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Briefing 122: Wednesday 6th July, 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're thinking briefly about the kinds of prayers these disciples prayed. We read in Acts 2:42 that the new believers were devoted to prayer, but what did they pray for?

They prayed for wisdom...

In Acts 1: 24 we read that the disciples prayed over which of the extended group of believers would replace Judas. They used plenty of human wisdom in that decision – that it should be someone *“who had been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us,”* and they shortlisted 2 candidates. But when it came to making the final call, they prayed for God's wisdom. It's not hard to apply that to our current situation, is it? But are we praying for that?

They prayed for their leaders...

In one sense, praying for wisdom (above) might also fall into this category – but here I'm thinking more about praying for those who have been appointed. So, in Acts 6: 6, having chosen 7 deacons to serve the people, the disciples prayed for them; no doubt praying that God would use them and bless them and equip them to serve. In Acts 13:3, the church at Antioch prayed for Barnabas and Paul as they set off on their next missionary journey - perhaps praying for protection, for blessing, for real lasting fruit and many conversions. And in Acts 20:36, as Paul makes his final departure from the Ephesian elders, we find them praying together, as they committed Paul into God's grace, and Paul prayed for them that they would stand firm in the faith.

I hope that over the past 11 years you have prayed for me, but right now your 3 churchwardens, Mike, Karen and Eunice particularly need your prayers. But that's true of others as well. Those leading home groups, working with our children or on our pastoral team. In fact, everybody in positions of leadership both at local church level and across the national and international church needs the prayers of God's people. Do you pray for them, as the early church did?

They prayed for their mission and ministry...

3 times in the book of Acts we find God's people praying for the ministry and mission of the church. When Peter and John had been arrested and beaten, the church came together and prayed for boldness and courage, and for God to act in power to the glory of his Name. In Acts 8:15, the apostles prayed that new believers in Samaria might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in Acts 9:40, Peter prayed that Tabitha might be brought back to life. What do these 3 prayers have in common? The conviction, faith and boldness with which the apostles prayed! And whilst there are times when God's power seems to be somewhat less active in bringing people to faith, and in seeing people healed and their lives transformed, the fact is that God has not changed. So we can and should pray bold and confident prayers, knowing that whilst the Lord's answer might still be 'no', He is absolutely able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. The early church had that kind of confidence in God. Do we?

Finally, they prayed in times of extremis...

There are times in our lives when we reach the end of our resources; when there is nothing more we can do but pray. There are at least two times like that in the book of Acts, and both lead to prayer. In Acts 7:60, Stephen is being stoned to death. But with no strength of his own left, Stephen prays for himself and his murderers. And then in Acts 27:29, as the boat taking Paul to Rome was sinking, all those aboard prayed that God would keep them safe till morning. Just like us, the apostles prayed *“HELP!”* prayers! But their confidence in making those prayers flowed out of a life fuelled by daily, corporate, Jesus-honouring prayer. It was therefore natural to them that when their own resources and power were exhausted, that they prayed. I wonder if our own prayer lives are that strong.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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

WOMEN'S CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST this Saturday 9th July at 8.30am at St Nicholas Church – speak to Karen or Evelyn for details

GRAVELEY ROAD WORKS Friday 8th- Sunday 10th 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 10th, you may well need to park on the High Street and walk down Church Lane.

TIMES TO PRAY...

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

Next Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: 13th July at 7:45-9pm

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom - 7am-8am Tuesday 19th July. Contact Dave for 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*

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! Sign up sheets in both churches!

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.

CABARET EVENING AT ST NICHOLAS - The Church Wardens would like to invite you to a Church Family Evening to say thank you and an informal goodbye to Dave and Judy on Saturday 30th July from 7.00pm to 10ish, refreshments will be available or bring your own bottle - (if you would like to take part in the cabaret with a song, monologue, sketch etc please contact Martin Bailey who is coordinating the cabaret). We would very much like you to come along and take part in the evening.



Gents of St Nicholas + St Mary's...

You are invited to join us for a round of crazy golf at Graveley Fruit Farm at 6pm- followed by a curry in the Old Town.

If you're interested, please sign up in church or email Dave at revdmbrown@gmail.com



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:

10th July: Hebrews 4: 1-13

17th July: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

24th July: Hebrews 5:11-6:20

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?