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Briefing 25: Tuesday 11th August, 2020.

Dear friends,

The US election campaigns kick off over the next few days as both parties hold their conventions, announce their Vice-Presidential candidates, and set out their visions for the country over the next 4 years. Will they seek to *Make America Greater Again* or simply *Get America Healthy Again*, only time will tell. There are bound to be many slogans and strap-lines to watch out for, just as there are in our elections. But what matters most is the detail behind the slogan: What will the country they want to (re) build look like? What would a Trump or Biden kingdom be like?

In our reflections on the Lord's Prayer we've arrived at a kingdom-building slogan which we trot out each time we say it together: Your Kingdom Come? What does that mean? What would God's kingdom look like? Is it talking about the day Jesus returns, or the growth of the church now, or both?

Whilst keeping our eyes and minds focused on the fact that one day Jesus will return and usher in his glorious and perfect kingdom, where pain and suffering, sickness and disease, sin and death are no more, (*and it would be good to pray that might be the case for us*) the thrust of the prayer Jesus teaches us to pray is more about the kingdom now. So we are to pray that God's kingdom comes and grows and is established now. Today. In our midst.

But this is not a political kingdom. We are not to pray that the church takes over the ruling of the country – throughout history that has always been a disaster. No, as Jesus said in Luke 17:20-21: "*the kingdom of God is within.*"

God's kingdom grows as individuals bow the knee before King Jesus and pledge their allegiance and obedience to him. And so, one person at a time, families are changed, communities are changed, towns and cities and countries are changed, because under the rule of King Jesus, we fight against sin and selfishness in our own hearts and lives, we practice generosity and hospitality, sharing God's love with others, and we stand up for truth and justice so that the values of God's kingdom are demonstrated in our midst. And those changes start to happen, God's kingdom comes, as the gospel is preached and proclaimed, and sinners are brought to repentance and faith.

So as with many of the parts of the Lord's prayer, it needs to start with us before our prayers move on outwards to friends and family, neighbours and colleagues and acquaintances, and all those thousands and millions of people we have never met. And as our prayers are answered, and people come to faith in Christ, so God's kingdom comes.

How might you pray Your kingdom come? Here is one idea...

Heavenly Father, thank you that one day every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Thank you that you have opened my eyes to see that now, and you've brought me to yourself through the gift of faith.

But I confess, heavenly Father, that there are still areas of my life where you do not reign; places where I'm holding on to power. Forgive me, Father. Help me to surrender every part of my life to you and your perfect, loving rule. And as your kingdom grows in my life, would it be visible to others so they may hear and believe the good news of Jesus.

Heavenly Father, would your kingdom come in my family. Please rule over our relationships, guide our decisions, and lead us to walk in your ways. May your kingdom come in the lives of those I love but who do not yet know you. May they see your goodness, your beauty, your truth and take you as their king, Saviour and Lord.

Heavenly Father, would your kingdom come in our town. We long for the day when there are no more broken homes or broken hearts, where poverty and suffering are vanquished, where hopelessness is gone and replaced by your perfect peace and lasting joy. Heavenly Father, help us to live out lives of generosity and love, that your name would be praised, the hungry fed, the weary find strength and lost sinners find a merciful and loving saviour.

And Heavenly Father, would your kingdom come in our country. Build your church. Raise up evangelists and preachers, and equip your people to be your heralds of good news, that your kingdom would grow in our day.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

OTHER NEWS:

PRAY WITH US TOMORROW- 7:45pm at St Nicholas: Come along in person, or pray at home using the resources on the attached sheet.

LEBANON EXPLOSION: If you'd like to make a donation towards the work supporting those in need, here are 2 ways of doing that. The first gives details of the Barnabas Fund's appeal. The second is a link to the Facebook page of a church in Beirut run by some of our friends, Ivan and Debbie Fawzi. For family reasons, (their parents live in the UK) they were out of the country for the explosion, but the church has posted details about the needs on the ground.

<https://mailchi.mp/barnabasfund/beirut-lebanon-explosion-august-813734?e=d8a66ff27b>

<https://www.facebook.com/ResurrectionChurchBeirut>

CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN (and adults): I'm offering a £10 book voucher to anyone under 14 who can learn the books of the Bible off by heart by the end of August. Parents- encourage your children- and learn with them!

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS: As we announced last week, both churches will be holding their APCMs in September. If you are interested in standing for some of the vacant positions on either PCC- please do get in touch with me and we can chat about what is involved. Nomination forms will be put up in church in the next couple of weeks. Also, if you are not yet on the **Electoral Roll** but have been worshipping with us for more than 6 months or you live in the parish, please do join to show your commitment to the church. Forms will be available shortly too.

FUNERAL OF BERYL HARGREAVES: As you will have already heard, Beryl Hargreaves, a long-time former member of St Nicholas congregation died recently, and her funeral will take place at Harwood Park tomorrow, Wednesday 12th August, at 1pm. Rev Christine Hina will be taking the service. Beryl had a very small family, so if you remember her and would like to attend please let Christine know. Her mobile number is 07383 518790.

RESTARTING CHILDREN'S WORK AT ST NICHOLAS: S Club Minis (nursery to Y1) and S Club (Y1-Y5) will be restarting this weekend, and parents wishing to bring their children along should sign in on the usual form. (see below)

A risk-assessment is being undertaken, based on the latest advice from the DFE and the Church of England, and on top of the existing protocols for attending worship, the following protocols will be put in place:

- *Tables and chairs will be cleaned prior to the start of the sessions.*
- *Children and adults involved will cleanse their hands on entering the rooms.*
- *Efforts will be made to maintain social distancing during the sessions.*
- *Children will be provided with their own resources (pens, scissors etc) and these will be cleaned after the session.*
- *No snacks or drinks will be provided. If your child needs a drink or a snack, please provide one for them.*
- *At the end of the session, all art work or work sheets will be taken away.*
- *Children and adults involved will cleanse their hands before re-entering the church.*

CHURCH SITTERS/WELCOMERS REQUIRED: Further to our Mission Action Plan discussions on St Nicholas PCC, from the week beginning 24th August we want to begin to make the church available for those seeking a place of quiet prayer or for those simply wanting to take a look around the building. We are therefore looking for pairs of volunteers to church sit and welcome visitors on these days and times: **Monday mornings from 10am-12noon. Wednesday afternoons from 2pm-4pm and Friday mornings from 10am-12noon.** If you'd be willing to take a turn at this, however regularly, do please let Steve or Karen know. Thank you

THIS COMING SUNDAY, we will be focusing on the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, thinking about why they are important and what they teach us. The Bible readings for the day will be Acts 2:22-41 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Why not read them before you come along to church, and remember to bring your own Bible with you! The 9:30am service at St Nicholas will be a Service of the Word, the service at St Mary's at 11:30am will be a short service of Holy Communion following the Book of Common Prayer. If you are yet to book in, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/GmSRYZSZrvHmTb3BA> If you're not able to make it, do make sure you join us either live on Facebook or catch up later.

A short update will come out on Friday and there will be more news next week,
Yours in Christ,

Dave

PRAYER GATHERING: WEDNESDAY 12TH AUGUST, 2020

1# We worship God for who He is and what he has done.

Song: Jesus Your Mercy...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpQZREWhgXg&list=PLYdnaVTk3ydE5dtvShIGpYdl0F_F8-eg-&index=7&t=0s

Reading: Psalm 27

A time of worship and thankfulness in prayer for who God is... (his character, power, majesty and might), for his many blessings to us in Jesus, and for the many material blessings he has showered upon us.

2# We pray for the ongoing work of mission, discipleship and evangelism in our church, parish, town and diocese.

Song: Let your kingdom come - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gkLv41Dows>

2 Timothy 1: 3-14

- *Pray for the weekly preaching of God's word that it might be true to the scriptures, clear, Spirit-filled and useful in rebuking, correcting and training us in God's ways and righteousness so we are equipped for every good work.*
- *Pray for our homegroups that they may be and be places of deep fellowship, learning and encouragement.*
- *Pray for the restarting of our kids work and plans for a group for children aged 10-14 to be launched soon.*
- *Pray for our churches as they develop their new MAPs- for our churches to be places of welcome, places of fellowship, learning and discipleship and bases for mission out to our parish and town.*
- *Pray for the other Anglican clergy, esp Rev Karen Mitchell, the newly appointed minister at St Andrew and St George, for our Bishops and Archdeacons. Pray that the gospel of Jesus might be proclaimed faithfully and well.*
- *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.*

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

Reading: Psalm 2

- *Spend some time praying for our Queen, her government and all in authority.*
- *Pray for peace amongst the nations of the world, a cure or vaccine for Covid-19, for justice, and for peace and freedom to preach the gospel in every nation.*
- *Pray for those in prison for their faith in Christ, and those who imprison them.*
- *Pray for those affected by the explosion in Beirut last week, especially the churches seeking to witness to Jesus.*

#4 We pray for one another.

Reading: Psalm 146

Song: He will hold me fast: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP0dtwXWQ_M

Our God sees and cares, so we pray for the sick, the suffering, the lonely and the lost. The poor, unemployed, the grieving and the fearful. We pray for the old and the young, and all those in between...

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 they 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.