



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



10th Sunday after Trinity – 16th August 2020

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

We live in an ever-changing world at the moment with guidelines changing along with it. Following very recent changes to comply with the latest guidelines it is mandatory for you to wear a mask while you attend public worship. You will of course be already used to wearing a mask while you shop so wearing a mask in church may not cause you any issues, but please speak to me or one of the wardens if you are exempt from wearing a face mask.

With all Blessings

Rev Liz

01543 480286



Collect Prayer – 10th Sunday after Trinity

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be
persistent in prayer, give us
patience and courage never to
lose hope, but always to bring our
prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Please note
Rev Liz and Ray are on
holiday from 15th August to
25th August.**

Opening Times and Services - St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 16 th August	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Morning Worship led by Carol Law
Sunday 23 rd August	10.30 am to noon 11.00 -11.30	Church Open Communion led by Rev John
Sunday 30 th August	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Morning Worship led by Curate Graham Wigley

Opening Times and Services - St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 16 th August	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Morning Worship led by Patsy Toulouse
Sunday 23 rd August	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Morning Worship led by Alan Bateman
Sunday 30 th August	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church open Communion led by Rev Liz and Rdr Ray Chamberlain

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.

St Peter's Church – booking in

If you've attended worship at St Peter's Church Stonnall this week (16th August) and intend to come next week (23rd August) please 'book your place for next week' before you leave church today. If you forget to do this please call or email Curate Graham Wigley on

Telephone 0121 352 0899 or

Email; curate@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk

At the risk of sounding like a theatre box office 'the booking line will close Friday 21st August'.

Joyfully, we are at capacity at St Peter's Church. We want to be able to welcome all who would like to worship with us, and we are very willing to run a second service if this is required.

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. Our PCCs have prayerfully considered mid week church opening and have made the decision to cease this from August onwards.



News from the Church of England – current as at 14th August 2020

- Public acts of worship within church are now allowed to take place, subject to certain conditions.
- It is mandatory that worshippers 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>
- APCMs need to be held by 31st October, more details and dates will follow shortly.

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 pray for the people living in Beirut, and all affected by the recent explosion.
- 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.

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 11:1-2a, 29-32

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now^[k] receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the

crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Songs for today

Everyone needs compassion, Will you come and follow me

Thoughts for today – by Carol Law

When I first read this passage from Matthew my heart sank. 'Oh no, this is not a passage I want to be speaking on, this is not the Jesus I know and love.' I have to be honest and say that I don't find this Jesus very likeable – he firstly ignores a woman in pain, he then speaks over her in derogatory terms and uses words that are distinctly racist. Not what I expect from Jesus. I'd rather have my cosy, warm and loving Jesus – the one who shows compassion and mercy at the drop of a hat!

And then there's the disciples in this story – they too show a distinct lack of compassion, and they come across as arrogant and dismissive, they just want her gone. I want my disciples to be sitting earnestly at the feet of Jesus, learning from him and showing the love of God to others in need. This is a deeply uncomfortable passage and we have to go with the discomfort if we are to discover what it is all about.

Let's start by setting the scene. Jesus was nearing the end of his public ministry, he's tired, he's weary and he needs some space. He needs space to prepare himself and his disciples for what is to come. And so he needs to get away from the crowds of people following him everywhere and making demands on him. He needs to get away from the Scribes and the Pharisees who are constantly badgering him. And so he takes them off somewhere where they won't be disturbed, where no-one will expect him to perform. He takes them to Tyre and Sidon, non-Jewish areas – Gentile territory! The only time in the whole of the gospels that we find Jesus in Gentile territory.

So immediately the disciples were out of their comfort zone – to them this was bandit country and all their safety nets as Jews were removed here. They were amongst the Gentiles with whom they had nothing in common and they were probably feeling nervous and agitated by being in such strange surroundings. But if rest is what they were looking for then

they weren't going to find it. Immediately a woman starts shouting at them, and the woman is not a Jew, she's a Gentile, and not just a Gentile but a Canaanite – ancestral enemies of the Jews.

No self-respecting woman would talk to a man the way she was talking to Jesus – let alone a Gentile woman talking to a Jewish man before being spoken to. So all the social rules of the day are being broken here – and everyone in this story – the disciples, Jesus and the woman – are outside of their comfort zone.

So, that's our starting point, now let's look at the story:

Jesus & the disciples arrive in Tyre & Sidon for their little holiday, when immediately a woman comes running after them shouting at them – 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering greatly.' A deafening silence – Jesus totally ignores her – how could he ignore this anguished woman? The disciples take his silence to mean he doesn't want anything to do with her and they urge him to 'send her away, she keeps following us and yelling – it's embarrassing.'

He ignores them also, and starts a dialogue with the woman that in today's climate would be truly shocking. He starts by defining his mission - 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel', in other words 'I was only sent to the Jews, not the Gentiles – and you're a Gentile'. Wow! That's a bit brutal isn't it?

I suspect the woman was well aware of that, but she's a desperate mum and her daughter needs help, she's not going to be easily deterred, and so she turns her earnest plea into an earnest prayer. She falls at his feet and begs 'Lord, help me!'

This is the moment isn't it – the moment when we just know that Jesus will be filled with compassion, he'll lift her to her feet and say 'woman your daughter is healed'.

Oh no it isn't, and in fact everything turns from bad to worse, he insults her and humiliates her in front of his friends - 'It isn't right for the dogs to eat the food from the children's table'. He likens her to a dog, less than human, a derogatory term used by the Jews about the Gentiles.

This poor woman...but she's made of stern stuff, and as quick as a flash she replies 'Even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.'

And at this point I think Jesus smiled! I know that nowhere in the Bible does it say that Jesus smiled, but he loved a bit of banter and this woman has played him at his own game.

'Woman your faith is great, your request is granted' – her daughter was healed. Phew – at last, the Jesus I know and love is back!

This is a story of great faith – coming from an unlikely source - persistent, unshakeable faith not from a Jew, not from a follower but from a Gentile, an outsider. Her impressive faith opens the door and the Kingdom of God breaks in.

We too were once outsiders, we are the Gentiles and Jesus came specifically to the Jews. He came to fulfil God's promise to his chosen people, the people of Israel. He promised them he would send them a Messiah, a Saviour. Jesus didn't come to be a sort of 'flying doctor' healing all and sundry. If he had have done that then his promise to the Jews would not have been his chosen people. But when he died on the cross and rose again everything changed and all the barriers came tumbling down, and as he went back to heaven he commanded his disciples to spread the Good News to all the world. We are no longer outsiders, in fact there are no outsiders now – the love of God is for everyone, and that includes you and me!

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