



Rev Dave Brown
Rector of St Nicholas Stevenage & St Mary Graveley
2a North Road, Stevenage. Herts. SG1 4AT
Tel: 01438 213587
Email: revdmbrown@gmail.com



Briefing 87: Tuesday 26th October, 2021.

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you have noticed just how many people are trying to predict the future right now. Almost every day there are new projections for the number of Covid cases and hospital admissions. Some of them suggest exponential rises, others show a sharp decline. It doesn't exactly fill one with confidence!

At the same time, climatologists are trying to predict the world's future climate and the effects of global warming based on various scenarios. Almost everyone seems to accept that the climate is changing. And no one would argue that we all need to better care for our world or face serious consequences. However, it does seem almost impossible to know with any certainty just how quick any change will occur, as the litany of unfulfilled predictions made in previous decades have shown.

Of course, trying to predict the future is not uncommon. Everyone does it. Businesses do it all the time as they try to anticipate future trends and customer needs. We are doing it in church as we try to anticipate what the Covid situation will be like at Christmas and whether we can hold Carol services with our churches packed to the gunwales or opt for smaller events. And we all do it on a smaller scale, individually or on a family basis as well, don't we, as we attempt to predict the best way to get round the M25, or the best place to go on holiday. How many times have our own attempts fallen flat!

But of course, only God knows the future. Our lives, and indeed the very continued existence of the universes, are utterly in his hands. We may make plans, and try to predict trends and see patterns in the world around us (*something that God has made possible by his ordering of creation*) but as sovereign over his world, God can, and often does, confound our planning. Ultimately, all of history marches to his tune, and works to his purposes, not ours.

Do you find that unsettling? We shouldn't! Instead, trusting in God's goodness, love, patience, kindness and mercy should give us plenty of reasons to live wholeheartedly for him today, whilst actively trusting tomorrow into his care. The world will not end through nuclear holocaust or environmental catastrophe, unless the Lord himself allows it to be so. And since the Bible is clear that Jesus will return to a populated world, I think we have reason to hope.

So, should we make plans for the future? Of course. It is wise and prudent to do so. Not least because if we didn't, no major projects or initiatives would ever be started, and there would never be any food in our cupboards for tomorrow!

But let's hold all our plans lightly- perhaps getting more used to saying the words "God willing" more often when we talk about our plans for the future. And as for predictions of doom and gloom, let's hold them lightly too, and not be led into fear and panic. If we are in Christ, then our future is utterly secure, and *"nothing, neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39) Of that we can be absolutely sure.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

COVID PROCEDURE UPDATES: From next weekend (7th November) we are suspending our booking system for church services for the time being. However, since Covid-19 hasn't gone away, you can still check in via the track and trace app. Please also take a moment to remind yourself of our basic rules for helping one another stay covid free:

- 1: **Do not** come if you are unwell. If you are unsure, please get tested. There are packs of free tests at church.
- 2: **Use** hand sanitiser as you enter and remember to wash your hands regularly.
- 3: Please try to **maintain** social distancing – especially when inside the building.
- 4: If you want to sit mask-free, please sit in the front portion of the church.
- 5: Please consider taking a **lateral flow test** within 24 hours of gathering. They are easy and accurate, and are a great way to ensure that you do not inadvertently spread covid to others in the church family. (All those leading, preaching and singing etc) are taking them, or are still behind screens. Please play your part too.

Come and Pray Together!

We're reshaping the times we gather for prayer, so this Friday will be the last of our Friday evening sessions for a while. Why not come and join us?

From next week, our corporate prayer times will either be on Tuesday mornings from 7am-8am (on-line via Zoom), or on Wednesday nights, when we will meet in church for a time of praise and prayer from 7:45pm to around 9pm. Dates for the rest of 2021 are shown below.

Tuesday mornings 7am-8am: 26/10, 2/11, 9/11, 23/11, 30/11, 7/12

Wednesday evenings 7:45pm-9pm: 17/11, 1/12, 15/12

“Our Father in Heaven... I'm afraid I'm lost for words!”

LEARNING TO PRAY OUT LOUD

Following on from suggestions at a recent PCC meeting, we're also going to be running a short course on prayer, with a focus on helping us grow in confidence with praying out-loud with others. These will be held from 4pm-5pm on Sunday 14th November and Sunday 21st November and between 5pm and 6pm on Sunday 5th December.

If you lack confidence, or have never uttered a word out loud with prayer, then this is for you.

Sessions will be very practical. You'll need a pen and a Bible.

Please let Dave know that you'll be coming.

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

Tuesday 26th from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 27th from 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 28th from 10am - 12noon.

Tuesday 2nd from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 3rd from 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 4th from 10am - 12noon.

LITTLE LAMBS: Our toddler group for preschool children and their parents, grandparents etc, restarts on Friday 5th November and runs on Fridays in term time from 9 - 10:30am in the Parish Room.

- If you have pre-school children- do come and bring your friends!
- If you know of any parents with pre-school children – do invite them along.
- If you could help with refreshments or chatting to parents (perhaps once a month) please talk to Jeannette.
- If none of those apply – please make a commitment to pray for this work

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD: Christmas is approaching and it's almost time to fill those boxes. All the details can be found here, along with a great video showing what happens to the boxes [Operation Christmas Child \(samaritans-purse.org.uk\)](https://www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk) There are plenty of flat-packed boxes available at the back of the church.

More ways to help: **BE A DRIVER...** delivering the boxes to the depot in St Neots from 22nd – 26th November – if you can help for a few hours on one of the days, contact Stuart on enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

Or sign up in church if you can help for an hour or two with receiving boxes at St Nicks from 15th-21st November. The church will be open from 10am-4pm each day.

GOING DEEPER: SHOULD ONLY MEN LEAD CHURCHES AND PREACH? Following the recent sermon on 1 Timothy 2 and 3 a few weeks ago, both PCCs have suggested a follow up session to examine the Biblical material in more detail and to allow time for questions and discussion. This will be held on Sunday 28th November from 7pm. There's no need to book, but if you're interested in coming, please let Dave know.



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH - 18-30s Social: Saturday 27th November from 6:30 – 9pm at Grace Community Church, Hydean Way – come along for a fun evening with a version of 'The Cube' – drinks and desserts provided! Please let Matthew & Jo Dear know on enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk if you'd like to attend so they have an idea of numbers.

Also, Grace Community Church have a small team looking to set up a **CLOTHES BANK** to provide children's clothes for families in need. Some of their church members have already donated a variety of clothes, but they particularly need donations in the **3–9 year-old range**. If you have any suitable clothing in this age range to donate, please bring to St Nick's in the next 2 weeks.

EVENTS IN THE COMING DAYS

WALKING GROUP – the re-arranged walk is on Thursday 4th November, walking on Pegsdon Hills. Meet at The Raven pub at Hexton at 10.30 am. Robust footwear will definitely be required and appropriate waterproof walking clothing as the weather is changing. And bring a drink.

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:

31st October: 2 Timothy 3:10–4:22 7th November: Titus 1: 1-16 14th November: Titus 2:1-15

THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR THE LIFE OF MATILDA ROGERS-WRIGHT: 3pm, Wednesday 17th November at St Nicholas Church, followed by some light refreshments. All welcome.

ST NICHOLAS DAY: Once again this year we will be singing carols at the St Nicholas shops as part of the St Nicholas Day celebrations. More details nearer the time, but do save the date: the afternoon of Saturday 4th December!

WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRASS BAND- Christmas Concert in aid of Bridgebuilders Christian Trust. Saturday 4th December, in St Nicholas Church. Tickets £7:50- pay on the door. See Poster for more details.