



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



Briefing 46: Wednesday 13th January, 2021.

Dear friends,

As the numbers of Covid cases rise around the country, it was not surprising to see fewer people in church on Sunday. If you don't feel comfortable coming along at the moment, please do make the effort to watch online. It won't be the same, but you will have the added pleasure of being able to sing at full volume to your heart's content! We look forward to the day when we can all be together again.

This coming weekend we have a visiting preacher in both our churches. The Rev Johnny Jukes, the president of Oak Hill Theological College, where both Dan and I trained, will be coming to preach. If you want to find out more about Oak Hill, do take a look at their website from this link: [Home - Oak Hill College](#)

Apart from appearing at St Nicholas on Sunday to lead the service, Judy and I will be taking a break over the next 9 days. We were planning a few days away together; the pandemic has put paid to those plans. Instead, I shall be redecorating my study, with some walks across the country, cycle rides and movie nights thrown in. We both value your prayers for God's refreshment of us over these days.

As you'll see from the notices on the opposite page, other plans have had to be amended, but there are still opportunities for prayer, evangelism and discipleship. Do read the notes and get involved.

New City Catechism Question 2: What is God?

When we discussed this question at our home group before Christmas, a number of people found that question itself rather strange. Surely it should be 'Who is God?' not 'what is God?' As Christians we know God as Father, and know ourselves to be his beloved children. What's more, as we will think in question 3, God is not a solitary person, but a tri-unity, a unity of 3 persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that we call the Trinity. Sadly, for many people, God remains little more than a distant power or unknowable deity. So this question takes us back to basics before opening up the wonderful truths of the God who reveals himself through the Scriptures, and of course in the person of the Lord Jesus. So what is answer? **What is God?**

God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything.

***He is eternal, infinite, and unchanging in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice and truth.
All things happen through him and by his will.***

Firstly, God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He brought the world into being, as he brought us into being. And by his will we continue to live. Every day is a gift from God.

But as we read the Scriptures we find so much more. We discover that God is eternal, that he never had a beginning. That he is infinite, utterly unlimited in every way. And that he does not change. I find the unchangeable nature of God so comforting. We live in a world which changes so quickly, not just technologically, but in terms of the way society operates, how it views right and wrong. Everything seems to be changing these days, but God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

The full answer of the catechism unpacks that a little. It says that God is eternal, infinite and unchangeable in his power, perfection, goodness, glory, wisdom, justice and truth. Think on those things for a moment. God's power is unlimited and has not changed since he created the world or brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt or raised Jesus from the dead. What an encouragement to pray!

Likewise his goodness, perfection and glory know no limits, and have not diminished over time. So God is just as worthy of our praise, adoration and obedience as he has always been. And throughout all eternity, he will continue to be worthy of our worship.

And in a world which seems to be challenging God's word more and more, how wonderful to know that his wisdom, justice and truth are likewise eternal and unchangeable. Our limited human minds may never fully grasp everything

he has revealed of himself in the Scriptures, although that's no excuse not to try, but what he has revealed does not change. The truth of the Scriptures will continue to challenge each society, as it has always done, but we can have great confidence that what we read of God in the Scriptures is the truth, and what God demands of those who follow him, continues to be his standards throughout all generations.

And because God is perfect in every way, because his power is ultimate and undiminished, because this is his world which he created and sustains, nothing happens here that falls outside his perfect will. We touched on the sovereignty of God a little on Sunday. I know it is a huge thing to get our heads around. Yet as I said on Sunday, when our lives seem to be falling apart, when our plans lie in tatters around our feet, when suffering comes – as it has come to many of us in these last months, how wonderful to know that God is still in control and that he is steering history according to his will.

We serve a glorious, eternal, infinite, unchanging God, whose purposes always come to pass and who loves us, his children, with undying affection. May this year be a year we get to know him better than ever before, for in his presence....

Yours in Christ,

Dave

IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

COME AND PRAY TOGETHER! Tonight (13th) is our next **Church Prayer Gathering**- to be held on Zoom from 7:45pm to 9pm. Contact churchwardens@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk for a link. Our next early morning prayer meeting will be on Tuesday 19th January at 7am.

CHURCH WEEKEND AT HOME - CANCELLED: unsurprisingly, the church weekend at home scheduled for the end of February has now been cancelled. We'll try again in 2022!

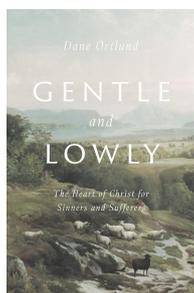
CORNHILL MISSION: In February we were also expecting a team of students from the Cornhill Bible course to join us for 4 days of mission activities in the parish. Those plans have also been cancelled. However, there will be a programme of events online. Please pray for us as we plan and prepare these events. And as the programme is announced, please make every effort to invite your non-Christian friends and family along.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIVATE PRAYER. St Nicholas will be open for private prayer for 3 sessions a week: Tuesdays from 2 – 4pm, Wednesdays 12 noon – 2pm, and Thursdays 10am – 12 noon.

IDENTITY COURSE: Starting Tuesday 2nd February and running for 7 weeks, this free course works through John's gospel to investigate the identity of Jesus and the implications for us when we discover who he is. The course is engaging and entertaining and offers plenty of room for questions and discussions, and whilst it is designed for those investigating Christianity for the first time, it would be great for anyone simply wanting a refresher. **Sadly, this will now need to start online via ZOOM** rather than in church, but we will switch if the restrictions are eased. More details can be found by contacting Dave or by visiting <http://www.identitycourse.com/index.asp>

CHILDREN'S WORK ON SUNDAYS: Under tiers 4 and 5, we are unable to hold separate children's work in church. However, activity packs will be available to tie in with the talk and the question from the New City Catechism, so do bring your children along. We love to see them and they are part of our family.

NEW CITY CATECHISM RESOURCES: There are still a few copies of the adult devotional book (£5) and children's version (£1) available in church if anyone would like them. An app or web version is also available.



LENT COURSE: Order by 25th January. This year our Lent study course will be Dane Ortland's excellent book '**Gentle and Lowly- The Heart of Christ for Sufferers and Sinners**'. Considered by many commentators to be the best Christian book of 2020, the 23 short chapters and booklet of accompanying notes and questions will help us grasp the wonder and depth of the heart of Jesus for us in a new way. The course will be perfect for personal reflection, or homegroup discussions, but I'd encourage you to make the time to talk through each chapter with 1 or 2 others, perhaps over the telephone, over a WhatsApp call or a Zoom link. The book is hardback and very new, but we've found a great source for discounted books making the price just **£10** per set. Please sign up in church or email or call me to place your order.