

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

16th July 2023: 6th Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

The past year has been a busy one with our support for projects that show our **compassion**, as well as our ongoing support of people in our **congregations**. This has involved a huge amount of volunteering which we'd like to recognise and say thank you for. If you have been involved in anything at our churches, whether that be on Sunday mornings, or at other times, or if you have given support from your own home, we will be celebrating this at a coffee and cake event on Saturday 5 August between 10.30-11.30am at St Francis of Assisi Church. As well as our church activities, we also opened the Warm Space on a Wednesday so that those who were struggling in the economic and energy crisis had somewhere to meet with others and share some food, Social Befrienders continued to offer a listening ear over the telephone to those living on their own who needed someone to talk to, and we arranged and delivered Christmas Bromley Foodbank hampers again. Volunteers for these initiatives have included people from outside our church congregations and they have also been invited to this event. So, if you have been involved in any of these, or other initiatives at our churches, please do come along to meet others who are community minded.

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

Next **Sunday 23rd July**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church, at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' 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 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 **Women's Group meeting** is at St Francis on Tuesday 18th July at 8pm when we are focussing on homelessness. Anne Horner-Tree will speak about the Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme which provides household items for those made homeless, (e.g., on coming out of prison, or returning from hospital and finding accommodation is

taken back by the landlord and the contents disposed of - this really happens). Brian Griffiths will also speak about the experience of some from St Mary's and St Francis' in travelling weekly to London with sandwiches and soup for the homeless on the streets. Please bring along suitable items for donation (e.g., cutlery, crockery, duvet covers (not duvets), pillow slips, tea towels, saucepans, frying pans, bath towel, toothbrush, etc.) Come along and find out more and we will continue to collect in the weeks to come.

Children's Society Coffee Morning and Cake Sale: St Francis' Church Hall on Saturday, 22nd July from 10.00-12.00 noon. Delicious home-made cakes for sale, coffee and biscuits, children's amusements, 'Guess the weight of the Cake' and a raffle. Please come along and bring your friends. All proceeds to The Children's Society. Donations of home-made cakes to sell at this event, would be very welcome. Christine Morton

The **Croydon Area Racial Justice Group Study Day** is on July 22, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM at Christchurch Purley, Brighton Road, Purley CR8 2BN. The day will focus on the Anti-Racism Charter and how we might engage with it. All are welcome: reserve your place at <https://christpurley.churchsuite.com/events/ziomb6rs>.

Liz and Mike Jeggo, the OMF missionary workers in Japan, whom St Francis support, will be coming with their family to the 10.45 service at St Francis on July 30th, when Mike Jeggo will be the preacher. It would be good to have as many people there as possible to support and encourage them.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, cold meat tins, desserts (e.g. sponge pudding, jelly, Angel Delight), coffee, ladies' deodorant and toothpaste. They have plenty of pasta, cereal 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 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

Creator God,
you made us all in
your image: may we
discern you in all that
we see,
and serve you in all
that we do; through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Isaiah 55:10-13

For as the rain and
the snow come down
from heaven, and do
not return there until
they have watered
the earth,
making it bring forth
and sprout, giving
seed to the sower
and bread to the
eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be
that goes out from
my mouth; it shall not
return to me empty,
but it shall
accomplish that

which I purpose, and
succeed in the thing
for which I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out
in joy, and be led
back in peace;
the mountains and
the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of
the field shall clap
their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn
shall come up the
cypress;
instead of the brier
shall come up the
myrtle;
and it shall be to
the LORD for a
memorial, for an
everlasting sign that
shall not be cut off.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus
went out of the
house and sat beside
the lake. ² Such great
crowds gathered
around him that he
got into a boat and
sat there, while the
whole crowd stood
on the beach. ³ And
he told them many
things in parables,
saying: 'Listen! A
sower went out to
sow. ⁴ And as he
sowed, some seeds
fell on the path, and
the birds came and
ate them up. ⁵ Other
seeds fell on rocky
ground, where they
did not have much
soil, and they sprang
up quickly, since they
had no depth of
soil. ⁶ But when the

sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ Let anyone with ears listen!’

¹⁸ ‘Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on

rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.

²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who

indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

Post Communion Prayer

God of our pilgrimage,
you have led us to the living water:
refresh and sustain us as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

The parable of the sower is a well-known one. I think it’s so well-loved because it’s easy to understand. Jesus was talking to an agricultural society using a farming illustration. And it was made even easier to understand as its meaning was explained by Jesus. So, we know that he used this story to tell those who are listening that his word will produce a great harvest when sown in good soil.

Now, I want you to think about today’s context. Farming has moved on and, in this country, only 1% of the working population are employed in agriculture. This is largely due to improvements in farming processes, but it does mean that we’ve become disconnected from the land. It’s more difficult to know what goes into our food and it’s also harder to understand those stories such as the parable of the sower. Read in today’s context, the sower in Jesus’ story would be seen as crazy. Who goes out into a field of unprepared ground and throws the seed around in a haphazard fashion?

Today the farmer will use a tractor and will prepare the soil before sowing any seed. Firstly, the ground would be ploughed – with one deep cut and then two or three light ploughs. Some machines might do all of this in one go, so it’s not necessary to go over the ground a number of times. There might be a need to add fertilizer before then sowing the seeds – again using a tractor. For example, for wheat, the seeds are sown 4-5 cm into the soil in nice, neat rows. After watching for pests and diseases (and applying pesticides and insecticides if necessary) the farmer will harvest the crop when it’s ripe. There’s none of this seed falling on the path or on rocky ground, or in the thorns – any rocks have been removed and there’s not a thistle or bramble in sight!

I guess that today we get much better yields from our land than in Jesus’ day, but I think that this also says something about the difference between God’s kingdom (how he’d like the world to work) and how it actually does work. The world puts its trust in efficiency and our economy is driven by a desire for pleasure and wealth, while God’s economy is driven by love. Today we have a great reliance on technology, which has cut out people in many instances. Now with AI we’re looking at the potential for even greater opportunities to cut out people. In God’s kingdom though, people are reliant on each other and on God’s own guidance.

Let’s go back to the parable, to see how else it shows how God’s kingdom works. We might think that the sower in the parable is being wasteful. He’s using broadcast sowing and chucking the seed all over the place, with only a proportion of it falling on the good soil. I think that Jesus was using this story as a symbol of God’s generosity

and grace. He sows the seed liberally, without worrying about the type of ground it falls onto. I wonder if sometimes we try to limit the way that God's grace is offered. It's much easier to speak of faith or to act kindly with people that we like or agree with. But in God's kingdom, grace is shared with all who are within reach – whether they are likely to respond positively or not.

We've got three baptisms coming up in the next month. One of the families are members of the Messy Church congregation, but the other two are not. Now, I might well look at these families and think that I'd only like to baptise the child where I know that the parents have a commitment to raising their children to be a part of a church – there's clearly good soil there. But in God's kingdom, where an opportunity to sow comes along, the sower sows, no matter what the outcome. I may not see the fruit produced by my visits to these families and our interactions with them as part of their services, but I know that there will be some impact. As it says in v11 of our first reading from Isaiah, God's word is like the rain: it will not return back to heaven without having first watered the earth and made some kind of contribution to a harvest being reaped.

In God's kingdom efficiency isn't the most important thing, it's more about supporting others and relying on God's grace. And this grace isn't just offered to those already in our church community, it has to be spread in an untargeted way. I wonder, do we trust in God's ways and give out his grace indiscriminately, to all comers no matter who they are? Maybe this is something for you to reflect on during the week ahead.

Amen.

Prayer Pointers

Pray for St Mary's and St Francis' churches that we may see the real benefits of working more closely together, sowing the seeds of the Gospel.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for the parishes in Wandsworth Deanery – for the Area Dean, John Whittaker and for the Lay Chair, Gemma Duncan.

Pray for those for those with addictions - drugs, drink, and gambling. For those who struggle to manage life's challenges. Pray that they may encounter people who will care for them, who will support, encourage, guide and give them hope.

Hold before God the war-torn countries, nations, and peoples of the world who live among bombs and landmines and sniper fire and so much more. Pray for those whose lives are senselessly pulled apart, for those whose homes are wiped out, those whose families are shattered.

Pray for the survivors of abuse and bullying, especially those who have suffered through the church. Pray that the church may swiftly set up an independent body to be the voice of survivors.

Pray for those we know and love who are struggling to make sense of their lives, through financial pressures, illness or age, family strife or rifts. In our congregations pray for these by name – Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell and Sue Jones – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died. Pray especially for Daniel Grainger, Pat Allegacone and Martin Rees and their families.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings - all those things that worry us; those situations we feel helpless in; those decisions that burden us; those losses that overwhelm us, and all that we are thankful for.