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Briefing 74: Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.

Dear Friends,

### **My Favourite Verse:**

If you were to name a favourite verse in the Bible, which one would you choose? And why? What truths does it declare? What hope does it give? How has it strengthened you in your life as a disciple of Jesus?

Over the next few weeks, I hope we're going to hear from a range of different people, each sharing a verse or 2 from the Bible that means a lot to them. I say that **I hope** that's what will happen – because I am hoping that a number of you will come forward and share something with us. If you'd like to write something, simply get in touch with me let me know your verse – in case anyone else has beaten you to it – and then write a short piece of around 200-300 words for the weekly newsletter. We may get to hear from 2 people each week. But to get us started, here's 2 verses that mean a lot to me.

*“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”” Rev 21:3-4*

I was 12 or 13 years old when I first went to a funeral. It was my grandfather's. I held myself together quite well in church, but as his coffin was lowered into the grave I broke down in tears and wept. The finality of death and the separation from loved ones hit home hard that day.

Since then, I've been to countless funerals. All my grandparents have died, along with my mother, various aunts, uncles and a number of good friends, and as a minister I've literally taken hundreds. And although I very rarely cry at funerals- the vicar really does need to hold it together – the pain of death, the distress it causes, the hopelessness, the “if onlys” and “what ifs” those left behind experience, still breaks my heart.

But there is a hope, and it is a glorious hope. It's the hope that sustained me when my mother died from leukaemia, just days before she was to receive a life-saving bone marrow transplant. It's the hope I'm able to speak of at every funeral I take, the promise of a glorious eternal future where tears and death and mourning and crying and pain are no more. Over the last 18 months or so there has been an awful lot of crying and pain, of separations through lockdown, self-isolation and death. But one day there will be no more separation. One day there will be no more death. One day I won't have to take any more funerals.

And right at the centre of this perfect new creation will be Jesus, perfectly glorified, with his nail-pierced hands outstretched to welcome children who will see his glory and share his joy for all eternity. That's the hope that keeps me going when life is tough, when I'm weary, stressed or ill. That's the hope that inspires me to keep trying to share Jesus with those who don't yet know him- for this hope belongs only to those who have accepted Jesus as their own Lord and Saviour. And that's the hope that, by God's grace, I will still be clinging onto when I come towards my own death, whenever that may be.

And the more I think of heaven and what God has prepared for those who love him, the more use I am here on earth. For I'm more willing to risk what I cannot keep, because of that which I cannot lose.

Grace and peace...

*Dave*

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

Come + pray!

**TUESDAY MORNING from 7am-8am on Zoom.**

Log on for all or part of the time: Please Contact Dave for a link.

**Friday night at St Nicks from 8pm-10pm.**

Come + join us and pray for God's Holy Spirit to move in us and across this town that we might know more of God's love and power in our lives and see many brought to Jesus.

**Private Prayer in St Nicholas church THIS WEEK and NEXT WEEK.**

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> 12noon-2pm and Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> 10am – 12 noon.

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> 12noon-2pm and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> 10am – 12 noon.

**CHURCH FAMILY BBQ:** After the postponement last weekend- we've pencilled in the BBQ for this Saturday (31<sup>st</sup> July) from 4:30pm. If you were booked in and cannot come, please let us know. If you couldn't attend before and now you can- please let us know.

If the weather forecast looks poor again, and we will make a call on Friday morning - the next reserved date is Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August.

**WALKING GROUP:** A good number of people have shown an interest in heading out on some walks together, so David Cattell (husband of Karen) will be planning a walk at some point in August, and then initially once a month. Details will be available soon!

**READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS:** This week we continue our series in Genesis, and for those who'd like to read the passages before coming to church on Sundays, the readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> August: Genesis 9:18-29

8<sup>th</sup> August: Genesis 10:1-11:32

15<sup>th</sup> August: 1 Timothy 1:1-11

**A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:** Fundraiser for St Mary's Graveley: August Bank Holiday Monday afternoon— refreshments in Flint Barns next to the church and activities around the church yard. **PLUS** the Maze will be open and there will be various activities around the church and grounds.

**PCC UPDATE:** brief notes on what happened at our last 2 PCC meetings is below. If you want to know more, please have a chat with any of the elected members or churchwardens.

**GRAVELEY PCC** met on 19<sup>th</sup> July and spent a good amount of time discussing Covid protocols and other items. We also took a decision to restart our efforts to revitalise the church building – and work towards the installation of a toilet, a small kitchen, redecorating the church and installing better lighting. Our 1<sup>st</sup> step is to secure the funding for some initial drawings. We also began to consider our new Mission Action Plan, thinking through what defines our church socially, theologically and liturgically; and had a brief discussion about one element of our next sermon series.

**ST NICHOLAS PCC** met on 27<sup>th</sup> July - as well as receiving and discussing various reports, we also spent some time reviewing our Mission Action Plan. We also reflected on how we might encourage corporate prayer within the church, and heard feedback from a subgroup who had worked through the *Living in Love and Faith* materials.

## A reminder of our new COVID Protocols

- ✓ Please continue to use the on-line booking system, as it helps us plan our seating. If you forget to book, the chances are that there will be room- and we will take your details on arrival.
- ✓ The NHS QR code for logging in to a venue will also still be available.
- ✓ Everyone should use the hand sanitiser on arrival.
- ✓ We would prefer face coverings to be worn on entering the church until you reach your seat, and our welcomers will be doing so. If you want to sit and enjoy the service without wearing a face covering, please sit in the front 5 centre aisle rows at St Nicholas or at the front in the north aisle at St Marys. If you sit anywhere else, we would ask you to keep your face covering on during the service.
- ✓ In terms of seating arrangements, we will continue to use alternate or widely-spaced pews, and make sure there is a gap between different households using the same pew to encourage social distancing.

- ✓ We will be encouraging congregational singing, although you do not need to sing if you don't want to. We will also restart loaning out Church Bibles to those who would like one.
- ✓ Communion will continue to be in one kind– with the same method of distribution as now. Although we are looking at alternatives.
- ✓ Those involved in the worship group at St Nicholas and the choir at St Mary's, as well as those leading services and preaching in both churches, will no longer use screens or visors as a matter of course. Instead, they will take a lateral flow test no more than 24 hours before the service, using screens when this has not been done.
- ✓ Refreshments after the service will continue to be enjoyed outside (weather permitting), where we hope everyone will remember to give one another space.

I also want to reinforce some very important steps we can all take:

Please **do not come to church**

- if you have tested positive for Covid,
- if you have any symptoms of Covid and/or are waiting for results from a PCR test,
- or if you should be self-isolating. To do so is to recklessly endanger members of your church family.

Please consider using a lateral flow test 24 hours or so before you come to church, particularly if you want to go '*face covering free*'. These are free and easily available from local chemists and through the post. They are quick and easy to administer and if done correctly, are very accurate in detecting Covid. More details are available from: [Order coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

Finally, if you haven't done so already, please consider getting fully vaccinated. As the evidence has shown, the vaccines provide a highly effective way of keeping yourself safe from serious disease, and of reducing the risk of passing on the virus to others. Vaccines are now available to all adults, and it is also often possible to bring your second dose forward if you are still waiting for that.

Do please continue to pray for me, the church wardens and both PCCs as we seek to navigate these confusing and difficult days and often have to balance a range of factors when making our decisions.