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Briefing 22: Wednesday 15th July, 2020.

Dear Friends,

Despite one or two teething problems, and our sadness with not being able to shake hands, sit next to each other or sing, the last 2 weeks of gathered church, back in our buildings, have been a huge encouragement. If you've not yet given socially-distanced church a go, and you are physically able to meet and not still needing to shield, then please do come along. The booking form can be accessed through this link: <https://forms.gle/4bAhD6erSRJNmeFH6>, but whatever church you normally attend, you'd be very welcome in either. Graveley has fewer people attending, so if you feel worried by meeting, albeit at a distance, with 50 or so others, then do book in there. We've worked very hard to minimise any risk, and it will do your soul the power of good.

Tonight, of course, St Nicholas will be open from 7:45-9pm for a church prayer gathering. This is for people from across the benefice, so if you are able, do come along and join us as we pray for our churches, our parishes, the wider world and one another. There's no need to book, but we will be taking a note of everyone who comes along.

The response to the financial appeal at St Nicholas has shown us the wonderful way in which God answers prayers, sometimes, as in this case, in ways far beyond our imagination! As I said on Sunday, the total pledged or donated now stands at around £50,000, with gift aid still to be added. What a tremendous response God has brought about in our hearts!

And with this encouragement of one answered prayer, I want to encourage all of you, whether you are planning to come along on Wednesday night or not, to set aside the same time, 7:45pm-9pm, to pray with us. In his wisdom, God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his divine will in the world. Without prayer, and concerted, regular, Biblical prayer, God's kingdom will not grow amongst us, the lost will not be saved, the poor will not hear good news and the weary will not find the true eternal rest that only Jesus can give. So will you pray with us this week? And will you give yourselves to pray, regularly, fervently, alone or with others, until God answers our prayers and showers our parishes with his mighty blessing until our churches are full to overflowing? Every revival, in the UK or abroad, starts with God's people praying. Will we be people of prayer for our town and village, so God might move powerfully amongst us?

The pattern on Wednesday night is below. It's a mix of scripture readings, listening to a song with a focussed time of prayer following. If you are unable to join us, why not pray along with us? We have a Father who longs for us to pray, a saviour who us praying for us and the Holy Spirit in us to help us pray. Let's not waste these glorious gifts and privileges!

PRAYER GATHERING: WEDNESDAY 15TH JULY, 2020

1# We worship God for who He is.

Song: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2tKVqZZiI4>

Reading: Psalm 103

A time of worship in prayer for who God is... his character, power, majesty and might. You might like to think of the names of God and praise him for each one.

2# We praise to God for what he has done.

Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

A time of thankfulness in prayer, thanking God for his many blessing to us in Jesus, and for the many material blessings he has showered upon us.

3# We pray for the ongoing work of mission, discipleship and evangelism.

Song: Facing a task unfinished - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-YxQok6cPA>

Reading: Romans 10:1-15

Spend some time praying for the work of our churches as we develop our new Mission Action Plans for mission from and in our renewed building (St Nicks) and in this strange new world. Pray for our PCCs, both of which are meeting in the next 2 weeks. Pray for the churches in our deanery, our diocese and our bishops, and the UK, that the gospel of Jesus might be proclaimed faithfully and well across this land. Pray too for our mission partners, Jimmy and Katia in Brazil, Rachael and Bernie in Uganda, and Bridgebuilders working in Stevenage. Pray for courage, opportunities, wisdom and the Spirit's anointing. Pray for more workers in the harvest field, especially amongst us. Pray for a greater concern over the lost and a desire to share the gospel.

4# We pray for our country and the nations of the world.

Reading: 1 Timothy 2: 1-6

Spend some time praying for our Queen, her government and all in authority. They need God's wisdom and guidance. Pray for peace amongst the nations of the world, a cure or vaccine for Covid-19, for justice, peace and freedom to preach the gospel in every nation. Remember those in prison for their faith in Christ.

#5 We pray for one another.

Song: Lean Hard - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul5u-mPmCq8>

Reading: Luke 4:4-21 and Matthew 11:28-30

Using the Church Family List or simply calling to mind those in our churches and families, let's pray for one another, and especially for those we know are in need. Use it as a time to pray, as we learnt in the Lent course, that those we pray for might have a greater vision and understanding of God, that their hope and joy would be first and foremost in Jesus, that they might be more aware of the great riches that are theirs in Christ, that would have power to stand firm and live boldly for Jesus whatever their circumstances, and that they might know how wide, and deep and high is the love of God for them.

Over the next few weeks I'll write more about prayer. We have shown ourselves to be a giving church. Let's make sure we are also a praying church.

Do please keep praying for me. I'd value your prayers for the next 2 Sundays as I preach first on the judgment to come (2 Peter 3:1-18) and then on God's amazing grace (Ephesians 2:1-10).

There will be a further brief email update on Friday which will include the service sheets for Sunday, but until then, may the LORD bless you and your families, and stir all our hearts to pray, that His will would be done here amongst us, as it is in Heaven.

Yours in Christ,

Dave