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Briefing 114: Wednesday 11th May, 2022.

Dear friends,

Have you ever been duped by people you know into believing something which wasn't true? During my sixth form, my friends and I all agreed that on the next non-uniform day, we would all come in fancy dress as St Trinian's schoolgirls! It seemed like a good bit of fun the time, and being incredibly naïve, I threw myself into it with my usual gusto. How shocked, embarrassed and angry I was when I arrived at school to find that I was the only one who'd taken the idea seriously!

None of us like to be made a fool of, as I was on that day. And so perhaps we can sympathise with Thomas, who missed Jesus' appearance in the upper room. We don't know why he wasn't there. Perhaps some urgent business called him away. Perhaps he was simply too upset to be around other people. But when the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, Thomas refused to believe. He would not trust them. He would not be made a fool of and have his heart broken again.

But this was no teenage hijinks. This was no laughing matter. This was serious. This was Jesus. And if Thomas was going to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead, then it would take more than the pleadings and witness statements of his friends. The stakes for Thomas were simply too high.

Thomas had to wait a week to see Jesus for himself. I wonder how many more times over that week the disciples told Thomas it was no joke, that Jesus really had risen, and how many times Thomas had re-stated his position that "*unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it!*" But at the end of the week, Thomas got his wish. All the disciples were together, with the doors locked out of fear of the Jews, when Jesus came and stood among them. And Thomas, the sceptic, the disbelieving, the doubting, was able to touch the nail marks in Jesus' hand, and the spear mark in Jesus' side. And then, just like the women, Thomas worshipped: "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas is given a gentle rebuke by Jesus. He's told to stop doubting and believe, and that those who have not seen and yet have believed are truly blessed. But I for one am grateful for Thomas's scepticism, not least because it shows us the frailty and doubts of the disciples. They are ordinary men, dealing with a world changing, mind blowing set of events. It is an extraordinary thing to have witnessed – and we shouldn't be surprised that Thomas, along with so many others, struggle to believe it.

But just as Thomas's doubts were turned to a faith that led him to spend the rest of his life sharing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection, perhaps even as far away as India, so when others consider the evidence for the resurrection, their doubts, however strong they might be, can also be overcome. We might not be able to touch the nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet, but we can point to someone who did. And for some people, hearing about Thomas will be a step on the road to finding a saving faith of their own.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

Times to Pray...

Wednesdays at 7pm-7:30pm Quiet Evening Prayer: All welcome

Next St Nicholas Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: Wednesday 25th May 7:45-9pm

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom. 7am-8am Tuesday 17th May. Contact Dave for a link

The church will also be open for visitors and private prayer on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon

UKRAINE. We’re still collecting **TINNED FOOD** (that can be opened without a can opener), cup-a-soup packets and energy bars; **BLANKETS**; or **GOOD QUALITY WINTER CLOTHES**, particularly coats – please do bring them along to church. These will be sent via the Barnabas Fund.

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

15th May: Psalm 25: 1-22 22nd May: Psalm 27: 1-14 29th May: Psalm 32: 1-11

SAFEGUARDING: As part of our commitment to safeguarding, those serving in various roles in the church (eg with children, on our pastoral team or PCCs) need to complete certain training courses, most of which are now on line. If you are informed by one of the safeguarding team that you need to complete such a course, **please do so as soon as practicable!** We shouldn’t need regular reminders to do the right thing. Thank you!

ADMITTING BAPTISED CHILDREN TO COMMUNION BEFORE CONFIRMATION. At its last meeting, St Nicks PCC voted unanimously to seek feedback from the church family on the idea of admitting baptised children of committed church families to communion prior to their confirmation. This would only be with full parental support and after a short preparation course. If approved we would apply to the Bishop of St Albans for permission to adopt this practise from September 2022. Whether or not you have children, (but especially if you do!) we’d like to hear your views on this, particularly on the following 2 questions:

1: Would you support such a move? (*we’d love to know your reasons either way*)

2: We envisage that this would apply to children in school year 2 and up (roughly 6-7). *Is this age about right?*

Last chance to email your responses to Alison by 15th May on admin@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

THIS SUNDAY - NEW ALL AGE SERVICE starting at St Nicholas at 9:30am. We’ll start together, break into groups (some for a main talk, others for discussions or some art and craft work) then come back together

TODAY - DIOCESAN EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE - Wednesday 11th May, 10:30am-3pm: with Paul Harcourt, *leader of the New Wine network of churches*- at St Nicholas. The theme for the conference is **HOLDING TO TRUTH AND LOVE** and all are welcome to come along. Tickets which cost £13 per head can be booked here... [2022 Annual Conference with Paul Harcourt – St Albans Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship \(stalbansdef.org.uk\)](http://2022 Annual Conference with Paul Harcourt – St Albans Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship (stalbansdef.org.uk))

FLOWER FESTIVAL at St Nicholas Church: 16th – 19th June

THIS SATURDAY - WESTON CONCERTS is presenting a concert by Ben Goldscheider (horn) and Richard Uttley (piano) on Saturday 14 May 2022 at 7.30pm at St Nicholas Church. Tickets £18 (£5 for age 25 and under). For tickets go to trybooking.co.uk/BOHH or for more information and a link, see website westonmusicsociety.org.uk/

These two internationally acclaimed musicians will play a programme by Beethoven and Schumann as well as commissioned pieces of the 2020s.

THIS SATURDAY - WOMEN’S BREAKFAST on Saturday 14th May at 8.30am at the Standing Order – see Karen for details.