



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



7th Sunday after Trinity – 26th 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.

I've also resumed taking a day off each week and this is Monday as before lockdown.

With all Blessings

Rev Liz

01543 480286



**Collect Prayer –
7th Sunday after Trinity**

Generous God,
you give us gifts and make them
grow:
though our faith is small as
mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory
and the flourishing of your
kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Opening Times and Services - St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 26 th July	10.30 am to 1.00 pm	Church Open
	11.00 – 11.30 am	Morning Worship led by Carol Law
Wednesday 29 th July	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Church open for private prayer and reflection <i>Please see notes below</i>
Sunday 2 nd August	10.30 am to noon	Church Open
	11.00 am – 11.30 am	Communion led by Rev Liz
	12.15 pm – 12.45 pm	Baptism of Cecily Cox

Opening Times and Services - St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 26 th July	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Morning worship led by Graham Wigley
Wednesday 29 th July	10.00 – Noon	Church open for private prayer and reflection <i>Please see notes below</i>
Sunday 2 nd August	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Communion led by Rev John <i>If needed a second Communion service will take place at 11.30 am, please see below for more details.</i>

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 has been undertaken to enable Communion to be offered from 2nd August. The Communion services will look and feel very different to the services you have been used too.

Whenever possible Communion will be offered at our churches on alternate weeks. In line with guidelines only Communion wafers will be distributed, the priest leading the Communion service will take both wine and wafer.

Due to the restrictions on space and to ensure the safety of all concerned it is not possible for Communion to be taken at the Communion Rail in Stonnall, Communion will be brought to you while you remain in your pew. Communion will take place during the half hour led worship times.

Dates of Communion services during August

2 nd August	11.00 am St John the Baptist Shenstone, led by Rev Liz 10.30 am St Peter's Stonnall, led by Rev John *
9 th August	10.30 am St Peter's Stonnall, led by Rev Liz*
23 rd August	11.00 am St John the Baptist Shenstone, led by Rev John
31 st August	10.30 am St Peter's Stonnall, led by Rev Liz and Rdr Ray Chamberlain*

***Please note – it is important you 'book in' to the services at St Peter's Church Stonnall. As we are maintaining 2m social distancing in St Peter's Church we can only accommodate 16 people at a service. All service leaders are very happy to lead two services on any given Sunday, but we need to know who intends to come to church.**

There is no need to 'book in' at St John the Baptist, it is possible for more people to be safely socially distanced inside this church.

Midweek Church Opening.

During July both our churches have been opened for a few hours each Wednesday. Both churches have had stewards on duty during these hours however very few people have visited either church, and some sessions no visitors have come to the churches. I will be discussing whether to continue midweek opening with both PCCs in the next few days. If you have any views regarding mid week church opening, please let me know. (Rev Liz 01543 480286).



News from the Church of England – current as at 24th July 2020

- Public acts of worship within church are now allowed to take place, subject to certain conditions.
- Worshippers are strongly encouraged to wear a mask while inside the building.
- Weddings, funerals and baptisms are now permitted to take place within churches, subject to certain conditions.
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

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.
- 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 give thanks for the families that worship in our churches and we particularly think of Cecily Cox as we prepare for her baptism; to take place 12.15 pm, 2nd August at St John the Baptist Church
- 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 as they prepare for the school summer break. We ask for patience and strength for all families.
- We thank you for all key and frontline workers. Protect them Lord
- We give thanks that Jean Tidman is now back at home.
- We hold families recently bereaved in prayer and ask for comfort and strength for them in their time of need. In particular we think of Jean Bishop's family. We hold Pauline Tipton in prayer following the death of her daughter.
- We ask for healing for Joan Terry falling a fall, and continued healing for Kylan.

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, Tuesday 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.

UCB Bible Study Notes – are available from Rev John, please collect from 4 Fotherley Road, Shenstone.

Our readings for this Sunday are;

Romans 8:26-39

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-33,44-52

Jesus put before the crowds another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Songs for today

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, Be still for the presence of the Lord

Thoughts for today – by Curate Graham Wigley

Gods Kingdom...Humble beginnings and Discipleship.

When I was growing up, me and my younger brother spent a lot of our time watching a certain type of film. about an underdog who goes on to do great things. This was a big theme in films in the 80's and the 90's when we were kids.

So, usually there's a young kid, from humble beginnings, most likely bullied at school, no one sees any worth in them and then, you know, they end up being the hero and they save their school from destruction by aliens, or something like that. And this very idea, that Hollywood told us about, of humble, of small and undervalued beginnings is one of two messages about God's Kingdom that I think we can take from what Jesus is saying today in our reading from Matthew.

So, we have Five parables from Jesus in today's reading.

The first, is the parable mustard seed and the Yeast, where We message one. (humble beginnings)

The next set are about hidden treasures, where we get message two, which is the cost of our discipleship and following Jesus and how to find God's Kingdom.

Now, when we think of the Kingdom of God, we would be forgiven to think that it is all about Heaven where God lives, and we'll all get there at the end. But Jesus is talking to his followers about God's Kingdom now. God's Kingdom on Earth confronting evil, and how this all starts with something small and undervalued.

The mustard seed and Yeast are fairly mundane things. On their own, they don't produce anything of worth, or anything that can be measured by the world's standards. A mustard seed can't go out and bring profit or military power. But Jesus is talking about the work that he and his disciples were doing then.

Their ministry was undervalued by many. They produced things that couldn't be measured by the rest of the world, but the end goal of that work was something much greater. The work they were doing was the just the seed that grew into the tree that gave life and nurture and shade to all around it.

But seeds take time to grow, and it is an organic process that, as far as I'm aware, will grow as it will.

But its beginnings were small.

God's kingdom has small beginnings. It's the small humble and overlooked birth of a baby born to a young mother in 1st century Israel. God became like us in a way that was unseen and overlooked. But the end was of greater worth than the beginning seemed.

But what about the parables about the treasure and the pearl?

Well, we have a person who finds treasure hidden in a field and sells everything they have to buy the field to get the treasure, and someone in search of pearls, and on finding one of great value sells everything they have to buy it.

These parables tell us of someone who is willing to get rid of everything they value to have this greater treasure, which is God's Kingdom. Now, it doesn't say that these people find the treasure or the pearl and add it to what they already have. Instead, they willingly surrender what they already have, or what they see as valuable, for the treasure. For God's Kingdom.

To put a modern take on this, If someone were to say to you, "I've found this really amazing thing in a shop in town and I'm going to sell my car and my house and my TV, and my Favourite Christmas jumper so I can buy it..." You'd probably think they were nuts.

But this is where we get to the truth about the worth of God's kingdom and how this worth is overlooked by world.

This worth that's found in truth, and love, and forgiveness and mercy and compassion. I think we only need to put the news on to see how little this is valued by parts of our world today.

Now, the message that comes from this is that there is a cost to discipleship. And that's a very hard message to hear. Now the cost isn't necessarily financial, that's just one image we have from our readings.

But God's Kingdom and the fruits of God's Kingdom, are worth far more than anything the world might say is of worth. And sometimes, we must put down or 'sell' those things that we centre our lives around and put God and God's Kingdom there instead. Sometimes there are things we cling to and treasure that we don't need to cling to, because there is a greater treasure for us. There is a better life for us. And sometimes we need to reframe or change what we believe is truly of value. And although people may look at those who value the hidden treasure that is God's Kingdom, and think they are odd for valuing something that can't give you a holiday to Mauritius, the fruits of these small beginnings we might see now, are far greater than anything that some might focus their lives on.

This is our hope and our goal, that the small, overlooked or unseen seeds planted now, be that within our own hearts or the hearts of others around us, will one day grow into something beautiful, and something that gives life to others and that points to the love that God has for all of us.

God's Kingdom is unlikely and has small and unseen beginnings.

And, despite what we leave behind to follow God, be assured that your toils are not in vain. There is a greater treasure for us.

This is our Good news of God's Kingdom.

Amen.

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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

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