

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

7th June 2020: Trinity Sunday

Hazel writes:

We are now entering into 'ordinary time' in the church calendar, but of course, it's not 'ordinary' at all at the moment. For some it will be especially extra-ordinary if there has been a death or other significant event in their family. Last week we started a Churches Together project to put together bereavement packs to give out to friends who might be in such a position. Here is a link to some craft ideas from the Quiet Morning that you might want to follow to make a contribution to these packs:

<https://www.stfranciswestwickham.co.uk/content/pages/documents/1590757302.pdf>

If you do create something, let me know and I will ensure that it gets into the packs. If you would like a pack yourself to give to someone, I can get one for you.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – An audio file of the sermon and a video of the service have been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined together into this pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Please tell someone if you know of somebody who is not accessing this material.

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 service for Trinity Sunday;
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Worship at 10.45am from St David's Cathedral; Sunday morning stories at 11.15am on creating unity through football and other activities; and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm on spiritual inspiration in the great outdoors.

Our Bereavement Support Group will start again next week on Wednesday 10th June at 2.30pm. The location of the meeting will be decided dependent on the weather and who is likely to attend. If you know of someone who might be interested, please contact Hazel.

Are you missing seeing your friends from Church? We have set up a Zoom "coffee/tea & chat" for next Thursday, 11th June at 2.30 pm. This will be an informal meeting for anyone who wants to meet, chat and catch up with their friends. We hope to meet regularly for just 40 minutes each week, but you don't need to commit to joining each week.

Gifty and I will circulate an email to all our contacts with the log in details a few days before the meeting. Please let me know if you would be interested in such a meeting by computer or on a landline but do not receive an invitation. Rowena

Psalm 23 garden – The Chelsea Flower Show was going to include a garden sponsored by the Bible Society and inspired by Psalm 23: psalm23garden.co.uk. Hearing about this inspired Merri to design her own, and the photos of what she created are on the following page.

Maybe this inspires you to create your own prayer garden, inspired by a psalm or other verses from the bible. How about if we had something outside each of the churches? If anyone is looking for a space to use, please contact Julie Bailey on 020 8777 1064 for St Francis' garden or Stephen Howe on 020 8249 0315/aireyowe@virginmedia.com for St Mary's.

If you don't want to create a prayer garden, but would like to **help with some weeding** in the church gardens, please contact Julie or Stephen, who will be happy to co-ordinate all contributions.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Hazel and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.



Collect

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth, and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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!*

First reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.
¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Post Communion

Almighty and eternal God, you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:
hold us firm in this faith, that we may know you in all your ways and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory, who are three Persons yet one God, now and for ever.

Talk

I thought I'd come to the summer house at our home for the sermon today. The place where I read, because I wanted to take the inspiration for my sermon from a book that I'm reading called Learning to Dream Again by Sam Wells. I can thoroughly recommend it, although it does need a clear head to read it, digest it and understand what it is that Sam is talking about. He is a really good theologian, so I do recommend it.

There is a chapter in the book which is all about **relationship** being at the heart of the Holy Trinity and so I wanted to use that as the basis for the sermon for today – Trinity Sunday. I think it's that relationship being at the heart of the Holy Trinity which is part of why it's difficult being a Christian today. I'm going to explore this by starting with some of my own relationships:

I was never very close to those in my original family – we're all very different. My mother's social incapacity has been linked to a medical problem now, but when she got drunk at my wedding and fell off her chair during the speeches, I just found it downright embarrassing. One of my sisters has two adopted sons, who have learning difficulties. Now, I'm not embarrassed by that, but sometimes I find it difficult to relate to them and I have awkward conversations. My other sister is a single parent – happily she's in another, happy, relationship, but her pain isn't something we talk about very much. My Dad has the early signs of dementia and he finds it difficult to talk about that. At some time he will need extra care – as his recent fall into a pond indicates. There may be characteristics in your own family members that make it difficult for you to relate to some of them. But they are our family and we do our best to continue in relationship with them.

So, that's my family. What about career relationships? As some of you will know, I started in hospitality – specifically hotels – as it was always thought of as a 'people industry'. So, what I couldn't do with my family, maybe I'd be able to do with others. But the more I came into contact with other people, the more I realised that people are difficult to get on well with. In the end, after my degree, I started in accounting, maybe as an opportunity to escape from the people industry. But even in accounting, I did some training and coaching and now here I am a vicar in West Wickham, I think because I have found, as well as being difficult to get on well with, people and relationships are where joy really lies.

God is in relationships. And that's at the heart of the Holy Trinity. But, relationships are difficult and many people try to avoid those difficult conversations. It's much easier to focus on a task rather than people. And the aim of life becomes: get a good job, a

nice house and a family with positive experiences to share. Even currently, if you look at the activities that we think show God's love to others, well it's much easier to make donations to a food bank, to help someone with their shopping, or to sew some scrubs or bags to put the scrubs in for the NHS. All these things are really valuable and they do show God's love, but they all keep people at arm's length and we have control over the relationships that are associated with them. However, once we start to work with others, or come alongside someone who is suffering, then we have to deal with the fragility, foibles and failings of another person, as well as our own and this is sometimes where things fall apart.

Suffering situations always have relationship at the heart of them. This might be because there's a lack of relationship – domestic abuse or loneliness are things currently in the headlines that might mean that suffering is happening because of relationship. But equally relationship might be the reason why we want to go on through suffering, although that might be difficult to admit. Maybe it's illness, but we keep going because of our relationships. So, even in suffering, which we prefer not to talk about, relationship is central to our lives.

And this is where the Holy Trinity as relationship comes into play. Holy Trinity is the church's description of God. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God as a relationship of three people wonderfully shaped towards each other, with a direction – a goal – which is to be in relationship with us – with every single human being. That's the aim of the Holy Trinity. That's the subject of that gospel reading from Matthew, which is called the Great Commission. It's Jesus' last command to his friends. It's all about relationship. It's about making disciples through baptism and teaching, knowing that Jesus is always with us while we're doing that. It's all about relationship – God with us: us with each other.

And then I remember back to those early family relationships and I get nervous about going that extra step towards somebody else. Our culture values practical accomplishments much more than relationship. We have laws, professions and institutions. All of them codify a wisdom that's summarised in CVs, in wealth, in reputation. That is what's valued in a person.

God's life and his economy is almost the complete opposite. God's economy is aimed at turning tangible things (our money, our buildings, our expertise) into fragile, fickle, fallible relationships. Jesus showed us this in his coming to earth, his death and his resurrection –there's nothing God wants more than a relationship with us. The Holy

Trinity as a relationship of three turned towards you and to me – God wants nothing more. God is constantly trying to turn our economy of gold into his ecology of grace. Maybe that seems like the wrong way round to you, but it's God's way round.

Paul in his conclusion of the second letter to the Corinthians tells them that they will have to agree with each other. They may agree to disagree, but agree they must, because this is the only way that they will live in peace. So grace must mark out their, and our, relationships. Relationships that are based on the love of the Father (that's something that we were thinking about in Thy Kingdom Come just a week ago) and it's relationship that's lived out in the communion of the Holy Spirit, which Richard talked about last week. The Holy Spirit poured out on everyone.

So, it's relationship that's at the heart of the Holy Trinity – there's nothing more in God's kingdom than relationship. I wonder how much relationship is at the heart of your life. Does it permeate all the way through, or do the practical aspects sometimes come to the fore? I so often fall back on the practical aspects. Yes, I can do the cooking, I can do the shopping. Much easier to do that than loving, caring through suffering. That's a completely different ball game – a bit scary even. But that is what's rewarding, that is where there's great joy. Because when relationship is at the heart of our lives, then we can really show God's love because the Holy Trinity – God – is all about relationship. There is nothing more satisfying, more joyful.

Amen.

Hymn of response – God forgave my sin

A recording with lyrics can be found using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NWOTInWoZs>

Prayer Pointers

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers, especially those working on Covid19 wards and intensive care units, that through their skill and insights many will be restored to health.

For the isolated and housebound, that we may be alert to their needs, and care for them in their vulnerability.

Continue to pray for those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies, that their decisions and actions may be wise, honest and truthful.

For racial harmony in the USA and in our own country, that people of all faiths and ethnicities may work together to bring peace and justice and an end to racism. May our communities be places of trust and friendship, where all are known and cared for.

Father, in the name of Jesus, hear our prayer for a rebirth after lockdown; fruitfulness after fallow; plenty after scarcity and may all share your blessings *(Prayer by Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark)*