



Rev Dave Brown  
Rector of St Nicholas Stevenage & St Mary Graveley  
2a North Road, Stevenage. Herts. SG1 4AT  
Tel: 01438 213587  
Email: [revdmbrown@gmail.com](mailto:revdmbrown@gmail.com)



Dear all,

#### **Briefing 4: Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.**

*‘From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave me too, do you?” Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”’ John 6:66 – 69*

When difficult times come, there are two common reactions towards God. Some rage and wave their fists at him, angry and frustrated. Others, confident in God’s mercy, and recognising their own weakness, throw themselves on God’s mercy. In this passage, it isn’t difficult times that have caused some to turn back from following Jesus, but difficult words. Jesus has been speaking about his death in terms that his Jewish readers found hard to grasp and understand, and so many gave up. It’s not clear whether Peter and the 12 understood what Jesus meant – they had a habit of misunderstanding him after all. They are certain, that however difficult the words Jesus might be speaking, they are words of eternal life, that he is the Holy One of God, and they will stick with him through thick and thin.

I suspect we all have passages in the Bible that we don’t understand. I also suspect we look at these difficult days and struggle to understand what God might be doing through them. But Peter’s response is still the right one, and there is no one better in whom to place our trust than Jesus. He truly does have the words of eternal life, and he is the Holy One of God.

**News Update:** You will have seen in the news that, along with almost all the shops, pubs and restaurants. churches have now had to close. Weddings have had to be postponed and Graveley church is no longer open for private prayer. But as someone wrote on Twitter: Our buildings may be closed, but the church is very much open for business. We, God’s people, are the church; and we are very much still active! Indeed, although I’m not having any face-to-face meetings, I seem to be busier than I’ve been for a long time! I’d value your prayers for energy and focus- as well as for protection from this virus.

**Next postings:** Later today I’ll be recording and uploading our first **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? Tomorrow, there will be another bite-size Bible uploaded to our YouTube channel which you can access by clicking here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzRGAalRTsJuKFRBvkljAtQ/> If you click the **SUBSCRIBE** button, you’ll get a message notifying you every time a new video gets uploaded. If you like what you see, please remember to **like** it or **share** it on your own social media platforms. Never before has so much Christian content been uploaded to the Internet. Let’s make sure we are passing it on so that others can come to share in the good news of Jesus as well.

**News from St Nicholas PCC:** Yesterday evening St Nicholas Church PCC met via a Zoom video conference. Graveley will get to try out that technology in April, if we’re still not able to meet together in person. Amongst the subjects discussed were safeguarding, and you can see our new policy here:  
<https://saintnicholaschurch.org.uk/safeguarding/>

We also discussed how we, as a church (*and I include Graveley in this*) are responding to this crisis and what we might do better. The regular postings and videos will continue, but in time the style of the Sunday service may evolve a little. We have an awful lot to learn about how to use the technology well.

We also reaffirmed our desire to care for one another well and to reach out in love to those in our communities in 4 different ways:

**1: 4 Up/4 Down:** Please use our Church Family List and aim to call those 4 above you and 4 below you on the list each week. The calls don't need to be long, but any call shows that you care, and that we as a church community are standing together. If you're from Graveley, while we don't have such a list right now, do please call those people you know and ask them if there are things that you can do to help, and if you are unable to help, do get in touch with me.

**2: Offer practical help to your neighbours:** as long as it's safe for you to do so, why not consider filling in one of the forms at the end of this newsletter and dropping it round to some people who live near you. (*There are some for St Nicks and some for St Mary's*) Simply letting your neighbours know your telephone number and that you are available to talk, may be of wonderful comfort to them.

If they need the kind of help that you are unable to provide, please contact Herts Help on 0300 123 4044 or via <https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx>. They are coordinating help to vulnerable people across the county and will make sure your neighbour gets the kind of help they need.

**3: Getting involved in the wider community:** you may have seen the call for 250,000 volunteers to help the NHS with practical tasks like delivering medicine or shopping. Can I encourage you, if you are able and it is safe for you to do so, to put your faith into action, sign up and get involved. The link is here: <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>.

To get involved with helping in our local area, please visit <https://www.thvolunteering.org.uk/> and sign up there. They are coordinating the recruitment of local volunteers that Herts Help (above) then call on.

**4: Praying more:** many of our home groups have their own **WhatsApp** prayer groups, where urgent prayer needs can be shared easily with one another. Why not set something up with your friends? I'd also like to encourage those of you with smart phones to download the **Prayer Mate App**. I use it in my own quiet times to remind me who to pray for and to link in with mission agencies and their prayer requests. It would also offer us a means of sharing prayer requests amongst our own church family. Do download it, and if you'd like to give the church family only 'prayer group' a try, contact Mike and Evelyn Wilton.

### **Something for your soul...**

The song for the day is here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3HH\\_-1Zbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3HH_-1Zbs)

2 short videos: <https://clayton.tv/new/0i0/6452/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSgPVgoYpag>

And if you'd like to read a book all about the issue of suffering, why not try '*Where is God in a Messed Up World?*' You can buy it here <https://www.10ofthose.com/uk/products/14491/where-is-god-in-a>.

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.

Yours in Christ, *Dave*