

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI WEST WICKHAM PARISH MAGAZINE



October/November 2026

50 pence

THE CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI
RAVENSWOOD AVENUE
WEST WICKHAM KENT BR4 0PW

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REGULAR SERVICES

SUNDAY

- 8.00 am** **Holy Communion**
1st Sunday varies - See calendar for details
3rd & 5th Sundays at St Mary's Church, The Avenue
2nd & 4th Sundays at St Francis' Church
- 10.00 am** **First Sunday – Joint Family Communion**
with St Mary's, held alternately at each church
See calendar for details
- 10.45 am** **Parish Communion**
Activities for younger children (aged 3+) and
crèche facilities in church
- 10.45 am** **2nd Sunday – Morning Worship**
(non–Eucharistic)

WEDNESDAY

- 9.30 am** **Morning Prayer**
10.30 – 11.30am **Church open for quiet and prayer**

A Letter from Carol

“I waited for you to turn to me”

During October and November there are some special times when we shall be in a period of “REMEMBERANCE.”

On October 4th, we will be remembering the 800th Anniversary of the death of St Francis, as well as remembering the consecration of St Francis Church 90 years ago. We are also in the Autumn Season of Harvest, so we remember our farmers, who have had a difficult year with the heat and lack of water. In our remembering we must also give thanks for our world around us, our creation, and pray that we can be good stewards of our land, as St Francis inspired us to be.

Moving into November we start with All the Saints on the 1st, All Souls on the 2nd, Guy Fawkes on the 5th and then we remember our soldiers on the War Memorials on Remembrance Sunday on 8th November, continuing on the Wednesday with a 2-minute silence at the “11th hour of the 11th month.”

Towards the end of the month in the church calendar, we celebrate ‘Christ the King’, when we are reminded that Jesus came into this world as God’s Son and was anointed and crowned with thorns to offer his life as a sacrifice for us on the cross, so that a kingdom could be born of Truth, Life, Justice, Love and Peace. Our world today so desperately needs a kingdom, where our world leaders talk truth, and where people of all faith and cultures can live in peace. What would be our part in all this I wonder? As Christians it is through our prayers, and our living relationship with God that we can make the difference. How we live our lives: giving time to God and showing love for our neighbour.

At this time, you may also remember loved ones that are now at rest in that heavenly kingdom of Christ the king, where truth, justice and love abounds. For those of us still living our lives and remembering in the earthly kingdom our comfort is in allowing God to surround us with love and open our hearts

to receive love in our lives. God is always with us, through our remembering, our times of sorrow and our times of joy if we only make the time.

For your comfort I share with you a Reflection:

A Letter from God

When you awoke, I was there, waiting upon you. I wanted to share in your love.

At breakfast you listened to the radio and rushed your breakfast. You had no time to speak to me. I waited but you did not turn to me. Though you travelled by rail you spent your time on your laptop and reading the news. You did not once give me a thought.

And I waited for you to turn to me.

During your work there were lots of small gaps. There was more time at lunch.

But you did other things and had no time for me.

Yet I waited for you to turn to me.

At the end of the day, you watched the television and played a game.

For a while you dosed before you had your last drink of the day.

And I waited for you to turn to me.

Now, I thought you will have time - just before you go to sleep.

Instead, you read until you were tired. You worried about tomorrow and at last fell asleep.

I will surround you with my love this night. I will wait for you tomorrow and if you do not remember I will be there the day after,

I will wait until you turn to me. All my love, God.

Every blessing as you keep your personal remembrance.



Calendar for October

Sunday 4th

8.00 a.m.

10.00 a.m.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Holy Communion at St. Mary's

Joint Service at St. Francis followed by lunch

Saturday 10th

Harvest Supper at St. Mary's 7.00 p.m.

Sunday 11th

8.00 a.m.

9.15 a.m.

10.45 a.m.

3.00 p.m.

HARVEST SUNDAY

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Morning Praise at St. Mary's with scouts with
livestream

Morning Worship at St. Francis

Pet Service at St. Francis

Sunday 18th

8.00 a.m.

9.15 a.m.

10.45 a.m.

3.00 p.m.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

Holy Communion at St. Mary's

Holy Communion at St. Mary's with livestream

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Healing Service at St. Francis

Sunday 25th

8.00 a.m.

9.15 a.m.

10.45 a.m.

LAST SUNDAY IN TRINITY

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Holy Communion at St. Mary's with livestream

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Calendar for November

Sunday 1st

ALL SAINTS

8.00 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

10.00 a.m.

Joint Service at St. Marys with livestream

3.00 p.m.

Memorial Service for All Souls at St. Francis

Sunday 8th

REMEMBRANCE

8.00 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Mary's

9.15 a.m.

Morning Praise at St. Mary's with livestream

10.45 a.m.

Morning Worship at St. Francis

Sunday 15th

2ND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT

8.00 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

9.15 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Mary's with livestream

10.45 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Sunday 22nd

CHRIST THE KING Sunday next before Advent

8.00 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Mary's

9.15 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Mary's with livestream

10.45 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Sunday 29th

ADVENT SUNDAY

8.00 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

9.15 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Mary's with livestream

10.45 a.m.

Holy Communion at St. Francis

Bible Readings

Date	Reading	Reader
October		
4 th	Micah 6: 6-8	Lesley East
	2 Tim.1-14	
	Galatians 6: 14-18	
	Luke 12: 22-34	
11 th	Deut. 8: 7-18	David Wada
	2 Corinthians 9: 6-15	
	Luke 12: 16-30	
18 th	Isaiah 35: 3-6 (or Acts 16: 6-12a)	James Pitt-Payne
	2 Tim. 4: 5-17	
	Luke 10: 13-21	
25 th	Leviticus 19: 1-2, 15-18	Sam Hand
	1 Thess. 2: 1-8	
	Matthew 22: 34-46	
November		
1 st	Revelation 7: 9-17	Joint at St Mary's
	1 John 3: 1-3	
	Matthew 5: 1-12	
8 th	Amos 5: 18-24	Gill Kehoe
	1 Thess.4: 13-18	
	Matthew 25: 1-13	
15 th	Zeph. 1: 7, 12-18	Valerie Hamilton
	1 Thess.5: 1-11	
	Matthew 25: 14-30	
22 nd	Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24	Joan Burford
	Ephesians 24: 1-6	
	Matthew 25: 31-46	
29 th	1 Corinthians 1: 3-9	Lesley East
	Mark 13: 24-37	

FROM THE REGISTERS

Funeral and Thanksgiving Service for Audrey Constance TIBBLES

at

**St. Mary of Nazareth on Monday, 3rd August 11.30 a.m. followed
by Cremation at Beckenham**

A celebration of the life of our Audrey Tibbles. Paying tribute to a wonderful lady.

This was a very sad occasion, for us to say farewell to a senior member of our congregation, who did so much for our church, over a period of decades.

Having been admitted into hospital, a week before Audrey's 100th birthday, it was gratifying to be shown a photograph of her, surrounded by her hospital staff, celebrating this milestone event, looking happy and contented, but only to pass away peacefully, three days later.

Audrey was born in Hither Green in 1926, the same year as our late Queen. In 1940, Audrey and her family were evacuated during the second world war to Torquay, where at the age of 16, she joined the Red Cross, to help out at the local hospital. Once back after the war, Audrey found continued employment with the Prudential assurance company in Holborn, and carrying on with her association with the Red Cross, and where also she met with friends, who introduced her to our St. Mary's church.

Our Audrey was always generous with her time, endlessly creative, loaning a vast array of skills, to support our church community, friendly and caring, a noted flower arranger, food cooked to order, and especially Christmas cake making, for the parish Christmas market raffle. As with all church social events, Audrey was with us to enjoy herself in our company.

For all Audrey's service to the Red Cross, the then Prince of Wales, presented her with a Commendation award, for her length of dedicated involvement.

And as part of the Red Cross fund raising committee, Audrey retired as a Commandant of the City of London division, of the Red Cross.

As a terrific hostess, Audrey was well known for throwing expensive lunches, to mark her significant birthdays, Audrey, it was said, that true to form, she was planning her 100th birthday bash, or a well organised wake, it was a shame that it was her wake, that we all sadly attended.

With all her friends, she lived life to the full, whilst helping others.

Stephen Howe

Dates for your Diary

October

St Francis of Assisi Patronal Day and 90th Anniversary Celebrations
On **Sunday, 4th October 2026**, St Francis of Assisi Church, West Wickham will be celebrating its 90th Anniversary along with St Francis Patronal Day which this year marks the 800th anniversary of St Francis' death. To celebrate this occasion there will be a commemorative service which will be led by the Venerable Greg Prior, Archdeacon of Croydon at 10.00am and will be followed by a light lunch in the church hall. You are warmly invited to attend this special service and the lunch.

Pet Service

At 3pm on **Sunday 4th October** we will hold our annual Pet Service as a thanksgiving for the companionship, joy and comfort that pets bring to the lives of so many.

Parish Lunch

The Parish Lunch is on **Wednesday 7th October** at 1.00 p.m. in the hall. Please let Beryl know if you are unable to attend 0208 289 8097. Thank you.

Tunes, Tales & Tots

Come along and join a monthly morning of music, play and stories for little ones (0 to pre-school) and their grown-ups at St Francis of Assisi Church, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham BR4 0PW on the second Friday of each month beginning on **Friday, 9th October at 9.45am** (doors open at 9.30am).

There will be:

- Tunes – songs and rhymes with plenty of musical fun
- Play – crafts, activities and time to explore
- Tales – story time to finish

All led by musical professionals. Everyone welcome – Mums, Dads, Grandparents, Childminders and Carers. Refreshments available and £1.00 per child.

Harvest Supper

The Harvest Supper is on **Saturday 10th October** at 7.00 p.m. in the hall. The cost is £10 and there is a list to sign in the vestibule or book through Beryl, berylbolton@hotmail.com. On the menu are sausages, beans and chips; and a dessert but you must bring your own drinks. Glasses will be provided.

After the supper Geoff will entertain us on the piano and there will be the usual sing-along of popular songs. Any profit will be for church funds apart from the raffle which will go towards the lighting fund.

Harvest Services

This year our Harvest Services will be held on **Sunday 11th October** at 9.15am in St Mary's Church (joined by the Scouts) and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. We will be collecting donations of non-perishable foods and toiletries for Bromley Food Bank. Please do come along to give thanks for all we have and bring some donations for those in need. It is also possible to donate items by leaving them in the boxes outside both

churches at any time, or you can make a monetary donation to the Bromley Foodbank at <https://www.justgiving.com/page/harvest26>

An Evening of Magic

On Tuesday **20th October at 5.00 p.m. or 7.30 p.m.** come and join us for a Magic Show with Tom Bolton, Beryl's grandson. Tickets at £12 for adults and £10 for children available from Beryl on 07834 983735 or berylbolton@hotmail.com . There will be a paid bar available at the beginning of the event and during the interval. All proceeds, from the event less expenses, will go towards the St. Mary's lighting fund. Do come and join us for what promises to be a wonderful evening!

November

In Loving Memory

Our annual service to remember those who have died will be on **Sunday, 1st November at 3pm** in St Francis' Church. This is an opportunity to come and remember with thankfulness, the lives of those you have loved and lost.

If you would like the names of loved ones read out at this service, please complete a sheet that will be in the churches a few weeks beforehand or give your names by email or phone to Matt. Also, do let others who might find this service helpful know about it and offer to come along with them to provide support.

Parish Lunch

The Parish Lunch is on **Wednesday 4th November at 1.00p.m.** in the hall. Please let Beryl know if you are unable to attend on 0208 289 8097. Thank you.

NB. The Christmas lunch will be one week later than normal on Wednesday 9th December at 12.30 p.m.

Join Us as We Celebrate Our Birthdays!

Come and join us for a special evening as we celebrate our birthdays together on Saturday 21st November, 7pm at St Mary's. A three-course meal cooked by our very own Michelle and Paul! Cost is £20 pp. Pre-dinner drinks will be served at 6:45pm in the vestibule. Please bring your own drinks for the meal. Tickets will be available from Beryl on 07834 983735 or berylbolton@hotmail.com

Christmas Market

It's coming up to that time again, Saturday, 28th November from 10.30 a.m. – 2.30 p.m. for our fabulous Christmas Market. There will be the usual mix of stalls with possibly, a couple of new additions. Your help will be gratefully received. There will be further requests for donations of cakes, wine, chocolates and bits for the hamper at a later date. Thanks to everyone in advance. Natalie, Claire and Tony.

Advance Notices

Big Christmas Sing

This year's annual Big Christmas Sing will be held on Saturday 5th of December 4.00 p.m. at St. Francis Church in aid of Christian Aid.

Community Christmas Tree Festival – 12-19 December 2026

St Francis of Assisi Church, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham

We have begun planning for the fourth 'Community Christmas Tree Festival' at St Francis of Assisi Church, West Wickham. As in previous years, we will be raising funds for Welcare which is a family support charity working with families and children up to the age of 13 in South London and East Surrey. The dates and opening times are:

- Saturday 12 December – 11.00am-2.00pm
- Wednesday 16 December – 3.00-7.00pm:
 - invite schools; pre-school groups to come along - children's activities

- invite local businesses to come along
- 5pm-7pm live music and refreshments including mulled wine
- Friday 18 December – 11.00am-2.00pm
- Saturday 19 December 11.00am-2.00pm: children's activities

Further information will be shared in the coming months, but if you would like to be involved in any way, please contact Nicky Nightingale, Gill Kehoe or Caroline Povlsen.

Parish Matters

West Wickham Choir Concert Sunday 19th July at St. Mary's

Once again, Geoff and the West Wickham Choir gave a brilliant performance. Despite the extremely hot weather, it was very well attended. It was good to hear “Daniel Jazz” again and “Saints Alive”. It's many years ago since Geoff and the choir first performed “Saints Alive”, however, it never loses its appeal. We were treated to solos by Theo, Carol, Clara, David, Elizabeth and Claire. Of course, not forgetting Theo playing the cello and the other instrumentalists. Well done, to everyone concerned with this performance and we look forward to enjoying the next one. The sum of £683.73 was raised for the Lighting Fund.



News from our link church of St Andrew's in Gweru, Zimbabwe

I've recently heard from Tinashe Mahwerera, the parish priest of St Andrew's, our link parish as part of the Croydon-Central Zimbabwe Joint Link, that they have now received the £1,019.90 gift from St Mary's. As I reported in an earlier update, the money is being put towards the building of a rectory for the parish priest. Tinashe tells me that progress on the building is going well and that, God willing, it will be dedicated by Bishop Ignatius Makumbe, a former parish priest at St Andrew's, on October 17th. He adds that the completion of the rectory "will indeed assist the priest to exercise his duties well."

I have shared with Tinashe our focus on prayer for the growth of our churches, especially for young folk and their families to join us, and he tells me that the church in Zimbabwe is beginning to have a similar problem and, I quote, "young couples are becoming few in our churches. It is also becoming our major concern as well. God shall continue to guide you through."

Tinashe assures me that they hold us in their prayers and are also praying for their nation, for peace, love and unity. It would be good if we could join them in this prayer.

Richard Ford

St Francis & St Mary's

Joint, All-Age, Other Special Services & Events Calendar for 2026

October

- 4th Joint Service at St Francis': St Francis' Patronal Service (Gift Day) and 90th Anniversary – 10am
- 4th Light lunch following Joint Service to celebrate 90th Anniversary of St Francis of Assisi Church, West Wickham – 12.00noon
- 4th Pet service at St Francis' – 3pm
- 7th St Mary's Community Lunch – 1pm
- 9th Tunes, Tales & Tots at St Francis – 9.45am
- 10th Harvest Supper at St Mary's – 7pm
- 11th Harvest Festival at St Francis
- 11th Harvest Festival All Age – Scouts at St Mary's
- 20th Magic Night – 5pm and 7.30pm at St Mary's
- 25th Bible Sunday

November

- 1st Joint service at St Mary's (All Saints) – 10am
- **1st Memorial Service at St Francis' – 3pm**
- 4th St Mary's Community Lunch – 1pm
- 8th Non-eucharistic: Remembrance Sunday
- 13th Tunes, Tales & Tots at St Francis – 9.45am
- 17th Women's event at St Mary's – 8pm
- 27th High Street Christmas Lights event at St Francis' - tbc
- 28th St Mary's Christmas Market – 10:30am to 2:30pm
- 29th Advent Sunday

December

- 5th The Big Christmas Sing at St Francis' – 4pm
- 6th Joint service St Mary's Patronal Sunday – 10am
- 6th Brunch following St Mary's Patronal service – 11:30am
- 6th St Francis' Christmas Community Lunch – 12:30pm
- 9th St Mary's Christmas Community Lunch – 12:30pm
- 11th Tunes, Tales & Tots at St Francis – 9.45am
- 12th Scouts' Carol service at St Francis' – 6:30pm
- 12th–19th Community Christmas Tree Festival at St Francis'
- 13th Carol service and Nativity – 10.45am at St Francis
- 13th Squirrels Nativity at St Mary's – 9.15am
- 20th Carol service - 4pm at St Mary's

- 24th Christingle at St Mary's – 4pm and Lighting the Lamps at St Francis' – 6pm
- 24th Midnight Communion Services at both churches – 11:15pm
- 25th Joint service at St Francis' – 10am
- 27th Joint service at St Mary's – 10am

Smile Lines

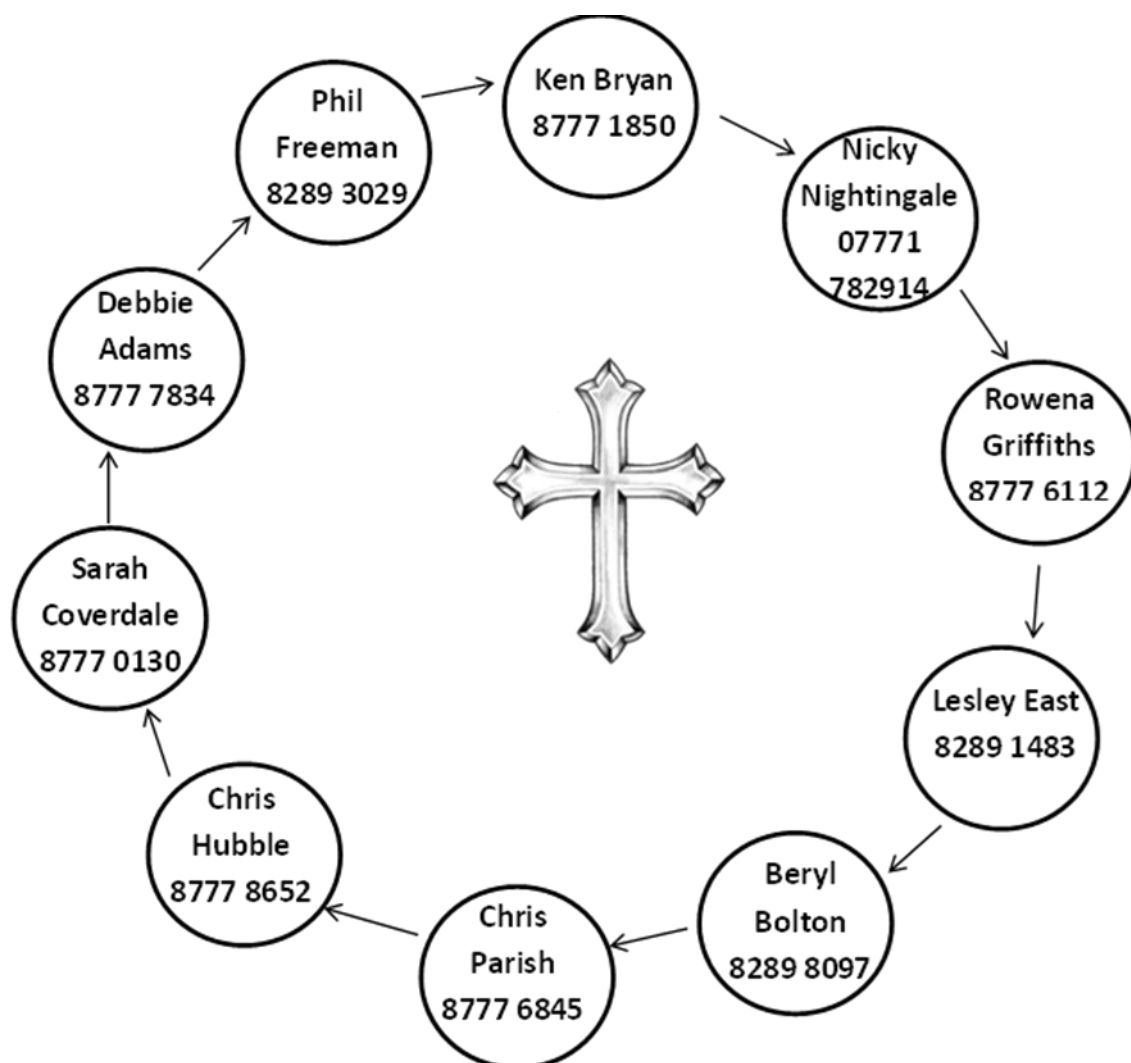
***I got a call from a scammer who said, "I've got all of
your passwords."***

I said, "Great. What are they? I'll grab a pen."

St Francis and St Mary's Prayer Chain

Many people find they are given strength and peace of mind when they know that they, or their loved ones, are being prayed for. And the more people who are praying for someone, the better!

If you would like prayer for yourself, please call anyone on the chain below and they will pass a message on around the circle. If you like a name added to the intercessions list in our services, (which will be on-line as well as in-person) please state this when you make contact.



Prayer Focus

Focus for Prayer: October and November 2026

In our next two Focuses for Prayer, I want us to focus not on the season being celebrated, but on our two Patron Saints whose celebrations occur during this time: St Francis in October, and St Mary in Advent. Both of these great saints have much to teach us about prayer and our life in God.



For St Francis I want us to use this icon of St Francis as our focus. An icon is not portrait of an individual, but a window into the life of Heaven. Icons are works of theology and spirituality not of art, and an icon painter is said to ‘write’ an icon as one might ‘write a book’. As works of theology we see in the icon that the eyes, nose and ears are larger than one would find on a normal human being, whilst the mouth is smaller. This is intentional, the receiving senses are emphasised, the communicating organ

(the mouth) made smaller: the image is basically saying, ‘shut up and listen’!

The next thing to notice is the halo that surrounds Francis’ head, a reminder that he is now in the eternal presence of God. His brown robe speaks of his humility, but also of the robes worn by the orders which bears his name. The cross reminds us of his devotion to Christ and the Church; indeed, it is from the Crucifix in the ruined church of San Damiano that he heard God calling him to serve and to rebuild the Church.

The dove does not simply represent his love of creation, though tradition tells us that he negotiated with a wolf that was making the life of the shepherds of the village of Gubbio difficult, but that he was a peacemaker. During the Crusades he crossed the battle lines to negotiate with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in Egypt, choosing negotiation over protracted violence. The dots on Francis’ hands tell us that he was a Stigmatist, that is someone who through divine intervention bears the wounds of Christ in their own body. This is associated

with extreme holiness and prayerfulness, and there are examples of at least one individual receiving the Stigmata in the mid-twentieth century, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina a monk of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor (the Capuchins) being the most famous. In saying this I must add that as Francis lived 900 years ago some of what I have written is legend rather than verifiable truth, but these stories tell us who Francis was, but also who the Church has understands him to be.

In the modern imagination Francis can be a bit of a soft saint, all flowers and doves, however in life Francis was a dangerous man to be around. He famously sold off his father's stock of cloth and gave the proceeds to the poor. He and his followers often ran into trouble with the rich and comfortable Church authorities who did not appreciate their radical and disturbing poverty. (It's hard to hold the moral high ground when you are holding a golden cup in your hand, and your opponent is wearing rags.) He was then a menace to the polite society of the age. Radical in poverty, disruptive in politics, and someone who saw value in creation, including a ravenous wolf troubling the herds of Gubbio. His life reminds me of our call as a Church to 'comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable'.

One of my favourite pieces of Franciscan writing is the Canticle of Creation (known to us as the hymn 'All creatures of our God and King'):

*'Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
'from whom no living man can escape.
'Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
'Blessed are those who will find Your most holy will,
'for the second death shall do them no harm.'*

His words remind us that bodily death is part of creation, something not to be feared but welcomed because through it, and through Christ's death we are united with God in eternity. It is rather spiritual death and separation from God that we should fear.

St Francis then is and was a dangerous man, but then so was Christ. Francis challenges us as to what it means to follow Jesus, and of our relationship with creation. He is the first environmentalist, and one of a long line of saints who have challenged the Church's economic riches.

Matt's Book Review

Our Church buildings tell us much not just about the history of the church, but also of the community they serve. As you may know I love to go Church crawling, that is looking round churches great and small, like Betjeman's Church Mouse, seeking out their hidden treasures, be is a staircase that leads nowhere, or a now empty wall niche that once held an Aumbry or saints statue.

Church buildings can tell us a lot about the community that built them. The huge, cold grain and wool cathedrals of rural England speak not of giant lost congregations, but of small communities investing their temporal wealth in eternity. The modern 'churches in the round' like St Mark's on the High Street speak of the democratisation of worship, whereas an Eastern facing Altar speaks not of sheep and shepherd (leader and led), but of democratisation in another way, of prayer being said communally by priest and people together, not performatively one in front of the other.

During the Reformation when the English Church separated from Rome, a move as much to do with the rise of printing and literacy amongst the poor folk as it was theological, saw the replacement of images with texts. Statues, alongside painted walls and glass depicting Biblical stories was replaced with texts painted onto walls, usually the 10 Commandments, the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Our own two churches reflect the more recent Anglican tradition of mixing Catholic and Reformed traditions which began in the nineteenth century, mixing richly coloured vestments, statues and paintings with raised pulpits, colourful Altars with fixed pews emphasising listening alongside ritual movement, both of which their own way tell the story of our faith week by week one highlighting the other.

With regards to the Altars of our two churches, these reflect the rediscovery of English Liturgical traditions by Percy Dearmer. The Riddle Posts of St Mary's in particular are of a particular liturgical moment in the Church emphasizing a very English iteration of Catholicism viewed through late-Victorian eyes.

Go further afield to Istanbul not to the Hagia Sophia (the Church of the Holy Wisdom) but to Hagia Irene (Church of the Holy Peace) and you will see theology and history played out in stone. Unlike almost all churches of the East this one is unadorned other than with a bare, unadorned cross. This Church was decorated during the Iconoclastic period when icons and statues were banned and often destroyed. Every few centuries the Church goes through a period of destructive cleansing when much of what is beautiful is lost for the sake of artistic puritanism, forgetting that images and statues are not in themselves divine or worthy of worship, but that they are windows looking into the life of Heaven.

Travel to the margins, to the Old Kent Road and areas like it and you will find Christian communities and congregations making homes in warehouses, schools and community halls. These gatherings are meeting the needs of Christian communities from the Southern hemisphere. Their worship differs from traditional Western and Eastern forms of Christianity, and speaks to the needs and stories of those communities just as our own churches speak to us and our histories.

In his book Fergus Butler-Gaillie uses 12 churches to tell the story of Christianity, from Japan to America, from Canterbury to Zanzibar. Whilst my article is narrow in focus, his is wide offering an overview of Christian history by looking through the windows of our church buildings.

Churches to speak of communal trauma in particular through war memorials. Trauma is also expressed also in more ancient churches the strange stairway that go nowhere, the empty niches that once held saints' statues and holy water stoups destroyed as part of changes in English religious life. Our churches are places that hold memory and history, and like any good history

book like Fergus' help us to engage more personally in the tectonic shifts that like a blacksmith forging a piece of metal, have formed our Christian heritage through the fires of history.

Witnessing a Lynching

This summer we witnessed a lynching, that is the killing of a young black man because he had dared to step outside the societal boundaries and expectations unfairly placed around him by others. There might not have been a tree to receive him, or a rope publicly placed around his neck, but there was a mob whipped up to violence, and there was the expectation of blood.

We might well imagine lynchings to be something only found in the Deep South of America, and something that occurred only in history, and not in our own times, but the hounding to death of Professor Jason Arday by a media led mob was just that, a public lynching. Professor Arday had dared to step outside of the boundaries placed on him by society; he had dared to do something that none of us are likely to do, that is become a professor at one of our most ancient institutions of education.

As part of his lynching, Arday was accused of lying and of misrepresenting himself with regards to his achievements, he was accused of plagiarism, of copying someone else's work and words in his Doctoral dissertation. Cambridge University was accused of having employed him based on the colour of his skin, not his academic credentials. Many of these accusations started with a man who himself is now subject to academic censure, and who had previously been expelled from the same institution. However, these accusations were then taken up, amplified and expanded upon by both the media and users of social media, none of whom had a clear understanding of how academia functions.

It did not end with Professor Arday. Following his death a friend of mine, a Professor of colour at another ancient university has found his own

appointment questioned, despite the fact that he has exceptional academic credentials and despite the fact that being a Professor of Black Theology could not reasonably be held by a white man! (Black Theology is an exploration of the Black experience, read through the lens of Liberation Theology.) As a theology of experience, it cannot reasonably be written by anyone other than one who has lived that experience, and whilst I have read most of the major works in this field and have used it to form my own theological understanding I would not dare to presume to write about it myself.

Next comes Professor Arday's recently published autobiography which I have been reading. There will be those who claim that it is a work of fiction, written by a man with a Walter Mitty complex. This is both a dangerous calumny against Arday, and misunderstands the nature of autobiography, which is not simply a process of truth telling, but of explaining how someone sees themselves, and how they see and tell their story. Biography is not an exact science in which every truth is pinned down as it is in a scientific journal, rather it is written through the lens of personal perception and experience, it says 'this is how I see myself and how I tell my story'.

A good example is the autobiography of the former politician, editor of the Telegraph and friend of Dennis Thatcher, William 'Bill' Deedes'. His autobiography 'Dear Bill' gives a view of the man as seen through his own eyes, and there are elements of the story missing because he was either not aware of them or unwilling to tell them. A later biography, written by his daughter tells a different story of his life, in particular the impact the War had on his life and his relationships with others, in particular his family. What emerges is a man deeply troubled by the past, and who is far less sympathetic than his own portrayal of himself might want him to appear.

Neither however tells the whole truth of who Bill Deedes was, they both gives aspects of the man as seen through different eyes. Others will tell a different story of him. It is the same with Professor Arday's autobiography,

it is now much more difficult to read given the controversy that surrounded his life, and the accusations levelled against him. His lynching continues after his death through the distorting lenses placed over our eyes by those who managed his death, the media published and social, and it is difficult to remove those glasses and see the man underneath, a man of exceptional talent and intelligence. However, what we can be certain of is that most, if not all the things he was accused of lying about did actually happen, and that he had earned his place in academia.

Biography and autobiography can also reveal deeper and uncomfortable truths about others, truths we might wish to avoid. Stuart Hall's autobiography for instance reveals an unpalatable truth about beloved author JRR Tolkien, that Tolkien may have held unacceptable views about race, and how one might read English literature through the lens of race. This fits with other questions in Tolkien's own writings about how non-white people are presented.

As a society we need to learn from what has happened this summer, and so does the media and social media commentariat, some of whom placed laughing emojis in response to any and every mention of his name. That someone could be publicly lynched in our own day tells us how little we have learned, and of how far we need to go. It also tells us that the sins of the past are the sins of the present, and of how we need to look after those at risk, to check in on them and to support them with our love and prayers, because those who have gone after Professor have tasted blood and their desire has, I think not yet been satiated.

Revd. Matt Drummond



Forgiving God,

We are sorry when our human
relationships go wrong.

We are sorry for times when our words and
actions are hurtful and damaging.

We think of those people we find it hard to
accept and get along with...

forgive us for blaming them for our behaviour.

We think of those people who find it hard to
accept and get along with us...

Give us the courage to face up to the part we play
in their attitudes.

help us to learn from the example of Joseph
and his brothers.

Help us to have the generosity to forgive others.

Help us to have the courage of Joseph's brothers
and to ask for forgiveness.

May today be the first day in our new relationship
with other people,

through Jesus Christ, our forgiving Lord and Saviour,

Amen.



What is Christian Nationalism and why should I be wary of it?

A few years ago, it would not have been unlikely that you would have heard the claim that Christians in this country were being persecuted, that you'd be arrested for wishing someone a 'merry Christmas', and that Christianity was being erased was British culture. What people really meant was that in an increasingly secularised age, though our culture is still very heavily influenced by Christianity, Christianity is having to find its place within a marketplace of faith. Now this has morphed into something new, and we are seeing a rise in so-called Christian Nationalism on the Right and Far Right. We have seen failed celebrities and Right-Wing agitators wrapping themselves in the Cross and calling for a revival in Britain. But what is Christian Nationalism?

First off, Christian Nationalism is more Nationalist than it is theologically Christian. It is American in origin relating more to the intellectual and religious history of their nation than it does our own. At its basic level it is a movement designed to designate some people as 'in' and others as 'out'. Those who are on the inside are white Europeans or Americans, and who are on the political and cultural Right, some of whom may well be Christian. Those on the outside are those who profess faiths other than Christianity, cultural Liberals and those on the Left, and those whose heritage is not white European or American. Some of the latter may well be Christians, though are likely to be of the type who take seriously God's call on us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves', and thus not the right sort for Christian Nationalists whose stock in trade is division rather than unity.

Linking to Christianity finding its place in the marketplace of faiths, there is also a sense that Christian Nationalism comes out of an increasing societal ignorance of what Christianity actually is, as I will demonstrate below. This comes partly out of the decline in Church going in our country, and our move away from Christianity being formative for our culture towards one that is more secularised and celebrity focused.

At a deeper and more worrying level Christian Nationalism is about how society functions. Christian Nationalists propose a Denominationalist approach to society, where God is in charge of every aspect of human life from family to culture, from the media to the Judiciary and Government. Not just as an undergirding and guiding theme such as in the Judeo-Christian mindset that guides Western politics and Law which allows for disagreement and dissension, but in terms of absolute control, and where there is no space for disagreement and dissension. If this sounds familiar then it is, it is the type of government described in Orwell's novel '1984' and is the type of government seen in Iran as well as in the USSR.

It is not simply God who is in charge of all sectors of society however. In the home God is replaced by or is a co-worker with the husband. What God is to culture the male is to the Christian Nationalist household.

The very concept of Christian Nationalism is not without its critics, and Professor Luke Bretherton a Christian ethicist argues that it is too simple a catch all phrase imported from the US. His feeling is that what undergirds and drives the concept (alienation, urban decay, loss of hope in certain communities) is lost in the blanket condemnations issued by the churches. In this he has a point, if we don't look at what drives Christian Nationalism, then we won't be able to address its underlying causes.

So how do we approach Christian Nationalism? First, we need to recognise that it is not Christian, and whilst individual Christians may sign up to its beliefs, it is in many ways inimitable to Christianity. At the heart of Judaism and Christianity is the call to love God and neighbour, this forms the summary of the Law used by both Jews and Christians.

Going deeper in the Parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus describes our neighbour not just as someone who lives next to us or who is like us, but anyone who is in need of our love and care. This goes against Vice President JD Vance's misrepresentation of the Gospel where a hierarchy of

neighbourliness and need is created: family first, followed by neighbour, community, fellow citizens and, last, those elsewhere, a hierarchy that utterly and egregiously misrepresents Jesus' understanding of who our neighbour is.

Second, we need to understand that God is not calling us to create an Iranian style theocracy where faith is used as the measure in public life and discourse as well as private life, and where dissent and difference is punished. (Which is what Christian Nationalism proposes if you take it to its logical conclusion.) If we look at the gospels we will find a situation where disagreement forms part of the life of the nation. We also need to ask what is that people find attractive about Christian Nationalism, and why does it speak to people? This does not mean agreeing with its supporters, but rather listening to and addressing their concerns, and in doing so building communities based in love and mutual understanding.

Finally, we need to recognise that Christian Nationalism is not a new idea, just an old one repackaged. In the 19th Century the Orthodox Church condemned the heresy of Phyletism, that is of linking faith to national identity. Thus, Christian Nationalism is something that the Church has condemned as being unchristian. As I have noted above, it is founded on the fear of the non-Christian (non-White) 'other' and thus is simply old-fashioned racism shrouded in the Cross.

Revd. Matt Drummond

Crossword Answers

Across: 1 dare; 3 cherubim; 9 son Tohu; 10 yield; 11 ranch; 12 enlist; 14 Baalah of Judah; 17 Edward; 19 Sheol; 22 media; 23 open air; 24 apostasy; 25 Eton

Down: 1 describe; 2 run in; 4 household gods; 5 royal; 6 blessed; 7 MIDI; 8 Joshua; 13 children; 15 added to; 16 Jasper; 18 await; 20 exalt; 21 YMCA

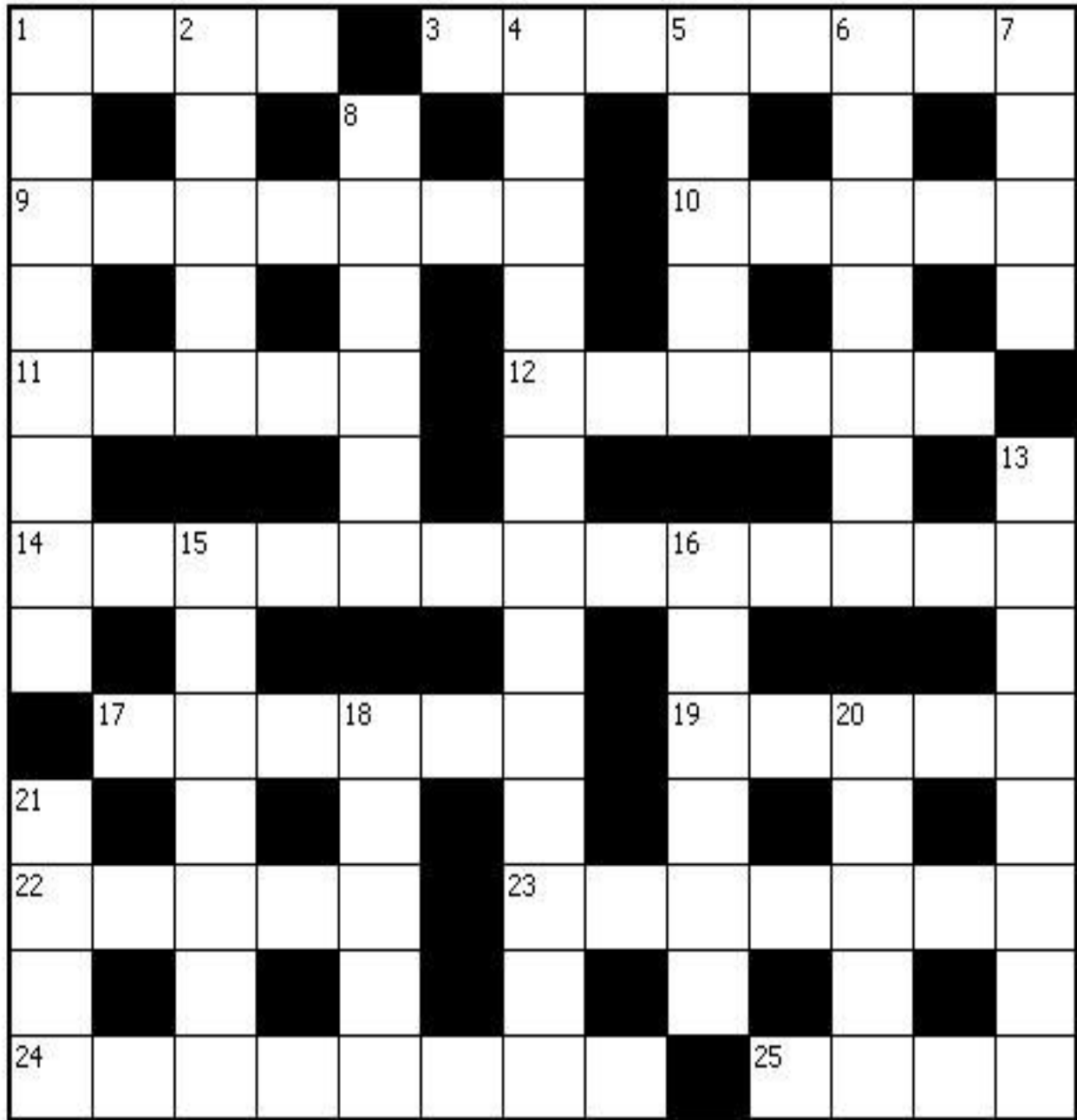
Smile Lines - Children's Comments

In future, all cars will be fitted with catholic converters

God created the World and then created Adam & Ebay

The epistles were the wives of the apostles

Crossword Puzzle



Crosswords Clues

Across

- 1 'Those who were standing near Paul said, "You — to insult God's high priest?"' (Acts 23:4) (4)
- 3 They were assigned to guard the tree of life (Genesis 3:24) (8)
- 9 'Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the — of — , the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite' (1 Samuel 1:1) (3,4)
- 10 Surrender (Joshua 24:23) (5)

- 11 Where American livestock can be reared (5)
- 12 Listen (anag.) (6)
- 14 Alternative name for Kiriath Jearim (2 Samuel 6:2) (6,2,5)
- 17 He founded Westminster Abbey, — the Confessor (6)
- 19 Hebrew word for the place of the dead (5)
- 22 Allies of Persia in the fifth century BC (Esther 1:3) (5)
- 23 Where John Wesley was forced to preach a lot (4,3)
- 24 Rebellion against God; abandonment of religious belief (8)
- 25 Note (anag.) (4)

Down

- 1 Give an account of (Mark 4:30) (8)
- 2 ‘I — — the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free’
(Psalm 119:32) (3,2)
- 4 ‘He took the ephod, the other — — and the carved image’
(Judges 18:20) (9,4)
- 5 ‘You are a chosen people, a — priesthood’ (1 Peter 2:9) (5)
- 6 The meek, the merciful and the mourners are all this
(Matthew 5:4–5, 7) (7)
- 7 Musical Instrument Digital Interface (1,1,1,1)
- 8 He was the son of Nun (Deuteronomy 34:9) (6)
- 13 ‘Let the little — come to me’ (Matthew 19:14) (8)
- 15 ‘About three thousand were — — their number that day’
(Acts 2:41) (5,2)
- 16 In John’s vision, the wall of the new Jerusalem was made of this
(Revelation 21:18) (6)
- 18 ‘Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly — a Saviour from
there, the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Philippians 3:20) (5)
- 20 ‘Glorify the Lord with me: let us — his name together’
(Psalm 34:3) (5)
- 21 Young Men’s Christian Association (1,1,1,1)

Answers on an earlier page

WE ARE ALL GUILTY

Well, I am. At times! Of complacency of leaving it to others to sort out!

BUT we do have a duty when it comes to the safeguarding of children **OR** vulnerable adults in the church.

There is a manual in our church vestibule entitled, '*A Safe Church*', which is for reference by anyone and acts as a guide to safeguarding matters.

If you do have a genuine concern about such a matter, then you may wish to speak to Charlotte Wilson or Kim Teare, our Safeguarding Officers or to one of the churchwardens.

ST FRANCIS' PRE-SCHOOL HELD IN THE CHURCH HALL

We are a small, friendly Pre-School and we take children aged between 2 to 5 years.

Contact: Kelly Fiander

Tel: 07719-397637

Email: stfrancispreschool21@gmail.com

URL: <https://stfrancispreschool.co.uk>



GROUPS & ACTIVITIES AT ST FRANCIS' CHURCH

On the first Saturday of every month the church is open from 10.30 am to 11.30 am when refreshments are served, and this raises money for Action Aid.

Contact Barbara Goodchild 8777 8782

The Church Halls. Our main large hall is available for hire. There is also a small hall which can be used in conjunction with the main hall at weekends and during school holidays.

Bookings Secretary: Liz Raper 8777 2745

Men's Group. This meets on the second Monday evening of the month, alternately at St Francis' and St Mary's.

Contact: Stephen Howe 8249 0315

Reading Group. This meets on the second Thursday morning of the month.

Contact Barbara Goodchild 8777 8782

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH HALL

Cubs

Tuesdays from 6.15 pm to 7.45 pm

Contact Kat Hardman katkahardman@gmail.com

Scouts

Fridays from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

Contact Hilary Moy, Group Scout Leader 07961 826814

West Wickham Market [Stalls & Refreshments]

Fridays from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm 07712 492854

Wednesday Market

From 9.00 am to 2.00 pm 07492 864597

Debbie's Dance

Thursdays from 9.00 am to 10.00 am .. debbiesdanceschool@yahoo.com

Sugar Craft & Cake Decorating

Thursdays at 8.00 pm (Six meetings a year)

Articles and items for the magazine are always welcome.

We are currently looking for a new editor, but if you have any contributions for the next bi-monthly magazine [editions for Dec/Jan '26, Feb/Mar '27 etc], please contact Nicky Nightingale nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk by the second Sunday of the month