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Briefing 82: Tuesday 21st September, 2021.

Dear Friends,

One down, one to go. Last week I, along with some 250 clergy from St Albans Diocese, attended a 3-day conference in Swanwick. It was great to be able to catch up with friends again and hear some talks by Paula Gooder, who is a lay theologian on the staff at St Paul's Cathedral. The theme was hope, and we were all encouraged as we studied the scriptures together. There were frustrations, and more worrying elements too, but those sadly come with the Church of England territory these days, but overall, it was a worthwhile time.

As you read this I'll be away in Leeds with Mike and Karen at the ReNew Conference, meeting with other evangelical Anglicans for encouragement and training. Such gatherings are a real joy, not just for the friendships and Biblical encouragement we receive, but because of our shared understanding of the gospel, our commitment to the scriptures and desire to see the good news of Jesus taken out across the nation. This is a true gospel partnership.

The need for such true gospel partnerships was highlighted just last week as the Anglican Church in Wales voted to allow clergy to conduct the blessing of same-sex marriages and civil-partnerships. Many of the clergy, including one of my closest friends, are now feeling uncertain about their future within a church which has so blatantly wandered from clear teaching of the scriptures. Do pray for them, and for faithful Anglicans in the Church of England, who may face a similar dilemma in the coming year or so. Right now, elections to General Synod are taking place which will go a long way to deciding the way those votes will go, so do pray that those who stand firm on the truth of scripture might be elected. Our unity and witness as English Anglicans, and as part of the worldwide Anglican Communion depends on it.

On to more immediate and local matters, with our **Harvest Festival** next week we're hoping that everyone will bring either some food donations and/or a financial gift as a token of our thankfulness to God for his blessings to us.

At **St Nicholas** the food will be taken to the FOOD SHED run by Vineyard Church, with financial gifts being given to The Barnabas Fund to support Afghan Christians.

At **St Mary's**, food donated will be passed on to THE HAVEN, Stevenage's homeless shelter, with any financial donations being sent to Rachael and Bernie in Kampala, so they can distribute them to those in dire need.

A reminder to that on Monday 27th September at 12noon, there is a Thanksgiving Service at St Nicholas for the life of John Taylor - an active member at St Nicholas for many years and a former church warden and treasurer. Church family are invited to attend, and if you have a long memory of John serving here, I'd love to have some memories and thoughts from you. Please keep Roma and the family in your prayers, along with several others in the church family who are grieving after the death of loved ones.

Forrest Gump may have said that life was like a box of chocolates, but if that's so, then at times it seems like we're left with the hard toffee or the marzipan. (Substitute your own worst chocolate here.) But no matter what situations we face, Psalm 142 tells us that we can *cry aloud to the LORD and tell him our troubles*. And this is no one-way therapy session. The LORD loves us and knows us, and he also knows the right way ahead so that we avoid the snares that lay hidden along the path, and he promises to lead us safely through.

However you are feeling today; whatever situations have you confused or weighed down, let me encourage you not to carry them on your own but to take them to the LORD in prayer. He will listen to your desperate cry. He will be your redeemer, for he has promised that all things (eventually) work for the good of those who love God. Look to him as your refuge and your portion in the land of the living, and you will find your strength and faith renewed.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

Come +
Pray!

TUESDAY MORNING PRAYER GATHERING: 7:00AM-8AM– ask Dave for a Zoom link.

FRIDAY NIGHT at St Nicks Church from 7pm-9pm.

Come + join us and pray with us for our churches, parishes and God's world.

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

Tuesday 21st from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 22nd from 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 23rd from 10am – 12 noon.

Tuesday 28th from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 29th September 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 30th 10am – 12 noon.

LITTLE LAMBS - Our toddler group for preschool children and their parents, grandparents etc! Fridays in term time from 9am-10:30am in the Parish Room. Do come and bring your friends!

ST NICHOLAS SUNDAY KID'S WORK Whilst we are aiming to run our groups on alternate weeks, due to the availability of leaders, S Club for children in years 2-5 will be running again this coming Sunday (26th). We hope that all groups will also be running the week after!

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED- Starting Thursday 14th October, at 7:45pm. Ideal for those wanting to refresh themselves on the basic truths of the Christian faith, and for those wanting to explore the identity and mission of Jesus for the first time, CExp is a 7-week course which takes participants through Mark's Gospel answering questions about who Jesus is, why did he come, and what does it mean to follow him. **It's free, there's no singing or prayers,** and there's no need to say anything if you just want to listen. But it's a great opportunity to ask questions too! Karen and Philip Walker will be running the course- why not chat with them and go along yourself, or take a friend with you. (See the flyer attached)

GIVING A LIFT TO CHURCH: I'm still searching for someone to offer a single, double-vaxed lady, who lives in Great Ashby, an occasional lift to church. Do speak to Dave if you are able to help.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD: Last year our churches sent almost 100 boxes and St Nicholas was the collection point for hundreds more. This year we're doing it again! Details of how to fill a box yourself or fill one on line can be found here: [Operation Christmas Child \(samaritans-purse.org.uk\)](http://samaritans-purse.org.uk) But we need volunteers to help with receiving boxes at St Nicks from 15th-21st November from 10-4pm each day and with wider collections the week after. Can you help? Contact Stuart Marshall on enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

EVENTS IN THE COMING DAYS

ST NICHOLAS DOOR-TO-DOOR TEAM: The team will be going out this week. Please do pray for them. If you'd like to join the team on their visits- please contact Karen Walker or Steve Bamford.

READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS: The readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

26th Sept: 1 Timothy 6:2b-10

3rd October: 1 Timothy 6:11-21

10th October: 2 Timothy 1: 1-18

EDEN CONSORT RECITAL: Saturday 25th September from 1pm at The Palladian Church, Ayot St Lawrence, AL6 9BZ. Andrew Lewis will be playing two organ pieces and accompanying the Eden Consort (a group of 4 singers) in some of their music. There will be a variety of classical styles and eras.