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**Briefing 52: Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2021.**

Dear friends,

It seems there is light at the end of the tunnel. We've always known that, of course. For Christians there is a gloriously eternal light at the end of the tunnel! But with vast numbers being vaccinated, and the number of cases, deaths and hospital admissions coming down rapidly, it seems there is also light at the end of this Covid tunnel.

I'm sure all of you will have either seen or read the Prime Minister's roadmap to return us to normality, and I'm sure we will all be praying that things continue to improve and that dates don't have to be pushed back. Like Judy and I, I'm also sure you can't wait to see friends and family again, to hug your children and grandchildren again, to travel again and to have people into your home again. But what of church? As things begin to return to normal, can I gently prompt you to consider your own roadmap to returning to church on Sundays.

This isn't a 3-line-whip, a command to come back by a certain date. If and when you return will be your own personal decision, and we will continue to live stream services from St Nicholas for those who can't come for health reasons. It is however a plea that you start thinking seriously about when you will come back, and that you make a plan, and with God's help, to stick to it. If you haven't been to church for almost a year, it may take a good degree of courage to leave your house on a Sunday morning and come back to church, but that is the right thing to do. Meeting together regularly is, actually, a command of God to his people, and a sign of our commitment to and trust in God. And so if we are able to come, we should come.

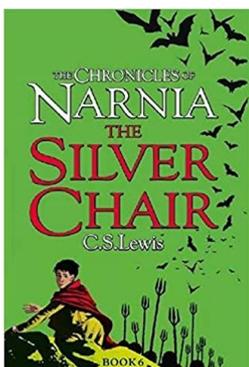
Live streamed services are a poor substitute for being together. Being part of a local church family is a means of God's grace, a place where we can grow and be encouraged ourselves, and encourage and serve one another. So take your time. Think things over carefully. But please do make your own roadmap for returning.

**New City Catechism Question 8: What is the Law of God in the 10 Commandments?**

**You shall have no other gods before me.**  
**You shall not make for yourself an idol.**  
**You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.**  
**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**  
**Honour your father and your mother.**

**You shall not murder.**  
**You shall not commit adultery.**  
**You shall not steal.**  
**You shall not give false testimony.**  
**You shall not covet.**

I'm sure you've been in many churches where the 10 Commandments have been displayed for all to see. And it's not difficult to understand why it is. The 10 Commandments encompass our relationship with God, defining what it means to give him his rightful place in our lives, and calling us to true and full obedience. And when it comes to our relationships with other people, there aren't many crimes which don't fit into one of these categories, particularly when we include Jesus' explanation of these commandments. As summaries of God's commands go, the 10 Commandments do a great job. As long as we remember them and bring them to mind, that is.



Judy and I have been working our way through the Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis. In the Silver Chair (book 6) a young girl called Jill Pole is brought into Narnia and face-to-face with Aslan. He set her off on a vital mission, and to help her on her way, he gave her a series of clues. He told her to remember them, to say them to herself first thing in the morning and last thing at night, so that the signs became so deeply embedded in her mind and heart that she would remember them, however difficult or testing a situation she found herself in.

Of course, that isn't what happens. She started off well, but gets distracted. She thinks she's doing so well that she doesn't need to keep telling herself the clues. And so when she finds herself in a testing situation, she forgets the clues entirely and unsurprisingly, she and her companions end up in dangerous situations.

God's Law, given to us in the 10 Commandments and throughout Scripture, functions for us in the same way. If we are to walk obediently in the path of blessing, if we are to avoid the pitfalls and consequences of sin, then God's law and all his wonderful Word to us, needs to be so embedded in our hearts and minds that it acts as a guide, a safety rail, a light in the darkness, whenever we find ourselves in danger or temptation. And the more of God's Word we know, the better we will be able to walk through life without falling into the traps of the enemy.

So I don't know how well you've been getting on memorising the questions and answers in the catechism, but if you haven't even begun, learning the 10 Commandments would be a good place to start.

Yours in Christ,

*Dave*

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

**GOOD NEWS ON-LINE CORNHILL MISSION:** The mission may be over but the lunchtime interviews are still available to watch on Facebook, and if you visit our YouTube channel, you can watch the talk from the men's breakfast. Do continue to pray that the gospel seeds that were sown would be watered by God's Holy Spirit and bear much fruit.

The Treasure Hunt Trail is still up in St Nicholas Church Yard, so if your children need some exercise after a day in front of their screens, do take them along. The packs are available from the Lych Gate. We'll take the clues down next Sunday.



**COME AND PRAY TOGETHER! NEXT WEEK** we will be meeting on ZOOM to pray for the church, for the world and for one another between 7 and 8am on Tuesday morning. Do contact Dave for a link.

If you want to pray in church, 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. Why not go along and pray there? (*Perhaps that could be part of your road map for coming back to church?*)

**CHILDREN'S WORK ON SUNDAYS:** Under tier 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 a treasured part of our family. We are expecting that our children's work will be able to recommence once schools reopen, but we're waiting for confirmation of that.

**THINKING OF BAPTISM OR CONFIRMATION?** If you are considering having your children baptised, please do get in touch with me. Our next 3-session baptism preparation course will take place after Easter, but it would be good to get dates booked in the diary.

If you are looking to be confirmed in the Church of England, St Nicholas will be hosting a confirmation service on the evening of Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June. Do speak to Dave if you'd like to pursue confirmation or would like more details.