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Dear all,

Briefing 3: Monday 23rd March, 2020.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

Despite the upbeat nature of some of the recent press conferences, there’s not a lot of hope around right now. As I write, 4 Dioceses in the Church of England have decided to close all their churches for even private prayer, and the government is considering tighter measures to enforce social distancing. But our hope, true Biblical HOPE, is not in governments nor scientists nor ourselves- but in God.

This verse fits in with the BIG prayers we’ve been looking at in our Lent groups, and what a time to pray it! Let’s pray that God would fill us with his hope so that we are not bowed down by fear or anxiety, so that our hope may overflow to our family and friends who, right now, have no knowledge of this hope. That will be my prayer for us in the coming weeks. Do pray it with me.

What’s coming up next...

So you don’t get overwhelmed, my aim is to produce these **briefings 3 times a week**: Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays, supplementing them with very **short videos each Tuesday and Thursday** via our YouTube page which you can access here. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzRGAaIRTsJuKFRBvkLjAtQ/> If you click the SUBSCRIBE button, you’ll get an email notifying you every time a new video gets uploaded. Don’t forget to make some comments in the comments underneath and to click the LIKE button. It all helps to move the site up the search engines and helps others to find it. Do keep an eye out for these materials, and do pass them on to family and friends who might find them useful.

This week I’ll also be working on a **family-friendly worship time** with all-age songs, a short talk and some ideas of activities for children to do. Why not make some time to watch it together with your children? It would be fabulous to see some photos of these on Facebook when they’re done. I hope that will come out on Wednesday- so look out for the link in the next update and on You Tube.

Sunday gatherings have now moved on line.

With the ban on all gatherings now in place, we held our first on-line service on Sunday and already the service has had over 140 views. If you haven’t watched yet, do give it a try. I’d love to know your thoughts. We’ll try to improve the sound quality next week, and put the camera higher up, but my plan is for the format to remain the same, at least for the next few weeks. For those of you not familiar with YouTube- the talk will also be available as an audio file on the sermons page on the St Nicholas Church website.

Caring for one another: 4 Up/4 Down.

As I’ve mentioned before, it’s very important that we, as a church family, show our love and care for one another, and that means we all have a role to play. So please can I encourage you to look on your church family list at those who are four places above you, and four places below you on the list, and make it your aim to remember those people particularly in your prayers and to call each one once a week. Ask if there

are things that you can do to help, and if you are unable to help yourself, do get in touch with me. There's a new list coming out soon- so the names might change a little.

Practical help for those in need

We cannot solve every problem, but we can do what we can do, both individually, and as a church. So if you hear of neighbours in need, perhaps with food shopping or something similar, and you are unable to help them, please do let me know. We also have a pastoral fund which, although it isn't very large, is there to help ease financial problems. If you, or someone you know, has an acute financial need, please do let me know. There may be a way that we can help, at least a little. I am also being made aware of a number of other organisations across the town that are offering support at this time, and so I might be able to point people to them as well.

Prayer

For the time being at least, Graveley Church remains open for quiet prayer Saturdays from 10-11am, and on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30pm-4pm. Do remind yourself of the protocols before you come. They can be found here: <https://saintnicholaschurch.org.uk/covid/graveley-church-open-for-quiet-prayer/>

I'm also aware that our prayer chain hasn't been working well of late. We'll be discussing alternatives at PCC tomorrow night, so that we can be ready to respond in prayer quickly at times of acute need. In the meantime, why not try to end your telephone calls with a little prayer, perhaps even saying the Lord's Prayer together. It might feel a little strange at first, but nothing should be more natural for God's people than to talk to their Heavenly Father together. So be brave, and give it a go.

Something for your soul...

The song for the day is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvNfjLmlvil>

The on-line talk for the day is here: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/radiant-with-hope/>

And if you'd like to read (or listen to) an inspiring book, let me recommend '**Captive in Iran**'- the story of 2 young women imprisoned in Iran's notorious Evin prison for telling others about Jesus. You can buy it here <https://www.10ofthose.com/uk/products/18042/captive-in-iran> but it's also available as an audio book and from many other book sellers.

There will be another update in a couple of days, in the meantime, may God bless you and your families and may the LORD hear our prayers on behalf of our nation and our world.

Grace and peace to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour

Dave