

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

6th December 2020: Second Sunday of Advent

Hazel writes:

This week we started with some of our Christmas traditions in a very different way to what has been done in previous years. It was great to have some time in quiet contemplation on Friday afternoon and then the exact opposite with NOT the Big Christmas Sing on Saturday. You can see something of the Quiet Time next Sunday evening on-line and you can watch NOT the Big Christmas Sing any time at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v-CPd9oFg0>

Next Sunday, 13th September there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St. Francis' at 8am and at 10am in St. Marys. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 10am.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently Bromley Borough Food Bank need tinned chicken and ham, jelly, instant whip, sponge puddings, and shaving gel. Thank you for your continued support.

Following the Quiet Time for Advent at St John's church on Friday, we have an **on-line mini retreat** on Sunday 13th December from 6.30pm to 8pm, using some of the materials to enable a personal reflection on the Advent theme of hope. A Zoom meeting invitation has been included with this pew sheet. Please do join us for an opportunity to uncover hope and prepare for our celebration of Christ's birth.

We will be doing some **gardening at St Francis' Church** on Saturday 12th December from 9.30am onwards. Please do come along with a trowel and some warm clothes to make it an activity to join in with. There may be a mince pie for those who are there, but please bring your own drink.

This Christmas congregations will not be able to sing inside the church buildings, but we are able to sing outside. We are thinking of holding one or two informal and socially distanced '**come-and-sing-carols**' events outside St Mary's Church during the week before Christmas. Please would you let Geoff (geoff@mussard.org.uk or 8650-8389) know by the end of this week (Saturday 12th) if you'd like to attend on either Monday 21st or Tuesday 22nd December and whether you'd prefer an event at 4pm or 7pm. We anticipate being able to accommodate around 20 people at an event and will schedule one or two, according to demand. (Torches and umbrellas may be helpful!)

Messy Christmas happens this Friday 11th December at 3.45pm on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MessyChurchWestWickham>. Do share this link with your friends and family wherever they are located.

Our **Bereavement Support Group** meets on Wednesday 9th December at 2.30pm in Emmanuel Church.

The **St Mary's on-line Christmas Market** made £2,750, which is a great return. Thank you to Gifty and Debbie for master-minding the hampers and publicity and to everyone who contributed to make it a success.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – A video of the service has been posted to the websites for today. All other 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. This week at 9.00 a.m. Worship at Home for the Second Sunday of Advent with HOPE Together.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4: Cities of Promise a place for nature – Rev. Dr. Rob Marshall, Rector of Digswell, Welwyn Garden City.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 live from Salisbury Cathedral
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Worship at 11.30 for the Second Sunday of Advent Rev. Alan Miller leads service from Church of the Holy Rude in Stirling and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. Rev. Kate Bottley hosts Final of BBC Young Chorister of the year.

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.

We now have a **contactless card machine** at St. Francis, so any monies being paid at the Church can be by cash or card. It is very simple to use !

Bromley Welcare are not collecting toys this year but would appreciate donations of money. If you feel you would like to donate, please send cheques to Barbara Wilson, 19 Frederick Crescent, London. SW9 6XN. Thank you. Margaret Bond and Merri Womack (Welcare reps for St Mary's). If you have any queries, please get in touch.

The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education are hoping to recruit **Foundation Governors** to support their schools. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Penny Cox at beablessing.sdbe@gmail.com.

We need 6 helpers for the service of **Lighting the Lamps** on Christmas Eve. Please contact David Wada if you feel able to help.

Christmas decorations. If anyone would like a table decoration please call Merri on 0208 777 8772. Prices will range from £5 to £15 depending on the size and let Merri know when you would like to pick it up. Proceeds to St. Mary's Christmas Market.

St. Mary's Christmas Cards. Last chance if you wish Kay and Geoff to deliver your church cards. They must be with them at **35 Oakfield Gardens Beckenham** by Monday. If you are unable to deliver to them please let them know and they can arrange to pick them up.

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

Collect

Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

First Reading:

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and

hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Gospel:

Mark 1: 1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”’,

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of

repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

Post Communion Prayer

Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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REFLECTION for the Second Sunday of Advent – Ken Bryan

My talk this morning is about L, S and D. Now that does not mean it is about money, for those who remember the pre decimal coinage of pounds, shillings and pence. But for my talk today it stands for Love, Service and Discipleship.

And the greatest of these is love. Where have you heard those words before? Yes in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians chapter thirteen.

As Brian said last week the theme for the second Sunday of Advent is love. Love is mentioned over five hundred times in the bible and generally has four different meanings.

Eros means romantic and passionate love. It is about attraction and can be one sided, but when it is shared between two people it can be a joyful thing.

Secondly there is philia which means to have a special interest in someone or something, so we get brotherly and sisterly love. A strong bond of friendship which can last for years and through good times and bad.

Thirdly storge (pronounced stor-jay) is the love of parents for children. It is described as the most natural of loves. It doesn't seek any love in return. And does not depend on whether the person is worthy of love. Even if the child's behaviour is such that it wouldn't be tolerated in anyone else.

Fourthly agape which is love modelled on the love God has for humankind. Love given even if not returned. The love that is important in the process of forgiveness.

People today are accustomed to thinking of love as a feeling, but that is not necessarily the case with agape love. Agape is love because of what it does, not because of how it feels. God so loved the world He gave His only son (John 3:16). It did not feel good to God to do that, but it was the loving thing to do.

Christ so loved that he gave his life. He did not want to die, but he loved, so he did what God required. A mother who loves a sick baby will stay up all night long caring for it, which is not something she wants to do, but is a true act of agape love.

The point is that agape love is not simply an impulse generated from feelings. Rather, agape love is an exercise of the will, a deliberate choice.

In our Christian lives we will need to exercise all kinds of love.

We need agape love because some of the things that God requires of us are not fun or easy, but need to be done in His service.

We need to have phileo love because we need to be a true friend and have true friends to stand with us, people who are emotionally connected to us and with whom we can share our deepest thoughts and feelings.

Eros love is important for starting a family and in the formation of deep, long lasting bonds in marriage.

Lastly, we Christians and other followers of God need to have storge love between us, a deep family affection that comforts us and helps us feel connected to our immediate family as well as all our extended spiritual family.

One important aspect of agape love is that it extends beyond emotions. It's much more than a feeling or sentiment. Agape love is active. It demonstrates love through actions.

This leads on to my second letter 'S' which is for service. The love that God has for us, was shown in his sending us his son. For us it is to decide how we will follow him. Is it to be passive or to be active in any way that we can and in a way that we believe we are being guided by God?

There is so much in this world to be done with needs all around us. We are not being called to be depressed that we can't do it all and we shouldn't feel inadequate as God knows our limitations.

Today our four churchwardens are commissioned. What an example they are to us. Four people putting themselves forward to serve our two churches in our United Benefice. They will be faced with many challenges some of which they may be able to predict and many that they will have no idea that they are coming. But the special thing about all four of them is that they are not doing it for themselves or for any feeling of importance and stature but through a desire to serve. For which we are all exceedingly grateful. We wish them God's blessing on all that they do.

Verse eleven of Peter's epistle says 'Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness'.

It is now for us to decide what we can do. Perhaps in this time of Advent we can take time out to rethink who we are and what we want to do. We have been in lockdown and are still limited by Tier two as to what we can do. So let's take time in this pandemic wilderness to face the struggles that are around us but also listen to the promptings of God. Just as John must have done in the time he was in the wilderness leading his very simple life.

Sometimes we will be led to things we can do as individuals but often we will not be alone as we can be more effective when we do things with others.

We can take time to learn more about the situation and needs of others. Just like several of us have done this week with the Zoom meetings to learn about disabled people and those with additional needs. Understanding that each one is 'fearfully and wonderfully made by God'. And another meeting to hear about the artists in Bethlem Hospital.

Or we can work together to support the Foodbank, collecting and distributing food to desperately needy people.

Surely it is for us to show God's compassion in a hurting world.

My third letter is 'D' for discipleship.

John proclaimed repentance for the forgiveness of sins and he pointed to the one who is greater than he, the one who is coming after him and the one all should follow. We know that he was talking about Jesus.

We Christians are baptised into Christ. We are his disciples challenged to go into the world to share our faith and tell others what it means to us and to make new disciples.

If we like John and Jesus have confidence that God is in control so, however bad things seem and all the sadness that we have to endure we know there will be an end to it and there will be positive things coming out of it.

As our final hymn this morning will declare that as disciples 'We have a gospel to proclaim' the good news of Jesus Christ.

For the St Mary congregation I must mention that the 8th December is our Patronal Festival remembering when the church was dedicated. And as always we remember

Mary who was a wonderful example of someone who trusted God and she looked forward to the joy of the birth of a son. A very special son. She loved God and gave herself in service to Him. She was a disciple in that she followed Jesus even to the cross.

My theme was L, S and D. Love, service and discipleship. It is now for us to love as he loved us and to serve our neighbour as ourselves and to be a disciple spreading the word of God to all who are prepared to hear.

After all as Mark says in verse one it's just the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. The story continues to unfold both around us and just as importantly, through us **Amen**

Prayer Pointers

Thank God for the love that Christ has shown us. For the love we see in the Advent narrative – especially the love between Joseph and Mary. Pray that we may show this love to each other and to those we meet each day of our lives. May we as a worshipping and serving congregation overflow with love for our local community here in West Wickham. Through this love, may other feel that they belong as part of our fellowship.

Thank God and pray for all those who serve in St Mary's and St Francis'. Pray especially for our four churchwardens commissioned on Sunday during the service. May those who serve in any way in our congregation be encouraged and affirmed in their service. Thank God for our Benefice Vision Group as they seek to guide us into new ways of reaching out to our community in love.

Continue to pray for all those who have lost their jobs as a result of the Covid crisis. Pray especially for all those in the retail sector who work for companies who have, or are about to, cease trading – for all who will face Christmas without work – for their families and all those agencies who support them.

For all in Government, especially the Government of our country as Ministers and MP's face difficult decisions about Covid restrictions and Brexit. Pray that all their deliberations and decisions may lead to justice, freedom and peace.

Pray for all those who experience prejudice and discrimination in any form. For the church that it may be a place where those on the margins feel welcome and affirmed – especially for our Church of England as we seek to understand what it means to live in faith and love regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, poverty and ability. For that love that came down at Christmas to envelope all the discussions around inclusivity in the church.

For those who are ill at this time - those known to us and those known to God alone. Pray especially for all those suffering any form of mental illness that they may find peace and tranquillity once more. We remember those in our local mental health units and the community nurses attached to them. Pray that those who are ill, and their relatives and friends can find comfort and peace through the love of Christ.