

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

1st May 2022: Third Sunday of Easter

Hazel writes:

Joining with the 7th West Wickham Scout Group last week resulted in a very celebratory St George's Day service. Their fundraising after the service raised £474, (with more donations still to come in). It's great to be associated with such a successful community organisation in West Wickham, so thank you for your support of the scouts in their efforts.

Today, we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Mary's Church and a joint Holy Communion service with a Thanksgiving at 10am in St Francis' Church. We welcome the Towler family and their guests, as well as our speaker, Fiona Straszynski, from Christians Against Poverty.

Hymns at 10 a.m. in St. Francis' – Colours of day – Give thanks – There's wideness in God's mercy – I danced in the morning.

Next **Sunday 8th May**, we will have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church and Songs of Praise services at 9.15am in St. Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church, which will be followed by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The **West Wickham Village Day** is this Monday 2nd May from 10am to 4pm in Blake Park. Do come along and say 'hello' at the Churches Together in West Wickham hospitality area.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Francis' **at 10am** on Sunday. 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 – a service from Northern Ireland reflecting on our need and desire for meaning in life.

- Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Lincoln Cathedral.
- On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Aled Jones explores Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, the largest monastic ruins in the United Kingdom.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned cold meat, tinned vegetables, chopped tomatoes, long life fruit juice, long life milk, instant whip, sponge pudding and men's deodorant. They are well stocked with pasta, cereals tea and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen 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>. Thank you for your continuing support.

Action Aid Saturday Coffee mornings are held from 10.30 to 11.30 or thereabouts on the first Saturday of the month, including this week on Saturday 7th May. It will be nice to meet up for a chat again on these occasions, so please do come along.

We are pleased to say that we are commencing our **lunchtime concerts at St. Francis** on Thursday May 19th with our very own Jacqueline Turner bringing a programme of varied music to entertain us. Francesca will be accompanying her at the piano. There will be leaflets giving the dates of subsequent concerts available in our churches.

Coffee Morning in aid of the DEC Ukraine Appeal is to be held at St Mary's on Saturday 21st May from 10.30-12noon. There will be a number of stalls including plants and cakes. If you could make a cake or some biscuits, please sign up on the list at the back of Church or contact Ann Herbert by phone 0208 464 1609 or email: andrew@hrbt.org

In May I will be aiming to **walk 300,000 steps for Christian Aid**. Christian Aid week is from 15-21 May and the focus this year is on Zimbabwe which has been hit by rising food prices. Christian Aid supplies water taps, teaches people to grow food, and provides seeds that thrive in drought. This way dry, dusty land can be turned into a garden of hope. Step by step, we can change lives. Here is a link to my fundraising page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hazel-o-sullivan3>, or you can leave donations in either of the churches. Hazel

Our next **women's event** will be on Tuesday 17th May at 8pm in St Francis' Church. This is during Christian Aid Week, so we will be focussing on their appeal which is about how we can help those in poverty who are hungry to change their lives. We will also have a healthy eating theme, sharing fruit, so do bring some fruit of interest, as well as a friend.

The Methodist Church in Beckenham is appointing a **Church Administrator** to work 16 hours per week at £15/hour. Duties include managing the church office; letting the church rooms; supporting the ministers and church stewards and liaising with external service providers. The successful applicant will have expertise in Microsoft Office with good literacy and numeracy skills. For more information and an application pack contact Christine Handel on 020 8658 1381 or at christine.handel@ntlworld.com. Closing date for applications 6th May with interviews on 14th May.

We held a meeting to discuss our **Ukraine response**. Before any refugees arrive in the West Wickham area, we would like to make contact with any potential hosts, so that we can enable them to share experiences (for example, helping with the visa application process, or what the council are looking at when they come to your home). If you or anyone that you know in the local area has offered to host refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, please do ask them to contact Hazel, who will begin to co-ordinate this response until someone is identified to facilitate this work on a longer-term basis.

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 there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

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.

Collect

Risen Christ, you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope: strengthen us to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace, to the glory of God the Father.

First Reading: Proverbs 25:6-7

⁶ Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; ⁷ it is better for him to say to you, 'Come up here,' than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.

Second Reading: Luke 14:1, 7-14

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the

table, he told them this parable: ⁸ 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, "Give this person your seat." Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, "Friend, move up to a better place." Then you will be honoured in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'¹² Then Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a

luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Post Communion Prayer

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

When was the last time that you gave a present to someone or did something for another person? Maybe you gave someone an Easter egg; or maybe you made a cake or other gift of food for someone recently; or maybe you get someone else’s shopping for them; or have you helped someone with a practical task recently?

Once you’ve thought of something that you’ve given recently, I’d like you to then think about why you did this. There are many reasons why you might give something or do something for someone else and I’d like to explore what those might be.

The first reason for giving might be a feeling that you’re obliged to do so. It’s very easy to get into a routine of regularly doing something and then it can become a problem if the same thing doesn’t happen – think birthday cards, Christmas presents. Have you got into a routine of doing something for someone that’s now become expected, almost like a contract for work, and so it’s got nothing to do with giving any more.

Another reason that you might give something or do something for someone is that you think (or maybe you know) that you’ll get something in return. The whole wedding present thing is a bit like this. You invite someone to an event, such as a wedding, expecting that there’ll be a present coming in return.

You may be thinking that these reasons aren’t why you’ve given something in the past – you feel good about giving and it’s something you do a lot. But think about it: how does that good feeling arise? Is it because it results in you recognising that you’re in a better position than someone else? For example, leaving a donation for the foodbank: what’s the reason for your good feeling when you do it? Is there any hint of feeling superior?

None of these reasons make giving the wrong thing to do but looking at our motives for this giving can be revealing.

Another reason for giving that we haven’t looked at so far is because you want to show God’s love. Not because you feel obliged to love, or because you think loving will give you a good feeling in return, but because you can’t help it. That’s how God’s love works: there’s so much of it that it flows out uncontrollably in giving in some form or another.

This is what Jesus is talking about in our gospel reading – he’s exploring the motivations for how one might act in giving and receiving invitations to a shared meal. Does this

represent an outpouring of love for another person, or is there an ulterior motive behind the action?

When I take a wedding service, one of my possible talks is about different types of love. It's the outpouring of unconditional love that Jesus modelled in his life, and which is critical to a marriage, that we want to be able to show to others through our day-to-day actions. The outpouring of unconditional love is how God works. The outpouring of unconditional love is how a good marriage works. And it's the outpouring of unconditional love that feeds many charities.

It's this outpouring of unconditional love that we are celebrating today in two ways:

- Children are created when two people have so much love for each other that they want to share everything with each other, especially that wonderful gift of new life. At our 10am service, Matt and Sarah Towler are giving thanks for such new life, created in love, when they bring their second child, Chloe, to church for a Thanksgiving.
- And at that same service, we're going to hear about how volunteers with Christians Against Poverty help clients to experience a transformation in their life with practical and emotional support, showing that there's always hope because of God's love, despite situations of real poverty.

Our whole life should reflect this outpouring of love if we are to live fully and fruitfully. Last week Matt Towler was invested as a leader of the 7th West Wickham Scout Group. And through this volunteering he has gained an added aspect to his life which is fulfilling. His son, Alfie, is also part of the group and enjoying new friendships and experiencing new activities. All of this the consequence of the outpouring of God's unconditional love.

Each one of us here can gain an added aspect to our own lives in Christ by giving to our church community, our family or another group in some way, not because we think we have to, not because we might get something else in return, not because it will make us feel superior, but simply because we love, and we cannot help that uncontrollable outflow of love.

This is what Jesus showed us in his life on earth. This is what he was talking about in response to watching those who were with him at that meal and when he thought about the reason why he and others might have been invited to that meal.

So, think back to that present giving or doing something for someone else that you thought about at the start of this reflection. Was this an example of the outpouring of

God's love? By making this the reason for every single action that we take, we can make our whole life an outpouring of God's love. And, as we are all made in God's image, this is the way in which our very fullest life can be recognised.

Prayer Pointers

Pray that we may we always find ourselves in the lowest place, to feast with our friend Jesus there. Give thanks for the way in which Jesus welcomed and accepted the poor, the disadvantaged and the marginalised and that he welcomed everybody to sit around his table. May we always remember that nobody is too unimportant or insignificant to receive the peace, love and joy that Jesus gave so freely.

Give thanks and rejoice with the Towler family as they attend St Francis on Sunday morning to give thanks for their daughter Chloe.

Pray for all those standing for election as local councillors on Thursday next week. Pray also for the candidates standing for the directly elected Mayor of Croydon. May those elected champion the cause of the poor and provide good, effective services for our Boroughs especially for those in poverty and struggling to make ends meet.

Lift to God all the places in our world that are suffering right now. Pray especially for Ukraine, still in the grip of war. Pray for those trying to bring peace and harmony to a very difficult situation.

Continue to pray for peace on the streets of our city. Pray especially for the victim of the shooting in Orpington on Wednesday and for the relatives and friends of the four in one family killed in Southwark on Monday. Pray for the police and those in the justice system who investigate these senseless crimes.

Hold before God all those we know who are sick. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Julie Bailey, Vicky Pearce, Barbara Colpus and Mary Sanders.

Offer our own personal prayers – our deepest needs, our fears, our joys and thanksgivings and for all those who we love dearly. Compassionate God, may we live **abundantly**. May we live **generously**. May we live **caringly**. May we live **lovingly**. May we live **for others and** may we live **richly for you**.