



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



12th Sunday after Trinity – 30th 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 – 12th Sunday after Trinity

God of constant mercy,
Who sent your son to save us:
Remind us of your goodness,
Increase your grace within us,
That our thankfulness may grow,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Opening Times and Services - St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 30 th August	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Morning Worship led by Curate Graham Wigley
Sunday 6 th September	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Communion led by Rev Liz and Rev John A
Sunday 13 th September	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Morning Worship led by Rdr Alan Bateman
Sunday 20 th September	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Communion led by Rev Liz and Curate Graham Wigley
Sunday 27 th September	10.30 am to noon 11.00 – 11.30	Church Open Morning Worship led by Rdr Ray Chamberlain

Opening Times and Services - St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 30 th August	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church open Communion led by Rev Liz and Rdr Ray Chamberlain
Sunday 6 th September	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Morning Worship led by Curate Graham Wigley
Sunday 13 th September	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Communion led by Rev Liz and Rdr Ray Chamberlain
Sunday 20 th September	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00	Church Open Morning Worship led by Patsy Toulouse
Sunday 27 th September	10.00 – Noon 10.30 – 11.00 12.15 pm	Church Open Communion led by Rev John A Private Baptism

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 (30th August) and intend to come next week (6th September) 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 4th September'.

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 29th 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. For life events only 30 people may attend.
- <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 – current as at 29th August 2020

- 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 areas of our world where violence and disruption is rife. We particularly think of America at this time
- We hold Lisa and Ian in prayer following their wedding at St Peter's Church yesterday. Thank Lord that this day was able to happen.
- 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.

Graham Wigley

At long last a date for Graham's ordination has been finalised. It will be at Lichfield Cathedral, 26th September at 11.00 am. Due to restrictions the service is sadly a private one and Graham is allowed two guests only. However its planned that the service will be live streamed and once these details are available they will be made known. Graham and Rev Liz will visit both churches on Sunday 27th September to enable both congregations to pray for him and wish him well.

St Johns Hall

St Johns Hall has been closed since lockdown restrictions came into being. Over the lockdown period some major refurbishment works have been undertaken. A new kitchen has been installed (made possible by a

legacy donation from Joan Burney of £5000, a generous donation Shenstone Parish Council which has covered the cost of buying the units, donations from Friday Friends and Shenstone WI) and a new ramp to enable wheelchair and pushchair access. Its thought that the hall will be open again from mid September, although usage will be subject to restrictions. We're very excited to open the hall once more for community use.

Veronica Raybould has taken on the role of Church Hall Administration and she will be the person to contact for all bookings. Her contact details are 01543 480756 vbraybould@gmail.com.

Our readings for this Sunday are;

Romans 12:9-end

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;¹ do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 16:21-end

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Songs for today - O Praise the name, Amazing Grace (my chains fell off)

Thoughts for today – by Curate Graham Wigley

About a year ago, I bumped into one of my old customers from my last job, and he was asking what I was doing now I had left the world of retail. So, I told him that I was training to be a Priest, then there was the classic pause, and finally he said, "oh, wow, ok. So, what do you need to give up then?" That was his first question. In other words, how do I have to live to now? Can you live like a regular human, or is it a life where you deny the world and sacrifice everything to follow heavenly and spiritual pursuits? This feeds into our message from Matthews Gospel today. How we live as disciples, and does it mean that we deny to world and seek suffering? Well, there's one line here that I think we, or non-Christian culture hears and can mis interpret. "Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Now, there is a big danger with this line, especially amongst Christians, and that is that we have to suffer to follow Christ. And we risk falling into the trap of romanticising suffering, making it an idol and seeking it out, or even, saying that our suffering is somehow necessary or part of God's great plan, even though we are unhappy and we know it isn't. I suppose it's where we get that saying, "we all have our crosses to bear". Life dishes out enough challenges and suffering on it's own, so why would God ask us to seek it out.

Well, here, Jesus isn't telling his disciples to seek out suffering and to deny creation, which God made and called good. Instead, Jesus is telling his followers what it looks like to be a disciple. It doesn't mean to deny being human, to reject being a person that lives in the world and to make yourself suffer as you do that.

It means we must live in a way that is slightly out of step with the rest of society. A way that does not conform to what the world says is good, like greed, credit, condemning refugees who are fleeing war...the list goes on.

Now, the words that Jesus used, "take up your cross" he used because In 1st century Israel, crucifixion was a punishment given to those who challenged the empire, who stood up against the oppression and basically lived a life like that of Christ. It was the consequence that awaited Christ, and any who followed him. And here, Christ is calling us to be a people who forgive and love each other, to challenge the status quo and live counter culturally.

Paul, in our Romans reading, almost lays out a list of how we are to live and what it looks like to take up your cross and follow Christ. Now, this might look lovely or even easy when we read it, but we hear these lines...

"Do not repay evil for evil", and "if your enemies are hungry, feed them". This is counter cultural. This is what taking up the cross and following Christ looks like. This is the alternative way of life that we are invited into by Christ.

Notice there's nothing here about guilt. Nothing about giving up certain foods, or drink or feeling guilty for being happy. I think the challenge is far, far greater than that. The challenge is to love each other as God loves us.

Now that's a big statement. Christianity has a terrible image problem. It involves guilt and shame, and self-flagellation, and denying the physical world because its

bad, and only seeking to be highly spiritual people. Well that's wrong. Creation is good as well as the spiritual. God does not want us to suffer. We know that God is alongside us when we suffer. God came to earth as a human to help people who suffer! So, this message isn't about seeking suffering, but about alleviating the suffering of ourselves and of others by showing them love, and compassion and friendship, and forgiveness.

So, our challenge is simple but hard. To follow Christ, to take up our cross is to live in a way that is counter cultural. It is to challenge oppression, to feed the hungry, to give shelter to refugee. It is to love your neighbour. It's to comfort your friend who is in pain. It's also to love your enemy.

Now, this isn't a popular way of living. We turn on the TV and we see people condemning each other. People telling those who are homeless or poor to just get a job, instead of helping them.

We see adverts that promote debt, people that advocate war, and a society that repays evil with evil. And what do we see as a result? The same cycle of pain and suffering over and over again.

Now, hold this up next to the life that Christ asks us to live, which is a way of love, compassion and forgiveness and there we see a chance to break that cycle. Now, the examples I just gave are about society as a whole, but this also works on an individual basis.

When we live the way of the cross, we love, forgive and show compassion, we end a cycle of pain for ourselves and for others. This is what freedom from sin looks like. This is who we are. This is who you are. A people who seek to stand against violence and hatred and bitterness, meanwhile being reminded that we are only copying the actions and the deeds of one other. God.

A God who walks alongside us in our own pain. A God who hears our prayers and our cries when the world seems dark.

This is our calling to follow Christ, to take up our cross and live just as Christ did, by loving each other, just as God loves us.

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

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Facebook: St John the Baptist Shenstone and St Peters Church Stonnall