

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

21st March 2021: Passion Sunday

Hazel writes:

The **National Day of Reflection** on Tuesday 23rd March is the first anniversary of the UK lockdown. A significant day for the country and one which will be marked to enable us to commemorate the tragic loss of life that has occurred and to stand together with everyone who's grieving. Both church buildings will be open for a time of private prayer on this day from 11.30am to 12.30pm. A one-minute silence will be kept at 12noon and the bell will be rung after this time. Do tie a yellow ribbon outside your home, or outside one of the churches to show your support of this event.

Next Sunday, 28th March, is **Palm Sunday**. Palm crosses will be available in both church buildings and there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St Francis' at 8am and in St Mary's at 10am. The **on-line** provision will be through a livestream from St Mary's at 10am.

St Francis' Church will be **open for private prayer** on Wednesday 24th March from 10.30-11.30am. There may be some music played from 11am, but otherwise, this will be a quiet time.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will premiere at 10am and will be available to view afterwards. 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. 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.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – a moment of remembrance by the Archbishop of York on the loss of 120,000 lives.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from the Chapel of Eton College during the 2017 Eton Choral Course.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Worship at 11.30 am - Kate Bottley introduces a service for Lent from St. Martins Church in Maidstone.
 - Songs of Praise **on BBC2 at 1.15 pm** – Rev. Kate Bottley shares some of her favourite moments.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need UHT Milk, Tinned Potatoes, Tinned Vegetables (particularly carrots), Long life Fruit

juice, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Fish, Tinned Cold meat, Toilet Rolls. Please do not bring any fresh food, as the foodbank cannot pass this on. The Foodbank has been incredibly heartened by the generosity of Bromley Borough residents during the past year. They are always grateful for donations but are currently preparing to downsize the warehouse and so would be very thankful for financial giving instead during this current crisis. If this is something you would like to do, you can donate money here:

<https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>

We will be collecting **donations for the Bromley Borough Foodbank** on the High Street between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 3rd April. If you would like to volunteer for an hour or two, please contact Tim Shingler on 020 8402 8586 or at tim.shingler@ntlworld.com.

Today is **census day**. Everyone must complete a form by law as soon as possible after today. You can find out more at www.census.gov.uk. If you cannot complete a form online, you can get a paper copy by calling 0800 1412021. You can also get help completing either the paper or on-line copy from our local Census Support Centre at Bromley Library on 07988 871360 or Aleksandra Besevic, the Bromley Census Engagement Manager on 07452 934102.

As we look to support our community as we come out of lockdown, I am grateful to those who have already knitted or crocheted some more forget-me-nots for our **bereavement support bags**. These will be especially helpful in the months ahead. If you would like a bag to give to someone that you know who has lost a loved one, do let me know. Hazel

We are planning (subject too PCC approval) to **re-open the church buildings for public worship during Holy Week**. The services will follow the same pattern as before with an 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. service on a Sunday (with the exception of Easter Sunday, when we will have a 9.15 a.m. and 10.45 a.m. service) as well as other services during Holy Week, so that we can mark that time in a way which was not possible last year. The restrictions associated with social distancing, wearing a face mask and no singing or socialising indoors will continue to be in place. There will continue to be an on-line provision of our Sunday services for the foreseeable future and during Holy Week Churches Together in West Wickham will provide a daily bible reading, reflection and prayer.

Merri and John Womack would like to thank everyone for their kind messages, support, love and prayers during John's stay in hospital. He is now home to continue his recovery. **If anyone feels they could organise this year's MacMillan Coffee Morning, please get in touch with Merri on 8777 8772.**

After Easter both of our churches will hold their annual meetings, when we will report on the year past and look forward to the year ahead. We will be looking for **new PCC members** in both churches and want to include more people in guiding and shaping what we do. If you'd like a greater insight to how our churches run, do talk to one of the current members about the role and consider whether it's something you'd be interested in taking on.

The **Church Electoral Rolls** of our two parishes will be revised as follows:

- For St Mary's, starting on the 20th March 2021, and ending on 3rd April 2021.
- For St Francis', starting on the 28th March 2021, and ending on 10th April 2021.

After the revisions, a copy of the Roll will be published for at least 14 days in the relevant church building.

Under the Church Representation Rules any lay persons are entitled to have their names entered on the roll if the person —

(a) is baptised,

(b) is aged 16 or over, and

(c) has made one of the following three declarations and duly applied for enrolment.

- that the person is a member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with it and is resident in the parish.
- that the person is a member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with it, is not resident in the parish, but has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the preceding six months.
- that the person is a member in good standing of a Church which is not in communion with the Church of England but subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and is also a member of the Church of England and has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the preceding six months.

Application Forms for enrolment can be obtained from the Church Electoral Roll Officer (Chris Fitzgerald for St Mary's and Rowena Griffiths for St Francis'). In order for a person to be entitled to attend the annual parochial church meeting and to take part in its proceedings, an Application Form for enrolment must be returned by the date shown above for the ending of the revision of the Church Electoral Roll by the Parochial Church Council.

Christian Aid Week this year is from 10-16th May and focusses on Climate Justice. We will not have a door-to-door collection, but (physical and virtual) envelopes can be given to friends and neighbours and we will focus on Christian Aid at our service on Sunday 16th

May. Carol Hubbard has stepped down as our representative at St Mary's and Anita Curtis from St Francis' will be unable to co-ordinate our efforts this year. If we are to contribute to Churches Together in West Wickham in this respect and record how much we raise, we will need to have someone else as our representative. If anyone is interested in finding out more (and the role need include only those aspects which someone is able to take on), please contact either Anita Curtis on 8777-5973 (john.curtis23@ntlworld.com) or Hazel.

Each week our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursday at 2.30 pm 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 /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk

PRAYER FOR DAY OF REFLECTION – Jane Smith

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| 1. On this day of reflection
On the year that has passed,
We have painful emotions
Of sadness and loss. | 5. We pray for the traumatised,
The bereaved and the weary,
May they find new strength
Hope and healing. |
| 2. “Lord, please have mercy”
Is all we can say.
We wait in silence
As we come to You today. | 6. We ask for protection,
For new treatments to be found.
In the midst of such anguish
May Your presence abound. |
| 3. Help us to keep reaching out,
Whatever the cost,
To break down barriers
And comfort the lost. | 7. We pray that nothing like this
Ever happens again
And that all those affected
Will eventually mend. Amen |
| 4. Thank you for all those
Who have come together,
Working so selflessly
To serve their neighbours. | |

Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call 2021

Week 4 – Zimbabwe

Over the past decade, Zimbabwe has experienced a number of unprecedented economic, environmental and political shocks and stresses. A sharp drop in GDP, hyper-inflation, deindustrialisation, closure of industries, large-scale lay-offs and disruption of public services, coupled with recurrent drought, floods and poor harvests, have contributed to chronic food shortages. Poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and environmental degradation are serious challenges, particularly in rural areas.

Food insecurity has been exacerbated by climate change. Whilst the rains have come this year after previous droughts, there is now a danger that the crops will be washed away because of too much constant rain. No matter what efforts are made it is a complicated process to keep Zimbabwe food secure and it is with this that the Bishop's Lent Call will help.

The **Diocese of Masvingo** is largely rural and so, with the right amount of rain, its people can produce plentiful crops. However, the effects of climate change mean that they are finding it very hard to feed everyone.

The Diocesan projects team has already planted some of the farming land at the Daramombe Mission. This land is near a river to help with irrigation so long as there is rain. They want to purchase two cows for dairy farming, too. The Chidzikwe Training Centre has market gardening, a piggery, poultry production and the trainees keep goats and sheep.

In addition, the Diocese is working to provide feeding programmes through its schools and wants to expand the provision of school gardens, designed to help feed families nearby and to provide an income for the school. It especially needs help to sink boreholes.

In the **Diocese of Manicaland**, almost a million people are in need of help to have enough to eat. The people of this area have been much affected by climate change and the effects of 2019's Cyclone Idai. In addition, COVID-19 has affected the economic situation of many. The Diocese wants to offer food assistance to 2,000 households in Mutare, the fourth largest city in Zimbabwe, providing them with food hampers.

Mutare is the capital of Manicaland province and home to the Cathedral and Diocesan Offices. Those who will be particularly helped are the disabled, elderly, single parents, orphans and other vulnerable children. It is estimated that US\$96.7 per month is needed for each household — about £72 a month. We cannot offer all the money that the Diocese needs but any amount we give would be gratefully received.

The **Diocese of Central of Zimbabwe** has also been affected by climate change, and, like the Diocese of Manicaland, by Cyclones Dineo, Idai and Charlene. Many households, especially those with school-age children, are in need of food assistance.

The Diocese, working with the Mothers' Union and the Anglican Women's Fellowship, have established kitchen soup points in both urban and rural areas where children aged 12 or younger are being fed when resources are available. Surveys have determined that many boreholes are not functioning as well as they might and the provision of reliable and clean water is a great challenge. The Coronavirus pandemic has further worsened the situation as there is greater demand for clean running water, which cannot be met.

The Harben Park Diocesan Farm plot is being upgraded to become a Climate Smart and Food Security Training Centre. It will be a model for supplying clean domestic water, driven by solar power; a home for capacity-building, income-generating projects, and for the promotion of Church and community resources management.

The **Diocese of Matabeleland** is one of the driest regions in Zimbabwe and many households in rural Matabeleland struggle to have a single meal a day. To help communities cope, the Diocese has implemented a rural food security programme in partnership with Episcopal Relief and Development.

Many urban households are also food insecure, so urban parishes distribute foodstuffs to vulnerable homes when they can. Cyrene Farm, a Diocesan Trust farm located some 30km south of Bulawayo, aims to provide affordable vegetables to urban households. This enhances food security and good health. However, sustainability is key so the produce is sold so that the Diocese can recover its costs and keep the project running.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Rangemore, is a semi-rural parish with land and borehole water. The Diocese has started growing sugar, beans and sweet potatoes there. It is not far from the urban population and has helped greatly in achieving food security locally. More progress can be made if water from the borehole can be piped and an irrigation system established.

The Diocese is also restoring St Clare, Parklands, a former hostel, in order to provide an income to contribute financially towards food security in the Diocese. However, provision of water is necessary before the rooms can be rented.

For all these projects to succeed they will need help from us in the Diocese of Southwark, through our prayers and to purchase the materials that they need to keep things running.

**Please will you help by donating through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call?
southwark.anglican.org/lentcall**

Collect

Gracious Father,
 you gave up your Son
 out of love for the world:
 lead us to ponder the
 mysteries of his passion,
 that we may know
 eternal peace through
 the shedding of our
 Saviour's blood,
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:**Song of Solomon 8: 6-7**

Set me as a seal upon your
 heart, as a seal upon your
 arm; for love is strong as
 death, passion fierce as the
 grave. Its flashes are
 flashes of fire, a raging
 flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot
 quench love, neither can
 floods drown it. If one
 offered for love all the
 wealth of one's house, it
 would be utterly scorned.

Gospel Reading:**Matthew 27:3-10**

³ When Judas, his
 betrayer, saw that Jesus
 was condemned, he
 repented and brought
 back the thirty pieces of
 silver to the chief priests
 and the elders. ⁴ He said, 'I
 have sinned by betraying
 innocent blood.' But they
 said, 'What is that to us?
 See to it yourself.'

⁵ Throwing down the
 pieces of silver in the
 temple, he departed; and
 he went and hanged
 himself. ⁶ But the chief
 priests, taking the pieces
 of silver, said, 'It is not
 lawful to put them into
 the treasury, since they
 are blood money.' ⁷ After
 conferring together, they
 used them to buy the
 potter's field as a place to
 bury foreigners. ⁸ For this
 reason that field has been
 called the Field of Blood

to this day. ⁹ Then was
 fulfilled what had been
 spoken through the
 prophet Jeremiah, 'And
 they took the thirty pieces
 of silver, the price of the
 one on whom a price had
 been set, on whom some
 of the people of Israel had
 set a price, ¹⁰ and they
 gave them for the potter's
 field, as the Lord
 commanded me.'

Post Communion Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have taught us
 that what we do for the
 least of our brothers and
 sisters we do also for
 you:

give us the will to be the
 servant of others
 as you were the servant
 of all, and gave up your
 life and died for us,
 but are alive and reign,
 now and for ever.

Sermon: Focus on Judas - Hazel O'Sullivan

Poor Judas. He doesn't get a good press from his fellow disciples, does he. In Matthew's gospel in the previous chapter to the one our reading comes from, he's said to have been actively looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus. In Mark's gospel he's called a betrayer as early as the third chapter when the twelve disciples are named. In Luke's gospel, it's suggested in chapter 22, v3 that it was because Satan entered into Judas that he went to the chief priests to betray Jesus.

I wonder if it was this sense of being isolated and excluded by the others that contributed to him taking his own life, as we heard about in the gospel passage today.

What if Judas was really trying to help Jesus to be that Messiah that they'd all begun to believe he was?

The disciples had had three years of following Jesus. They'd seen healings and miracles, such as stilling the storm. They'd begun to believe that he was the Messiah promised by the prophets so long ago. This was someone who'd be able to free them from Roman rule – a military style leader who'd drive the Romans out of Judah. Surely, Judas thought, if I bring things to a head with an approach made towards Jesus by the religious leaders, he's going to react as the Messiah surely would and he'll lead the whole Jewish community into a battle where we'll be able to stand up to the Romans. Given all the miracles that Jesus has performed, victory will be ours for the taking.

But, of course, it didn't work out like that. I truly believe that Judas had good intentions in what he did, but he didn't understand the way in which Jesus wanted to bring about freedom for the Jews (as well as for everyone else, of course). However, Judas was the one disciple who was prepared to stand up for the issue that he felt passionate about and to force a situation which he thought would encourage others to join him, but actually it made them reject him instead.

I wonder if there's an issue that you feel passionate about, but you're not sure if others feel so strongly as you do? Are you prepared to stand up for justice in this situation, or is this just too scary? What if others don't agree with me? What if I end up offending others in some way? What if the tables are so stacked against my position that there's no way I'll be able to make any difference in this situation? Judas was not the sort of person who had those qualms. I think Judas really did believe Jesus to be the Messiah and that his approach would enable him to come out as such and to stand up for the Jews against the Romans.

So, if Judas did have good intentions behind his actions, why did his approach lead to him getting it so wrong? I think it's something to do with a common human feeling that in any issue where there are two sides, there's a need to be adversarial in our approach to the issue.

What if there's no need for adversary? What if there's a better way of love and unity, which is what Jesus' approach was.

Let me tell you a story - a true story. Last year, Qasim Rashid, an American author and human rights activist was running for the US Congress in Virginia. As he was campaigning, he gained a lot of support, but he was also on the receiving end of some anti-Muslim comments. One day, a guy named Oscar Dillon sent a tweet, the gist of which was that Rashid was not welcome in America.

Anyone who has ever been on the internet knows how these exchanges usually go down — someone says something incendiary, then someone who disagrees hits back with hateful comments and this typically results in more name-calling and spite.

Rashid took a different tack.

He did a little research and found that Dillon had set up a GoFundMe account (like a JustGiving page in the UK) to pay for some mounting medical debts and adaptations of their home for disability access, so that his wife could continue to live independently there. When Rashid saw that information, he took a risk. He donated money to the GoFundMe account — and then encouraged his supporters to do the same. Within days the account had raised almost \$20,000.

Dillon watched the donations rolling in in shock. He couldn't believe that Rashid had helped him in this way given how badly he'd treated him. He asked Rashid to meet, and when they did, he apologized for his tweet. Not only that, he invited Rashid to put campaign signs in his front garden!

When Rashid made the choice to get to know Dillon better and understand where he might be coming from, it made all the difference. They could both gain something by working together instead of tearing each other apart.

I wonder, if Judas had worked together more closely with Jesus, whether the outcome of the situation would have been different. Maybe not. Maybe Jesus knew that his death was what had to happen and having Judas take this path and being portrayed as a betrayer was the price that had to be paid. But if they had worked together, maybe the

other disciples wouldn't have bad-mouthed him in their gospel accounts and Judas wouldn't have killed himself.

We too must build up and work together instead of tearing down. So much of what we know in our society is broken and it can be easy to criticise. You only have to look at two recent news stories to see this at work:

- The Meghan and Harry interview: is that about sides, or is it about people wanting to help each other out? You can see the relationships in an adversarial light, or you can imagine what might be the outcome if everyone spoke to one another with love and concern and respect.
- And what about the Sarah Everard vigil last weekend? Imagine what might have happened if the police and the Reclaim Our Streets organisation had worked together to find a way in which it could happen safely – a way of love and unity, rather than an adversarial way. I know the issues are complex and maybe not as simple as I'm suggesting, but it's interesting to consider that 'what if' question.

After Judas recognised that his adversarial way of standing up for what he believed was right was not Jesus' way, he regretted his actions. He ended up being isolated by the other disciples as a result. He had good intentions, but his way led to him being seen as taking sides, even if he'd claim that he wasn't doing so. It was the disunity and isolation that led him to take his own life.

Can we stand up for what we believe is right, without being adversarial about it, without creating disunity? Can we look at those issues that have been highlighted by the pandemic – poverty, loneliness, bereavement, divisions in society, climate justice – and rather than standing against a group of people, can we consider ways in which we might be able to work with those who are facing these issues, or with those who can have a positive impact on the outcomes associated with the issues? Yes, we need the passion of Judas for a particular cause, but we need to follow that passion in Jesus' way – the way of love that's suggested in the reading from the Song of Solomon. This is a way that will not be rejected by another, or if it is, at least this is done with respect.

Unity and love are crucial to being able to operate in this way. Jesus knew that the more we operate in this kind of mindset, wanting love and unity between people and seeing the human being in others, whatever their background and behaviour, then the more others will see the good (and God) in us. That's the thing about loving: it's

contagious. Our collective love and unity can become louder than any individual acts of hate.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

As we think of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus, pray for those whose close friendships have been broken, especially those who have suffered at the hands of gossip and cruel words within a community and those whose confidence has been betrayed. In our close fellowship of our congregations, pray that we may always treat each other with dignity and courtesy, always looking for the best in each other – the way of unity and love.

We pray for the family and friends of Sarah Everard murdered as she walked home last week. May they be comforted and may your justice be done. Pray that public spaces may be safe so that all can walk safely, exercise safely and talk together safely. Help us to celebrate freedom: freedom from all powers and principalities. And make us as transforming and loving communities spreading love to all.

We pray for police officers in our community today as they face the challenges of enforcing the law. Pray especially for all who investigate murder and violent offences and who have to witness atrocious crime scenes. Pray that all officers would use the power and authority given to them wisely, carrying out their responsibility to serve and protect us. Pray that they may be protected from temptation and deliver them from evil.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently – especially for John Godfrey; Anne Bryan (sister of Barbara Colpus); Chris Cowlard and his wife Pauline (nephew of Ken Colpus) and Michael Sanders (husband of Mary Sanders). Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Be with us as we think about all that has changed this year and help us to trust that you are always with us.

We remember those who have died. Help us to trust they are at peace with you. Pray especially for Samuel Akadi, Dennis Barcoo and Margaret Taylor. May they now experience your greater glory. Show us how to reach out to others with kindness and care, so that hope shines out in every heart and home. We pray for those who mourn the recent death of those they've loved, especially Samuel's mother, Jane, his fiancée, Amy and his young son, Isaac and for Darren and Mark Barcoo mourning the death of their father, Dennis.

We pray for funeral directors especially those who serve our community and all who sensitively and compassionately care at the time of death. Give thanks for the way in which they have risen to the challenge of Coronavirus providing care in a time when body-to-body contact is difficult. Bless and keep them safe and give them strength for the days ahead as they bear witness to your holy presence among us in death.

God of all that has been, that is, that is to come,
as we reflect on the year that has past,
those we have lost, those we have missed, the contact not made, the hopes dashed,
new things discovered, new opportunities seized, new love embraced,
we thank you that you have been with us and brought us to this day.
Stay with us as we step into your future with faith and hope and love
and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Prayer for the National Day of Reflection for Coronavirus written by Andrew Nunn – Dean of Southwark Cathedral)