



# Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**The Lord be with you  
And also with you**

We are of course very excited about our churches re-opening. A lot of work and consultation has taken place and although the services are limited we can at least worship together for a short time.

Details and opening times are included in this edition of PEWS NEWS

If you are unsure about any aspect regarding church services please do give me a call.

With all Blessings

Rev Liz

01543 480286



**Collect Prayer –  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

Almighty God,  
send down upon your Church  
the riches of your Spirit,  
and kindle in all who minister the  
gospel  
your countless gifts of grace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Opening Times and Services - St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> July	4.00 pm	Evening prayer led by Rev Liz Chamberlain
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> July	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Church open for private prayer and reflection
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> July	10.30 am to 1.00 pm	Church Open
	11.00 – 11.30 am	Morning Worship led by Alan Bateman
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Church open for private prayer and reflection
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> July	10.30 am to 1.00 pm	Church Open
	11.00 – 11.30 am	Morning Worship led by Carol Law
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> July	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Church open for private prayer and reflection

## Opening Times and Services - St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> July	10.00 – Noon	Church Open Led worship by Rev Liz 10.30 am & 11.30 am
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> July	10.00 – Noon	Church open for private prayer and reflection
Sunday 1 9 <sup>th</sup> July	10.00 – Noon	Church Open time of led worship by Patsy Toulouse to be confirmed
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July	10.00 – Noon	Church open for private prayer and reflection
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> July	10.00 – Noon	Church Open time of led worship by Graham Wigley to be confirmed

### **Important for St Peter's Church**

During Sunday opening time there will be a short half hour service of Morning Prayer. Due to restrictions seating is available for only 16 people. A 2m distancing has been adopted so that wearing a mask is not required, although if you want to wear a mask you can do so. If you would like to come to the led part of the morning **its important that you 'book in'. Please call Rev Liz to book a place.**

If more than 16 want to reserve a place two services will take place.

### **Communion in our churches**

We have now been given permission to celebrate Communion in our churches as long as we follow the guidelines about these services. The documentation for this is quite detailed and some careful thought and preparation needs to take place before Communion can be offered.

It is prayerfully hoped that Communion might start to be offered in the very near future.



### **News from the Church of England – current as at 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

- Public acts of worship within church are now allowed to take place, subject to certain conditions.
- From 15<sup>th</sup> June, when safe to do so, churches may open for private prayer time.
- Weddings and funerals are permitted to take place within churches, subject to certain conditions.
- <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 all our Government, our Bishops and Clergy. We pray especially for the Prime Minister and our Government as decisions continue to be made.
- We thank you for the Queen and the Royal Family
- We pray for our country as we cope with the lifting of some restrictions. Protect us and help us to make the right choices.
- We think about families preparing funeral services at this time under very different circumstances. We remember Jean Anderson whose funeral service takes place this week.
- Many couples who expected to get married this year have moved their weddings till next year. Ian and Lisa are still planning for their wedding to take place in August and we hold them in prayer.
- We hold our clergy, Church Wardens and PCC members in prayer as they continue to work through the guidance and changes required to enable our churches to open.
- We hold before the Lord our schools, teachers, support workers and those pupils who have returned to school. We ask for patience and strength for all families where children have not been able to return to school.
- We thank you for all key and frontline workers. Protect them Lord
- We give thanks for healing received.

## **Larry Butler**

Larry's funeral will take place 22<sup>nd</sup> July at 2.30 pm and attendance at this is by invitation only. However St John the Baptist Church will be open that afternoon between 2.00 and 4.00 pm, should you wish to spend some time in private prayer and reflection.

## **Mike Raybould**

Veronica would like to say a big thank you to all who attended Mike's celebration of life service, both inside the church and outside. Thank you to all who played a part in the service and who made it all happen, welcomers, tech support, hospitality so many special people.

## Happy Wedding News

Sarah Williams (who used to worship at St John the Baptist and niece of our own Joyce Williams) married her fiancé Richard Cunningham on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July. Sarah and Richard are one of the first couples to marry after the lifting of lockdown restrictions and applied for a Common Licence to allow the marriage to go ahead. The wedding has been reported in the media including Midlands Today and Good Morning Britain. Here's a photo of the happy couple.



## 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.

### **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.

### **Our readings for this Sunday are; Romans 8:1-11**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit<sup>[a]</sup> of life in Christ Jesus has set you<sup>[b]</sup> free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin,<sup>[c]</sup> he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit<sup>[e]</sup> set their minds on the things of the Spirit.<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>6</sup> To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit<sup>[g]</sup> is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit,<sup>[h]</sup> since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does

not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit<sup>[i]</sup> is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ<sup>[i]</sup> from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through<sup>[k]</sup> his Spirit that dwells in you.

### **Matthew 13:1-9**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears<sup>[a]</sup> listen!"

### **Matthew 13:18-23**

<sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

### **Songs for today**

All heaven declares, Reckless love

### **Thoughts for today**

You will of course have heard many times the story of the story, and probably many sermons about the meanings of this in relation to people

accepting the gospel truth, some don't want to know, some are beyond saving, some start but fall by the wayside, for some life and other interests get in the way, but for some the truth takes root and flourishes and grows. The last part of the gospel readings spells that out. Easy peasy let's wrap up the talk now!

But I'd to suggest another way of looking at this parable and for that I'd like you to use your imagination. Imagine then that you are a farmer in first century Israel. You have some land, you're quite proud of this land, its been in your family for generations. This land you have sustains you, your family, it provides food to feed you, enough left over to sell, and enough seed for next year. You've spent weeks preparing this land for sowing time, you've weeded, tilled, removed stones, raked and dug in what in polite circles is called organic fertilizer. You're ready!

You stand at the edge of your land, you have your trusty gardening sandals on, sun hat on head, perhaps a bottle of water with you too. Slung across your body is a seed bag, and in it are the precious seeds from last year. Each tiny seed valuable, each with potential to grow, to be an amazing plant, whatever that plant might be. And you start to sow, you walk sedately up and down your field, ensuring that each seed falls into the prepared earth, in the best place for it to grow, why would you want to waste one of those precious things. You take care, because this is your livelihood, this is your future..... but that would be the sensible thing to do wouldn't it, but you are a reckless, happy go lucky optimistic first century sower, and so you run up and down your land scattering seeds from this bag in wild abandon, who cares where these seeds land, you are so happy that you have them, let's scatter it all around, just like the cartoon. Why would you do that? In Matthew's gospel the sower does just that he scatters seeds, he doesn't think where he's scattering them, whether they will grow, whether it's the right place at the right time, he scatters. The sower doesn't make the decision where to sow – the reaction of the seed is dependant on other factors, not the sower, other things, are we bold enough to say God is in control of that, think of the Romans reading. And given that the sower would need to sustain family life, this seems to be so very very reckless. Why would he, or she, waste their efforts?

I'd like to continue with my suggestions to you, and plant (a deliberate pun there) a seed or two in your minds. That good news is to be planted whether or not the 'soil' has been prepared fully and whether or not you know for certain its going to take root. We are charged to be sowers of



the good news in reckless, wanton abandon. Without thought, or hesitation, leaving what happens to those seeds to God, allowing him to control.

Where then are our 'fields' to plant in? Where are those areas, fully prepared, or stony, full of weeds or inhabited by birds, where are those fields? Well folks those fields are all around us and not just because we're in the middle of leafy Shenstone and Stonnall. In 'normal times our fields would be our schools, which has given us an open door, our family service each Sunday at Early Birds, our Messy Church. We would usually have umpteen requests for weddings and baptisms, we would usually have fields aplenty to sow in. We still have those fields, we are still planting it just looks a little different and although our services have restarted in a small way, our recorded services are still going to go ahead, another field for planting in.

How then are we continuing to plant. Our schools are returning in September to being fully opened, sadly we can go in with our small but very dedicated team to present bible stories to the children there. But we can continue to sow, by recording an assembly each week to be presented in school. We are sowing seeds. We know as a team our Open the Book stories make a difference, as children tell us so

What about Early Birds? Early Birds is a lovely service, and make no bones about it, it's a service. We pray, listen to bible stories, sing praises to God and say sorry. We even celebrate Communion on occasions. It's a privilege to see the faith of our children and their parents and carers growing. We're continuing to plant at this Zoom service, from our homes.

Messy Church may have to be our fallow field for the time being, but we'll continue to tend the ground and keep it free from weeds.

And our biggest field – our weddings, baptisms and funerals. For the biggest events in family life, non church goers, choose to celebrate in church. It's a privilege to share the biggest events in someone's, and to share in church, as we can now restart to do, is the icing on the cake. Now I know, because some of you have told me, that it's a shame, families come for their child's baptism and , and I quote 'we never see them again' and so you might think why should I bother with them and

to come to that sort of service. If its any consolation, people at many other churches feel the same. Why bother?

If you think about shops like Waitrose and Marks and Spencer for a while. They have their shops in town and we know that these shops work to a standard. They have regular and loyal customers. Waitrose and M&S also run shops in motorway service stations. Customers there are highly unlikely to return, but the service offered, the good available are the same standard and quality offered in the high street. Just because at a service station you might never come in again, you don't get a second class service.

Folks we have fields aplenty to sow in, we may not always see immediate results, the sowing we do may not always be easy or to our taste, remember the Romans reading no one ever said it was easy to be spirit filled and under God's control, but we are charged to sow. We can leave the results of our sowing to the Lord. I for one am very happy to leave it to him to deal with the results of our sowing, but we all need to sow. As a church community the preparing, the sowing and the watching is down to us. The results thankfully are up to the Lord.

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Associate Minister: *Rev John Aston*, 480388, [bradston@btinternet.com](mailto:bradston@btinternet.com)

St John the Baptist Church Wardens: - *Bonnie* 480278 & *Bill Whitney* 480652

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

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