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Briefing 83: Tuesday 28th September, 2021.

Dear Friends,

Psalm 133 begins with these words: *“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”* That was our experience last week as Mike, Karen and I attended the ReNew conference in Leeds. The sung worship was strong and vibrant, the Bible was taught faithfully, and we were encouraged to continue to hold firmly to *the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.* (Jude v2).

The main Bible talks were focussed on establishing healthy churches that preach the whole gospel, are diverse in their appeal and have growth and pioneering in their DNA. There was plenty to challenge and inspire, especially from the accounts of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20, Ephesians 1 and Revelation 2:1-7) which book-ended the conference. The last talk from David Short, an Australian who, for a good number of years, has pastored an Anglican church in Vancouver, Canada, was especially moving. Having been planted by Paul, the church in Ephesus had grown strong, endured hardship, stood up for truth and had worked so hard. But whilst they were still very active and busy, they had *“lost their first love,”* and were in danger of losing God’s presence as a result.

It’s a very easy trap to fall into. We keep doing the things we have always done, and keep working hard in the church, but gradually our hearts grow steadily colder as our affections for Jesus fades. David challenged us to think through whether we were active in the church out of habit or because of our love for Jesus, and whether our greatest satisfaction and hope and joy truly comes from Christ. Is that true for you, for me? Is that true for us?

If so, the offer that Jesus made the church in Ephesus is there for us as well. For as we repent and turn back to him, the Lord, who is victorious over all, promises to strengthen us and feed us from *“the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”* We were reminded that the word used for tree here, is actually the one used of the cross in Acts and 1 Peter. So it’s an invitation to come to the cross of Christ, to be moved again by God’s love, refreshed by God’s grace and refuelled by the hope of the Gospel.

Do you need refreshing in your love for God today? If so... you know where to go...

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

HARVEST OFFERING: It’s not too late to make a donation to either Rachael and Bernie in Kampala (Graveley) or The Barnabas Fund to support Afghan Christians (St Nicholas). Simply bring your gift along on Sunday in an envelope marked harvest gift and place it in the offering box.



TUESDAY MORNING PRAYER GATHERING: 7:00AM-8:00AM– ask MIKE WILTON 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 28th from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 29th September 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 30th 10am – 12 noon.

Tuesday 5th from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 6th from 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 7th from 10am – 12 noon.

LITTLE LAMBS - Our toddler group for preschool children and their parents, grandparents etc! Fridays in term time from 9 - 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, only S Club Minis (Nursery-Y1) will be running this coming Sunday (3rd). We hope that all groups will 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). For more details see the Christianity Explored website: Christianity Explored

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://Operation Christmas Child (samaritans-purse.org.uk)) But we need volunteers to help with receiving boxes at St Nicks from 15th-21st November from 10am-4pm each day and with wider collections the week after. Can you help? Contact Stuart Marshall on enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

SEEKING ALLAH - FINDING JESUS: Wonderful testimony and a great way to learn more about Islam and how to share the good news of Jesus with Muslims. You can buy it here: [Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus \(Paperback\) - Nabeel Qureshi and Lee Strobel - 10ofThose.com](http://Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus (Paperback) - Nabeel Qureshi and Lee Strobel - 10ofThose.com)

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN WALES. I mentioned last week the sad changes that have happened in the Church in Wales. The Evangelical Fellowship in the Church in Wales issued a statement this week. You can read it here. Please do pray for them. [GB Meeting 6th Sept – Full Response – Evangelical Fellowship of the Church in Wales \(efcw.org.uk\)](http://GB Meeting 6th Sept – Full Response – Evangelical Fellowship of the Church in Wales (efcw.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:

3rd October: 1 Timothy 6:11-21 10th October: 2 Timothy 1: 1-18 17th October: 2 Timothy 2: 1-13

CONFIRMATION SERVICE: Wednesday 6th October at 7:30pm at Holy Trinity, Stevenage. Please do pray for Ronie and Abi as they are confirmed - and go along and support them if you are able.