

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

**21<sup>st</sup> January 2024: Third Sunday of Epiphany**

### **Hazel writes:**

We are in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and today I will be leading and preaching at the service in Emmanuel Church, while David Pickering will be preaching at the 10.45am in St Francis' Church. Ministers from the churches met during the past week and prayed for all our congregations here in West Wickham, remembering especially all those from the Methodist Church who are beginning their worship in other churches from today, and those from St Mark's Catholic Church who are getting to know a new priest, Fr Ashley. Please pray for all the congregations from the other churches: St John's; Coney Hill Baptist Church; Emmanuel URC; St Mark's Catholic Church; West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church and Hope Church.

This week we have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January**, 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.

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.

A **Severe Weather Protocol** is in operation in Bromley whilst the temperature is expected to be at zero or below, which means that all rough sleepers will be accommodated so they don't have to sleep on the street. If you come across a rough sleeper, please use the StreetLink website (<https://thestreetlink.org.uk/>) to generate an alert for an outreach team to go out at night and connect the rough sleeper with local support services.

We continue with the season of lay ministry during this month, culminating in a **Lay Ministry Taster Day** on Saturday 27th January from 10am-2pm in the diocesan headquarters at Trinity House. If you would like to explore whether God is calling you to some kind of ministry in the church by talking about what is involved in different ministries, do register your interest at [learning@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:learning@southwark.anglican.org).

Our next **women's event** will be on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January at 8pm in St Mary's Main Hall. This will focus on environmental matters, to see if there are improvements we can make to our individual carbon footprints in 2024.

**St. Mary's Valentine's Lunch**, organised by the gentlemen from St. Mary's, will take place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February at 12.30 p.m. in the hall. The cost is £12 per person and places can be booked through Beryl Bolton on 0208 289 8097 or [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) or by signing the list in the vestibule at St. Marys. Places are limited to 40 so book early to avoid disappointment. When booking you need to state whether you wish for ham, cheese or pate with your ploughmen's and whether you wish for mushroom or tomato soup. There will be a raffle and all profits will be for church funds.

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>.

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'.

The flowers on the platform at St Francis are from Audrey Knighton in memory of her husband John Knighton who recently passed away.

The sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's has been provided by Margaret Bond in memory of Richard and arranged by Beryl.

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**

God of all mercy,  
your Son proclaimed  
good news to the poor,  
release to the captives,  
and freedom to the  
oppressed:  
anoint us with your Holy  
Spirit and set all your  
people free to praise you  
in Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:****1 Samuel 3:1-10**

Now the boy Samuel was  
ministering to  
the LORD under Eli. The  
word of the LORD was rare  
in those days; visions  
were not widespread.

<sup>2</sup>At that time Eli, whose  
eyesight had begun to  
grow dim so that he could  
not see, was lying down in  
his room; <sup>3</sup>the lamp of  
God had not yet gone out,  
and Samuel was lying  
down in the temple of  
the LORD, where the ark of  
God was.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD called,  
'Samuel! Samuel!' and he  
said, 'Here I am!' <sup>5</sup>and ran  
to Eli, and said, 'Here I  
am, for you called me.'

But he said, 'I did not call;  
lie down again.' So he  
went and lay down.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD called again,  
'Samuel!' Samuel got up  
and went to Eli, and said,  
'Here I am, for you called  
me.' But he said, 'I did not  
call, my son; lie down  
again.' <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did  
not yet know the LORD,  
and the word of the LORD  
had not yet been revealed  
to him. <sup>8</sup>The LORD called  
Samuel again, a third  
time. And he got up and  
went to Eli, and said,  
'Here I am, for you called  
me.'

Then Eli perceived that  
the LORD was calling the  
boy. <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said to  
Samuel, 'Go, lie down;  
and if he calls you, you  
shall say, "Speak, LORD, for  
your servant is listening."' So,  
Samuel went and lay  
down in his place.

<sup>10</sup>Now the LORD came and  
stood there, calling as  
before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And  
Samuel said, 'Speak,  
for your servant is  
listening.'

**Second Reading:****Revelation 5:1-10**

Then I saw in the right  
hand of the one seated on  
the throne a scroll written  
on the inside and on the  
back, sealed with seven  
seals; <sup>2</sup>and I saw a mighty  
angel proclaiming with a  
loud voice, 'Who is  
worthy to open the scroll  
and break its seals?' <sup>3</sup>And  
no one in heaven or on  
earth or under the earth  
was able to open the  
scroll or to look into  
it. <sup>4</sup>And I began to weep  
bitterly because no one  
was found worthy to open  
the scroll or to look into  
it.

<sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders  
said to me, 'Do not weep.  
See, the Lion of the tribe  
of Judah, the Root of  
David, has conquered, so  
that he can open the  
scroll and its seven seals.'

<sup>6</sup>Then I saw between the  
throne and the four living  
creatures and among the  
elders a Lamb standing as  
if it had been slaughtered,  
having seven horns and  
seven eyes, which are the

seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne.

<sup>8</sup> When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> They sing a new song:

‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; <sup>10</sup> you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.’

**Gospel Reading:**

**John 1: 43-51**

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’

<sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

<sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’

<sup>48</sup> Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’

<sup>49</sup> Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’

<sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’

<sup>51</sup> And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

**Post Communion Prayer**

Almighty Father,  
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

## REFLECTION – Ken Bryan

Can you remember when Jesus said to you ‘Come and follow me’? Was it a very long time ago or more recently? And perhaps through the years it might have been reinforced in some way when you were asking questions.

For me it was over forty years ago when my wife was bringing our young son to church and I was at home wondering what it was all about, not having been brought up in a church-going family. With God’s prompting I came along to see what was going on and why people came to church, and He met me here in St. Mary’s and I knew this is where I was to be and where I was to grow in faith and live in a welcoming and loving community. There have been moments along the way when I have been questioning if I am in the right place or doing the right thing and God has shown me with various promptings that I am on the right track.

It’s sometimes good to look back to when you became a follower of Jesus. It can make you reassess why you are here on a Sunday and how it affects your life throughout the week. After all, we are not here just as a social club even though the community that is here is so important in working together and supporting each other through good times and not so good times. Whether celebrating good news or happy events or coming alongside those who are going through serious difficulties.

We are here to worship and praise God and to hear and to learn from scripture.

Nathanael was called by Jesus to follow him. I expect, like us, God had been prompting him to be open to become a follower. He may well have been a man educated in the scriptures as Philip said to him that they had found the man about whom Moses wrote in the law and also the prophets wrote in the scriptures.

When Philip says that it is Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, Nathanael was scathing in his remark ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ He obviously knew that Bethlehem was a town of David where the Messiah was to come from. As Micah the prophet had written in chapter 5 verse 2:

<sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.

But the small town of Nazareth was a different matter - a town of no religious significance. He obviously didn't know that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem.

Philip could possibly have said 'Oh you are probably right, let's forget about it'. But no, the evangelist in him said to him, 'Come and see'. He persisted because he was so convinced that Jesus was someone special, who seemed to know all about everyone he met, saying 'He sees us and knows us'.

Nathanael relents, his curiosity getting the better of him. He follows Philip to meet Jesus who immediately says that he can see that he is a true Israelite and a good and honest man as well. Nathanael is stopped in his tracks at this clear knowledge of himself and asks how Jesus knows him. When Jesus says that he saw him under the fig tree, that may have been a moment when Nathanael was keeping out of the sun while studying the scriptures. Or he may even have been praying for wisdom or guidance from God. And here we have Jesus as the answer to his prayer. That might be why he suddenly believed that Jesus is the Son of God.

In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity it is good to realise that, as well as ourselves, other people have been called to follow Jesus where they are, and that might mean in a different place in a different church and possibly a different denomination.

How often do our pre-conceived ideas and prejudices get in the way? But that should not be a reason to separate us from them. More a reason to celebrate that they are followers of Jesus where they are.

This should help us as a greater whole to celebrate the good times and be there at the difficult times.

Here in West Wickham, we come together to worship at Easter with the Good Friday service at St Francis', and we also celebrate Christmas with the Big Christmas Sing. And we care for people as the Churches Together with supplies for the Foodbanks, with the Bereavement group, with the Warm Spaces initiative and many other smaller events and acts of kindness which are not limited to our individual churches.

We have more in common than what separates us. After all there are more people outside the church who need to hear God's message and so we should work together. The outside world should not see bickering churches.

As the song written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David goes 'What the world needs now is love sweet love'.

We are not here to spend time saying we are better than you, we won't speak to you or recognise you as a follower of Christ. Surely it is for God to make that decision.

Christian Unity is about listening together, working together and praying together and respecting each other.

Facing the reality of our own brokenness helps to connect us to the suffering of others, here and around the world, from a place of humility and deep empathy.

Jesus sees us and knows us for who we are. And he wants us to follow him, each one of us.

Just as he didn't call one disciple but twelve, and he then sent out many more to spread the word that the kingdom of God has come near with his coming to earth.

As our reading from Revelation says of Jesus:

<sup>9</sup> 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; <sup>10</sup> you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.'

We know who is worthy. The lamb who was slain. Jesus Christ.

We are the saints from every tribe and language.

We are a kingdom people, and we are here to serve God.

We are to follow Jesus, each one of us. But we are not to do it alone. We are to live in a community of faith but also be open to live alongside and work with other communities of faith. They will not look like us or do what we do but we are all following Jesus and serving God here on earth.

Amen

### **Prayer Pointers**

Guide, shelter and shape all those who worship in the churches in West Wickham.

Keep us prayerful for our king and all the leaders in our country in parliament, in local government and in public life.



The world is becoming increasingly unequal. May we respond with what we have, to help the food banks where needs are currently often greater than the resources to meet them.

May we imagine your future and keep our eyes fixed on your message of peace for all people, thinking especially of the Holy Land, Ukraine, Ecuador and Somalia.

We ask for your comfort and peace to be given to those in sickness and those in need, especially Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Tina Hamilton, Daphne Hurlstone, Tim Curtis, and Barry Burford.

Help us to provide support and care for those who are bereaved, remembering especially Audrey Knighton mourning the loss of her husband John.

### **Prayer for the Season of Lay Ministries**

Lord Jesus, we give you thanks that you consider us worthy to serve you and have called us into ministries of many different kinds.

We pray for all those who are exploring what God's call means in their lives.

Help them to know God's peace and guiding as they listen for God's voice.

And we pray for those already in ministry that, as they carry out your work, you will help them to demonstrate your love, your compassion and your truth so that others may see your beauty and embrace you as Lord and Saviour.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.