

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

10th September 2023: 14th Sunday after Trinity/Creation Sunday

Hazel writes:

This week our theme is Creation Sunday: something that's particularly relevant to our **congregations**, as St Francis is the patron saint of the environment. This follows on well from the opening of the community garden last week. On Friday our Messy Church congregation also followed this theme, showing that we are one church united in faith.

This week we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church, Morning Praise at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and Morning Worship at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 17th September**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

We meet to **pray for growth of the Church** on Tuesday mornings between 10-11am at 130, The Avenue. Please contact Jean Pogose for more information: (dennis.pogose@ntlworld.com or 8289-5996).

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 in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

The **bereavement support group** meets this week on Wednesday 13th September at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room, Emmanuel Church, The Grove. This is open to anyone who would like to talk about bereavement with others.

There will be a **Coffee Morning** with a cake stall and a 'prize every time' table at 2 Long Meadow Close on Saturday 16th September from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and all profits made will be split between Macmillan and Bromley Welcare. All donations of cakes or produce would be much appreciated. Thank you.

The **7th West Wickham Scout Group** are holding a Race Night at their AGM on Saturday 16th September, with doors opening at 7pm and the first race starting at 7.30pm. We don't need to form a team, but it would be good to join together and share drinks and nibbles at a fun night out. Before each race there will be a commentary about the horses racing and you then choose a horse and how much you are willing to risk (minimum bet £1). We watch the race and if your horse wins, you win some money. Bring your own drinks and nibbles to consume at the table. Please bring along cash (preferably £1 coins). If you would like to join in, please let Hazel know, so we can reserve a place for you.

The **funeral** of Brian Griffiths will take place on Monday 18th September at 1pm in St. Francis' Church with refreshments afterwards from 3.15pm at The New Inn in Hayes.

Our next **Community Lunch at St Francis'** for senior citizens and those living on their own will take place on Sunday 24th September in St Francis Church Hall from 12.30pm-2.30pm. If you would like to come and join others, tickets are on sale from Barbara Goodchild on 0208 777 8782 and are £7.00 in advance.

The **Harvest Supper** is on Saturday 30th September at 7.00 p.m. in St. Mary's Hall taking the form of a bring-and-share. There is a list in both churches for you to sign up if you intend to come along and to advise what you will be bringing. Tickets £5 to cover the cost of desserts and tea and coffee.

The diocesan **Prayer and Spirituality Day** is on Saturday 14 October, 10am—1.15pm at Southwark Cathedral, £5.00, with the theme of Rest and culminating in a service of anointing for healing and wholeness. There will be the opportunity to reflect on rest for the whole person, and sleep. There will also be silence, meditation, musical nocturnes, and prayers for peace. The event will take place underneath a vast, suspended artwork — The Museum of the Moon, by Luke Jerram. Entry is by ticket, and you need to book online in advance here: <https://Rest-Southwark-2023.eventbrite.co.uk>. Or let Hazel know that you would like to attend and give her your ticket money.

Croydon Area Racial Justice Group's **Black History Month celebrations** are on Saturday 28th October at St Matthew's Church, Redhill (timing to be confirmed). The theme will be 75-year Windrush celebration and its legacy.

St. Mary's Christmas Market is on Saturday 25th November. If you are interested and can help in any way at all please contact Gifty giftynorley@gmail.com. If you are new to the Market and can spare an hour or so to man a stall, please contact Gifty. We are also

looking for a face painter if you know anyone who could help. Now is the time to start collecting large jars with lids for the pickled onions. Please leave in St. Mary's vestibule. Any offers of homemade jams, marmalade, pickles etc. will be gratefully received. Thank you.

We will continue to collect items for the **Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme** for those starting out in a new home with nothing. Starter packs for families in need include cutlery, crockery, duvet covers (not duvets), pillow slips, tea towels, saucepans, frying pans, bath towel, toothbrushes, etc. Please continue to bring any excess items that you have in cupboards at home.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, cold meat tins, desserts (e.g. sponge pudding, jelly, Angel Delight), coffee, ladies' deodorant and toothpaste. They have plenty of pasta, cereal 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 Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Holy God, earth and air and water are your creation, and every living thing belongs to you: have mercy on us as climate change confronts us. Give us the will and the courage to simplify the way we live, to reduce the energy we use, to share the resources you provide, and to bear the cost of change.

First Reading:

Genesis 2:8-10, 15

⁸ The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

⁹ The LORD God filled the garden with all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit trees. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of these gave life—the other gave the wisdom to know the difference between right and wrong.

¹⁰ From Eden a river flowed out to water the garden, then it divided into four rivers.

¹⁵ The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth much more than birds?

²⁷ Can worry make you live longer? ²⁸ Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. ²⁹ But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. ³⁰ God gives such beauty to everything that

grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. God will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith?

³¹ Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" ³² Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows you need all of these. ³³ But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

Post Communion Prayer

Creator God, you give seed for us to sow, and bread for us to eat; make us thankful for what we have received, and generous in supplying the needs of others, so all the world may give you thanks and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

The period from start of Sept to 4th Oct (the feast day for St Francis) is Creation-tide. In the same way as we focus on stories about the weeks after Easter in Easter-tide and about those who have died in the month of November (when we have our Memorial Service and Remembrance Sunday), so in this period (which we extend to include Harvest), the church focusses on creation-related themes.

It's an important topic for churches because of the command that God has given us to take care and look after creation – it's there at the end of v15 of the reading from Genesis when the Garden of Eden is being described. Because of this importance, churches of all denominations who take this seriously have adopted a framework that helps us to think about how well we are caring for creation. This is called Eco-Church. This has five different parts to it including a call to look at our own individual lifestyles. This means thinking about what we in our congregations have done to reduce our negative impacts on the environment.

I wonder if you've ever wondered just how much of an impact your lifestyle has on the environment. One of the ways in which this impact is measured is something known as your carbon footprint. Do you know what your carbon footprint is? If not, can I suggest that you try out the World Wildlife Fund Footprint Calculator. This can be found at <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>. It's a series of questions that asks about things like the extent to which your energy is supplied from renewable sources, whether you buy food seasonally from UK sources, how much you use air travel and whether you buy second hand goods, or always go for new consumption. Whilst it's probably not terribly accurate and the questions could probably be improved, it gives a framework of things to think about.

The UK average carbon footprint per person is 9.3 tonnes. I did my own calculation and found that I was above that at 10.1 tonnes, but I was pleased that this was below the average for the BR4 postcode, which is a whopping 12.6 tonnes. I thought it might be good to calculate an average for the united benefice and then we could see if we could reduce this over the course of the coming year. It's not really about the figures, but the things it makes you think about when answering the questions and the conversations that you might have with others about how you might reduce your footprint. If you do the calculation, do let me know what your result is (anonymously if you prefer) and I'll calculate our average. If you haven't got a computer or access to the internet and you'd like to try this out, let me know and we can arrange a time to meet to do it together.

Reducing our carbon footprint is clearly the direction of travel that everyone needs to be taking and would meet that instruction from God to take care and look after creation. One example of how we have all improved our carbon footprint recently is in our consumption of single-use plastic bags. You may remember that a charge for these was introduced in 2015. At this time around 140 bags per person were given to customers by major supermarkets in England. Two years later, the number of bags used by each person had reduced to just 24 – that’s an 83% reduction. How many do you think were used on average in 2019/20? Think about it – answer at the end. The point is that clearly the trend is downwards. So, does something similarly radical need to be done about other pollutants, to speed up the changes that are necessary if we are going to reverse the decline experienced in our natural environment.

I think that there is no question about the fact that humans have not carried out their task of looking after creation very well. In preparing for this talk and looking at our reading from the second chapter of Genesis, I was struck how the words used there in v15 are very different to those used in the first chapter of Genesis, where in v28 God said to humans: “... fill the earth and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.”. That might not sound like the words you’ve been used to as I’ve used the CEV to match the readings that we are using today. Don’t take my word for it – check it out in your own bible at home – in chapter one we are told to bring the earth under control and rule over the fish, birds and animals, and in chapter 2 we’re told to take care and look after them. I think you can clearly get a sense of the difference. And yet, so often when we think of creation, we turn to the first chapter of Genesis. That’s the good news. That’s when God gives us something good each day. In chapter 2 we’re introduced to the Garden of Eden and the first turning away from God’s ways when Adam and Eve eat the fruit of those trees that gave life and wisdom to know the difference between right and wrong. That’s the story that reminds us of our own sinfulness and how we haven’t taken care of and looked after creation, so we avoid that version of the creation story. I wonder if you even knew that there are two versions of the creation story.

However, there is a truth in the fact that we are more familiar with chapter 1 than with chapter 2. We prefer to be reminded of God’s goodness, rather than our own disobedience. And so, we’ve continued to bring the earth under control and rule over the fish, birds and animals. The world has moved from primarily an agricultural economy to a manufacturing and service economy, consuming far greater resources, even within agriculture. There are built up farms and factories in food production, and

the machinery used in agriculture takes every bit of goodness from the crops, leaving nothing to return to the ground, as well as releasing huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

Now you may be asking “But what can I do about all that? I can’t change the ways of big agricultural businesses”. I agree that we can’t change those ways, but we can place some influence on them by reducing what we buy, so that we produce less waste, reusing what we have (just as we have with the plastic bags) and recycling the rest wherever possible. One of the consequences of reduce, re-use and recycle is that you can end up worrying much less about your life, just as Jesus asks us to in our gospel reading. Since obtaining most of my fruit and veg through a company called Oddbox, who deliver a box of produce each week, I don’t need to think about what I’m going to buy – they deliver what farmers have had difficulty in selling, either because there’s too much at this particular time, or because the produce is a funny shape, or too small (or sometimes too big). And clothes shopping in charity shops made finding a new outfit for a wedding last year so much easier – I just bought the first thing that I saw that I liked and that fitted me (and it was a fraction of the price of a brand new one).

Yes, our lifestyles - what we do at home and in the rest of our lives should be influenced by our faith. I wonder how you measure up.

I’d like to finish with a quote from an environmental lawyer, Gus Speth. He said:

“I used to think that the top environmental issues were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that in 30 years scientists could solve these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to address those we need spiritual and cultural transformation, and scientists don’t know how to do this.”

This is why care for creation is an important topic for churches and I make no apology for scheduling a special service at least once every year on it. Let’s put ourselves in a leadership position for reducing our own carbon footprints, so that we can influence big businesses. If everyone was to do this there would be a growing reason for change that could not be ignored.

So, how many new single-use plastic bags do you use each year? The average in 2020 was four – that’s a 97% reduction since 2015. Coronavirus might have had an additional impact on this, but it is interesting just how much is possible. Anything is possible with God. I wonder what we could do about carbon footprints if we followed

God's guidance on this – a 97% reduction would be just 0.3 tonnes per person on average. That's getting pretty close to zero.

Prayer Pointers

Ideas for prayers with a creation theme:

For the Church to be a beacon of hope throughout the world, reminding us of our responsibility to care for and protect God's precious gift of creation.

Through God's grace may we hear the cry of the damage done to our world, our common home, and may we be moved to protect it for future generations to enjoy, at national, local and individual levels.

For those people who are already facing droughts, floods and storms: that God may grant them strength and hope for the future as they work to adapt to the changing climate.

May God open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

May God grant world leaders wisdom to make just decisions which respect the earth and all that lives in it, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable.

We pray for our local community: that through God's grace we may be good neighbours to each other, remembering especially those suffering at this time: Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, and Tina Hamilton.

For those who have recently lost loved ones, remembering especially the family of Brian Griffiths. We ask that Rowena, Rhys and Gareth might find a light at this dark time in the knowledge of your presence with them.