

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

8th October 2023: Harvest

Hazel writes:

There were two things that I talked about in the service last week that help to meet our Vision, which is to be connected to Jesus and live an abundant life:

- The St Francis' Gift Day last week will raise funds for the addition of a disabled-access toilet to the main hall at St Francis'. This will be a blessing to others, so promoting the **commerce** strand of our vision. You can still donate towards it in cash at the church, or by making a direct donation here:
<https://givealittle.co/campaigns/0c25b1f3-0a51-41af-88dc-2ac15c223905>.
- Our Harvest Festivals today mark the end of creation-tide – a season for everyone in the **congregations** to look at our impact on the environment. Our average carbon footprint came out at 10.3 tonnes of carbon per person per year, which is higher than the UK average of 9.3 tonnes. Let's see if we can reduce this over the next year by thinking about how we might change our home energy use, reduce our food waste, use public transport, walk or cycle more, and buy a greater proportion of second-hand goods.

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

Next **Sunday 15th October**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church and a joint service at 10am in St Mary's Church when we will welcome Debbie Adams as a Reader, following her licensing service this week. This will be followed by a celebratory brunch. If you intend to be at the brunch but did not have a chance to sign up last week, please do so today.

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 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.

Debbie Adams will be licensed as a Reader later today at 6pm in a service at Southwark Cathedral. If you'd like to sit in the cathedral with others from St Mary's and St Francis', we will meet at the Information Point on the lower concourse at London Bridge Station, near Pret a Manger at 5.10pm. This will enable you to travel on either the Hayes line (changing at Blackfriars, with the latest departure from Hayes at 3.54pm) or on the line from East Croydon – latest departure at 4.51pm.

The **Bereavement Support Group** meets this week on Wednesday 11th October at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room, Emmanuel Church, The Grove. This is open to anyone who would like to talk about bereavement with others.

Messy Church is on Friday 13th October at 3.45pm in St Mary's. Please do tell friends and neighbours with young families about this monthly activity which happens after school on the 2nd Friday of every month.

The **Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Day** is on Saturday 14th October, 10am—1.15pm at Southwark Cathedral, £5.00, with the theme of Rest and culminating in a service of anointing for healing and wholeness. There will be the opportunity to reflect on rest for the whole person, and sleep. There will also be silence, meditation, musical nocturnes, and prayers for peace. The event will take place underneath a vast, suspended artwork — The Museum of the Moon, by Luke Jerram. Entry is by ticket, and you need to book online in advance here: <https://Rest-Southwark2023.eventbrite.co.uk>. Or let Hazel know that you would like to attend and give her your ticket money.

The **St John's Autumn Fair** is on Saturday 21st October in St Francis' Church Hall between 11am and 3pm, raising money for Link to Hope, a charity that works with partners in Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and the Ukraine to help the poorest and most marginalised through education and social care. Crafty and tasty gifts available and refreshments to enjoy.

St. Mary's Christmas Market is on Saturday 25th November. If you are interested and can help in any way at all please contact Gifty: gifty@nortey.com. If you are new to the Market and can spare an hour or so to man a stall, please contact Gifty. We are also looking for a face painter if you know anyone who could help. Any offers of homemade jams, marmalade, pickles etc. will be gratefully received. 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.

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 or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

Both churches have been decorated for Harvest. The sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's has been donated by Dave and Wendy Taylor for Stephen's 17th birthday.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Creator God, you made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading: Psalm 8

¹ *O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the world!* ² Your majesty above the heavens is praised out of the mouths of babes at the breast. ³ You have founded a stronghold against your foes, that you might still the enemy and the avenger. ⁴ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have ordained, ⁵ What is man, that you should be mindful of him; the son of man, that you should seek him out? ⁶ You have made him little lower than the angels and crown him with glory and honour. ⁷ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands and put all things under his feet,

⁸ All sheep and oxen, even the wild beasts of the field, ⁹ The birds of the air, the fish of the sea and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea. ¹⁰ *O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the world!*

Gospel Reading:

Luke 5: 1-11

One day Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret while the people pushed their way up to him to listen to the word of God. ² He saw two boats pulled up on the beach; the fishermen had left them, and were washing the nets. ³ Jesus got into one of the boats—it belonged to Simon—and asked him to push off a little from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd. ⁴ When he finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ “Master,” Simon answered, “we worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will let down the nets.” ⁶ They let them down and

caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break. ⁷ So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats so full of fish that the boats were about to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell on his knees before Jesus and said, “Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!” ⁹ He and the others with him were all amazed at the large number of fish they had caught. ¹⁰ The same was true of Simon's partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus said to Simon, “Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of the harvest, with joy we have offered thanksgiving for your love in creation and have shared in the bread and the wine of the kingdom: by your grace plant within us a reverence for all that you give us and make us generous and wise stewards of the good things we enjoy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Richard Ford

This sermon is the 8 am Holy Communion service version of the Morning Worship and Morning Praise talks.

Those of us who live in towns and cities and do all our shopping in supermarkets and corner stores can become somewhat isolated from the sources of our food. Ask a child where our milk comes from and you may get the answer, “Sainsbury’s” or “From a carton.”

I grew up in Deal, a small seaside town in east Kent. Every morning, it was possible to go up to the beach and buy fish, just brought ashore by a number of small fishing boats, probably no bigger than the one that Jesus used as a pulpit to teach the great crowd that had come to hear him. So fresh was this fish that if you held a herring by the tail, it would stick out straight, rather than drooping, as my mother told me.

And what appeared on our meal table was clearly linked to the seasons of the year. So there was, for example, the season for sprats and a bit later the news would go around that the herrings were in, and so people would head for the seafront to buy them fresh.

In those days, I was the member of a church choir, and every Rogation Monday, at the end of April or the beginning of May, we would assemble at our church on the strand and then, with the Salvation Army band leading the way, process across the road to the lifeboat, stationed on the beach, for a service in which we asked God to bless the harvest of the sea.

And because we knew that fishing was a risky business, we would also pray for the safety of those who “go down to the sea in ships and do their business in great waters.”

Living where I did, I knew how precarious was the life of a fisherman, both in terms of the risk of shipwreck and drowning, and also failing to catch sufficient fish to earn a living. And that’s the situation facing Simon and his colleagues in our reading this morning. They have been fishing all night and have caught nothing.

And when Jesus tells them to push out into deeper water and drop their nets, they might well have been tempted to ask him what he knew about fishing, given that they were the experts and had worked hard all night and yet had been completely unsuccessful.

But they do as Jesus says and are rewarded with a record catch.

I think that there are two lessons for us here. First, in all aspects of our life – not just work – there's reward in doing things Jesus' way. Some years ago, young people in particular used to wear a wrist band with the letters WWJD written on them. Letters which stood for, "What would Jesus do?" In any given situation, ask yourself how Jesus would have behaved in that situation and try to do the same.

To be in a position to do that, of course, we have to be familiar with Jesus' teaching and his actions. In other words, we need to read our Bibles carefully, which will give us a fuller picture than sermons like this or what we remember from school assemblies or religious studies lessons.

But there's a second lesson here. And it tells us something about the nature of God. When Simon and his colleagues let down their net as instructed by Jesus, we're told that they "caught such a large number of fish that their nets were about to break." When God gives, he gives generously. In this case, it's fish but if we look around us, we can see that God's given us a good world, a world in which there is enough food for everyone to be fed.

But we also know that there are many people in the world today who are starving, who don't have enough to eat. One of the reasons for this is because of the amount of food that is wasted. I went out for a meal the other day with some friends. We ate at one of those pubs where *they* serve the meat, but *you* can help yourself to as much in the way of vegetables as you wish. Two of the people I was with, despite the fact that they had served themselves, left a fair amount of food on their plates.

The World Food Programme has calculated that all the food produced but never eaten would be sufficient to feed two billion people. That's more than twice the number of undernourished people living in our world.

In our first reading, we heard that God has given us dominion over his creation and put all things under our feet. In other words, he has made us stewards of his world. Now we may wonder how we can influence what goes on across the world, but one thing we can do is to take responsibility for what we do with our food.

And it's not just food for which we need to take responsibility; it's all the world's resources. Being good stewards of God's earth means asking ourselves whether we are economical in our use of electricity, gas, water and other resources, as well as food.

I started this sermon by talking about Rogation Monday and asking for God's blessing on the harvest of the sea. In rural communities the equivalent took, and still takes,

place on Rogation Sunday, with the traditional “beating the bounds,” when there is prayer for a good harvest from the land. Such activities help us to be more aware of how dependent we are on God’s creation for our “daily bread.” Today, harvest festival is the completion of the process, when we give thanks for the harvests, both of the sea and the land.

And one way to give thanks is to pledge ourselves to use wisely the many resources which our generous God has given us. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

Give thanks for the wonderful world God has made and filled with glorious content - landscapes and oceans, trees, shrubs and flowers, colours and textures, animals, birds and fish.

Pray that we as God’s children might be faithful custodians of our planet, responding positively to concerns about our changing climate.

We are made as creatures of community to support and be supported by each other. Pray that we find ways to show our concern for those recovering from earthquakes in Morocco; from floods in Libya; and those overwhelmed by war in Ukraine.

Help us to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger in our midst. Give thanks for the work of our local foodbanks.

We bring to God our needs and the needs of those we know. We bring to you especially those who are sick, including Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, and Tina Hamilton and those who grieve the loss of a loved one, especially Rowena, Rhys and Gareth Griffiths.