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**Briefing 121: Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.**

Dear friends,

Over these weeks, we're looking at the life of the early church, hopefully seeing some lessons and challenges for us in our benefice. This week we've moved on to Hebrews chapter 2 verses 42-47, where we see the kind of close fellowship that marked the early church. You might find it helpful to read them before continuing.

It's clear from verse 42 that the early disciples were a truly committed group of believers as *'they devoted to the Apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'* There's a whole sermon series just in this verse, but notice first the level of their commitment- they were **DEVOTED** to Jesus and his people. This describes a life-shaping, choice-directing passion that set the pattern for their lives. We may fear that kind of devotion- but if our commitment to Jesus isn't the thing that helps us make decisions about what to do with our time, money and talents- then something else will. What directs you, I wonder?

This devotion was directed in 4 ways. Firstly, they were **devoted to the Apostles' teaching**. Our patterns of worship on Sundays may well be different to those of our ancestors and to Christians in other places today, and the Bible gives very little instruction about what a Christian gathering should be like. But we must never wander from the historic teaching- or we will soon find ourselves following a different God and different faith, one that we have designed and one that cannot save. Let's stay rooted in the Apostle's teaching!

Secondly- they were **devoted to fellowship**. In my youth, we'd often go to church twice a day, and for some of you older still, 3 times on a Sunday wasn't unusual. Now it seems that for many Christians, twice a month is plenty. How sad this is. Some people, of course, are forced to work on Sundays... but too often we allow other things to take precedent on the Lord's Day and so our devotion to fellowship, being with other Christians, gathering together around God's word, is relegated to third or fourth place on our priority list. But read on and you can't miss the love and devotion they had for one another, a devotion which can only come through time spent together. Having eaten together, prayed together, celebrated together, they knew when one another was in need, and were willing to share- even selling possessions to give to those in the church family who were in need. No wonder the wider community held these Christians in such high esteem, for their love for each other was beautiful. Such devotion might take a long time to develop, but it starts with spending time together, eating together, talking together. Over the coming weeks there will be times to do that all together, but of course we can invite people around whenever we like! So will we make the time to be devoted to the fellowship?

Thirdly, they were **devoted to the breaking of bread**. In this context I think that the writer has two ideas in mind. Firstly- that the believers were spending time eating together, sharing ordinary meals in one another's home. I've mentioned this above, but it's worth repeating just how important this is. Covid made this impossible for a time- but we have no excuses now. Who can you invite to your house for some food or a cup of tea?

But when speaking of the breaking of bread, there's also the clear implication that the writer has the Lord's Supper in mind, the sharing of bread and wine as an act of remembrance of Jesus' death. The centrality of Jesus' death on the cross must never leave us, and regularly gathering around the Lord's Table- as well as daily bringing to mind Jesus' death for us is vital for our spiritual health individually and collectively. How will you remember it today?

Finally, they were **devoted to prayer**. It was wonderful to see so many people at the prayer breakfast on Saturday, but such numbers shouldn't be a shock, but a regular occurrence. Prayer is the engine room of the church. It's the means through which God equips his people for service and acts in his world. If a church fails to pray, it will fail, just as a Christian who fails to pray will fall away. And in these days, it's a means of God's grace that we need more and more.

Grace and peace,

*Dave*

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

**UPDATE on the Interregnum and last call for responses...** If you would like to have your opinions heard regarding the appointment of the new Rector, please complete the questionnaire on Google Forms – (please ask for a link if you are not on the Church Mailing list). There are paper copies in both churches if you prefer, but this is the last Sunday to return forms. There is a box to leave your completed forms in each church, or please return to one of the church wardens this Sunday.

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

**Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: TONIGHT at 7:45-9pm**

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom. 7am-8am Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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*

**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**  
John 1:1-14

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 2<sup>nd</sup> July: 10am-11:30am  
Longmeadow Church, Oaks Cross, Stevenage.

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

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July: from 4:30pm to 8pm.

Save the date and come along! Sign up sheets in both churches!

**DAVE AND JUDY'S LAST SUNDAY** will be on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> 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.



**WOMEN'S CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST** on Sat 9<sup>th</sup> July at 8.30am at St Nicholas Church – see Karen or Evelyn for details

**GRAVELEY ROAD WORKS Friday 8<sup>TH</sup>- Sunday 10<sup>TH</sup> JULY.** Resurfacing work is scheduled for these dates for all of Church Lane from the junction with the main road to the junction with Calder Way in Great Ashby. So if you are coming to Graveley Church on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>, you may well need to park on the High Street and walk down Church Lane.

**BISHOP MICHAEL'S FAREWELL SERVICE** - Saturday 16th July at 5pm at the Cathedral in St Albans. The invitation to attend the service is open to anyone in the Diocese. All are welcome and there is no need to book or confirm attendance.

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

3<sup>rd</sup> July: Hebrews 3: 1-19

10<sup>th</sup> July: Hebrews 4: 1-13

17<sup>th</sup> July: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

**WILL YOU STAND IN THE GAP AND SERVE???**

As you might imagine, there are a number of roles that Judy and I have taken that now need to be filled. Are you being called to stand in the gap and serve? If so - do come and talk to us...

**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.

**LINK PERSON FOR BRIDGE BUILDERS:** Hosting Christmas and Easter Journeys has become a regular part of our church life and for the last few years, Judy has been both the link person between our churches and Bridgebuilders and the Journey Co-ordinator to make sure the events run well. Do you have the skills and enthusiasm to take on this role? If so- please speak to Judy asap.

**SUMMER READING: BOOKS for just £1.** Don't forget to pick up a book or two to read over the summer. 4 titles are now available in both churches. Which one (or 2!) will you pick up?