

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

7th March 2021: Third Sunday of Lent

Hazel writes:

We are working towards opening the churches for public worship again during Holy Week, dependent on the cases of the virus remaining low over the next couple of weeks in our local area. The openings will be for private prayer or public worship only with the restrictions that we previously were working under still in place. Sadly, this cannot extend to indoor social interaction at this time.

Next Sunday, 14th March there will be a **service for Mothering Sunday** which will premiere at 10am.

St Francis' Church will be **open for private prayer** on Wednesday 10th March from 10.30-11.30am. This will be a quiet time for reflection without any music.

The Bereavement Support Group will meet on Wednesday 10th March at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room at Emmanuel Church, The Grove, West Wickham.

Messy Church is on Friday 12th March at 3.45pm on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MessyChurchWestWickham/. We will be looking at Messy Families, recognising that families do not always include a traditional mother figure and they come in lots of different shapes and sizes, but we can all say that we belong to God's family.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service is on Zoom at 10am. An invitation with the log-in details is attached. It will be recorded and available to view afterwards (by 1pm at the latest). All other files have been combined and sent electronically and 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 the UK's first bespoke ecumenical community serving young people
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Worship at 11.30 a.m - Rev. Kate Bottley introduces a service for Lent from All Saints Church in Hale Barns and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Katherine Jenkins reflects on personal prayer with young people in East Sussex.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need UHT Milk, Tinned Potatoes, Tinned Vegetables (particularly carrots), Long life Fruit juice, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Fish, Tinned Cold meat, Toilet Rolls. Please do not bring any fresh food, as the foodbank cannot pass this on. Thank you for your continuing support.

The **census** is taking place on 21 March 2021. It's a survey that happens every 10 years and gives a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. It helps plan and fund public services, like transport, education and healthcare. We have been asked by the Census Engagement Manager in Bromley to promote awareness of the census which everyone should complete. You can find out more at www.census.gov.uk.

Christian Aid Week this year is from 10-16th May and focusses on Climate Justice. We will not have a door-to-door collection, but (physical and virtual) envelopes can be given to friends and neighbours and we will focus on Christian Aid at our service on Sunday 16th May. Carol Hubbard has stepped down as our representative at St Mary's and Anita Curtis from St Francis' will be unable to co-ordinate our efforts this year. If we are to contribute to Churches Together in West Wickham in this respect and record how much we raise, **we will need to have someone as our representative**. If anyone is interested in finding out more (and the role need include only those aspects which someone is able to take on), please contact either Anita Curtis on 8777-5973 (john.curtis23@ntlworld.com) or Hazel.

Our **bereavement support gift bags** have proved very helpful for the bereaved and we are looking for some more knitted or crocheted forget-me-nots to include. This could be your Lent action for the week. There were patterns included in last week's pew sheet which is available on our websites. If you make any, please deliver them to the vicarage, so that we can include them in the bags that we send out.

Macmillan Coffee Morning. We have received an acknowledgement for the £621 we raised in September for Macmillan. They expressed their thanks to all who were involved in raising this amazing amount. **If there is anyone who would like to organise the event in September 2021 please let me know.** Merri Womack 8777 8772.

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

Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call 2021

Week 3 – Woolwich Episcopal area:

LewCAS

LewCAS is a small charity which is completely run by volunteers. It aims to support the many people in need in the area and was set up in 1996, becoming a registered charity in 1998.

LewCAS organised food collections for asylum seekers who were stripped of access to state benefits. Originally, it also raised funds to enable asylum seekers to attend English classes. Sadly, the classes are now subject to fees and the asylum seekers can no longer afford to attend. As a result, LewCAS now concentrates on providing food to those who are destitute, taking referrals from the Refugee Council, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) and Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL). It provides food parcels, clothing and basic household supplies, such as toothpaste and soap, to destitute asylum seekers. It also campaigns on their behalf and prays for justice and a loving response to their needs.

On a Tuesday morning food is distributed from 11.00am to 1.00pm at St John, Lewisham Way. People who come receive a collection of dried and tinned goods and some fresh food plus cash for travel expenses. Most often they receive corned beef, tuna and small fish such as sardines or mackerel, 1kg each of rice and pasta, a tin of tomatoes plus beans or pulses, tea, biscuits, long life milk, cereals, two toilet rolls, razors and a bar of soap. Once a month they get flour, oil and sugar.

FareShare supplies LewCAS with fresh produce and each week those who come to the food bank will get a selection of bread, potatoes, vegetables (for example, onions, carrots, greens) and fruit (apples, perhaps, or oranges or bananas). From time to time, those who use the food bank receive extra items such as more toiletries and cleaning products, including shower gel, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and brushes, washing-up liquid, bleach, or washing powder. Feminine hygiene items and nappies are distributed every two weeks.

The pandemic has changed the way in which LewCAS works and has doubled the number of people seeking help. The need is now much greater than ever. LewCAS has worked hard to ensure that individual boxes are pre-prepared for collection so that those visiting the church spend as little time as possible inside. They have also started to deliver boxes to asylum seekers who are shielding, self-isolating, or who have new babies.

The asylum seekers want to thank those who have supported LewCAS over the years. They also say: "We want to work, but we are not allowed to. We are not lazy. We are not criminals."

Lunchbox Library

Many of you will be aware of the campaign by the footballer Marcus Rashford in 2020 to ensure that the government continued to give food vouchers during the summer holidays to schoolchildren in receipt of free school meals. His campaign helped to highlight that, for parents who are on a low income, school holidays are akin to a juggling act: balancing the family budget in order to be able to put an additional meal on the table, taking care of household duties and looking after children. They also often need to try to find free activities provided in or close to their areas.

Recognising this need, Together Southwark started to run Lunchbox Library in 2016. This programme is designed to offer a safe and warm space for children and an accompanying adult during the day. It offers a combination of a warm main meal, often accompanied by a dessert, and activities and reading for fun with the children. The latter helps to prevent the trend for children's reading skills to dip over the school holidays. Children are read stories by volunteers in a happy and relaxed atmosphere and are encouraged to take a storybook to read at home.

In 2020, St Katharine with St Bartholomew, Bermondsey, supported around 50 children and young people aged 7-16, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Tuesday to Friday, from July to August. They offered 1,200 meals, 50 activity bags, 150 breakfast packs and 300 Take and Make boxes. The last of these contained raw ingredients and a recipe card for children to learn to prepare meals with their families.

St George, Camberwell, initially planned to support 69 children and young people aged 4-11. However, the need increased and the church supported 116 children three days a week in July and August. The need in 2021 will be no less great as the long-term effects of the pandemic continue to be felt.

Lunchbox Library helped to serve more than 2,000 meals in 2020, and the need for the work of LewCAS also increased because of the pandemic.

Please pray for all those who volunteer to be involved in this work and those who receive help from the projects. If you can, please think of those who would otherwise go hungry just as the 4,000 would have done without the loaves and fishes and support the work of those involved in offering food and hope to the people of the Woolwich Episcopal Area.

**If you can give to support the work of these services in Woolwich please consider doing so through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call:
southwark.anglican.org/lentcall**

Collect

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection
we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading: Psalm 69:15-21

Do not let the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the Pit close its mouth over me.¹⁶ Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.¹⁷ Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.¹⁸ Draw near to me, redeem me, set me free because of my enemies.¹⁹ You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonour; my foes are all known to you.²⁰ Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.²¹ They gave me

poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Gospel: Matthew 26:57-68

⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸ But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, ‘This fellow said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”’ ⁶² The high priest stood up and said, ‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ ⁶³ But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, ‘I put you

under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your verdict?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death.’

⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, ⁶⁸ saying, ‘Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?’

Post Communion Prayer

Merciful Lord,
grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION for the 3rd Sunday of Lent – Caiaphas – Ken Bryan

What we do know about Caiaphas is that his full name was Joseph Caiaphas. He was the Jewish High Priest between 18 and 37AD. He had done very well for himself as he married the daughter of Annas who was High Priest between 6 and 15AD. Annas had been appointed by Quirinius in the newly formed Roman province of Judea which was now under Roman rule. Annas was a powerful man and the head of a dynasty. He had five sons who were also High Priest and even a grandson. It is believed that he had significant influence on events until his death in about 40AD

Annas and Caiaphas may have sympathized with the Sadducees, whose members were among the wealthy Jewish elite.

All the High Priests were appointed by Rome and removed by Rome as well. So the comparatively long eighteen-year tenure of Caiaphas suggests he had a good understanding of how to successfully coexist with the Roman authorities.

I am sure Caiaphas had heard about this new preacher who was going about the countryside preaching to large gatherings and performing what seemed like miracles of healing. He must have been well aware of the priests trying to catch him out yet being confounded at every turn.

Whilst this was all happening in the countryside it was an issue that could be addressed and he would have believed that it would eventually be resolved without upsetting the status quo either for the Jews or the Romans.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in the lead up to the Passover festival with crowds all round him things changed. The pace quickened.

The overturning of the tables of the money-changers was a threat to the authority of Caiaphas, as he had a vested interest in the sale of sacrificial animals and other offerings together with the exorbitant rate of exchange on the temple coinage needed to purchase them.

Something had to be done about this man.

As Jesus was teaching in the Temple courtyards chief priests were sent to try to catch him out asking him where his authority came from. He confounded them asking where did John the Baptist's authority come from. They knew if they said from heaven they should have believed all he said and if from men they were afraid of the people who

believed he was a prophet. So Jesus said he wouldn't tell them of his authority and they went away chastened.

Jesus continued teaching in the city. This was too much for Caiaphas and two days before the Passover he called a meeting of the chief priests and elders where it was decided that the only way to silence Jesus was to have him killed in some sly way. But this should not happen during the feast or else there might be a riot which the Romans would subdue with their usual force.

The opportunity came when Judas approached the chief priests asking for money to hand over Jesus and they eagerly agreed and handed over thirty pieces of silver. Judas took the money even though its value was the price of a slave as defined in Exodus chapter 21.

What happened now was all under the cover of darkness. Evil doings to the man who came to be the light of the world.

Judas left the Passover meal for all the disciples, the last supper, and it was night. The arrest of Jesus was in the dark with the soldiers needing Judas to identify Jesus with a kiss.

Jesus was taken to Annas where he was questioned but he said nothing to incriminate himself so was hit in the face before being sent to Caiaphas.

Now Caiaphas summoned the Sanhedrin over which he presided. It consisted of seventy-one priests and elders of the people and twenty-three was a quorum. Caiaphas was determined to get the verdict he wanted at any cost even if it went against all the rules of the Sanhedrin.

The rules included that criminal cases should be in the daytime and not during the Passover season.

The meeting must be in its own meeting place in the Temple precincts.

A guilty verdict could only be pronounced after a night to elapse to allow any feeling of mercy might arise.

Two separately examined witnesses with no contact with each other are needed for a guilty verdict.

The other witnesses who had been brought to accuse Jesus had different and conflicting stories so they were in fact liable to be punished by death in a case where a life was at stake.

If it had been a proper trial the court should have heard the evidence for the innocence of the accused before the evidence for guilt was put forward.

None of that mattered to Caiaphas who thought he would be serving the greater good for one man to die and thereby saving a whole nation from the mob who knew no better and from the Roman army and all their might.

The charge about destroying the Temple could not be realistic and then that he would rebuild it in three days was impossible. The facts and what is said were twisted in trying to get a guilty verdict. Jesus ignored these twists and turns.

If he had said no to the question of 'are you the son of God' he could have walked free with no case against him. When he agreed to the question Caiaphas had his man. Blasphemy. The Sanhedrin then became hysterical and anything but the highest court for the Jews as they mocked him, shouted, spat at him and slapped and struck him. They reconvened very early in the morning to formalise the charge against Jesus. But as they could not carry out a death sentence he had to be taken to the Romans to carry out the execution.

When they took Jesus to Pilate they did not use the charge of blasphemy as they knew that Pilate would say that it was nothing to do with him but purely a religious problem. So they said 'We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king'. All were trumped up charges of treason hoping that Pilate would see them as being enough to have him put to death.

Caiaphas does not come out of this episode well. But he justifies his actions because he wants to keep in control. To keep a peaceful relationship with the Romans. To let everyone realise that he was the interpreter of what God wanted for His people.

What would we have done if we were Caiaphas? Would we not want to see the continuation of our dynasty? Of wealth kept and status confirmed. After all would we not be protective of our family? Try to keep the money that we have? To retain any status we feel we have within society? He and we want a peaceful life.

He had seen rabble rouser preachers before and we have heard eloquent speakers with strange views. Are they to be allowed to change our world? Should they not be ignored or stopped.

Would we change what we believe and how we worship if someone said we have to change now because of what one man is saying?

Do we change our views even if given a good argument or explanation for a different way of looking at things? Think of Brexit, covid, politics, the economy, the poor, migrants or sexuality and even our religion?

As we grow older our views become settled. We know what we think and we know what we like. Are our views entrenched that we would have sided with Caiaphas and the status quo? Don't we crave strong leadership that we feel is looking after our best interests. And those with less of an education like the crowd following Jesus would look up to the educated as we used to say 'the doctor is always right'.

We can look back through scripture and see the whole picture. Caiaphas only saw it partially. Even the disciples needed the resurrection before all that Jesus told them fell into place.

We are now challenged to believe and unlike Caiaphas to follow Jesus, listen to his words and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit on our journey of faith.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Caiaphas was comfortable with tradition – he didn't want anyone to disturb the 'status quo' and the privileges of his wealthy class. He didn't want to listen to the truth that Jesus spoke. Pray that we may not be bound up by tradition and just keeping things the way they are. Pray that we may be open to new ways of being Christians and being Church especially when the Covid restrictions are relaxed.

Pray for the children and teachers going back to schools tomorrow. We pray for their health and safety in classrooms and schools which allow for proper social distancing and hygiene. We pray for the site managers and caterers, as well as the office staff who are essential employees at schools that are open. Pray that that they too may be kept safe and protected from the Covid virus.

Pray for wisdom for our government and all the health and scientific advisers. Pray for guidance as they make their decisions and help them to communicate plans clearly. Pray especially for Cabinet ministers as they make decisions about relaxing the current restrictions. Pray that they may find energy during a time where they will be working long hours under great stress and strain.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently –especially for John Godfrey. Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love.

We give thanks for all those who now see face to face the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. Pray for those whose earthly life has come to an end, especially for Samuel Akadi, Dennis Barcoo and Margaret Taylor. May they now experience your greater glory. We pray for those who mourn the recent death of those they've loved, especially Samuel's mother, Jane, his fiancée, Amy and his young son Isaac and for Darren and Mark Barcoo mourning the death of their father, Dennis.

Ever present God, be with us in our isolation, be close to us in our distancing, be healing in our sickness, be joy in our sadness, be light in our darkness, be wisdom in our confusion, be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar, that when the doors re-open we may with the zeal of Pentecost inhabit our communities and speak of your goodness to an emerging world.

(Andrew Nunn – Dean of Southwark Cathedral)