



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



5th Sunday of Easter – 10th May 2020

**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.

As we await the update today from the Prime Minister, I pray that our safety is paramount in any decisions made.

With all Blessings
Rev Liz

He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

A Prayer of thanks for our times

We thank you for the technology available to use today and for how our churches are using it to share the gospel. We pray you would use this time of change to grow your church and bring many more to know you as their Lord and saviour.
Amen

Collect Prayer – 5th Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.



News from the Church of England – current as at 8th May 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>

Our Prayers

- We pray for our world, and all in need at this time.
- We pray for all our Government, our Bishops and Clergy. We pray especially for the Prime Minister and our Government as decisions are made and announced today.
- We pray for our country as we cope with the extended period of lockdown. Protect and guide us.
- We give thanks for all service men and women who served during WWII, we thank you for peace in Europe.
- Many known to us have had much needed surgery and treatment postponed, be with them all.
- We pray for Larry and Brenda Butler following Larry's fall, John and Di Gavan and for those caring for vulnerable relatives.
- We hold before you those in our Community affected by Covid-19, and those who need to isolate
- We think about the Clarke, Poxon and Ross families as they prepare for funerals in the next week or so.
- 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 coordinators 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

Thank you for your generous contributions. Both foodbank projects can only take gifts of non perishable items, so please no fresh goods.

Social Media

If you don't use social media and would prefer not to, the Archbishop of Canterbury has set up a free phone line of a service you can listen to. If you know someone who would like this, please pass this number on to them.



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.

There is a short service posted on our FaceBook pages to commemorate VE day Thursday 8th May.

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 and those who have posted donations through the Vicarage door. If you do 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/pccofstpetersstonnall>

At the time of printing this newsletter, £340 has been donated on St Peters page with gift aid an additional £85 has been raised and £350 on St John the Baptist's page. Thank you to the donors.

VE Day – from Lichfield Diocese' website

Lichfield Cathedral and a growing number of other cathedrals are uniting this VE Day in a project to remember heroes of the past and present as part of the [Big Picnic for Hope](#).

The Big Picnic for Hope is an opportunity for households to be part of a virtual get together on 8 May. The project asks people to stay at home, to picnic indoors or in their gardens, and to join friends and families virtually. Churches across the diocese are encouraged to get involved in the initiative which will raise money for the Trussell Trust.

Care for the family – The Marriage Sessions, starting 10th May

Have you ever considered that love isn't just a feeling? In a marriage love needs to go beyond feelings – sometimes our actions speak loudest of all. Nearly 3000 couples have already signed up for The Marriage Sessions, don't miss out! Care for the Family, are passionate about supporting couples in their relationships, and that's why they are streaming The Marriage Sessions, direct to your home – free of charge!

It's a four-part resource exploring how couples can build a lasting relationship. Whether you're newlyweds or have been married for years, these sessions will help your marriage blossom during these uncertain times – and all you need is an hour a week.

The key themes that are covered in the four sessions are:

CHERISH – the forgotten vow and how to keep your love alive

CONNECT – understanding each other and the art of communication

COLLABORATE – dealing with pressure points and handling conflict well

COMMIT – love is a choice when the going gets tough

Book your place now, book via Care for the Family FaceBook page or their website <https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/courses/marriage-courses-the-marriage-sessions>

UCB Bible Notes – message from Rev John and Ann

UCB Word for Today etc for May to July have arrived. John usually puts the booklets at the back of church and has no idea of who takes their copy from there. They will be available from outside The Vicarage in dry weather. If you are unable to collect your copy, please ring Rev Liz and she will arrange delivery if possible. Stay safe!

Our readings for this Sunday are;

Acts 7:55 - end

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

John 14:1-14

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go

and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Songs for today

Cornerstone, All my days

Thought for today

(sermon posted on FaceBook 10th May)

In our gospel reading today we hear another I am statement from Jesus. ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’. What a speech to make, I am the way the truth and the life. How many of you have ever had to make speeches in any form? Many married men will have made speeches at their own weddings, or perhaps been a best man, or maybe you’ve made Father of the Bride speeches at your daughter’s wedding.

The Father of the Bride’s speech, the Groom’s speech and the Best Man’s speech at wedding receptions are things to be eagerly anticipated and also dreaded, in equal measures. Thankfully Our Lord, Jesus Christ though is much better at speeches than speech makers at weddings or other occasions too, including vicar’s sermons.

And we get to look at one of his speeches today. John's gospel seems to be in two halves. In the first, we have a series of seven 'signs' or miracles performed by Jesus (including the water into wine in Cana and the feeding of the 5000), mixed in with encounters between Jesus and individuals or groups. The second half of the gospel, from chapter 12 onwards, has a change of tone. Whereas earlier Jesus repeatedly says 'My time has not yet come', now, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, the 'hour' has come, and the gospel reaches its climax. Because of this, some commentators split the gospel into two: the Book of Signs, and the Book of Glory. This part of John's gospel, in the second part of the whole gospel is referred to as 'the Farewell Discourse'. The first six verses are often used at funerals and its one of those bible passages that many people know, regardless of whether they are a regular reader of the bible or not 'in my father's house are many rooms' and so on. In Jesus' farewell discourse, his farewell speech is you like he makes three statements; I Am the Way, I Am the Truth and I Am the Life.

I AM THE WAY

John the Baptist started his preaching talking about "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness. Make straight the way for the Lord!" which echoes what we read in Isaiah 'A voice of one calling; 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God' . Isaiah 40:3-5. John's preaching of the kingdom of God would be the message about Jesus. I am the way. Have you noted Jesus' promise of the way, "I am the way." he does not say, I am "a way" or "another way" but; I am "the way to the Father." Jesus is very clear and certain here, he is "the Way

I AM THE TRUTH

Jesus states "He is The Truth." Again earlier in John's gospel we can read that this is no surprise that Jesus is the truth "The law was given to Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John 1:17. And again we should be clear, that Jesus did not say: "I Am a truth;" or "I Am another truth;" but, "I AM THE TRUTH." Jesus states to Pilot doesn't he: "Every one on the side of truth listens to me. "What is truth" replies Pilot.

This part of John's Gospel refers back and forth to earlier parts of the gospel and links to the OT so much. We could spend a whole morning looking at this small part, but we won't I promise. Earlier in John we can read "Grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ; or 'the Word' was made flesh, and dwelt among us," John 1:14.

And then the last of Jesus' I am statements in this part of the bible I AM THE LIFE

Jesus declares himself to be the life. He is the life promised by the Old Testament prophecies, we can read so many of them Jesus is saviour and Lord. Again in another part of John's gospel we can read where Jesus says 'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life' John 5:24, and another "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it to the full" John 10:10 our gospel from last week wasn't it, that first in this world he promises an abundant life; and in the world to come life eternal

Now all this is fine and dandy, but it still seems a little bit abstract, how can we relate to it today or try to make more sense of it. We've got some clues in the characters that are in our readings today, we've heard mention of Phillip, Thomas and Stephen and by looking at these three people we might be able to understand a little bit more about this statement 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. All three of these people ask questions or are asked questions. Philip and Thomas eventually realise that they must listen to Jesus voice, don't forget our gospel from last week about sheep knowing their shepherd's voice and that is the only one to listen to. Philip and Thomas realise they must listen to Jesus. Stephen has listened and is so convinced that this is the correct voice to listen to he isn't afraid of the consequences.

But back to our reading

First, we considered the declaration, "I am the way' John the Baptist announced that he was sent to "prepare the way of the Lord.", we met this last week in our morning prayer sessions.. Phillip is asking here in the gospel, show us the way, show us the way. Jesus tells him look at me, look at me, look at everything I've done and said. I know I'm paraphrasing here, but Jesus is telling Philip and telling us, look at me, look at my commandments that is the way for you to follow.

Then 'I am the truth', this is definitely being asked by Thomas isn't it. You can imagine him running around, 'well I don't know, I'm not sure, are you telling me the truth?'. Jesus told us, the believers would "know the truth, and that truth would set us free." This is that same truth that Jesus said would make us free from sin.

Lastly, "I am the life." Jesus makes it clear after we find the way; obey the truth, we shall have eternal life. Stephen was asked questions and his

answers weren't well received. Stephen knew what was going to happen to him, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit', take me to you Lord.

Although then this part is described as the farewell discourse, the farewell speech, and for those of you for who this sort of thing is important, it's the first half of the farewell speech. It doesn't sound like an ending does it? It very much a beginning, a start, a 'let's get going', all will be well, because Jesus is our way, our truth and our life.

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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St Peter's Church Wardens: - *Peter & Patsy Toulouse* 361778

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