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Briefing 120: Wednesday 22nd June, 2022.

Dear friends,

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at the life of the early church, hopefully seeing some lessons and challenges for us in our benefice. This week we've moved on just a few verses to see the disciples engaging in Spirit-filled proclamation.

Back in Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples that once the Holy Spirit had come on them, they were to be his witnesses '*In Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*' And as soon as the Holy Spirit had come, that's what they started doing. Acts 2: 14. *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.*

Peter was never short of self-confidence- the gospels are clear on that! And with the rest of the disciples he'd been on a 3 ½ year training scheme with Jesus to get ready for that moment, so he was ready when it came. You may not feel that confident standing up and telling crowds about Jesus, and if I'm honest, I'm not sure that street preaching is always the most effective means of sharing the good news. But the fact that you and I, as disciples of Jesus, are called to share our faith clearly, boldly and sensitively is indisputable. So what can we learn from Peter's method that might help us?

1: He took the opportunity when it arose. The Holy Spirit came, the disciples were filled with joy and power, even speaking in other languages, and so a crowd gathered who wanted to know what it was all about. So Peter told them! He got the question and he was ready. Are we, I wonder? Not so long ago we looked at some gospel outlines; simple ways to retell the good news of Jesus in under a minute if the opportunity came. Perhaps we need to revise, so we are ready when the chance comes and we get the question too.

2: He knew his Bible and connected with his listeners. Notice that in verses 17-21 Peter quotes from the Old Testament book of Joel, quoting words that his listeners would have known as a way in to speaking about Jesus. He was careful with his words so his listeners were drawn in and kept listening. This takes time and study, but also an awareness of those we are speaking to. So, how well do you know your colleagues and neighbours?

3: He was clear about who Jesus is and why he came. People were just as sceptical then about dead men rising from the grave as they are today, and just as nervous about claims of absolute authority as those living around us. But Peter pulled no punches. He made no attempts to soft-peddle the gospel. He spoke about Jesus' life and death, his resurrection and ascension, and made it clear that Jesus Christ is LORD. He unashamedly presented the authentic, Biblical Jesus to his listeners so that if they rejected his words, they were rejecting the real Jesus and not some half-baked alternative. That requires courage and confidence. Do you need to pray for that?

4: He repeated Jesus' call for all people to repent and believe and be baptised. Peter knew that following Jesus was a big deal, a huge decision, so he made that clear in his challenge. He didn't call people to come to church, to join a course or read a book. He called them to follow Jesus. That's not to say that those other things aren't often steps on the way, but if we are encouraging people to follow Jesus, there must come a point when we ask the bold and blunt question and call them to make a decision. This calls for wisdom- but God is willing to give that to all who ask.

5: He was clear about judgment and the consequences of rejecting Jesus. Verse 40: '*With many other words he warned them and pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*' Many of us might worry about ever speaking about judgment and hell. After all, it's not very nice or polite. But it is part of the gospel. We do have wonderful news about what we are saved for: a new life with God, new hope, lasting peace, eternal life, a new family etc; but the gospel also includes what we are saved from: judgment, hell, and separation from God and everything good. Are we bold enough to mention those things too? Jesus did. Peter did. Will we, when the time is right?

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

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

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

Email churchwardens@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk if you'd like to come.

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!

DAVE AND JUDY'S LAST SUNDAY will be on Sunday 14th August. On this day we will join together for a joint service at St Nicholas at 10:30am, after which there will be a bring-and-share lunch. Please save the date and come along.

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

26th June: Hebrews 2: 1-18 3rd July: Hebrews 3: 1-19 10th July: Hebrews 4: 1-13

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

Next Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: Wednesday 29th June at 7:45-9pm

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom. 7am-8am Tuesday 5th July. 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*

CRECHE AT ST NICHOLAS: The creche at the back in St Nicholas will be out of action for the next 6 weeks or so as it's full of organ pipes. We're hoping to have a creche space available in the Parish Room instead.

FLOWER FESTIVAL: Thank you to everyone who came along to St Nicholas to enjoy the fantastic Flower Festival last weekend, and thank you to Chris Chambers and the flower arranging team for a spectacular display, and for everyone who helped behind the scenes too.

LOOSE CHANGE COLLECTION: The 'penny pot' for loose change to continue to raise money for church flowers will be in church at St Nicholas this Sunday.

Update: URGENT NEED FOR THE UKRAINE: The Barnabas Fund are still collecting donations for those in urgent need in Ukraine. They particularly need **dried pasta, rice** etc. so please do bring them along to church. They currently have plenty of water and soups. Chris Taplin regularly takes the donations to the church in Southill which is coordinating collections. He says thank you to everyone who has generously donated to the 6 large consignments he has taken so far since March. You can also make financial donations via the touch and give point at St Nicholas, or through the Barnabas Fund's website at [Barnabas Fund: Hope and Aid for the Persecuted Church](#) or by placing your gift in an envelope marked Barnabas Fund Ukraine and placing it in the offering.

Get going with The Word One to One

Join us for a free training event, hosted by
Longmeadow Evangelical Church

10:00am - 11:30am on Saturday 2nd July
with tea and coffee served on arrival

The
Word
one to one



Longmeadow
Evangelical Church



Longmeadow Evangelical Church, Oaks Cross, Stevenage, SG2 8LT
07504 437534 – longmeadow-church.org.uk

If the thought of sharing the gospel like Peter, even with just one other person, has you confused and bewildered...

Why not come along to this FREE training event?

Come and learn how to share Jesus using the words of the Bible, with most of the work done for you!

Sat 2nd July: 10am-11:30am at Longmeadow Church, Oaks Cross, Stevenage.

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.

SCHOOL GOVERNOR: One of my privileges as Rector is being part of the Governing Body at Graveley Primary School. I am therefore seeking someone to take my seat on the governing body for the duration of the interregnum, and perhaps a little longer to allow the new Rector to settle in. If you have a keen interest in Primary Education and you'd be willing to serve in this way, please do come and have a chat with me as soon as possible. It is open to people from both churches, subject to ratification by Graveley PCC and the Diocese and would require DBS checks and training.