



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



Sunday 2nd May 2021 The Fifth Sunday of Easter

**Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

As you know our public worship can now resume which is very good news! There are of course restrictions still in place regarding social distancing and wearing of masks.

We do look forward to seeing you at church, but we do ask that if you are feeling unwell or showing any symptoms of Corona virus, then please do stay at home and keep yourselves and others safe.

Rev Liz
01543 480286

Collect for Sunday 2nd May

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

May Services

St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 2 nd May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Rev Liz and Carol Law
Sunday 9 th May	10.45 am	Communion Service led by Rev John A
Sunday 16 th May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Ray Chamberlain
Sunday 23 rd May	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev Graham and Rev Liz
Sunday 30 th May	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev Liz and Ray Chamberlain

St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 2 nd May	10.45 am	Communion service led by Patsy Toulouse and Rev John A
Sunday 9 th May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Rev Liz The APCM will be part of this service
Sunday 16 th May	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev Liz
Sunday 23 rd May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Patsy Toulouse
Sunday 30 th May	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev Graham and Rev John A

These dates and times are subject to change at short notice should government guidance change. If that should be the case every effort will be made to communicate changes to you as quickly as possible.

APCM- Our APCM's are coming up! Here is a handy timetable with all the dates and deadlines:

APCM timetable	Shenstone	Stonnall
APCM date	20/05/2021	09/05/2021
Notice of meeting on door by	02/05/2021	18/04/2021
Nominations for PCC members to be received by	20/05/2021	09/05/2021
Nominations for Wardens to be received by	19/05/2021	08/05/2021
TAR circulated by	01/05/2021	18/04/2021
Accounts to be approved	30/04/2021	
Notice of ER	16/04/2020	09/04/2021
Electoral Roll on Board for review	05/05/2021	04/04/2021
ER taken down as complete		
Revised Roll displayed	12/05/2021	18/04/2021

PCC and Deanery Synod Members

The APCMs for both our churches are almost upon us. Both churches have vacancies for PCC and Deanery Synod members. The PCC is the group that manages the day to day running of the church. The Deanery Synod is this group that is involved in the running of the Lichfield Deanery. If either of these roles are something you would like to know more about, then please speak with either Rev Liz or one of the Church Wardens.

Morning Prayer

Rev Liz and Rev Graham say Morning Prayer together, in our churches at 9.30 am Tuesday to Friday. This short 15 mins service is live streamed to both FaceBook pages. You are very welcome to join them at this time – you won't be on screen although your voice might be heard! The services start to be livestreamed promptly at 9.30 am if you happen to join after 9.30 am you're still very welcome but 'cheery hellos' need to wait till the livestream ends.

Morning Prayer is at St John the Baptist church Tuesday and Thursday and at St Peters Church Wednesday and Friday.

Communion in church - We are really happy to be able to celebrate Communion once more. Communion will be in 'one kind' only, so that means only wafers will be distributed. This is to comply with Church of England instructions still in place. Masks must be worn inside church, singing of hymns is not yet permitted and social distancing restrictions should be complied with. Please be aware that Stage 1 restrictions are still in place until 17th May.

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 safety for all as we prepare to enter the next stage of the roadmap out of lockdown.
- We thank you Lord for all those who are assisting with recording and distributing of recorded services.
- We hold in prayer the country of India as a further wave of coronavirus takes hold. We pray for safety for all medical staff and for supplies to be available.
- We pray for both schools in our benefice Greysbrooke School and St Peter's School. We thank for all teaching and support staff.
- We pray for the roll out of the vaccine and all who are involved in the administration of this. Thank you for large venues such as the cathedral being made available for this.
- We pray for the family of Richard Tearle, especially for Sam, Jamie, Molly and Alfie as they go through this difficult time.
- We pray for all of those mourning the recent loss of Joan Norton, especially her husband David.
- We thank you Lord for Tim Cox and pray that the move to his new home went well.
- We pray for all those known to us in need of the Lord's comfort and strength we pray for all those known to us in need of comfort.
- We have some weddings taking place this year that were postponed from last year. Please pray for Robert and Emma as they prepare for their wedding Saturday 8th May, at St Johns Church.

Prayer Ministry and Chat

If you would like prayer for any reason at all, then there is an opportunity for someone to pray with you. Di Proctor is happy to pray with you over the telephone. You might just fancy a chat with someone and Di is very happy to do that as well!

Prayer and Chat time will be Mondays, between 10.00 and 11.00 am. You can reach Di on 01543 480442. The first time you call Di you will be asked to say your name, and there will be a short wait while you are connected. *(All prayers are in confidence; however Di is obliged to report any safeguarding issues, should they arise, to Rev Liz/Tina Powell, the Benefice Safeguarding Officer)*

Rev Graham Priesting Service

Rev Graham will be Priested 23rd June 2021 at St Matthews Church, Walsall. Rev Graham has not been told yet if guests can attend this service, but as soon as this is known it will be announced.

There will be a joint Communion Service 27th June, at St John the Baptist Church starting at 10.45 am (there won't be a service at St Peter's on that day). Rev Graham will be presiding over Communion for the first time so please do join us if you are able. More details to follow.

Tim Cox

Many of you will know Tim Cox who lived in Shenstone and used to worship at St Johns Church till his health deteriorated so much getting up the hill to St Johns was proving difficult. Tim, as many of you know, continued to worship with our friends at Trinity Methodist Church. Tim's health is now at the point where he has decided he needs more care and so he's moved into residential care. A card has been sent from church, but if you would like to send an individual card to Tim, Rev Liz has his new address.

Songs for Sunday – I the Lord of sea and sky, You are the vine

Bible Readings for Sunday:

Acts 8:26-end

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south^[g] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." ³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"^[h] ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip^[i] baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes^[a] to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed^[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become^[c] my disciples.



Vineyard in Israel from Rev Liz's trip in 2009

Thoughts for today by Carol Law

Well this is a story for you gardeners out there – just wish I was one of them – where's Alan Titchmarsh when I need him. I bet Alan Titchmarsh could preach a great sermon on this passage. But he's not here, you've got me and I don't feel qualified!

Having said that we once did have a vine on patio in the garden – we didn't plant it to grow grapes or produce wine but to create a little oasis of shade so that I could sit in the sunshine without getting burnt. We didn't look after it very well, I'd hesitate to say that we ever gave it a good prune, all we ever did was chop off the dangly bits when it got out of control and tangled up – which it did on a regular basis. Needless to say the fruit was pretty inferior – we did get grapes but they were like shrivelled up peas and tasted disgusting. The product of neglect, I fear.

So when I knew I was to speak on this passage I decided I needed to do a bit of research and what I discovered was that vines are high maintenance – they need a lot of attention if they are to be productive and grow good fruit.

They grow luxuriantly (I can testify to that) and therefore need severe pruning on a regular basis - just chopping off the dangly bits was never going to be enough.

A young vine is not allowed to fruit for the first three years and is cut back drastically each year to develop and conserve its energy. When it's mature it is pruned in December and January. But here's the really important bit – a Vine bears two different kinds of branch – one that produces fruit and one that doesn't. The fruitless branches are cut off, and disguard, so that they don't drain away any of the plants strength, whilst the fruitful branches are pruned to encourage more fruit.

I hope you're all impressed with that – because I'm quite impressed with myself! Almost makes me want to go out and buy another vine to have another go – but I'll resist that temptation!

So, with that in mind, what we have here is Jesus talking in picture language, he's painting a picture that would immediately resonate with his listeners. Because the vine was part of the religious heritage of the Jewish nation – over and over again in the Old Testament Israel is pictured as the vineyard of God – a vineyard that according to the

prophet Isaiah had run wild, was out of control – bit like mine in the garden!

Jesus would have known all about vines – they grew all over Palestine, and still do. So when he talks about the two different kinds of branches, he's likening them to two different kinds of followers – those who stay close to him, abide in him, remain in him, and therefore produce fruit and those who don't, those who drift away and become useless.

In the first instance Jesus was speaking about the Jews – the branches of God's vine – a picture commonly used in the Old Testament – they refused to listen to him; they refused to accept him – and therefore they were withered, useless branches and would be discarded.

But in more general terms he was speaking of all of his followers – his followers then and his followers now – us. So you know what the question is for us this morning don't you – what sort of branches, what sort of followers, are we? Are we fruitful or not – are we all leaves and no fruit?

Don't try to answer that question now and possibly depress yourself! First of all let's think a little bit about what 'fruitfulness' is and what it might look like. If you're anything like me my first thoughts are about churchy things – like ministry, church roles, evangelism, telling people about Jesus – and of course it's very important that someone tells people about Jesus or how else will they ever find out. But fruitfulness is not limited to churchy things, there are many other ways of being fruitful.

Last month I subscribed to Spring Harvest at Home – it was excellent. During one of the evening celebrations they interviewed well-known author and theologian Mark Greene – and he was talking about this very subject, 'Fruitfulness' – he's written a book 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline' – Making a difference where we are. And in it he suggests that there are many simple ways of being fruitful and bringing glory to God.

We all know that the fruit of an apple tree is an apple; of a pear tree a pear; so surely logic tells us that if Jesus is the vine and we are the branches they produce the fruit of the vine – then the fruit must look like Jesus – it must taste like Jesus – have the fragrance of Jesus – care like

Jesus and love like Jesus. In other words if we are to be the fruit of the vine then we should model Jesus.

But how do we do that, and where do we do that? Well according to Mark Green we do it on the Frontline – now you're wondering 'what's a frontline', 'I don't have a frontline'. But apparently you do – we all do because a 'frontline' is a place where we meet people on some sort of regular basis who don't know Jesus. It will be different for each one of us depending on our circumstances, but we all have a place where we can model Jesus and make a difference. Indeed some of us will have more than one frontline.

For some of us it will be our place of work – making a difference by the way we do your job – cheerfully without whinging, honestly, and with integrity.

For others it might be at the school gate – a parent, a carer, a grandparent picking up children from school – perhaps we could be the one who rather than joining the crowd looks out for the person standing on their own, the one that doesn't quite fit in with the yummy mummies – offering friendship and a listening ear.

Or maybe it's the corner shop in the village – perhaps we pop in for your daily paper, or a bottle of milk – making a difference by being polite, friendly and helpful– paying our paper bill on time.

It could be the gym, the social club or the pub, it could even be down the Villa – a place where we can make new friends, friends who don't know Jesus. Maybe we could lead by example - sometimes we can make a difference simply by the way we don't behave! Not allowing ourselves to get drawn into gossip; not using bad language or telling dirty jokes; not getting drunk.

And if you are now sitting thinking 'but I don't go to any of those places, I don't really get out at all', then maybe your frontline could be your telephone line – maybe you could identify people who are housebound or lonely who would love to hear a friendly voice on the other end of the line. Give them a call just for a chat. Your 'frontline' could be a 'lifeline' to someone.

There are so many ordinary, simple ways of making a difference and bringing glory to God. You might think 'yes, but it's not the same as

talking to people about Jesus is it?' Well often our actions speak far louder than our words.

Paul writing to the Galatians tells us that the fruits of the Spirit are **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self control** – it's not an exhaustive list, in other places **perseverance and generosity** are added. You will notice not a mention of Church!

We must never underestimate the power of the way in which we interact with people we meet – we should be the people who model Jesus, we should be the joyful people; the glass half full people; the positive people.

That's 'fruitfulness' – we never know where it might lead - we just plant the seeds and leave the rest to God – the gardener!

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