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**Briefing 58: Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2021.**

Dear friends,

At the beginning of May, Judy and I will have been in the benefice for 10 years. How time has flown! With this anniversary in mind, at our PCC meetings in January I suggested that it would be a good opportunity to review where we are as a church, to take stock and to plan our way forward together. So over the summer we will be inviting all those connected with the church to contribute to PCC discussions by answering some short surveys.

However, to encourage you to think and reflect a little before those questionnaires arrive, I want to use the next 4 weekly sheets to give some initial reflections of my own and to raise some questions for you to think about. Each week I'm going to pick areas of our lives together starting with 2 Bs: our buildings and the Bible. Let's start with the buildings.

Both churches are blessed with beautiful locations, and have a dedicated team who care for the buildings and make them look their best. St Nicholas has obviously seen huge changes to its building over the last 10 years. The church is now light, warm and beautifully fitted out, providing us with a larger worship space, more meeting rooms and the ability to do things differently. This has taken not just a huge amount of work, but a large amount of money, a good proportion of which was generously given by church members.

The church building at St Mary's remains much the same as it was 10 years ago. We've managed to have some minor repairs done, but with a small congregation and without the blessing of a substantial legacy, we haven't been able to push ahead with the changes that are so clearly needed. But our buildings are simply tools to be used, somewhere to gather in worship, not places to be worshipped. And however beautiful the location, or up-to-date the facilities, it is the people of God who are the church, not the bricks and mortar. So how might we now use our buildings better to build God's people and to make disciples? And how might we find the funding to give St Marys the makeover it also needs to equip it for ministry in the coming decades?

So there's been substantial change in at least one of our buildings; but what about our understanding of the Bible?

When I arrived in the benefice, I made a clear commitment to preach the Scriptures and in Sunday services over the last 10 years we have worked our way through most of the 4 Gospels, Acts, Romans, some of Paul's letters and the book of Revelation. From the Old Testament we have studied Exodus, Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, half of Daniel, all of Jonah and Habakkuk, and a good chunk of the Psalms.

My sense is that more of you are now reading more of the Bible each week, and so have grown in your understanding of God and his ways. For my part, I can honestly say that I have never knowingly taught anything contrary to the clear teachings of the Scriptures, and that will not change for as long as I have breath. That has included teaching on some difficult and controversial issues, and I give you my word that I will not flinch from preaching God's word faithfully to the best of my ability.

But knowing the truth about God in our heads is one thing. Letting God's Word direct our lives, changing how we think, affecting how we live, is a whole new ballgame. I'm sure there will have been times when my preaching has not been clear enough, or when I haven't applied the passage to daily life well enough to identify the difference that it should make to us. I know I'm far from the perfect pastor, and I will continue to strive to do this work better.

But looking back over the last 10 years or however long you have been in the benefice; what impact has God's Word made on you? How has your understanding of God and his ways changed over this time? And how could the preaching and teaching on Sundays or mid-week be better? And reflecting personally, are you spending more time reading the Bible now than you were, or has your commitment to, or desire for reading the Scriptures waned?

Where are your gaps in understanding? What would you want to hear more about over the coming years? Think about that for your children too, if you have them. How might we teach them the truth about God more effectively?

We meet in our buildings, yet our faith must be rooted firmly in the Bible. May God continue to bless us with beautiful places in which to meet and the rich food of his holy Word.

Yours in Christ,

*Dave*

**Prayer is Vital  
Come + pray**

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

**Friday night at St Nicks from 8pm.** Bring a Bible, and join us to pray for ourselves + for the church.

**Private prayer in church.** **Next week the times have changed** and St Nicholas will be open at these times: Tuesday (13<sup>th</sup>) from 12noon-2pm, Wednesday (14<sup>th</sup>) 2pm-4pm, and Thursday (15<sup>th</sup>) 10am – 12 noon.

**Next Tuesday from 7am-8am.** Our regular early morning prayer meeting. Contact Dave for a link.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> from 7:45pm-9pm** - Church Prayer gathering via Zoom. Contact Dave for a link.

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS:** St Nicholas APCM will be after the morning service on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, St Mary's APCM will be after the morning service on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April. Please put the date in your diary and do your best to come along.

**CHILDREN'S WORK ON SUNDAYS:** We will be restarting our Sunday children's work at St Nicholas on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, and then run it every fortnight until the summer.

**CROSSLINKS-** The mission organisation that look after Rachael and Bernie Muluuta, have released their latest newsletter. It includes an invitation to join a global prayer meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April. All the details are here: <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=439234122776147de73f01c1d&id=f323ed6312&e=e7bde7b975>

**FOR YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT:** The last of the Lent Revival series from Christchurch Sidcup can be found here. The focus this week is the East African revival. [The Lent Lockdown Uplift: Present Inspiration from Revivals Past. Session 5 The East African Revival - YouTube](#)

For a challenging sermon about what it means to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, why not have a listen to Rev Paul Blackham preaching from chapters 3 and 4 of Mark's gospel. [Sunday Sermon 2021-01-24 - YouTube](#)

### **FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND PRAYER.**

As more and more people return to church and restrictions ease, we will be able to start doing more and more things. That necessarily means more and more people will be needed to serve. If you are a Christian, and you've been worshipping regularly with us at St Nicholas or St Marys for a few months, whilst there may be times when illness, infirmity or circumstance prevents you, our expectation is that we should all be serving one another in some way. How are you serving the church family right now? Here are some ways that we need people to serve:

**1: Treasurer for Graveley:** Honesty and integrity, and a confidence with numbers, spreadsheets and online banking required. If you worship at St Nicholas and could do this role, we can co-opt you onto the PCC.

**2: Helpers and teachers for Sunday morning children and youth work:** Be part of the team helping to teach our children and young people the good news of Jesus. Patience, kindness and a DBS check required. Parents of children- would you please consider serving as a helper in a different group to your children? We need people now!

**3: Catering and refreshments coordinator for St Nicholas.** We'll soon be able to open the kitchen again – can you put together a team to offer refreshments after morning services, and be able to coordinate food for other events such as Newcomer's Lunches, Christianity Explored courses, etc. There is no kitchen at **St Marys**, but we love refreshments after morning services. Would someone from the congregation take on that role there?

**4: Evangelism Team.** We want to re-establish our team doing door-to-door visiting, expanding it to include running termly enquiries courses for those investigating the Christian faith. Is God calling you to serve in this way?