

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

23rd July 2023: 7th Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

At the women's event on Tuesday, it was interesting to hear how Anne Horner-Tree got involved in the Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme for single people and families starting out in a new home with nothing. This may be women and families leaving a women's refuge, or newly released prisoners, or those who have had previous belongings removed from a rented property while they were in hospital for an extended period. Starter packs are provided from Bromley Parish Church to those who know about a family in need – the council, a food bank, schools, a women's refuge or Citizen's Advice. Demand for these starter-packs has gone up recently and last year Anne gave out 200. We donated a carload of 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, and we will get these to Anne, so that this work of **compassion** can continue.

This week we have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church, at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 30th July**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. **Liz and Mike Jeggo**, the OMF missionary workers in Japan, whom St Francis support, will be coming with their family to the 10.45 service at St Francis on July 30th, when Mike will be the preacher. It would be good to have as many people there as possible to support and encourage them.

There is also a **baptism service** at 1pm in St Francis' Church, when Elysia Lawrence will be baptised. All are welcome.

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.

Our **Volunteer Thankyou Event** is on Saturday 5 August between 10.30-11.30am at St Francis of Assisi Church. If you have been involved in any initiatives at our churches, including helping at our Sunday morning services in any way, please do come along to have some social time with others. As well as our church activities, we also opened the Warm Space on a Wednesday, Social Befrienders have continued to offer a listening ear over the telephone, and we arranged and delivered Christmas Bromley Foodbank hampers in the past year. Volunteers for these initiatives have included people from outside our church congregations and they have also been invited to this event.

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'.

The sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been provided by Primrose Smith for Laurence's birthday and has been arranged by Merri.

The pedestal and porch displays at St. Francis' on 23rd July have been requested by Lesley East and Margaret Thorne.

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

Generous God,
you give us gifts and
make them grow:
though our faith is small
as mustard seed, make
it grow to your glory
and the flourishing of
your kingdom; through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Romans 8: 12-25

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry,

‘Abba! Father!’ ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Gospel Reading:

Matt 13:24-30, 36-43

²⁴ He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" ²⁸ He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" ²⁹ But he replied, "No; for in gathering the

weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' ³⁷ He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are

collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

REFLECTION – Carol Coslett

The Earth is one Big Field of Seeds

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; but not only the creation but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit, groan inwardly... for we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”

(Romans 8:22)

How many of you enjoy weeding? It is all very well for Monty on Gardeners' World to potter around his garden suggesting our jobs for the weekend, but he has a team of gardeners working for him keeping it weed free ready for the fun bits to show us in planting, potting and planning! Since moving to West Wickham I have had to tackle the garden and do some hard digging to root out the ground elder that seemed to have spread everywhere, I never really knew about this particular weed before, but it is prolific and very few weed killers work on it. So digging is the answer, and patient persistence if I am to have any hope of planting new seeds, bulbs, or perennial shrubs. In Derbyshire I was blessed with a well-planned garden, full of flowering shrubs all well established and I really only had to maintain it and weed a few buttercups to keep it under control and every season a new plant would give colour to the outlook. A similar garden is Sissinghurst where I visited with my daughter, a couple of weeks ago. It is an example of a well-planned garden, and every bed so full there is no room for the weeds to grow, but there are still parts left for wilding and natural growth, so any weeds can grow there.

My grandpa loved his garden but was a great one for digging and there is a saying that, *“If you want to find out which are weeds, you dig out everything and wait: the weeds are the ones that will grow back.”*

So, it is no good planting seeds unless you are sure the soil is good and is free from any risk of weeds growing up amongst them, certainly not the ground elder.

Yet for farmers it is a natural hazard, because, unless they use a lot of chemicals when they are planting out the wheat and barley, there will inevitably be the wheat tares that grow in between and can ruin a whole field for harvest. My morning walks during Lockdown and after used to take me up and around a field of wheat and barley. Sometimes you could tell what was the good crop and sometimes, despite the farmers efforts, there were the tares (or look alike wheat/ barley stems, Darnels) and poppies growing quite happily together. I presume the farmer would wait to harvest it all together, as there was no evidence that work was being done during the growing

season. Yet with good soil, sun and rain more good crops would be harvested than the rogue ones. With patience and love it would yield abundantly and the good out way the bad.

Some farmers though are taking seriously 'care' for the environment and are "wild-farming" their fields, chemical free and using a system called "pasture cropping" which restores the natural soil and actually helps prevent the tares, and other weeds growing up in between the crops. And we ourselves in our meagre plots are being encouraged to re-wild, leave the grass to grow a bit more, give a chance for the natural growth to flourish.

The parable in our gospel reading from Matthew today gives us advice that we should let the weeds and the wheat grow together and only at harvest time separate them, because, by rooting out the weeds, the good crop is also lost before it has matured. The story is being told to listeners who knew all about the land and the problems of sowing and reaping. Jesus uses the stories to teach them and us something about the Kingdom of God and how we can work for good in the world where there is also the evidence of things going wrong and weeds growing up to choke the new growth.

This parable though is not just referring to one area, one field, or community/ church but in this context the field represents the world, our planet earth, a **Big Field full of Seeds**. And within our world there are many challenges, differences, in fact "**The whole creation has been groaning in labour pains**" as the reading from Romans refers to, and our planet is literally "**on fire**".

Our news stories tell us of the heat in Europe, the challenge we have to save our environment from climate change, the ongoing wars and disputes across the world, or people fleeing and seeking asylum. We can all play our part to change the way we live, to open our hearts and minds for those in need, and the effects our lifestyles might have on people across the world. For instance, we are being encouraged to reduce our use of Fossil fuels, turn our energy use down. At the latest diocesan synod it was agreed that Southwark would be disinvesting in fossil fuels. Our diocese aims to achieve net-zero by 2035 and is striving to encourage all churches to become an Eco - Church. The interconnectedness to lifestyles for protecting the planet is crucial, and our care for the planet can't come sooner if we are to preserve our created world for future generations.

I wonder if you have seen the World on Tour? Gaia? It was in Southwark in 2022, I believe and this year it is in different parts of the UK and Europe from Durham to Truro,

Exeter, Lichfield, Chelmsford and also Germany, and Italy. It came to Derby this time last year when I visited it.

If you haven't seen it, Gaia (in Greek mythology is a personification of the Earth) is a huge touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram. Measuring seven metres in diameter and created from 120 dots per inch detailed NASA imagery of the Earth's surface the artwork provides the opportunity to see our planet, floating in three dimensions.

The installation aims to create a sense of the "Overview Effect", which many astronauts might have seen. Looking at it when it is hung in a cathedral or large building it circles around you, accompanied by a sound composition by BAFTA winning Composer Dan Jones. You can literally stand underneath the earth. It can provoke a feeling of awe for the planet, a profound understanding of our wonderful, created planet and a renewed sense of responsibility for taking care of the environment.

The artwork also acts as a mirror to major events in society and can give the viewer a new perspective of our place on the planet; a sense that societies of the planet are all connected and that we have a responsibility toward one another. It is quite amazing to stand under the earth, walk around the earth, see the large expanse of water, and land mass, the southern hemisphere. To view the northern hemisphere, a trip is needed to a higher gallery, and then you look down upon the earth as if in space itself.

It provides an opportunity to understand and reflect on all life, with a renewed sense of responsibility for taking care of the environment. As the Earth revolves it is easy to reflect that we are such a small part in this giant world field of seeds that has been planted. If you do get the opportunity to experience Gaia, I do encourage you to try to see it.

No time is more critical than now for us to engage in protecting our planet if it is to survive successfully for future generations. We all have to become more aware of the implications of our way of life has and the impact on how our ecosystems survive and develop. **THE EARTH IS ONE BIG FIELD OF SEEDS**

As a Church and Community we are called to BE THE ONES who can sow the seeds for growth and encourage that new growth through love, compassion and care. Inevitably what we sow will not always produce good fruit, or be successful, and there could well be a mix that comes forth. But we should let it continue and be surprised by the work of the spirit within people's hearts.

Our Planet Earth is diverse and full of complications and challenges, and that is true of our lives too. But that doesn't mean that we should not continue to sow the seeds, to spread the good news that The Kingdom of God is for all. That faith in a God who loves us can transform lives, build community, and grow the church.

But with our agricultural or gardening hats on we do have to have patience, let the wheat and the tares grow together to allow for that bit of re-wilding, let nature take its course. We may often feel we have failed but we need to have patience and to trust in God. We need to give the seed time to germinate, to flourish. So, in our conversations we never know what fruit it will bear... something that we say to someone years before may have influenced them for the rest of their lives, but we may never know, we may not see the growth but that doesn't mean we should not sow! Dig by all means, prepare the ground then sow, and have faith that the earth will produce (even with a few weeds amongst it).

We do not create the kingdom. We can prepare the ground for its growth in us and in others, but God gives the increase. Growth is often imperceptible, sometimes slow, sometimes it takes much patience. But if we sow, we should trust that God is at work. There will be a harvest—that is if you have sown the seeds!

There is deep work to do, new seeds to plant, to tend and treasure. And that's not just our land, but also our hearts and minds.

I believe it starts with our very selves, all baptised members and how we view our created world, respect for our environment and a willingness to work through change. We are Gardeners for Christ's Church, and we may feel we are groaning inside or despair at the amount of weeds that continue to grow in the garden, but **“we hope for what we do not see... we wait for it with patience”** in Faith, Hope and Love. We can celebrate that our **Earth is one Big Field of Seeds** just waiting for the harvest of all times and The Kingdom of God - Good News for all.

Prayer Pointers

For the world's people who go hungry through failure of crops, through bad land management or climate change, flood and drought, heat and cold, through the greed of others, through lack of money and resources. Give thanks for those who offer training and support for others in food and farming, for those who run soup kitchens and food banks.

For those who hunger for more than food, for those who are hungry for love, care, support and shelter. For those who are hungry for justice and fairness. Dignity and worth.

For those who are hungry for peace and stability, security and safety, especially those who fear the enemy who walks with them, who lives among them, who tries to influence and change them.

For those who have struggled and still struggle with excessive heat across Europe and America. May those with cool spaces offer a welcome and support. May those without shelter be offered a roof, a haven, a hope of comfort and safety.

For those adversely affected by ongoing strikes to transport and health services. Those who can't travel to places they need to get to. For those who can't get the care they need, whose illnesses get worse, whose pain increases and whose frailty becomes harder to recover from.

For young people being brought up in a digital age where good and bad, truth and falsehood, right and wrong seem hard to navigate with so much on-line influence. For those who see the world as a frightening uncertain place and wonder how they will step out and navigate it themselves.

For those we know and love who are struggling with difficult circumstances in their lives, through financial pressures, illness or age, family strife or rifts. In our congregations pray for these by name – Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Brian Griffiths and Primrose Smith – and those known to God alone.

May we tread the world carefully and seek what is right and good and truthful. We pray that we may be the scatterer of good deeds and words, kind thoughts and love in action. We pray that we may be the best followers of Jesus that we can be, that we may seek and find the Kingdom of God.