

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

15th August 2021: Blessed Virgin Mary

Hazel writes:

Congratulations to **Debbie Adams** who received a letter from Bishop Christopher last week, accepting her for training as a Reader. Her course begins in September, and she will continue to be a valuable member of our ministry team. She is both excited and delighted about this new and life-changing challenge that God has given to her. Do ask her about it and maybe gain inspiration for your own journey of faith.

Next Sunday we have Holy Communion services at **8am in St Francis' church** and at **10am in St Mary's Church**.

Morning Prayer is at St Mary's Church on Tuesday morning at 9am and at St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am.

Coffee and Chat has been a great way of keeping up social interactions while we've had restrictions on such events. There is still a place for this amongst those who are unable to get out and meet with others, so we are going to continue with it, but hold it once a month. This week (19th August) we will meet at the normal time of 2.30pm, after which time, we will meet on the first Thursday of every month, with the first date being Thursday 2nd September. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each session. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

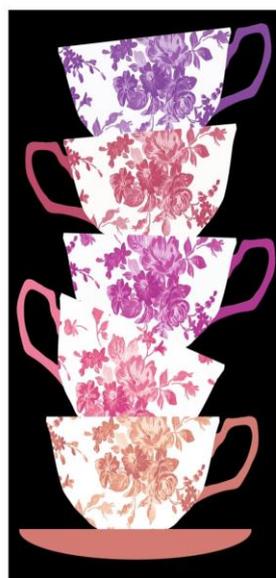
Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be **uploaded** to YouTube during the afternoon. All other files for this week have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources 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 –from Salford Cathedral - Mass for the Feast of the Assumption.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from the Chapel of Rugby School.
 - **On BBC 1:** Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Claire McCollum finds out why church weddings are so important to Christians.

Eloise and Steven's wedding at St Mary's on Saturday 21st August will be livestreamed at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq1RdXI27bTlompT6lCPoGQ>. There will be no space in the church building to accommodate members of the church, as we are continuing to observe social distancing on this occasion. If you would like to see Eloise before the service starts outside the church, you are very welcome to come to St Mary's a few minutes before 1pm to wish her well.

The **afternoon tea** next Sunday afternoon (22nd August from 3- 5pm) will hopefully be accompanied by good weather, so we will be in the gardens at St. Marys. This is primarily a social event, but we will be looking forward to other events and activities that can now be restarted in both church buildings and elsewhere. If you would like to donate sandwiches and/or cake for this event, please contact Gifty Nortey office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk or Liz Raper stevelizbraemar52@sky.com. Alternatively, tell one of them that you'll be coming and make a monetary donation at the event.

**You're invited
to**



**AFTERNOON
TEA
SUNDAY 22ND
AUGUST
FROM 3-5PM**

**At St Mary of
Nazareth Church,
The Avenue,
West Wickham.
BR4 0DX**

Our **High Street collection** of non-perishable and monetary donations for Bromley Borough Foodbank raised a total of £320 and a car-load of food and toiletries was taken to the warehouse last week. We have received a certificate of recognition from them for our support. Thank you to all the volunteers and those who donate to this organisation in whatever way.

Our **bereavement support bags** 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 take one from the back of either of the churches.

Freedom from legal restrictions will enable us to make changes in our public worship, but Covid 19 is still a threat. Please do come to one of the services to see how we are maintaining safety by asking everyone to observe the following:

- Keep you mask on, unless you are exempt or if you are leading the service in any way.

- Observe social distancing and only sit where there is a green tick, so maintaining at least 1m between people from different households.
- If, when you are sitting, you are concerned about others being too close to you, feel free to move to another seat.

One-way systems will remain in place. The sharing of the Peace will continue in a socially distanced format and arrangements for administering Communion, bread only, will remain the same for the time being.

Booking has now opened for the extremely popular **Bishop's Certificate Course** starting in September. There are five taught modules (5 weeks per module) and a final residential weekend module as follows:

- Following - about the New Testament
- Remembering - about the Old Testament
- Exploring - about the history of the church and what it means to be Anglican
- Believing - about what Christians believe
- Deepening - about living, serving and praying as a follower of Jesus
- Expecting - about putting your future into God's hands

For 2021/2022, there are four options to participate. Tuesday evenings at Trinity House, near London Bridge, Wednesday evenings online via 'Zoom', Thursday evenings online and Saturday mornings at Trinity House. The cost of the course is £220 which includes the residential event at Wychcroft. For more information about the course speak to Brian Griffiths our Reader who is also a course tutor, or Debbie Adams who has completed the course. To request an application form and a schedule of dates, email bishopscertificate@southwark.anglican.org or telephone the Diocesan Office on 020 7939 9400 and ask for the Discipleship and Ministry Department.

Some of us will be going to **The Southwark Diocesan Spirituality Day, 'Wells of Salvation' on Saturday 9th October, 10.00 am-1.00 pm, in Southwark Cathedral. Cost £5.00.** This is a morning of meditations, prayer, sung worship and restoration. Speakers include - the Venerable Justine Allain Chapman, the Archdeacon of Boston, author of *The Resilient Disciple*, writer and broadcaster Nick Mayhew-Smith, Bishop Christopher with oboe player Amy Roberts and members of Southwark Cathedral choir. Tickets available from: <https://spirituality-day.eventbrite.co.uk>

If you would like to join us and are not on the internet or need help with booking your ticket please contact Rowena Griffiths for further information on 8777 6112 or rowena.griff19@btinternet.com

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently their biggest need is "bags for life". They also need jellies, instant whips, biscuits, tinned

tomatoes, coffee, squash, deodorant, cleaning spray, antiseptic wipes and washing up liquid. Please do not bring any fresh 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 Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

The flowers this week at St. Francis have been provided by Barry Burford for Joan on completion of her treatment and have been arranged by Nicky and Christine.

Wedding flowers at St. Marys will be arranged from 9.30 a.m. onwards on **Friday 20th August**. If anyone could donate some greenery (mainly small leaved for the pew ends) could they please leave at St. Marys on **Wednesday 18th**. There will be a bucket on the doorstep to leave it in. Thank you.

The dates for your diary for the **Thursday lunchtime concerts** at St. Francis are: August 26th and September 23rd. Both commence at 12.45. Further details of programmes to be given nearer each date.

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

Beryl has had to change her email address to the above and most of you should have received this. Please email Beryl if you have not received this and wish her to have your email address, so you can be added to her new address book. Thank you.

Collect

Almighty God, who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary and chose her to be the mother of your only Son: grant that we who are redeemed by his blood may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Isaiah 61: 10-11

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is

sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 1: 46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down

the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all mercy, we your faithful people have celebrated that one true sacrifice which takes away our sins and brings pardon and peace: by our communion keep us firm on the foundation of the gospel and preserve us from all sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon – Hazel O’Sullivan

Brian told us last week that our words should build each other up. I want to use today’s sermon to explore why this is not just a nice thing to do, but how it’s vital if we are to undertake God’s will. I’m going to start with a story, which you might have heard before:

Once upon a time there was an abbot of a monastery who was friends with the rabbi of the local synagogue. Times were hard: sometimes the rabbi would come and pour out his soul with the abbot and the abbot would encourage him; other times the abbot would visit his friend the rabbi and pour out his difficulties and be comforted by the rabbi – just what Brian was speaking about last week: they built each other up.

The abbot found his community dwindling and the faith life of his monks was shallow and lifeless. Life in the monastery was dying. He went to his friend and wept. His friend, the rabbi, comforted him and told him: “There is something you need to know, my brother. We have long known in the Jewish community that the Messiah is one of you”.

“What!” exclaimed the abbot, “the Messiah is one of us? How can that be?”

But the rabbi insisted that it was so, and the abbot went back to his monastery wondering and praying, comforted and excited.

Once back in the monastery, walking down the halls and in the courtyard, he would pass by a monk and wonder if he was the one. Sitting in the chapel, praying, he would hear a voice and look intently at a face and wonder if he was the one. And he began to treat his brothers with respect, with kindness and with reverence. Soon it became quite noticeable.

One of the other brothers came to him and asked him what had happened to him. After some coaxing, he told him what the rabbi had said. Soon the other monk was looking at his brothers differently and wondering. The word spread through the monastery quickly: the Messiah is one of us. Soon, the whole monastery was full of life, worship, kindness and grace. The prayer life was rich and passionate, full of devotion and the services

were alive and vibrant. Soon the surrounding villagers were coming and listening and watching intently, and there were many who wished to join the community.

When new monks took their vow, they too were told the mystery, the truth that the Messiah is one of us. The monastery expanded, and all of the monks grew in wisdom, age and grace before the others and the eyes of God. And they say still, if you stumble across this place, there is life and hope and kindness and graciousness, the secret of which is the same: The Messiah is one of us.

For these monks, it was thinking that Jesus was present amongst them that changed them. That was why they built each other up. I wonder if our knowledge of Jesus' presence can do the same here and bring about that vision which Isaiah talks about in the first reading today: a vision of joy, not despair, despite difficult circumstances. Can we see ourselves (every person here in this space, as well as those who've read the sermon in the pew sheet and those who'll watch this video later today or this week), as being clothed in righteousness, and for praise to rise up amongst us as a result?

Today is the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is normally portrayed



as a woman who is ever young, often blond and blue-eyed, dressed impeccably in blue and white. She is the Queen of Heaven, floating on clouds and listening to the prayers of the faithful. Something like the first of the pictures shown in the pew sheet, on your handout or on the video. Could this really be a person who could help in prayer, to bring about joy rather than despair where there's a

difficult situation, like the current fires in Greece, the persecution of Christians in Afghanistan, or the way in which coronavirus is tearing through communities, such as the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh?

Well, I think that we've got the wrong image, because in reality, Mary was a fierce, determined person who lived in the midst of poverty, injustice and violence. She had her muddy, bare feet firmly on the ground and carried the burden of children, work, poverty and oppression. Additionally, she knew that her first-born child, Jesus, belonged not to her, but to the people, and so, as well as caring for her own immediate family, her heart and resources were given freely to those who came alongside her – those who were forgotten, oppressed and fearful – so that they left her presence with a promise of freedom and hope. This is the Mary who sings that song, the Magnificat, that was the subject of our Gospel reading today, a woman who might have looked more like the second image in the pew sheet, on your handout or on the video.



So, what is it that enables Mary to do this, to bring such a positive and encouraging message of joy to those who are facing such despair? After all, at the moment when she sings that song, she herself has just been told that she is going to give birth to the Son of God – that must have been a scary prospect.

Mary's response to this call on her life is to go and visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth: an older woman who thought she was never going to have a child, but who now finds herself pregnant. Clearly God was at work here too. It's with Elizabeth that Mary finds herself recognised and accepted. Until now, she's been on her own, but here she's affirmed and blessed with friendship, with companionship. Once she's with Elizabeth, she finds encouragement and support and this is what enables her to sing that song, the Magnificat. It's the support and encouragement for doing God's work that she finds from Elizabeth that gives her the strength, not only to carry out the task ahead of her, but to encourage others in God's work.

Can we use this model for our own lives today? We too have a request made from God as we come out of this pandemic. I have talked before about the vision that we have for how we might use this time as an opportunity to positively impact the community of West Wickham. I've set this out as having four elements: compassion, culture, commerce and congregation and we'll explore more of this at the afternoon tea next week. To do this work of God we will need to find ourselves recognised by God and affirmed and blessed by others who support and encourage us.

Mary was given strength to continue with her task as the mother of God through Elizabeth recognising that Jesus was there inside her – literally. And she then sings her song which speaks of being blessed, not because of what she will do, but because God has recognised her. He has taken notice of her and included her in his works of salvation and wonders.

So, can we too recognise others within our churches who God has included in his works of salvation and wonders? Debbie has just been accepted to train as a reader and this is great news. She will have gained much encouragement and support from others through the process of discernment, so giving her the strength to go ahead with this, as well as to encourage others in God's work, which is, after all what we're all called to do as Christians.

Going back to that story at the start: can we say that we have that secret which the monks of the monastery had? Can we say that we see Jesus, present here amongst us in the people who are here, the people who are reading this sermon at home and the people who'll watch the video later in the week?

It is only by knowing that Jesus is here amongst us that we will be able to go out and do God's work in joy, rather than staying with the despair of our situation. This is the only way that we'll get to sing the kind of song that Mary sang: a song of joy, of freedom and hope, not just for ourselves, but for others. Elizabeth encouraged and supported Mary, who literally brought Jesus into the world by giving birth to him six months later. Can we bring Jesus into our world by recognising him in others and giving them encouragement and support to go out and make those authentic friendships, vital to our work of compassion, culture

and commerce, which will be so important if others are to be introduced to Jesus?

Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- Thank God, for choosing Mary to be the mother of his Son, Jesus. Give thanks for her willingness to be part of the plan, and for her understanding of the divine purpose. Pray that we may come to our heavenly Father with the humility of Mary, ready not just to know God's will, but to do it.
- The child Jesus grew in wisdom and stature in the home of Mary and Joseph. Pray for our families and the homes they live in and for protection for all whom we love.
- For young people after the 'A' level results this last week – for those leaving home to study in university and those starting their first employment.
- Continue to pray for our two churches of St Mary's and St Francis' – especially for the 'Living in Love and Faith' courses planned for the autumn which will help us to welcome all as inclusive congregations.
- For countries where Covid vaccines are scarce and for a fair and equitable distribution of vaccines from other nations.
- For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce and Julie Bailey – and all those unknown to us, but known to God alone.

A prayer about climate change

Protector God,

we pray for all the countries where wildfires have blazed,
and especially this week for Greece and Italy and California.

Give those who are fleeing help and hope,
and those who are fighting flames skill and success.

Lord God, as we face a future

in which our actions are changing the climate,

give wisdom and urgency to act

to our world, to our leaders, and to ourselves. Amen.