

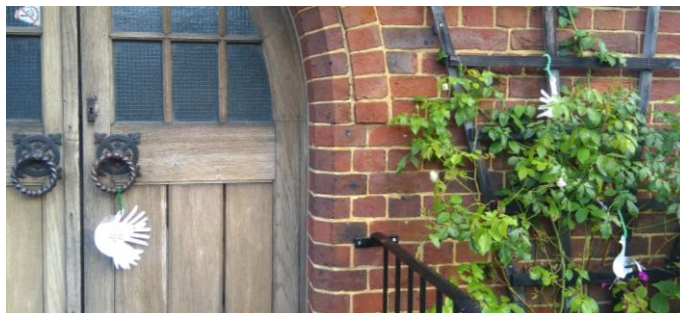
ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

27th September 2020: Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

It was great to see Pat Allegacone at last week's APCM in St Francis'. Many of you will know that she has not been well and we have been visiting her at home on a monthly basis for some time. Despite her difficult situation, she followed a nudge from God that morning to read Luke 18:1. This introduces a parable that Jesus used to tell his disciples to *pray always and not lose heart*. What a welcome message of encouragement for us all! Thank you, Pat for sharing it with us at the APCM.

On Monday it was **World Peace Day**. Here's a picture of some white peace doves that were at St Mary's.



On Friday we held our **Macmillan Coffee Morning** at St Mary's in the garden. Despite the forecast rain, a drop in the temperature and coronavirus restrictions, we were able to enjoy some social interaction, some fabulous savouries and cake and have raised just over £1,000 so far for Macmillan Cancer Support. If you would like to make a further donation on-line, here is a link to our JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan2>.

Thank you to Merri Womack for her encouragement and perseverance in organising the event.

On Sunday 27th there is a service for **Churches Together in West Wickham** from 6.30pm at St Francis' Church, also available on-line via Zoom (log-in details have already been sent round) and followed by the AGM. Please do support this event either in-person or on-line.

On Wednesday 30th September, **Midweek Communion** will be at St. Francis at 10.45am. Next Sunday, 4th October there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St. Mary's at 8am and at 10am in St. Francis. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am. Please note the location of in-person services above may be different to that stated in the magazines.

Our **Pet Service** will go ahead this year on-line next Sunday afternoon (4th October) at 3pm. There is an invitation for a service on Zoom, which has been sent round to all those receiving the pew sheet. If you have a pet and would like to receive a blessing

for them and their relationship with you, please do join us. We'll also be able to share stories of how our pets have helped us in the last few months.

St Francis' Gift Day is next Sunday - 4th October. This has been an incredibly tough time for both of our churches, with a significant loss of hall income and a drop in other donations. Individuals have also had financial difficulty, leading to an 89% increase in need for emergency food parcels in April, compared with the same month last year. Funds raised through our Gift Day will be split between our general funds and the Bromley Food Bank, who we will be supporting at Harvest. Please do give generously to our appeal, which will help us to recover from the impact of the virus and meet the needs of the community. If you would like to make a direct transfer to our bank account, the sort code and account number are 40-52-40 and 00022722 - please use 'Gift Day' as your reference.

We will be having a **Harvest Supper** on Saturday 10th October via Zoom at 7pm. Amanda from the Bromley Foodbank will tell us about the past, present and future news of the organisation. Bring your own food and drink and we'll also share some stories of things we want to give thanks for. You can share a photo, a link to a film or piece of music on the internet, or a poem or prayer that you particularly like. It will be great to share our blessings and get to know others better.

Our **Harvest Service** will be held on Sunday 11th October at 10am in St Mary's Church. We will be collecting donations of non-perishable foods and toiletries for the Bromley FoodBank. Please come along, or watch on-line, to give thanks for all we have and bring some donations for those who have less. It is also possible to donate items by leaving them in the box outside the Vicarage at any time.

Will members of **St. Mary's** please note that **donations** can now be made directly from our website using the link on the first page. Bob

For the past few years St John's have held their **Autumn Fair** in St Francis' church hall. This year they have taken it on-line, with many artists, crafters, artisan makers and small businesses from across the country joining in to raise money for Link to Hope, who send shoeboxes of gifts to families in Eastern Europe. These families often have to make a choice between buying food or fuel at Christmas time – buying presents is just not a priority. Here's a link to the site for the Autumn Fair:

<https://linktohopehighams.wixsite.com/autumnfair>

We sadly had news this week that **Joe Gilbert** had passed away suddenly at home. He was 97 and had been struggling for some time. We remember Kath and all their extended family at this sad time.

On a happier note **Debbie and James Adams** celebrated a Silver Wedding Anniversary this week. We send them our love, congratulations and best wishes on this special occasion.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, Instant Whip, mashed potatoes, jam, coffee, washing detergent, male and female shampoo, shaving gel/foam, adult & children's toothbrushes & toothpaste. There are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Our **Wednesday morning communion services at St Mary's** are attended by only a handful of people. If numbers do not increase in October, these services no longer be held, or they will be held at St Francis'. Please would anyone who has a view on the continuation of these services, speak to Hazel or Richard.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – All 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 with Rev. Canon Rachel Mann - an urban harvest
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Portsmouth Cathedral.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.30a.m. and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. with Claire McCollum from World Heritage site in Saltaire, Yorkshire.

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.

Collect

Lord of creation,
whose glory is around and
within us:
open our eyes to your
wonders, that we may serve
you with reverence
and know your peace at our
lives' end, through Jesus
Christ our Lord.

First Reading: Phil 2: 1-13

If then there is any
encouragement in Christ, any
consolation from love, any
sharing in the Spirit, any
compassion and sympathy,
² make my joy complete: be of
the same mind, having the
same love, being in full
accord and of one mind. ³ Do
nothing from selfish ambition
or conceit, but in humility
regard others as better than
yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you
look not to your own interests,
but to the interests of others.
⁵ Let the same mind be in you
that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who,
though he was in the form of
God, did not regard equality
with God as something to be
exploited, ⁷ but emptied
himself, taking the form of a
slave, being born in human
likeness.

And being found in human
form, ⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the
point of death— even death

on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God
also highly exalted him and
gave him the name that is
above every name, ¹⁰ so that
at the name of Jesus every
knee should bend, in heaven
and on earth and under the
earth, ¹¹ and every tongue
should confess that Jesus
Christ is Lord, to the glory of
God the Father. Therefore,
my beloved, just as you have
always obeyed me, not only in
my presence, but much more
now in my absence, work out
your own salvation with fear
and trembling; ¹³ for it is God
who is at work in you, enabling
you both to will and to work
for his good pleasure.

Gospel: Matthew 21: 23-32

²³ When he entered the
temple, the chief priests and
the elders of the people came
to him as he was teaching, and
said, 'By what authority are
you doing these things, and
who gave you this authority?'
²⁴ Jesus said to them, 'I will
also ask you one question; if
you tell me the answer, then I
will also tell you by what
authority I do these things.
²⁵ Did the baptism of John
come from heaven, or was it
of human origin?' And they
argued with one another, 'If
we say, "From heaven", he will
say to us, "Why then did you
not believe him?" ²⁶ But if we

say, "Of human origin", we are
afraid of the crowd; for all
regard John as a prophet.'
²⁷ So they answered Jesus, 'We
do not know.' And he said to
them, 'Neither will I tell you by
what authority I am doing
these things. ⁸ 'What do you
think? A man had two sons; he
went to the first and said,
"Son, go and work in the
vineyard today." ²⁹ He
answered, "I will not"; but
later he changed his mind and
went. ³⁰ The father went to the
second and said the same; and
he answered, "I go, sir"; but he
did not go. ³¹ Which of the two
did the will of his father?' They
said, 'The first.' Jesus said to
them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-
collectors and the prostitutes
are going into the kingdom of
God ahead of you. ³² For John
came to you in the way of
righteousness and you did not
believe him, but the tax-
collectors and the prostitutes
believed him; and even after
you saw it, you did not change
your minds and believe him.

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty God, you have
taught us through your Son
that love is the fulfilling of
the law: grant that we may
love you with our whole
heart and our neighbours as
ourselves; through Jesus
Christ our Lord.

TALK:

REFLECTION for the 16th Sunday of Trinity

27th September 2020

There is a short story that I heard about, in which a respectable church going woman feels superior to those who, she feels, are of a lower social class. As they all process up to heaven she is shocked by seeing those lower class people going up to heaven as well, all excited and cheering. At the end of the procession are the 'respectable' people like herself and her husband who 'had always had a little of everything and the God-given wit to use it.'

These people move forward 'with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behaviour. They alone were on message. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces that even their virtues were being burned away ...' The author says Our lives are testimony to the love of God for sinners. We are 'parables of obedience' living out daily the implications of discipleship by offering compassion and care to others.

In our gospel reading we have the respectable priests and elders challenging Jesus. The spiritual leaders who say they are God fearing and waiting for the Messiah, are certain that they have been serving God as they have always observed all that their religion said they should do and say and even believe. Then when they are faced with the promised Messiah they did not change their mind and thought that they were still waiting for the Messiah to come.

But others of less education and status did not think themselves good enough to be called by Jesus but when they saw and heard him they believed.

The issue is really how we respond to God's call to repentance, and His invitation to live as a recipient of grace. There has to be consistency between words and deeds, religious confession and active discipleship. Verbal expressions of obedience to the demands of God's message of love become hollow and meaningless if they do not come out of a total commitment in response to God's love for us in Jesus Christ. God seeks our hearts and lives, not just our words. It also highlights the inclusive love of God for us.

By his actions and his words, Jesus stressed both forgiveness and acceptance to the prostitutes and tax collectors. He did not accept their sinful ways of living, and yet was willing to meet them, talk to them with respect and even eat with them.

Both sons in Jesus' story show that we totally depend on God's grace in Jesus Christ. The good people, who speak the correct words yet do not follow through with their

actions; and those who make no claims of righteousness but receive the Gospel in faith. We are all flawed, sinful human beings who are struggling to live according to God's will for us. All of us depend on God's love in Jesus Christ. God's grace is at the centre of our Christian faith. Everything follows from God's initiative in loving and accepting us even before we can do anything in response.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer talked about 'cheap grace.' A concept that willingness to experience the wonder of God's love and salvation, demands nothing more of us. It is not a demand to offer God virtuous activity in return, as if we can make ourselves worthy of the gift of grace by our own goodness.

Jesus taught, instead, the concept of 'costly grace.' A sense of the depth of love which God has poured out for us in Jesus and a willingness to let the love of God enter us, transforming our lives and actions. Costly grace would have us live our lives as people who know God's grace as that which T. S. Eliot said, 'costs not less than everything.'

In today's epistle from verse five we find a beautifully crafted statement of the Christian faith. In who Jesus was and what he accomplished.

He was divine and yet put aside his divine nature to inhabit the limitations of a human being.

He emptied himself, putting aside his divine nature and became a servant to the human race. He allowed himself to fulfil the divine plan and went to the cross as a way of God showing the world that he understands the troubles and hardships that all humans go through. By that servanthood and through his suffering Jesus was raised back to the Godhead and to become the sign that God is a God of love for all that He created and for each and every human being.

So let us all confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father then focus on Jesus and follow his lead.

Be of his mind and having the same love, doing nothing from a selfish point of view but in true humility, considering others more important than yourself and serving others as he would want you to.

For us at St Mary's and St Francis as in the wider church we will be more effective if we are all working together with the same objective.

We are called to live and work together and loving each other and having due regard for each other and each other's opinion. And treating them as superior to our own. To achieve this we must be focussed on Jesus himself and the good news of the kingdom that he brings into the world.

We are motivated to want unity because we want to enjoy the comfort of knowing we are all following Christ and belong to his wider family. A family which demonstrates love towards each other, our thinking to be aligned with each other, all focussing on Jesus and the words of the gospels.

Paul said to the Philippians you must work out your own salvation which means I have told you all you need to know about Jesus and the kingdom of God. Now it is up to you what you do with that information. So we must take responsibility for ourselves as we have all the information in scripture that we need even though all the writers are now not around to keep telling us what we should be doing.

As it says in the last verse of the epistle it is God at work in us enabling us to do the things that He wants us to do. Faith followed by works.

And in the following verses Paul says that in this crooked generation you should shine as stars, as a light in the world. So will we shine as stars and be lights for Christ in the world?

Amen

Prayer Pointers

That we may all be aware of daily opportunities to serve and help others in the name of Christ. May our service not draw attention to ourselves but give glory to God. Help us as the body of Christ here in West Wickham to discover what the needs of our community are and inspire us to find ways of meeting those needs.

For charities who are having to make very difficult decisions in the light of a reduction in funding as a result of the Covid crisis. Pray especially for Macmillan Cancer Nurses who were supported at the coffee morning on Friday and Cancer UK who are facing the prospect of making staff redundant and reducing research into the causes and cures for cancer.

For all businesses, especially our local businesses, who are facing more restrictions following the Government's new rules on Covid19. For all those who work in the hospitality industry - hotels, pubs and restaurants - who are going to lose income and may be forced to cut back on staffing.

For all who help those who struggle financially as a result of losing their jobs. Pray especially for those who volunteer in local foodbanks – Bromley, Shrublands and The Vine Foodbank in New Addington. For all those who rely on their help to provide food for themselves and their families.

For the family and colleagues of the Police Officer shot dead at Croydon Custody Suite on Friday morning. For all Police Officers who have to face danger every day in order to keep the streets and homes of our communities safe and for all magistrates and judges who administer justice in our country.

For all who are ill at this time either at home or in hospital. For all those whose diagnosis or treatment has been delayed because of the Covid crisis. For all those who have been shielding and are still anxious about leaving their homes. Pray for all those who work in our local GP surgeries that they may be granted wisdom, skill and understanding.