

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM
16th May 2021: Seventh Sunday of Easter

Hazel writes:

Between Ascension Day (13th May) and Pentecost (23rd May), the church recognises a period of prayer to refresh our faith called **Thy Kingdom Come**. This year, the group receiving Morning Prayer reflections will follow this material using a prayer journal. Extra copies of the prayer journal are available at both of our church buildings. At the end of this period, we will be celebrating the birthday of the Church at a **Churches Together in West Wickham service on 23rd May at 6pm in Emmanuel Church and on Zoom**. The service will be followed by the CTWW AGM and an opportunity to talk to people from other churches outside afterwards (weather permitting).

And it's also Joyce Town's birthday this weekend – 102 today! Here's a photo of her at the care home where she is living. We're told that she still has her sense of humour & all the staff speak very highly of her. Happy Birthday Joyce.



Next Sunday (Pentecost Sunday) we have Holy Communion services at **8am in St Francis' church** and at **10am in St Mary's Church** (this service will be livestreamed), as well as the Churches Together service at **6pm in Emmanuel Church**, The Grove. If you would like to go to Emmanuel Church, please contact Ian Moore at secretary@godwithus.org.uk, or let Hazel know that you would like a seat. Zoom details will be circulated next week.

St Francis' Church will be **open for private prayer** on Wednesday 19th May from 10.30-11.30am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will **premiere at 10am** on YouTube. 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 Lichfield Cathedral – a name above all names.

- Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St. Martin's in the Fields, London on the eve of Ascension.
- **On BBC 1:** Sunday Stories at 10.30 a.m. – Kate Bottley meets a couple who offered their home to a Syrian refugee training as a doctor and
- Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. from Exeter Cathedral - Aled Jones explores the cathedral including its medieval underground passages.

The annual collections for **Christian Aid Week** will be depleted this year, as house-to-house collections are not generally taking place, so please contribute as generously as you can. Physical envelopes are available outside and inside St. Francis and St. Mary's churches, and can be given to Anita Curtis or Geoff Mussard, or placed in the letterboxes at the Vicarage next to St. Mary's or St. Francis' vestry door. Alternatively, you can donate on-line at <https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/envelope/west-wickham>. Please Gift Aid if you can – adds an extra 25% at no cost to you.

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>

Opportunity to help someone in need. Deacon Laura MacBean at the Methodist Church has been supporting a lady in her 50s who came to her two years ago as a safeguarding referral. Through a local charity she has been living in a variety of accommodation, but she now needs to move somewhere to rest and refresh until she can move into a private rented place or find someone suitable to lodge with. We are looking for a Christian lady (or an older retired Christian couple) with a spare bedroom who could offer a few weeks' respite while we try to work out a longer-term solution. Please get in touch with Laura (laura.macbean@googlemail.com or 020 8249 8592) if you can offer some respite or more permanent lodgings and would like to find out more.

St John's want your empty **crisp packets** to create survival kit blankets for rough sleepers and those in need. Recycling is a great way to save the oceans, and this could make a real difference to people's lives! Have a look at our page to find out more (www.facebook.com/CrispPacketProjectWestWickham), or check out this video: <https://youtu.be/L5FWMca5BFY>. You can collect and wash crisp packets and bring them

to the Foodbank donation points, or you can follow the video to make a finished sheet - we'd love you to join us!

Do you feel you are being called to put yourself forward to be on the **Southwark Diocesan Synod**? Elections will take place by the beginning of July. The Synod brings people together from across the Diocese to drive mission, set strategies, shape priorities as well as appoint to a range of positions on boards and committees. It is a body which is advisory and is a place where important topics facing the church can be discussed. If you want to find out more, please take a leaflet which you will find copies of in both churches and speak to Hazel.

If anyone would like a **pedestal flower arrangement** 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 pedestal arrangement at St. Francis this week is to celebrate **Rowena & Brian Griffiths' Ruby Wedding Anniversary** today and has been arranged by Celia Barnes.

A neighbour of Merri and John Womack has given an 18 month old **upright armchair** upholstered in duck-egg blue/grey to see if anyone at our churches could use it. If anyone is interested, it is in the vestibule at St. Marys but please contact Merri on 8777 8772.

At the **plant sale** at St. Mary's on the 9th May £40 was raised for Church funds. A big thank you to all those who supported it and there will be another plant sale after the 10.00 a.m. service on the 23rd May. Any donations of plants will be gratefully received and if anyone has any unwanted plastic pots 5 inches plus could they please leave at St. Mary's for potting up plants. Thank you.

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 or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk

Collect

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your
triumph, fill your Church on
earth with power and
compassion, that all who are
estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and
know your peace, to the
glory of God the Father.

**First Reading: Acts 1:15-17,
21-26**

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up
among the believers (together
the crowd numbered about
one hundred and twenty
people) and said, ¹⁶ 'Friends,
the scripture had to be
fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit
through David foretold
concerning Judas, who became
a guide for those who arrested
Jesus— ¹⁷ for he was
numbered among us and was
allotted his share in this
ministry.'

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to
choose one of the men who
have accompanied us
throughout the time that the
Lord Jesus went in and out
among us, ²² beginning from
the baptism of John until the
day when he was taken up
from us—one of these must
become a witness with us to
his resurrection.' ²³ So they
proposed two, Joseph called
Barsabbas, who was also
known as Justus, and Matthias.

²⁴ Then they prayed and said,
'Lord, you know everyone's
heart. Show us which one of
these two you have chosen
²⁵ to take the place in this
ministry and apostleship from
which Judas turned aside to go
to his own place.' ²⁶ And they
cast lots for them, and the lot
fell on Matthias; and he was
added to the eleven apostles.

Gospel Reading: John 17:6-19

⁶ 'I have made your name
known to those whom you
gave me from the world. They
were yours, and you gave
them to me, and they have
kept your word. ⁷ Now they
know that everything you have
given me is from you; ⁸ for the
words that you gave to me I
have given to them, and they
have received them and know
in truth that I came from you;
and they have believed that
you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on
their behalf; I am not asking on
behalf of the world, but on
behalf of those whom you
gave me, because they are
yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours,
and yours are mine; and I have
been glorified in them. ¹¹ And
now I am no longer in the
world, but they are in the
world, and I am coming to you.
Holy Father, protect them in
your name that you have given
me, so that they may be one,
as we are one. ¹² While I was

with them, I protected them in
your name that you have given
me. I guarded them, and not
one of them was lost except
the one destined to be lost, so
that the scripture might be
fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am
coming to you, and I speak
these things in the world so
that they may have my joy
made complete in themselves.
¹⁴ I have given them your word,
and the world has hated them
because they do not belong to
the world, just as I do not
belong to the world. ¹⁵ I am not
asking you to take them out of
the world, but I ask you to
protect them from the evil
one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to
the world, just as I do not
belong to the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify
them in the truth; your word is
truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me
into the world, so I have sent
them into the world. ¹⁹ And for
their sakes I sanctify myself, so
that they also may be
sanctified in truth.

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love
and power, your Son Jesus
Christ has sent us into all
the world to preach the
gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good
news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

The collect and post communion prayer, copyright © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England or reproduced with permission from other copyright owners.

Bible reading from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Sermon – Christian Aid Sunday: Richard Ford

Many years ago, between leaving school and going to university, I spent a summer working for Deal Beach Parlours as one of their team of ice-cream van drivers. Each morning I would drive from Deal to just outside Folkestone, where my first call was a caravan site. After that I would work my way round the coast to Dungeness, stopping off at various places on the way where I knew there would be a good stream of customers.

Each week I was paid a basic wage as a driver, plus commission according to the amount of ice-cream and lollies etc that I had sold.

However, my purpose this morning is not to discuss the economics of selling ice-cream, much as I enjoyed the job.

Indeed, there was only one downside. At the end of the day, we returned to the depot and handed in the day's takings. I was quickly informed by the other drivers in the team that it was the norm to take out a percentage of the takings for oneself before handing them over. They said that the boss expected that. To me it appeared to be no different to stealing, so I didn't do it.

Then when I came to collect my wages, I was told by the boss that I was earning so much in commission that I would be heavily taxed on it, so he was only putting a percentage in my pay packet and giving the rest to me as cash-in-hand. Being young and naïve I accepted this, although I wasn't quite sure of its legality. However, I consoled myself with the fact that being a student my total earnings for the year would be so low that I wouldn't be required to pay tax, anyway.

So why am I telling you all this?

It's because, although I very much enjoyed being an ice-cream van driver, I didn't enjoy being part of a world in which the workers fleeced the boss, and the boss encouraged cheating the tax man. I had to work in this world, but I didn't want to be a part of it.

And this is the idea which lies at the heart of our reading from John's Gospel this morning. In his prayer for his disciples, Jesus makes it very clear that his disciples are in the world, but not of the world.

When Jesus talks about the world here, he means that part of the world which has rejected God and God's values.

He means the world which is peopled by those who lack integrity, who lack compassion, who lack love. The world which is peopled by those who cheat those around them, who exploit others for their own gain, whose only concern is their own well-being.

That's why his disciples are not of the world, because they have received and accepted what Jesus has taught them about the nature of God, the values of God's Kingdom and the response that God wants from those whom he has created.

And Jesus prays on behalf of his disciples that God will protect them from the corruption of the world. The way in which Jesus puts it is interesting. Jesus says:

“I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.”

At first sight it looks as though Jesus is abandoning the world to its own sinfulness, but that is not the case, for later Jesus prays: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

Jesus is asking his Father's protection for his disciples, so that they can take God's word, his truth, his message of salvation into the world and share it with those who have not heard it, or who have so far rejected it.

And it won't be easy. As Jesus says: “I have given them your word, (that is your teaching), and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.”

And to some extent, that is the predicament in which we find ourselves today. Whilst many people in this country are fairly neutral about Christianity, there are those such as the bio-chemist, Richard Dawkins and his New Atheists, who feel called to be actively opposed to Christianity and denounce it at every opportunity.

And sadly in many parts of the world –such as North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, Iran, and India - our Christian brothers and sisters are giving their lives for their faith. It's been estimated that every day, eight Christians worldwide are killed because of their faith.

Yet despite what Jesus says about not asking on behalf of the world, it is clear that he still loves those who live in it, because when he says at the end of the reading, “And for their sakes (that is his disciples), I sanctify myself, so that they may also be sanctified in

the truth,” what he means is that he is setting himself aside, preparing himself for his next task, facing up to arrest, false trial and execution, so that his disciples, and by implication, we here today who are Jesus’ latter day disciples, can be sanctified, or made holy in the eyes of God.

But the disciples are not just sanctified in the sense of being made holy; they are also sanctified in the sense of being set aside, or prepared for the task of going into the world and sharing the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus.

And that is the task to which God calls all his followers, for we, today, are called to live out our faith in a world which may often appear hostile to all that we believe as Christians.

And if we find it easier to keep our heads down and “go with the flow,” then we need to remember that this was the world for which Jesus was prepared to give his life.

And this is the world into which he sends us, his disciples, to share with that world, both in word and deed, what Jesus has revealed to us about the nature of God.

Or to put it another way, God has a mission for the world and we are called to be his missionaries.

Let’s unpack that a bit. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 identified what have become known as the 5 Marks of Mission. The first two of those are fairly obvious:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers.

Then come responding to human need by loving service, seeking to transform unjust structures of society, and striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.

And they have been helpfully abbreviated by the Methodist Church into five words: Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure.

- **Tell** people the Good News.
- **Teach** new believers.
- **Tend** those in need.
- **Transform** social injustice.
- **Treasure** the environment.

Those last three - tending those in need, transforming social injustice and treasuring the environment – are the driving force behind Christian Aid.

In its publicity for Christian Aid Week, which comes to an end today, Christian Aid refers to the current climate emergency as one of the greatest injustices we face. That's because the principle culprits for global warming are the richer nations in the world, whereas the principle victims are the poorer nations.

The Archdeacon of Croydon, Revd Rosemarie Mallett, writes, as part of this year's Christian Aid Week's resources, that her awareness of climate change was sparked through studying, living and working in Senegal, Tanzania and Ethiopia early in her career, seeing first-hand the ways that the interests of corporations and global capitalism have exacerbated environmental damage and climate change, and undermined and threatened the livelihoods and lives of local people.

She then goes on to look at examples of the social injustice which we are called upon to transform: in Senegal, tomatoes were abundant, the staple of every market and every meal, and then, because of a development deal, cheap Spanish tomatoes were brought in and were part of a process that caused deep damage to local livelihoods and the national economy. The same issue was also obvious in Tanzania, where the cashew nut industry was hindered by the tied aid deals made to the detriment of local farmers. Then she turns to an example of the kind of activity that is damaging to the environment, a failure to treasure the environment: in Ethiopia she witnessed the deforestation as trees were being cut down for charcoal.

Our Archdeacon concludes: Even as Christians pray for the heavenly paradise, we are called to bring that kingdom into being in the here and now. We are called to build God's kingdom, to care for creation, and to work to transform any unjust and exploitative structures that harm the earth.

And one way in which we can do that is to support the work of Christian Aid. Financially, yes, but not only financially. Currently Christian Aid is inviting you to go online and sign a petition calling on the Prime Minister to increase financial support to the world's poorest countries and push for their debts to be cancelled; Invest in a green recovery that leaves no-one behind and stop the expansion of fossil fuel energy and support clean energy. That covers three of the five marks of mission embraced by the Church of England: tend those in need, transform social injustice and treasure the environment.

And do, please, remember that rather like a dog not being just for Christmas, but for life, Christian Aid doesn't exist just for Christian Aid Week, but is there needing our support as it plays its part in God's mission for his world all year round.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Continue to pray for countries around the world that continue to grapple with the Covid virus, and give thanks for the light beginning to emerge at the end of a long and deadly tunnel as lockdown restrictions in the UK are eased again this week. Thank God for all scientists and laboratory staff who have worked tirelessly to develop the vaccines and pray that the poorer countries of the world may receive tier fair share.

Pray that we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to seek justice, to defend the oppressed and take up the cause of the fatherless, the plea of the widow and those in poverty. Pray that when the scale of injustice in our world seeks to overwhelm us, the Holy Spirit will be the encouragement we need to keep to speaking out against it.

Pray for all speaking, collecting and fundraising for the work of Christian Aid this week. Pray all who are involved will have a joyful time and that more and more people would be drawn to participate in the work of bringing God's kingdom on earth as in heaven.

As our daily news contains yet more reports of knife and gun crime in London, pray for the families grieving for their children and the communities missing their friends. Pray for young people carrying knives – for those caught up in gang violence and post code wars – that they may find someone to talk to and positive role models who help them choose peace. Pray for the police, youth workers, policy makers, victims and families, to explore the challenges and look together to find a way forward

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who are having treatment or surgery at this time – especially for Michael Sanders and Julie Bailey. Pray for those we know, especially our relatives and friends, and those known to God alone, who seek God's healing grace. Pray that they may somehow find the presence of God in their suffering and in the caring hands of the doctors, nurses and other medical professionals who care for them.

Bring comfort to those coming to terms with the unexpected loss of a loved one. Bring your warmth to those whose hearts are cold and empty, and bring your blessing on all who in such times are there to share your love. Pray especially for all those who come

along to the Bereavement Support Group and for your blessing on those from St Mary's and St Francis' who facilitate the group.

Prayer for Christian Aid Week

God our Mother and Father, we praise you for the blessings you shower upon us.

Bless the lives of our sisters and brothers and their precious children.

In life's saddest moments, may we feel your love most, O Jesus.

Continue to dwell in our hearts, Lord. May your love keep us strong.