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Briefing 119: Wednesday 15th June, 2022.

Dear friends,

Acts 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Just before his ascension, Jesus gave his disciples some instructions. They were to stay in Jerusalem and wait. So they did. But they didn't sit twiddling their thumbs for 10 whole days. According to Acts 1:12-26, they met together, prayed together and took action together.

They, that's the 11 remaining disciples, the women who'd followed Jesus, his mother, Mary, and Jesus' brothers, met together in an upper room. Jesus' family had once thought him mad and had come to take him in hand (see Mark 3), but now they knew the truth about him. So they gathered with his disciples and waited.

They also prayed constantly. We're not told what they prayed about but we might hazard a guess. Perhaps they prayed for greater wisdom and understanding of all that Jesus had done and taught. Perhaps they prayed for clarity and courage for whatever lay ahead. And I'm sure they prayed that they'd be ready to receive the gift the Father was about to send. Praying together was a clear mark of the early church. So as they waited, they prayed.

They also acted. Judas had betrayed Jesus and so his place amongst the 12 was now vacant. So they discussed possible options, they shortlisted two candidates who had the right qualifications (someone who had known Jesus, seen Jesus, and followed Jesus from the beginning) and then they made a decision. The new mission Jesus had given them hadn't yet begun, but there was still work to do. So they waited, they prayed and they acted in preparation. And so when the day of Pentecost came, they were ready.

Togetherness. Prayerfulness. Wise, thoughtful actions. Those 3 things marked out the early church, and it seems to me that over the coming months they need to mark out our churches too.

Togetherness. Interregnums can sadly be times when churches fragment and people drift away. Without a Rector, things can drift, impetus can be lost and people can slip quietly away. Please don't let that happen. Stay together. Attend church more often. Hang around longer for coffee. Get more committed to your small group or prayer partnership- or join one! Be hospitable. Work hard at staying together.

Prayerfulness. If the prayerfulness of a church is a measure of its health, then over recent months our benefice is getting weaker, not stronger. Brothers and sisters, this must not be! The health of the church, indeed our own spiritual health, depends on prayer. Individually, in small groups, and together. Over the coming months that will become even more important, so let me urge you to make prayer a greater priority. Perhaps you might commit yourself to attending ONE early morning prayer gathering a month or to attending one of the regular evening prayer gatherings (the next one is Wednesday 29th July). And when the church wardens organise events to pray specifically to pray for the interregnum, make the time to come along. Pray. And pray some more.

Wise, thoughtful actions. The wisdom and discernment to make the right call to appoint Matthias in Judas' place came after much prayer and discussion. In a few months' time, the 2 Parish Reps from each church will need that kind of wisdom as they choose my successor. Between then and now, the PCCs will need that kind of wisdom as they put together a Parish Profile- a description of the parishes and the person and job spec for the next Rector. For the early disciples, that kind of godly wisdom came from togetherness (with one another) and prayerfulness (time spent together with the LORD). And each of you have a part to play in that.

Of course, we are not waiting for the Holy Spirit. He is here already. Equipping Jesus' church to unity and prayer and wisdom. So let's make sure we are not quenching his work or frustrating his plans by failing to play our part.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

**ST NICHOLAS STEVENAGE WELCOME YOU TO
OUR 2022**

FLOWER FESTIVAL

ON A THEME OF

BIBLE STORIES

**OVER 20 FLOWER DISPLAYS FROM INDIVIDUALS,
CLUBS, SOCIETIES, SCHOOLS + BUSINESSES.**



Friday + Saturday 17th-18th June from 11am-4pm
Sunday 19th June from 1pm-4pm
Entrance by donation. Refreshments available.
St Nicholas Church, Rectory Lane, Stevenage. SG1 4DA
www.saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

FLOWER FESTIVAL THIS WEEK at St Nicholas Church:
17th – 19th June (see poster to left). Come along + bring your friends!

Some help needed still needed to welcome guests and to make and serve refreshments. Contact Christine Chambers to offer your help and support!

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Benefice prayer breakfast at St Nicholas Church on **Saturday 25th June** from 8:30am with a focus on praying for coming interregnum and the process of appointing a new Rector.

Email churchwardens@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk if you'd like to come or sign up in church this weekend.

CHURCH FAMILY BBQ
at the Vicarage for all in
BOTH CHURCHES –

Saturday 16th July:
from 4:30pm to 8pm.

Save the date and come along!



UPDATE on the Interregnum...

The Churchwardens are carrying out a survey of the congregations at both St Nicholas and St Mary's as part of the formulation of a Parish Profile. The Parish Profile gives ordained clergy, who are seeking a new position, the information to enable them to pray if God would have them apply for the position of Rector. The Parish Profile provides an overview of the Rector that we would wish to appoint along with information about the Churches and Parishes. The answers to the survey will help the groups who are formulating the Parish Profile. The survey has a closing date of the 27th June 2022.

We would ask you to prayerfully consider completing the survey either on Google Forms (please ask for a link if you are not on the Church Mailing list) or a paper copy which will be available at the back of both churches until the 26th June 2022.

Should you have any queries please speak to any of the Church Wardens for clarification.

If possible, please try not to exceed 100 words per answer.

1. What character traits would you look for in the new Rector?
2. What preaching style and skills would you look for in the new Rector?
3. What is the vision for the church that you would hope the new Rector would bring to the church?
4. Any other comments

TIMES TO PRAY... Wednesdays at 7pm-7:30pm Quiet Evening Prayer: All welcome

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom. 7am-8am Tuesday 21st June. 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*

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

19th June: Hebrews 1: 1-14 26th June: Hebrews 2: 1-18 3rd July: Hebrews 3: 1-19

BRIDGEBUILDERS: Harvest journey – Bridge Builders are currently working on a new and exciting project and are now ready to begin filming. They are looking for volunteers who would be happy to come along to Longmeadow Church on the 4th, 5th, 6th July at either 10.30am, 11.30am, 1pm or 2pm for a short recording session (approx. 45 minutes) Volunteers will need to be comfortable with being on camera and for the recording to be publicly available on the Bridge Builders Christian Trust YouTube channel. The scripts are not yet available but will be sent nearer the time. Volunteers will NOT need to memorise the scripts. Please contact reach@bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk or call Natalie James on 01438 314314 if you have any questions or would like to volunteer to take part in The Harvest Journey. The Bridge Builders summer newsletter is also attached with this newsheet.