmas this year in terms of time with our families, meals and parties, but the story of Jesus' birth remains the same. This Christmas, there's even more reason to focus on the true meaning of the season as it shows us how much God loves us and can bring about hope and peace - things needed more than ever today.

I have had a number of cards and messages of Seasons Greetings to pass on to both of the congregations. It is difficult to display them all in the churches and I'd rather not share names with everyone in a document that is posted to the internet. Please accept this message in our last pew sheet of the year as a greeting from everyone else in the churches to you. And also a BIG thank you to all those who have contributed to our continuing ministry during this most strange of years.

Have a very Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

On Christmas Eve, the in-person services for Christingle and Lighting the Lamps are by ticket only. You can pick up a bag with all the necessary resources to join in on-line from each church during the afternoon from 2.30pm at St Mary's and from 4pm at St Francis'. Midnight Communion will be held at St Mary's at 11.15pm. On Christmas Day there will be one service of Holy Communion at 10am in St Francis' Church.

Next Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> December there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St Francis' at 8am and at 10am in St Mary's. On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January there will be a service of **Holy Communion** in St Mary's at 8am and at 10am in St Francis'. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 10am on both Sundays.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – A video of the carol service, combining what will happen in both churches has been posted to the websites for today. All other files 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.

**Christingle** and **Lighting the Lamps** services will be shown on our YouTube Channel at 4pm and 6pm respectively on Christmas Eve. **Midnight Communion** will also appear there from 11.15pm. Here's a note of the web-reference:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq1RdXI27bTIompT6lCPoGQ>.

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.Today](http://www.churchofengland.org.Today) 9.00 a.m. Worship at home with Marie Curie
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
  - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – from the U.K.'s smallest city St. David's.
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 live from Hereford Cathedral
  - On BBC 1: Sunday Worship at 11.15 a.m with the Rev. Canon Roland Riem from Winchester Cathedral and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. from St. Pauls. Aled Jones reveals the U.K.'s favourite carol with guest Andrea Bocelli.

Our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursdays at 2.30 pm is taking a break for Christmas. We will next meet on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January. This is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena ([rowena.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:rowena.griff19@btinternet.com) /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

**Carol singing outside St. Mary's**: to suit those who have responded, this session will be on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. at 4pm. Space is limited, but any further requests to take part to Geoff at [geoff@mussard.org.uk](mailto:geoff@mussard.org.uk) or 020 8650 8389 . If after the latest advice from the government anyone wishes to change their mind about singing could they please let Geoff know. Don't forget your torch and broly if needed.

We are not able to do ‘**Christmas shopping**’ as we normally do this year. If you are looking to support a small local business during these difficult times, do take a look at Jane Coia's website: [www.winsfordhouseproduce.co.uk](http://www.winsfordhouseproduce.co.uk). Jane is a member of St Francis' who is a producer of jams, marmalades, pickles and chutneys. Take a look at the website for the full range of products and details of how to order. Gift boxes can be made up in any combination.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [bbolton@ntlworld.com](mailto:bbolton@ntlworld.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**

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Isaiah 9: 2, 6 and 7**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.  
<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Gospel:**

**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**

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# Joseph reflects on the Birth of Jesus

## The beginning in Nazareth

Welcome to my humble carpenter's workshop in Nazareth. My name's Joseph, my wife is Mary and our very special young son is Jesus. We've been away from Nazareth for a long time and we're not long back, so I'm building up the trade once again. The story of our life together as a young family is quite mind boggling – so many things have happened – dreams, finding somewhere where Mary could give birth, visitors to see our son – some from very distant lands - long journeys and living in a foreign land to escape the brutal Herod. Let me tell you a little about it all. I'm sure that you'll be amazed too – and maybe, like me, you'll think about what it all means. You never know the whole thing may change your life – just as it has changed Mary and me.

My life changed when I met Mary. She really was a beautiful young girl. We had so much in common – the same values, the same dream and even the same sense of humour. It was inevitable we would get engaged. All was going well – we were both so looking forward to our wedding day and setting up home together. Then everything changed. Mary told me she was pregnant. I was so angry – the father must have been someone else in the village. What a disgrace – the village gossips had a field day. Mary tried to tell me that an angel from God had visited her and that her child would be his son. Like I would believe that!! She said that the angel had told her that the child was the promised Messiah – that he was to be the Son of God. She seemed so calm and peaceful about it all – unlike me. To say I was seething would be the understatement of the year. I didn't know what to do or where to turn.

But then I had a dream – God's messenger spoke to me. It was no daydream – this was for real. I'd always tried to do what's right in life – obey all the religious rules and festivals – but God speaking direct to me? I was told that Mary's baby really was God's son. I was even given his name – Jesus – and that I was not to be afraid to marry Mary. It was such a vivid dream – so real – how could I ignore it? The most amazing thing was that after the dream, my anger melted away and I felt a complete peace that I had never experienced before. It was as if me saying 'yes' to the angel was the turning point. Saying 'yes' was the start of this amazing new life that Mary and I shared together.

I've been making little reminders for Mary of our experiences so far. The angel was the start so this little wooden model will be take pride of place in our home. It'll remind us of how we both said 'yes' to God, how 'yes' brought us a marvellous inner peace and how in saying 'yes' our lives were changed forever.



### **The birth in Bethlehem**

So, we got married. Not a big wedding – just a quiet ceremony. Mary rushed off to see her cousin Elizabeth who was also expecting a baby – if you ask me that's another miracle considering how old Elizabeth was. My carpenters work was doing fine and all was well until just before Mary was due to give birth, the Romans decided on a tax census. They decreed that everyone had to go back to their hometown to be counted so that they weren't losing any money in their coffers. Now, my hometown is a small place called Bethlehem. It's way down south of the country – not far from Jerusalem. We had no



choice but to undertake this long, hard journey made even more difficult because Mary was so near to birth. However, I still found this inner peace I mentioned earlier and I was sure God was protecting us. I made this little portrait of Mary, me and our trusty donkey to remind us of the long days and nights of our journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Fortunately, we managed to get to Bethlehem safely although Mary must have been really uncomfortable by the time we arrived. Bethlehem was bustling with people – not just those who lived there, but hundreds who had travelled from all points of the compass for the census and many Roman soldiers as well. By the time we entered the town, it was clear that there was no proper accommodation to be found – not even in the homes of my relatives or people I knew. The inns were full to the rafters and, anyway, who wants to give birth in a noisy, rowdy pub? Eventually, we found a space in a house where the animals were housed – most houses in Bethlehem had animals and stables to keep them.

It was there in this dirty, smelly stable that Mary gave birth. It could have been stressful, but once again, we both had this most amazing peace – the peace brought by the angel back in Nazareth. We found some rags and wrapped our new son in them. No luxurious bed or cot of course, so we just laid him on the straw used to feed the animals. Not a very auspicious start to life for the Son of God and yet it seemed to be the right place for him to

sleep and for us to wonder at the gift of this new life. God was there with us in love and peace right there amongst the animals and the fodder. He wasn't watching from a distance, he had come to us in Nazareth, walked with us to Bethlehem and rejoiced with us as we watched our baby son sleeping on the straw. God's love was there in that stable. Mary and I knew that comfort, peace and joy that was God's gift to us.

### **Visitors come to see us**

We weren't on our own in that stable for very long. We could have done with a rest after our long journey and the ordeal of the birth. Yet not long afterwards some rough men who had been looking after sheep in the fields just outside Bethlehem rushed in completely out of breath. I wondered how on earth they knew about Mary and I and Jesus. They told us of another encounter with angels. These angels get about a bit don't they! Apparently, these shepherds were minding their own business watching over their flock making sure that their sheep weren't attacked by wolves or the stray town dogs. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them (shades of Nazareth nine months ago!!) and the normally pitch darkness was flooded with marvellous light. Understandably, the men were absolutely terrified. What on earth was going on? The angel told them not to be afraid and told them about the birth of our son who really was the Messiah and they could find him here in this stable wrapped up in rags. Then, not one angel, but hundreds of them appeared and sang praise to God. They said that there would be peace on earth among those God loved.

They felt compelled to get to our stable as fast as they could – no wonder they were breathless. They brought a couple of young lambs with them as they couldn't leave them to fend for themselves in the dark fields. When these men saw Jesus they just stared at him with wonder and awe. The shepherds told us how they experienced that peace that Mary and I found through the angels. What is it about angels and peace?

I wondered why the angels appeared to these shepherds. Why did God reveal himself to them? They were the lowest of the low – the local outcasts. Did you know that they were considered to be completely unreliable witnesses. They weren't allowed to give any evidence in a court case – uneducated and unreliable. Is this how God chooses to reveal himself – to outcasts and the lowly? Is this who our little Jesus was sent to love and to heal? You would think that God would have sent his angels to announce the birth of his son to the High Priests or the great rabbis and teachers of the law – but no, he sent his angels to lowly, unreliable people – those who other people looked down on. Mind you, some posh people did turn up not too long afterwards. I mean Jesus is the Son of God, so why not receive expensive gifts from the rich and famous. I have to tell you that those

angels appeared to the posh people as well - but that's just another story for another time.



I made this little scene of Mary and I with a shepherd and a couple of sheep in Bethlehem to remind Mary and I of those men who, like us, had found peace, love and joy through the angels. The lowly, unreliable and outcasts drawn to the Son of God.

I wonder if that's going to be the path that Jesus' life takes in the future?

### **Prayer pointers**

Thank God for the peace and joy that is found in the manger in Bethlehem. For the way that Mary and Joseph both said 'yes' to God even though what they were asked to do seemed impossible. Pray that we may not be afraid to say 'yes' when God calls us to witness to Him and to serve in His name.

God announced the birth of Jesus to humble, lowly, unreliable shepherds. Pray for all those who society looks down on – the homeless, refugees and all those who don't fit in. Thank God for all who will serve them over the Christmas and New year period – especially for all the soup kitchens on the streets of our city and for the volunteers who give up their festive season to feed and clothe the vulnerable. May we support them in our service and in our giving.

Pray for all who will be unable to see their loved ones over the festive period due to the Coronavirus restrictions, especially those who live on their own. May everyone still find real joy and peace – the peace that passes all understanding – the peace that all who met the Christ-child found. Pray especially for all in our local care homes – the residents and the staff.

As we remember how God was close to Mary and Joseph during the difficult journey they made from Nazareth to Bethlehem, thank God for the way in which he has remained close to us in this most difficult year of 2020. For the way in which St Mary's and St Francis' have maintained worship and pastoral care for the congregations. Pray that God will continue to strengthen and support us all as we go into the New Year and that we may respond to His call to serve and care for our community.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently – especially for Valerie Hamilton and Sam Hand. Hold before God all those in the NHS who will be working in our hospitals and ambulances over Christmas and New Year. Continue to pray for all those working on the Covid wards and for those who are feeling stressed and struggling to cope with the difficult cases.

**A prayer as London enters Tier 3 restrictions (Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark)**

O God our constant in this ever-changing world, have mercy on us in these difficult times, we pray. As we long for the vaccine to bring change, grant us hope; as we long for restrictions to end, grant us resilience; as we long to see family and friends, grant us restraint; as we long for your Kingdom to come, grant us vision. And so may this time of waiting become a time of growing faith and lead us onward into life. Amen.

**Collect**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your birth at Bethlehem  
draws us to kneel in  
wonder at heaven  
touching earth:  
accept our heartfelt  
praise as we worship  
you, our Saviour and our  
eternal God.

**First Reading:****Isaiah 52: 7-10**

How beautiful upon the  
mountains are the feet of  
the messenger who  
announces peace,  
who brings good  
news, who announces  
salvation, who says to Zion,  
'Your God reigns.'

<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift  
up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they  
see the return of the LORD  
to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into  
singing, you ruins of  
Jerusalem; for the LORD has  
comforted his people,  
he has redeemed  
Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his  
holy arm before the eyes of  
all the nations; and all the  
ends of the earth shall

see the salvation of our  
God.

**Gospel:****John 1: 1-14**

In the beginning was the  
Word, and the Word was  
with God, and the Word  
was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the  
beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All  
things came into being  
through him, and without  
him not one thing came  
into being. What has come  
into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life,  
and the life was the light of  
all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines  
in the darkness, and the  
darkness did not overcome  
it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent  
from God, whose name  
was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a  
witness to testify to the  
light, so that all might  
believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He  
himself was not the light,  
but he came to testify to  
the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light,  
which enlightens  
everyone, was coming  
into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world,  
and the world came into  
being through him; yet  
the world did not know  
him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what

was his own, and his own  
people did not accept  
him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who  
received him, who  
believed in his name, he  
gave power to become  
children of God, <sup>13</sup> who  
were born, not of blood  
or of the will of the flesh  
or of the will of man, but  
of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became  
flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen his  
glory, the glory as of a  
father's only son, full of  
grace and truth.

**Post Communion Prayer**

God our Father,  
whose Word has come  
among us  
in the Holy Child of  
Bethlehem:  
may the light of faith  
illumine our hearts  
and shine in our words  
and deeds;  
through him who is  
Christ the Lord.

**Collect**

God in Trinity,  
eternal unity of perfect  
love: gather the nations  
to be one family and  
draw us into your holy  
life through the birth of  
Emmanuel, our Lord  
Jesus Christ.

**First Reading:****Isaiah 61:10-62:3**

<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in  
the LORD, my whole being  
shall exult in my God; for  
he has clothed me with  
the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with  
the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks  
himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns  
herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings  
forth its shoots and as a  
garden causes what is  
sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause  
righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the  
nations.

For Zion's sake I will not  
keep silent, and for  
Jerusalem's sake I will not  
rest, until her vindication  
shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a  
burning torch.

<sup>2</sup> The nations shall see  
your vindication, and all  
the kings your glory; and  
you shall be called by a  
new name that the mouth  
of the LORD will give.

<sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of  
beauty in the hand of the  
LORD, and a royal diadem  
in the hand of your God.

**Second Reading:****Galatians 4:4-7**

When the fullness of time  
had come, God sent his  
Son, born of a woman, born  
under the law, <sup>5</sup> in order to  
redeem those who were  
under the law, so that we  
might receive adoption as  
children. <sup>6</sup> And because you  
are children, God has sent  
the Spirit of his Son into our  
hearts, crying, 'Abba!  
Father!' <sup>7</sup> So you are no  
longer a slave but a child,  
and if a child then also an  
heir, through God.

**Gospel: Luke 2:15-21**

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had  
left them and gone into  
heaven, the shepherds  
said to one another, 'Let  
us go now to Bethlehem  
and see this thing that has  
taken place, which the  
Lord has made known to  
us.' <sup>16</sup> So they went with

haste and found Mary and  
Joseph, and the child lying  
in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When  
they saw this, they made  
known what had been  
told them about this child;  
<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it  
were amazed at what the  
shepherds told them.  
<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all  
these words and  
pondered them in her  
heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds  
returned, glorifying and  
praising God for all they  
had heard and seen, as it  
had been told them.  
<sup>21</sup> After eight days had  
passed, it was time to  
circumcise the child; and  
he was called Jesus, the  
name given by the angel  
before he was conceived  
in the womb.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Heavenly Father,  
whose blessed Son  
shared at Nazareth the  
life of an earthly home:  
help your Church to live  
as one family, united in  
love and obedience,  
and bring us all at last to  
our home in heaven;  
through Jesus Christ our  
Lord.

**Collect**

Creator of the heavens,  
who led the Magi by a star  
to worship the Christ-child:  
guide and sustain us,  
that we may find our  
journey's end in Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Ephesians 3: 1-12**

3 This is the reason that I  
Paul am a prisoner for Christ  
Jesus for the sake of you  
Gentiles—<sup>2</sup> for surely you  
have already heard of the  
commission of God's grace  
that was given to me for you,  
<sup>3</sup> and how the mystery was  
made known to me by  
revelation, as I wrote above  
in a few words,<sup>4</sup> a reading of  
which will enable you to  
perceive my understanding  
of the mystery of Christ.<sup>5</sup> In  
former generations this  
mystery was not made  
known to humankind, as it  
has now been revealed to his  
holy apostles and prophets  
by the Spirit:<sup>6</sup> that is, the  
Gentiles have become fellow-  
heirs, members of the same  
body, and sharers in the  
promise in Christ Jesus  
through the gospel.<sup>7</sup> Of this  
gospel I have become a  
servant according to the gift  
of God's grace that was given  
to me by the working of his  
power.<sup>8</sup> Although I am the  
very least of all the saints,  
this grace was given to me to  
bring to the Gentiles the

news of the boundless riches  
of Christ,<sup>9</sup> and to make  
everyone see what is the plan  
of the mystery hidden for  
ages in God who created all  
things;<sup>10</sup> so that through the  
church the wisdom of God in  
its rich variety might now be  
made known to the rulers  
and authorities in the  
heavenly places.<sup>11</sup> This was in  
accordance with the eternal  
purpose that he has carried  
out in Christ Jesus our Lord,  
<sup>12</sup> in whom we have access to  
God in boldness and  
confidence through faith in  
him

**Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12**

In the time of King Herod,  
after Jesus was born in  
Bethlehem of Judea, wise  
men from the East came to  
Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> asking, 'Where is  
the child who has been born  
king of the Jews? For we  
observed his star at its rising,  
and have come to pay him  
homage.'<sup>3</sup> When King Herod  
heard this, he was frightened,  
and all Jerusalem with him;  
<sup>4</sup> and calling together all the  
chief priests and scribes of  
the people, he inquired of  
them where the Messiah was  
to be born.<sup>5</sup> They told him,  
'In Bethlehem of Judea; for  
so it has been written by the  
prophet:<sup>6</sup> "And you,  
Bethlehem, in the land of  
Judah, are by no means least  
among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a

ruler who is to shepherd my  
people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod  
secretly called for the wise  
men and learned from them  
the exact time when the star  
had appeared.<sup>8</sup> Then he sent  
them to Bethlehem, saying,  
'Go and search diligently for  
the child; and when you have  
found him, bring me word so  
that I may also go and pay  
him homage.'<sup>9</sup> When they  
had heard the king, they set  
out; and there, ahead of  
them, went the star that they  
had seen at its rising, until it  
stopped over the place  
where the child was.<sup>10</sup> When  
they saw that the star had  
stopped, they were  
overwhelmed with joy.<sup>11</sup> On  
entering the house, they saw  
the child with Mary his  
mother; and they knelt down  
and paid him homage. Then,  
opening their treasure-  
 chests, they offered him gifts  
of gold, frankincense, and  
myrrh.<sup>12</sup> And having been  
warned in a dream not to  
return to Herod, they left for  
their own country by another  
road.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Lord God, the bright  
splendour whom the  
nations seek: may we who  
with the wise men have  
been drawn by your light  
discern the glory of your  
presence in your Son, the  
Word made flesh, Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

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