

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

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2024: Easter Sunday**

### **Hazel writes:**

Our offertory at the services today will enable the **congregations** to support the **Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call**, which is raising money for projects in Zimbabwe and the Diocese of Jerusalem. You can also donate via the Diocese of Southwark website at [www.southwark.anglican.org/lentcall](http://www.southwark.anglican.org/lentcall).

In other **congregational** news, I can report that John & Dorothy Watson will be celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this week.

In support of our **community**, St Mary's have now re-sited their defibrillator machine outside the hall, so that it is available 24/7. Many thanks to all those who supported this project financially.

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

Next **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church, and a joint service at 10am in St Mary's Church.

On **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April**, 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.

There will be NO meeting to **pray for growth of the Church** this Tuesday morning, but we will meet on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 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.

There will be a **West Wickham Choir** Summer Concert in July and the **first rehearsal** is this coming Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April at 7.15pm in St. Francis' Church.

**Gardening at St Francis'** will be on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April from 10am to do light gardening, weeding, and trimming of the front and side beds. This will be alongside our **Action Aid coffee morning** which runs from 10.30-11.30 am. All welcome: just turn up with your trowel or secateurs. The more people involved the easier it will be. Thank you, Kate and Valerie.

We have a **concert with afternoon tea** on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April at 3pm, when Clara Coslett and Jacqueline Turner will perform a selection of musical theatre songs. Entry will be by ticket only (£6), so that we know how many to cater for. You can get tickets in person at St Francis' Church, or on-line here:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/StFrancis-of-Assisi>.

Our next **Women's Event** is a trip to London to hear Kate Bottley speak at St Paul's Cathedral on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April** at 6.30pm. She will talk about some of the things she's learnt about love, death, forgiveness, loneliness and joy, and why she thinks faith is the key to happiness. The event is free, but you will need to book a ticket:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/have-a-little-faith-tickets-774399338267>. Let Kate Dyer or Hazel know if you're hoping to join us, and we'll make sure that you have the necessary information about travel, and we can get you a ticket if you can't do on-line booking.

As well as her concert with Jacqueline Turner, **Clara Coslett** is also performing a one-woman show at Dorking Halls the following week (Fri 19<sup>th</sup> – Sun 21<sup>st</sup> April). Details are available here: <https://www.dorkinghalls.co.uk/ddos/>. It sounds like a show that would be worth going to see.

**St. George's Supper at St. Mary's** will take place on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April** at 7.00 p.m. The cost for a 3-course meal of prawn cocktail/melon, roast beef and all the trimmings, trifle, and coffee is £15, and you must provide your own alcoholic drinks. Places can be booked by signing the list in St. Mary's vestibule or through Beryl 0208 289 8097 or [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) and will be limited to 40 so book early to avoid disappointment. There will be a raffle and the usual sing-along of songs after the meal and any profit will be for church funds. Any donations for the raffle would be much appreciated. Thank you.

**Hazel's final service** will be a joint service **at St. Mary's at 10.00 a.m. on Sunday 5th May**. This will be followed by drinks in the vestibule and then a buffet lunch in the Hall. Lists have been posted in both churches for people to sign up if they hope to attend or they can contact Beryl Bolton [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) or 07834983735 at St. Marys and Nicky Nightingale [nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 07771 782914 to give their names and state whether they are vegetarian, vegan or have a food allergy. Final numbers are required by Sunday 21st April. Thank you.

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.

We have received a certificate of thanks from **Bromley Borough Foodbank** for the donations made during January and February which weighed a total of 83.95kg. Many thanks to all those who have contributed. Please keep the donations coming in by using the boxes outside either the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables (including potatoes and tomatoes), hot and cold meat tins, cooking sauces, UHT milk, squash, UHT fruit juice, coffee, desserts, washing up liquid and toilet rolls. 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>.

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 churches have been decorated for Easter by those on the flower rotas.

The flowers on the platform at St. Francis on Easter Sunday are in memory of Margaret Marsh from her daughter Lynda Marsh.

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 glory,  
by the raising of your  
Son you have broken  
the chains of death  
and hell: fill your  
Church with faith and  
hope; for a new day  
has dawned and the  
way to life stands open  
in our Saviour Jesus  
Christ.

**First Reading:****Acts 10: 34-43**

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to  
speak to them: 'I truly  
understand that God  
shows no partiality,  
<sup>35</sup> but in every nation  
anyone who fears him  
and does what is right  
is acceptable to him.  
<sup>36</sup> You know the  
message he sent to the  
people of Israel,  
preaching peace by  
Jesus Christ—he is Lord  
of all.

<sup>37</sup> That message spread  
throughout Judea,  
beginning in Galilee  
after the baptism that  
John announced:  
<sup>38</sup> how God anointed  
Jesus of Nazareth with  
the Holy Spirit and with  
power; how he went  
about doing good and  
healing all who were  
oppressed by the devil,  
for God was with  
him. <sup>39</sup> We are  
witnesses to all that he  
did both in Judea and in  
Jerusalem.

They put him to death  
by hanging him on a  
tree; <sup>40</sup> but God raised  
him on the third day  
and allowed him to  
appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the  
people but to us who  
were chosen by God as  
witnesses, and who ate  
and drank with him  
after he rose from the  
dead.

<sup>42</sup> He commanded us to  
preach to the people  
and to testify that he is  
the one ordained by  
God as judge of the  
living and the dead.  
<sup>43</sup> All the prophets  
testify about him that  
everyone who believes  
in him receives  
forgiveness of sins  
through his name.'

**Gospel Reading:****Mark 16: 1-8**

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

<sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' <sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

<sup>6</sup> But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.'

<sup>8</sup> So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

**Post Communion****Prayer**

God of Life, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection have delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Collect**

Risen Christ,  
for whom no door is  
locked, no entrance  
barred: open the doors  
of our hearts, that we  
may seek the good of  
others and walk the  
joyful road of sacrifice  
and peace, to the  
praise of God the  
Father.

**First Reading:****Acts 4: 32-35**

<sup>32</sup> Now the whole group  
of those who believed  
were of one heart and  
soul, and no one  
claimed private  
ownership of any  
possessions, but  
everything they owned  
was held in common.

<sup>33</sup> With great power the  
apostles gave their  
testimony to the  
resurrection of the Lord  
Jesus, and great grace  
was upon them  
all. <sup>34</sup> There was not a

needy person among  
them, for as many as  
owned lands or houses  
sold them and brought  
the proceeds of what  
was sold. <sup>35</sup> They laid it  
at the apostles' feet,  
and it was distributed  
to each as any had  
need.

**Gospel Reading:****John 20: 19-31**

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening  
on that day, the first  
day of the week, and  
the doors of the house  
where the disciples had  
met were locked for  
fear of the Jews, Jesus  
came and stood among  
them and said, 'Peace  
be with you.' <sup>20</sup> After he  
said this, he showed  
them his hands and his  
side. Then the disciples  
rejoiced when they saw  
the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them  
again, 'Peace be with  
you. As the Father has  
sent me, so I send  
you.' <sup>22</sup> When he had  
said this, he breathed  
on them and said to  
them, 'Receive the Holy  
Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive  
the sins of any, they are  
forgiven them; if you  
retain the sins of any,  
they are retained.'

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who  
was called the Twin,  
one of the twelve,  
was not with them  
when Jesus came.  
<sup>25</sup> So the other  
disciples told him,  
'We have seen the  
Lord.' But he said to  
them, 'Unless I see  
the mark of the nails  
in his hands, and put  
my finger in the mark  
of the nails and my  
hand in his side, I will  
not believe.'

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'

<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Lord God our Father, through our Saviour Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in baptism have made us one with him: deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in your love, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## REFLECTION – Debbie Adams

I wonder if you can recall a film you have watched or a book that you have read, or a historical event that has had a profound effect on you? This may have changed the way you think, or the way you view the world.

I asked my husband James this question, and he referred to the film Ben-Hur, the 1959 version with Charlton Heston. He highlighted Ben-Hur's overwhelming desire for revenge throughout the film, and his transformation after his life-changing encounter with Jesus, leading to forgiveness. Those of you who are not familiar with the film, it has been described as a biblical epic, set during the time of Jesus' ministry. It won 11 Oscars and has taken its place in cinema history. The film traces the plight of Judah Ben-Hur, a young Jewish Prince from an influential family in Judaea. As a young man, Ben-Hur is reunited with his childhood friend Messala, who is now an influential Roman officer exerting control over Jerusalem.

However, when the friends meet again, Ben-Hur is opposed to the oppressive Roman rulers and refuses to help Messala stem the increasing unrest and protests of the Jewish people. The resulting rift boils over, and an accident leads to Ben-Hur and his family being falsely accused of trying to kill a Roman official. Although Messala knows that Ben-Hur is innocent, he allows him to be convicted of the crime.

Ben-Hur's mother and sister are imprisoned, and he is condemned as a slave to row on the Roman galley ships. Ben Hur's hatred for Messala and his desire to seek revenge becomes the central theme of the film. During Ben-Hur's trek to the galleys, he collapses with thirst and is close to death when a Roman guard refuses to give him water. He asks God for help, and a local man (Jesus), defying the Roman guard, gives him water and revives him. This fleeting encounter leaves an impression on him.

In a twist of fate, while a galley slave, Ben-Hur saves the life of the commander of the Roman fleet in a sea battle and is adopted by him. He becomes a skilled chariot racer and returns to Jerusalem to find his family but is informed that they are dead. His anger escalates, and when the opportunity arises to race against Messala in a chariot race, he takes the opportunity and wins. Messala is badly injured during the race and informs Ben-Hur before he dies that his mother and sister are in fact alive, but are lepers living in caves known as the valley of the lepers. Ben-Hur is reunited with his mother and sister, and at the end of the film they are healed.



Ben-Hur's encounter with Jesus and witnessing his crucifixion, where he hears Jesus' message of forgiveness, transforms his heart. This leads him to a path of forgiveness through the transformative power of faith. This is highlighted in our Easter message today through Jesus' teachings that life can be changed by embracing the principles of love, forgiveness and faith. The resurrection offers a new beginning and a new hope for all who believe, as it did for Ben -Hur. It emphasizes that through Jesus' sacrifice and victory over death, individuals are offered forgiveness of sins, love and the chance to start a new life in Christ.

In today's Gospel reading, Mark records the unexpected historical event of Jesus' resurrection. It has all the elements of a film or television drama, with fear, suspense, tension, and anticipation of what will happen next. On the first Easter morning, the three women are making their way to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus with spices and oil. It would be the last act of devotion to anoint the body of Jesus for burial. The women are grieving and must have felt emotional and distraught after witnessing the death of Jesus on the cross.

The women are talking amongst themselves in practical terms: 'who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?' The stone is enormous and heavy, and they must have felt anxious about it as they approached the tomb. It took enormous courage for the women to make the journey to the tomb knowing they would not be able to move the stone, and there is a real threat of being arrested as followers of Jesus. They are not hiding but are out in the open for all to see. When they look up, they are amazed and afraid, as the large stone has been rolled away. This is completely unexpected.

The tomb is empty except for the young man dressed in white who has a message for them. 'Do not be afraid. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen, he is not here.' They are instructed to 'Go and tell' the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going ahead of them in Galilee, and that they will see him, just as he told them. There is no resurrection appearance, no earthquake, no conversation between Mary and the Risen Christ, and no disciples running to see the empty tomb as recorded in other Gospels. Mark's Gospel ends with the women leaving the tomb and saying nothing to anyone because they are afraid. Perhaps this abrupt ending is consistent with Mark's style of writing - short and to the point, recording only the facts.

The stone rolled away demonstrates God's power to remove burdens and obstacles in our lives, such as the great fear that the women felt when they left the empty tomb. We know the women did overcome their fear and told the disciples of the miracle of

that Easter morning, sharing the good news that the tomb was empty, and Jesus was Risen. The disciples were instructed to `Go and tell` the good news of the resurrection of Jesus to everyone, which is why we know the story today. The disciples' and the women's lives were transformed and changed forever.

I wonder what obstacles and barriers you have created in your life that you have laid in the tomb and are hidden away. This could be a broken or strained relationship. Perhaps it's an illness, or a bereavement that engulfs you in a world of darkness. Uncertainty for the future as we enter a period of interregnum, or a challenging situation that is such a burden it results in doubt and fear. It could be a demanding job that consumes you, or a lifestyle that keeps you from achieving what you really seek. Maybe your stone is the fear of war and conflict, and the human suffering that it causes. Sharing your experiences this Easter of how the Risen Lord Jesus has enabled you to overcome fear or a difficult situation in your life can have a positive impact on others.

Easter reminds us that God can transform our doubts and fears into hope, and bring healing when we offer them to the Risen Christ. Jesus has the power to roll away the stone and give us courage to move forward so that we can live the life God has called us to.

The resurrection isn't just a historical event; it remains with us today as the cornerstone of our faith. The disciples were instructed to go out to tell others, and so we too need to live out the resurrection in our daily lives, by sharing the good news with others in our community, our families, and our work-places. This is highlighted in our reading from Acts, where we hear about how Peter told those gathered in Cornelius' house about Jesus. Peter was speaking to people of a different race and culture. However, Peter overcame his fear and uncertainty through reassuring them that God's message is open to anyone who believes. God shows no partiality or favouritism.

We in turn must also strive to treat everyone with love, kindness and acceptance, while looking beyond differences and extending God's grace to all, as Peter did. The resurrection of Christ is a universal message for everyone, regardless of background, status or nationality.

The women have been told by the messenger in the tomb that Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee, and that there they will see him, just as he told them. This promise also extends to us today, because Jesus is not confined to the tomb. He has overcome

death, he has gone ahead of us, he is risen and is alive and active as we encounter him in our daily lives, in our worship, and in our personal relationship with him.

Easter is more than one day of celebrations. It is about trusting God to free us from all the obstacles in our lives that separate us from his love. The resurrected Christ who has rolled away the stone, brings forgiveness, love and the promise of eternal life. Let us rejoice in the Risen saviour and embrace the new life in Christ that he offers.

Amen.

## **Prayer Pointers**

Give thanks that Jesus was prepared to go to the cross for us and pray that we might deepen our appreciation of God's truth.

Pray for an end to the fighting in Gaza, for access for humanitarian aid to prevent the onset of famine there, and for an end to the conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen and parts of Africa.

Pray for the food banks around the country, that they will have the resources needed to meet the increasing demand and that there might come a time when such food banks are no longer needed.

Pray for the continued recovery of the Princess of Wales, for her husband, and for their family. Grant to them, and to all who are affected by sickness, faith, hope, and knowledge of your love, remembering especially Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Tina Hamilton, Barry Burford, Pam Tabner, Mark Christy and David Taylor.

Give thanks for all who have lived and believed in Jesus, remembering especially those once close to us, now sharing in your Resurrection.