



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



2nd Sunday of Easter – 19th April

**Alleluia, Alleluia, He is Risen!
He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!**

I pray you are all safe and well. Don't forget if you need help in any way please call me and I'll do my very best to find the right sort of help for you.

We continue to be in a lockdown situation which will bring with it challenges. I know many of you, myself included, are missing being able to worship and pray together. Let's hold on to the image and thought of how our first Worship time together will be when the lockdown restrictions are lifted. What a day that will be!

With all Blessings
Rev Liz

He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Light a candle

By lighting a virtual candle, you're making space to pray.

You can light a candle online to pray for yourself, for a loved one or for a situation. Whatever is going on, make space to pray in your life.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/light-candle>

Collect Prayer – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no
entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of
others
and walk the joyful road of
sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father.



News from the Church of England – current as at 18th April 2020

- All public acts of church activities, worship and private prayer opportunities within church are suspended until further notice.
- Guidance and ruling on conducting weddings and funerals is available on the websites of Lichfield Diocese and The Church of England.
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>
- <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/latest-coronavirus-information>
- Lockdown restrictions are to remain in place for at least a further three weeks.

*Taken from The Church of England website

Our Prayers

- We pray for our world, and all in need at this time.
- We pray for our Queen and all the Royal Family, and in particular Prince Charles. We pray for all our Government, our Bishops and Clergy. We pray especially for the Prime Minister.
- We pray for our country as we cope with the extended period of lockdown. Protect and guide us.
- Many known to us have had much needed surgery and treatment postponed, be with them all.
- We give thanks for those who have been healed
- We thank you for all key and frontline workers. Protect them Lord

Help and Assistance

We want to make sure everyone in our church and our communities stay safe. If you have any need whatever please contact one of our care co-ordinators who will their best to find someone to help you.

Graham & Margaret Birt 01543 483138

Di Proctor 01543 480442

Val Neale 01543 374430

Contributions for our local foodbanks.

If you would like to make contribution to our food banks the following collection points are available;

For the Lichfield Food Bank (Shenstone Church) –

The Vicarage, St Johns Hill, a container is in the porchway

7 Church Close, Shenstone, a container is outside the door.

For the Thomas Project (Stonnall Church) –

1 Lazy Hill, a box is inside the porch

Social Media

Social media is sometimes regarded as Marmite, you either love it or hate it. However at these times its very useful for keeping in contact with each other. If you've previously avoided using email or social media maybe you're starting to rethink your opinion. If you have recently set up an email account or joined FaceBook please email Rev Liz so she has your email address and 'like' one of the church's pages.

Morning Prayer times on FaceBook

During the week, Monday to Friday, there is a short time of Morning Prayer on both FaceBook pages. This time of prayer is based on the set liturgy for Morning Prayer for the day. You can access an app for this at <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray>. It's a free app and includes Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer for each day.

Church Finances

Although both our churches are closed for public worship and private prayer time our bills still need to be paid. Thank you to those of you who continue to give by standing order. If you usually give by envelope on the plate you will have received a letter with a supply of envelopes in to enable you to continue your donations during our shut down time. You can either save these up till we're able to reopen or contact one of the wardens and they'll arrange for it to be collected from you.

A justgiving page for each church has been set up should you or a family member wish to make a donation, the details are as follows;

For St John the Baptist

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stjohnthebshenstone>

For St Peter's Church

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/pccofstpetersstonall>

At the time of printing this newsletter, £340 has been donated on St Peters page with gift aid an additional £85 has been raised. Thank you to the donors.

Our readings for this Sunday are;

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “You that are Israelites,^[a] listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death,^[c] because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

“Fellow Israelites,^[d] I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David^[e] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

John 20:19-end

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he

had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Songs for today

Faithful one, so unchanging. Come people of the risen King.

Thought for today

(transcript of sermon posted on FaceBook 19th April)

We very often use the phrase 'I couldn't believe my eyes'? Its something we use when we're seeing something but it just doesn't make sense isn't it. 'I couldn't believe my eyes when 'I saw the size of my ironing basket.' 'I couldn't believe my eyes when there wasn't a toilet roll to be seen in the supermarket' 'I couldn't believe my eyes when....' Well you fill in the gaps. We're certainly living in times aren't we when saying 'I couldn't believe my eyes might be said more often than usual. We also use the phrase seeing is believing don't we and that phrase was certainly what Thomas was thinking in the gospel reading, in the account of Jesus' appearance after His resurrection, exactly one week later. The rumours had been flying, but many people still claimed to have seen Him, including most of His disciples. All except Thomas. Thomas had not been around when Jesus appeared to the other disciples behind locked doors 7

days before. We don't know where Thomas was that first day. Perhaps due to fear, depression, disillusionment, discouragement, withdrawal seemed to be his only method of dealing with the supposed loss of his friend and master, Jesus.

So the disciples told Thomas afterwards: v25a. But Thomas was not ready to get over hurting that easily. As much as he wanted to believe, he could not simply accept the accounts of others without proof: v25b. We can look back and laugh and say, "How could he not believe? Jesus told him He would rise from the dead? All his friends had seen Him? Thomas was a fool for not believing." But we're 2000 years down the line. We often refer to Thomas as doubting Thomas as well, but one thing about Thomas. He probably does not deserve the nickname of "Doubter". There are 2 other pictures of Thomas in the gospel of John. The first one, John 11, tells us that he was willing to follow Jesus, even if that meant dying with Him. The second one, John 14, shows that Thomas was willing to ask the question: How can we follow you if we don't know where you are going? That is, we want to follow you, but aren't sure how. These are not statements made by a doubter. These are statements made by a follower. Thomas was, above all, a follower of Jesus. But in the course of events, he became discouraged. And he needed more than what others were saying in order to have faith again. And that can happen so easily can't it, we can become discouraged. What about us? Are we discouraged? In our life, has something happened to bring doubts into our mind? Are we looking for proof of Jesus' love, of God's power, of the Spirit's usefulness in your life? Proof give me the proof that Jesus is there, that he's real[L1].

In our Acts reading Peter makes a speech that gives verbal evidence of the truth and reality of Jesus' resurrection. Peter bases his speech on scripture saying that of course this is true, it was written years, decades, centuries ago that this would happen. How could you not believe it? So Thomas was looking for proof he needed to see Jesus to believe and Peter was giving verbal proof, verbal evident that this was all true. Jesus looked right at Thomas, the one who loved Jesus but got lost, worried and confused and singled him out. Peter stood up and confirmed to all who would listen to him the truth of the events that had just taken place. Two really significant points here for us to hold on to, Jesus cares about us when we don't quite understand all that's going on, and Peter's speech that God has a plan, is sticking to it, always has and will always do so.

Jesus wants to be part of our lives. He wants to be as real as the person you're sitting beside at home. He wants you to know that you matter to God. You are of infinite importance and never to forget that. If you are seeking Him, seeking help, seeking a way out, seeking an end to your broken heart, He will show you what He did for you. He will take you to the cross, where He suffered for you. He will show you to His nail-scarred hands, and say, "This I did for you." Just as he did for Thomas. And when Thomas saw all that Jesus was offering to Him, he believed. He cried out: v28. He said, "My Lord and my God' You see, Thomas wasn't a doubter – he just wanted something to believe in. He wasn't content with what others said – he had to experience it himself. He needed proof that all would be well, Peter spoke out about that proof to those listening to him.

We can hold onto these words today, 19th April 2020 a time in our lives that will go down in history as strange and confusing. We can choose to listen to rumour and mis information or we can choose to see for ourselves, like Thomas, and listen to those that know the truth when they speak it out as Peter did.

Where then are you getting your information from to allow you to make decisions in these times? We all have a responsibility more so now than ever before, to ensure that we listen to instructions and follow them, some of them we might not fully understand or fully agree with, but when those instructions come from those we trust and know we should listen.

At the heart of these time though is the truth that God is in control and has a plan, we need to continue to believe in him and that plan. We all matter to him.

What would it take for you to believe that you matter to God? What would it take for you to believe that God is in control and has a plan? What would it take for you to trust fully in God?

Please stay safe and well. If you need help please do not hesitate to contact Rev Liz. She will try to find the help you need.

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