

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

3rd July 2022: Third Sunday after Trinity/St Thomas

Hazel writes:

Here's a picture of the collection point for donations to Ukraine organised by Hope Church last week. We will share more news from them when we have a further update.

Our focus this week is on St Thomas. Next week we will be thinking about how visual art can really help with our mental health and well-being with lots happening on both Friday and Saturday, as well as our Sunday morning services. Then, the following week there is a Children's Society coffee morning on Saturday at St Francis' and a healing service on Sunday afternoon at St Mary's. Who said the summer was a quiet time?



Today, we have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Mary's Church and a joint service at 10am in St Francis' Church.

Hymns at 10 a.m. in St. Francis' - Christ is made the sure foundation – Make me a channel of your peace – Just as I am – I believe in Jesus – Lead us heavenly Father, lead us.

Next **Sunday 10th July**, we will have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church, and non-Eucharistic services at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

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.

Messy Church is on Friday 8th July at 3.45pm in St Mary's Church. Our focus will be on Messy Art, linking with the Visual Art weekend being held as part of our Festival of Art.

The **Festival of Art** begins this weekend with visual and interactive displays at the following times:

- Friday 8th July from 11am to 5pm at St Francis'
- Saturday 9th July from 10am to 5pm at St Francis' and St Mary's

Refreshments will be available throughout each of these days and there will be a trail to follow linking the two churches on Saturday. We are raising funds for MIND and Bethlem Gallery. Bethlem Gallery is also benefitting from a sculpture trail and workshop on Saturday 9th at Emmanuel church from 11am to 3pm.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at 9.15am. 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.

We are once again holding our **Children's Society Coffee and Cake Morning**, having had to cancel this event for the last two years, due to Covid. This is on Saturday 16th July in St Francis Church Hall from 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon. There will be the usual delicious homemade cakes as well as tea, coffee and biscuits for sale, children's amusements, "Guess the Weight of the Cake" and a raffle. Everyone is welcome. Meet your friends for a coffee and treat yourself to a homemade cake! Donations of homemade cakes would be most appreciated. Christine Morton (020 8777 9213)

There will be a **Healing and Wholeness service** held at St Mary's Church on Sunday 17th July at 3pm: an opportunity to receive anointing and laying on of hands and prayer for healing.

Thanks to all those who supported me in my **steps challenge for Christian Aid**. I completed 329,000 steps in May and raised £470 on-line, £510 in cash and a further £47.50 in gift aid associated with that. Hazel

An open-air **Passion Play** is happening at Gatton Park near Reigate on 14-17 and 20-23 July. Hazel will be going to the performance on Friday 15 July. Here's a link to the website for details and to book tickets:

<https://www.gattontheatre.org.uk/currentproduction/>.

Together with St John's, the women's group is hosting a **Welcome Evening Event for Ukrainian families** and their hosts on July 19th. We are looking for donations (OF EXCELLENT QUALITY) clothes, bags, jewellery and accessories. You can leave these in either of the churches any time before the event. This evening will be by invitation only, so if you know of any Ukrainian people, please pass on Milly's contact details, or

give her theirs (with their permission): linktohopehighams@gmail.com or 07796 338483.

Oak Lodge School are looking for **volunteer community governors** who play an important role in supporting the school and holding it to account for standards. You don't need to be an expert in education or have links with the school, but you must be committed to the successful running of the school. This means being available to give your time to be in school and to attend meetings at various times throughout the year. In return, you'll find that being a governor is hugely rewarding and that you develop new skills and knowledge. As a school that is committed to building a diverse community, we're particularly keen to hear from people from underrepresented groups and with protected characteristics, particularly older people and those with disabilities. For more information or to express an interest please contact the Trust Governance Manager, Joyce Munro at governance@compassacademytrust.org.

A lady in Crystal Palace is moving to a home as she has dementia and is looking for someone to give a home to one (or both) of her two cats. They are around five years old. If anyone is interested in having more information, please contact Hazel.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require toilet rolls, soup, cooking sauces, tinned cold meat, squash, coffee, surface spray cleaner, toothpaste and washing up liquid. They are well stocked with pasta, cereal, 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.

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

God our saviour,
look on this wounded
world in pity and in
power; hold us fast to
your promises of peace
won for us by your Son,
our Saviour Jesus
Christ.

First Reading:

Ephesians 2: 19-22

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Second Reading:

John 20: 24-29

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'

²⁸ Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Post Communion Prayer

O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining and whose power we cannot comprehend: show us your glory as far as we can grasp it, and shield us from knowing more than we can bear until we may look upon you without fear; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

REFLECTION – Richard Ford

“What’s in a name?” asked Shakespeare, through the person of Juliet. “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

I’m not so sure.

When I was younger, my mother told me that she wanted her two sons to have biblical names included in their Christian names, or as we now have to call them, “first” or “forenames. “

My older brother’s second name was John.

John, one of Jesus first disciples and the one who came to be known as the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disciple who on that first Easter morning ran to the empty tomb with Peter and looking in and seeing the burial clothes lying there empty, believed. John, who with his brother, Jesus named Boanerges, sons of thunder – what an impressive sounding name. John, who if he didn’t actually write the gospel which bears his name, was certainly the inspiration behind it, as well as the two letters which bear his name.

That was the man whose name my brother bore.

And as for me, well given what day it is today, you’ve probably guessed, if you didn’t already know, what biblical name I was given.

Yes, my second name is Thomas.

And for years, I hated having that as my middle name, because the only thing I associated with it was the word “doubting:” Doubting Thomas.

And he’s known as “Doubting Thomas” as a result of what we heard in our gospel reading this morning: Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails, I will not believe.”

Today, of course, even a primary school pupil will tell you that they are taught to look for evidence before accepting any assertion. So perhaps Thomas was ahead of his time!

But what made it worse for me as a child was that my Godmother gave me as a Christmas present, the first of the “Thomas the Tank Engine” books. Now don’t get me wrong: I loved the Thomas the Tank Engine stories, but as for Thomas himself, he was a fussy little engine, almost always in trouble, often arrogant and only worked on a

branch line with a couple of carriages, unlike the other engines who pulled express trains on the main line.

It was a good job none of the other engines were called “John,” or it would probably have put me off my brother for life.

And it was only years later that I came to understand that there really was more to Thomas than the nick name “Doubting” would have us believe.

Ironically, given what I’ve just been saying, it is John’s gospel that gives us the fullest picture of what Thomas was like.

The first time we really meet Thomas is when Jesus has just left Judea to seek refuge on the other side of the River Jordan from the Jewish leaders who had tried to stone him for claiming that he and the Father were one – in other words that he was equal with God, a comment regarded by the Jewish authorities as blasphemy.

It is on this safe side of the river, that Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, is sick and dying, on the other side, the unsafe side of the river.

Then, two days later, he tells his disciples that he must return to Judea to go to Lazarus. Jesus’ disciples are appalled and remind him that, to quote their words, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there.”

But Jesus is insistent on the need to go to Lazarus, even though he knows that Lazarus is now dead. The disciples still remonstrate with Jesus, and only Thomas agrees with what Jesus is doing, saying resignedly, “Let us go that we may die with him.”

Thomas is both brave and loyal, and prepared to stand out against the other disciples.

The next time Thomas is the focus of attention is when Jesus is in Jerusalem teaching his disciples in the days that lead up to his arrest, what are known as the “Farewell Discourses.”

Jesus has just referred to the fact that in his Father’s house there are many rooms and that he is going to there, to his Father’s house, to prepare a place for them and that they know the way to the place where he is going.

The disciples don’t really understand what Jesus is getting at, but it is Thomas who speaks up, saying, “Lord we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Thomas is prepared to ask the hard questions, the kind of questions that others are reluctant to ask for fear of appearing stupid. He's the kind of person that we like to have around because he's ready to ask the questions that we'd like to ask but are too embarrassed to ask.

Then we come to today's gospel. Why Thomas isn't with the other disciples when Jesus first appears to them, we don't know. Perhaps he was so upset that he wanted to grieve alone. Who knows? It doesn't really matter. What is important is that he is one of those people who aren't prepared to take the word of others for something as unbelievable as a person rising from death. So, he wants concrete evidence of the resurrection.

And when he gets it, what a response: "My Lord and my God!" No doubts now. Thomas recognises that Jesus is divine, the first person in John's gospel to do so.

So, in addition to his courage and his readiness to ask the hard questions, Thomas is the disciple who, once he is convinced of the truth, is ready to accept it whole-heartedly.

And it is because of Thomas that Jesus speaks those most reassuring of his words: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not yet seen and yet have believed."

That's you and me, here this morning or listening on-line.

Jesus' reaction to Thomas reveals that it is all right to have doubts and to express them – God can deal with our doubts as Jesus deals with Thomas's. And when our doubts are overcome and, like Thomas, we recognise Jesus as our Lord and our God, oh how blessed we are.

These days I'm almost proud to carry the name Thomas... if only it weren't for that fussy little tank engine on the branch line!

One final comment from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which tells us just how blessed we are.

Paul writes to his gentile readers that they are members of God's household. For Paul, God's household would originally have referred only to the Jews, the Chosen People. But Paul has now come to realise that God's plan of salvation is for the whole world, not just one part of it.

A better translation of the word, "household," might be "extended family."

Just think: we, all of us here this morning, are part of God's family, and as Paul goes on to say, changing his metaphor, "are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Holy Spirit."

It's particularly apt, I think, that we should have this reading, set by the church in The Lectionary, and not chosen by Hazel or me, at a joint service, when we come together as the united benefice of St Francis' and St Mary's.

But let me finish by returning to the importance of names and what they signify.

We are members of the household, or family, of God. Just remember that when later today, and every week, we begin praying by addressing God as "Our Father." Amen

Prayer Pointers

At a time when many question the relevance of the Church, pray that we may be inspired to be witnesses in the world - witnesses that strengthen the presence of Christ in our communities. May we be the answer to those questions of relevance by what we do and what we are known for.

Pray for those whose lives are lived with the backdrop of war, violence and conflict especially for the people of Ukraine.

Pray for those who live, in loveless households where violence and abuse are the norm. Where people live treading on eggshells for fear of the next abusive attack and violent outburst.

Pray for those who are discriminated against because of gender identity, disfigurement, disability, religion or ethnic origin. May we at St Mary's and St Francis' be a welcoming and inclusive community.

Pray for families and households who are struggling and will struggle yet more, with the cost-of-living increases and commodity shortages that abound. Pray for Bromley Borough Foodbank who are experiencing a decrease in donations at this time.

Hold before God all those we know who are sick, especially those suffering from cancer and undergoing treatment. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Vicky Pearce, Mike East, Pat Allegacone, Jane Smith, Daphne Dack and John and Anita Curtis – and those known to God alone.

Pray for all who have died recently, especially Julie Bailey and for her daughters Pippa and Zazine and her wider family and friends. Thank God for the example of her life – for her laughter and joy even when faced with illness. For Brian Walsh, father of Deborah Howell and for all who we have loved and yet see no longer. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings. We entrust to God all those things that worry us; those situations we feel helpless in; those decisions that burden us; those losses that overwhelm us, and all that we are thankful for.