



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



7th Sunday of Easter – 24th 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 all learn to work with the lifting of some restrictions, I pray we keep safe and well.

With all Blessings
Rev Liz

He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

A Prayer

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the
sick,
and lift up all who are brought
low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can
separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Collect Prayer – 7th Sunday of Easter

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with
power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know
your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen



News from the Church of England – current as at 16th 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 continue to be made.
- We pray for areas of the world where violence continues. We think particularly about those in Kabul.
- We pray for our country as we cope with the lifting of some restrictions. Protect and guide us.
- Many known to us have had much needed surgery and treatment postponed, be with them all.
- We hold before you those in our Community affected by Covid-19, and those who need to isolate
- We give thanks for those who have been healed
- We hold before the Lord our schools, teachers, support workers and those pupils preparing to return to school
- We thank you for all key and frontline workers. Protect them Lord
- We pray for the ordinands (vicars in training) as they leave their colleges and prepare to take up their Curacy posts. We especially pray for Graham Wigley who will be joining us here in our United Benefice.

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.

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>

Big Church Day Out – 24th May

This is a fantastic worship event available this weekend. Have a look Sunday 24th May from 12 noon.

www.youtube.com/bigchurchdayout



Our readings for this Sunday are;

Acts 1:6-14

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me,

because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Songs for today

All heaven declares, My Jesus My Saviour

Thought for today

(sermon posted on FaceBook 24th May)

If you had looked at your diary last Thursday (that would have been six weeks after Easter) you might have seen the heading "Ascension Day", but then it might not be there because Ascension Day is one of the neglected feast days of the Christian church.

Churches around the world observe many Ascension Day traditions, such as "the blessing of the first fruits," in which grapes and beans are blessed. Some churches depict the Ascension of Christ by raising a statue of Jesus above the altar and lifting it through a special door in the roof. Other churches have outdoor processions with torches and banners. In an old Ascension Day tradition from England, parishioners carried a banner bearing the symbol of a lion at the head of the procession, and a second banner bearing the symbol of a dragon at the rear. This represented the victory of Christ over the devil.

Although the Ascension occupies a place on the church's calendar these days it seems it is far from being prominent in Christian thought. It seems overshadowed by Good Friday and outshone by the glory of the Easter morning, then we seem to slide towards Pentecost, with not a thought for the Ascension. It though an important part of the churches calendar as it marks an event so significant, it seems a shame that it gets missed.

In our readings today we're focussed on immediately before the ascension. Jesus is praying for his disciples, he's desperate for them to understand what is going to happen and that he is praying for them.

- I wonder if Jesus was worrying about them. Those of us who have children worry about them. Doesn't stop when they get older, in fact I think you worry more as they get older.

- Look today at the Gospel reading from John, it describes how Jesus is praying for his followers, and exclusively for them rather than praying for the whole world.
- Jesus prays for 3 things he wants them to continue with when he leaves them
- **Unity** – Jesus wants them to be united, but not just united (M&S), he wants them to be united as he and God are. To have the same intimacy and oneness. That they may be one as Jesus and God are one. Thing is when Jesus ascends his leadership and uniting power will end with his departure and he's really concerned that they will fall apart without him physically there to guide them. The disciples are having to stay within the world and Jesus knows they will need all the help they can get to stay together.
- **Strength** - Jesus knows what is ahead of them, in the way of persecution and problems, he knows it will be dangerous for them, and so he prays for the Spirit to keep them secure. He prays for their protection against the evil one. Jesus himself has been assaulted, but never overcome by Satan during his time on earth, but his know his disciples will have all this and more thrown at them.
- **Holiness** – There is a spiritual dilemma facing the disciples they live in the world, but Jesus says they are not of the world, and he's talking about a spiritual location here not a geographical one. Throughout John's Gospel the world is described as a place of darkness and unbelief. Jesus prays that his disciples will be sanctified, made holy. And that is made holy, not so much as being perfect but leading a life that is aligned with God, reflecting God's goodness. Jesus death on the cross enabled the disciples to experience something never know before, because through his death and by leaving his spirit with them, the disciples came become truly aligned, made one with God

Now I don't know about you, but Jesus' prayer although inspiring it's a bit challenging, its a truly divine conversation between Jesus and God, and we're a bit like eavesdroppers into it. But let's explore it a bit more

Jesus is at prayer – it gives us a model to follow doesn't it, Jesus prays so intimately with God and with confidence. Look at how Jesus prays too, he tells God about his life, his aims, things he's done, he tells God about the people he's mixing with. Look to at the character of the church at that time and what Jesus' hopes for it were, that it should reflect God's glory and love for the world, it should be confident in its knowledge of God. Jesus has left us with a set of truths, not opinions, truth that come from God. I wonder then how would it be if we as a church community prayed that same prayer that Jesus did just before his ascension, just before he went to sit at God's right hand, we prayed to be unified, strong and holy. I know I challenged you to some prayer last week, but here's another this week.

Can we pray for unity? Unity is a little hard given our circumstances isn't, we can't meet together. But we can unify by sharing this on line service. I know many look at this service, far more than usually attend worship in the church building. Not only are we unified in our desire to worship and praise God, but we are growing in our numbers.

Can we pray for strength? We all need some help at this time. Whether that be practical, getting shopping done etc or by a phone call or letter. That sort of contact albeit remote strengthens and upholds us. Have you noticed when you offer to help someone, not only are they strengthened but your uplifted too.

Can we pray for holiness. Now before you all run off over the horizon I don't mean you all walk around with hands clasped in prayer, looking very pious, no not that at all. But now more than ever our relationship with Jesus sustains us. By becoming more 'holy', by spending time with him, listening to his word and seeking his will, we will become more holy. This week then, could you make your prayers be for unity, strength and holiness?

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.

Vicar: - *Revd Liz Chamberlain* 480286 vicar@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk
St John the Baptist Church Wardens: - *Bonnie* 480278 & *Bill Whitney* 480652
St Peter's Church Wardens: - *Peter & Patsy Toulouse* 361778

Parish Administrator: - 480286 admin@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk

St John's Hall Bookings & Administration: - 480286 admin@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk Website: www.stjohnthebaptistshenstone.org.uk Facebook: *St John the Baptist Shenstone and St Peters Church Stonnall*