



Pews News

United Benefice of Shenstone & Stonnall



Sunday 6th & 13th June 2021 **First & Second Sunday after Trinity**

This week PEWS NEWS is a double edition and next new one will be for Sunday 20th June.

As you know we were unable to open Shenstone Church last Sunday as it was thought a number of people had been in contact with someone with Covid 19. Thankfully all those concerned have continued to be well and tests taken have all been negative. It though, a reminder to us all that we are not fully out of the woods yet. It is great we can once more worship together in our churches but if you feel unwell for any reason please do stay at home.

Rev Liz
01543 480286

Collect for Sunday 6th June

God of truth,
help us to keep your law of love
and to walk in ways of wisdom,
that we may find true life
in Jesus Christ your Son.

Amen

Collect for Sunday 13th June

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

May & June Services

St John the Baptist, Shenstone

Sunday 6 th June	10:45 am	Morning Worship led by Rev Graham
Sunday 13 th June	10:45 am	Communion service led by Rev John P and Di Proctor
Sunday 20 th June	10:45 am	Morning Worship led by Rev Graham
Sunday 27 th June	10:45 am	Communion service led by Rev Liz and Rev Graham

St Peter's Church Stonnall

Sunday 6 th June	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev John A and Patsy Toulouse
Sunday 13 th June	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Rev Graham
Sunday 20 th June	10.45 am	Communion service led by Rev Liz and Patsy Toulouse
Sunday 27 th June	10.45 am	No service at St Peters Joint service at St John the Baptist

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.

We are really pleased to welcome you in church but ask that if you are feeling unwell or showing any symptoms of coronavirus, then please stay at home to keep yourselves and others safe.

Church Warden – St John the Baptist

A Church Warden is appointed by the PCC to be the Bishops' Officer and assists the Incumbent in the day to day running of the church. Bill Whitney's term of office has ended and so we need to appoint a new warden. Miranda Bonnielauri has been re-elected as Church Warden, leaving a vacancy for a Church Warden

If this role is something you would like to know more about, then please speak with Rev Liz.

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 2 restrictions are still in place until 21st June.

Our Prayers

- We pray for all our Government, our Bishops and Clergy.
- We thank you for the Queen and the Royal Family.
- We thank you Lord for all those who are assisting with recording and distributing of recorded services.
- We pray for all those mourning. We think of the family of George Cooper, give them peace and comfort after the funeral service last Friday.
- We pray for all those known to us in need of the Lord's comfort and strength; we particularly pray for Linda Jenkins's nephew and his family, Jill and Paul Harris, Carol and Ian law, Graham and Margaret Birt and their family, and for Cynthia Stokes.
- As term restarts we thank the Lord for our schools, the teachers, the support staff; may this new half term be a time of blessing for all.

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). After the service you are welcome to bring a picnic lunch and we will gather together on the Glebe land or in the church hall if the weather is inclement. Tea, Coffee and cakes will be provided.

Rev Graham will be presiding over Communion for the first time so please do join us if you are able. More details to follow.

Holiday and Retreat Dates

Rev Liz and Ray are on annual leave from 5th - 17th June. If you have any pastoral issues in that time please call Rev Graham. His number is at the back of PEWS NEWS

Rev Graham will be on his pre-priesting retreat from 17th - 19th June. We pray that this will be a time of refreshment for Rev Graham.

Home Communions

Home Communions will be starting again in July, depending on social restrictions. If you would like home communion taken out to you or know anyone who would, then can you let Rev Graham know before the end of June.

Hip Op - To all those who have sent cards, got in touch to wish me a speedy recovery and for all the prayer prior to and after my hip replacement operation, a heartfelt thank you. For this second operation I did feel apprehensive, but the volume of prayer from all around brought confidence and peace. Please don't kick me off your list just yet, there are still a few 'hills to climb' and don't forget to include Carol who has the

task of looking after me (never an easy job when I'm at full health many would say)- God Bless, Ian Law

Songs for Sunday 6th June – Lord, the light of your love is shining;
Christ whose glory fills the skies

Bible Readings for Sunday 6th June:

2 Corinthians 4:13 - 5:1

13 But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. 15 Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Mark 3:20 – end

and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the

demons he casts out demons.” 23 And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

28 “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30 for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

The True Kindred of Jesus

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters[c] are outside, asking for you.” 33 And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Thoughts for today by Rev Graham

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

There are times when we open the Bible and we can either be greeted by a deeply troubling piece of text, or we find a text that is confusing and doesn’t seem to be explained very well. We have one of those confusing texts in our reading from Marks Gospel today. I’m referring to the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Sadly, I don’t think that mark does a great job of explaining what this blasphemy is. I found myself asking the question that if I don’t know what blasphemy against

the Holy Spirit looks like, then how will I know if I've done it? We will unpack this a little more soon, don't worry.

Let's start by looking at a broad overview of our reading from Mark today. To begin with, Jesus has just appointed the twelve disciples. He then decides to go back to his home in place called Capernaum. We then hear that his family are out looking for him, and they most likely are heading from Nazareth to Capernaum, which was about a 20-mile

journey on foot. Now, his family aren't coming for a friendly visit, but they are going to Capernaum to stop, or restrain, Jesus because they had heard they he was "out of his mind."

This is the first time in Mark's Gospel where we hear about Jesus' family. Mark shows us Jesus' Mother and his brothers, but no father. Joseph is nowhere to be seen. One possibility is that Joseph had passed away by this point in Jesus' life.

However, before his family arrive, Jesus is dealing with scribes from Jerusalem who are accusing Jesus of being in league with dark forces and it's by the power of these dark forces that Jesus casts out demons. The scribes also use a name for some kind of demon or evil spirit and the name they use is 'Beezelbul'. In modern western Christianity and culture, we may hear the name Beelzebub, and this name we often attribute to the devil figure in western Christianity today. But we don't see this name anywhere else in our Bible other than Luke's Gospel, and it certainly isn't another name for a devil. This name actually comes from the name of ancient Canaanite god from the Old Testament, the god called Baal.

We occasionally see this name crop up in the Old Testament, but in 2 Kings we see the name Baalzebub mentioned as mockery of the Canaanite god Baal. We also need to remember that the Canaanites were an ancient enemy of Israel, so to accuse Jesus of being in league the god of their ancient enemy is quite an insult and quite an accusation to make.

The reason that they are accusing Jesus of these things is because Jesus, unlike the Scribes, has not official authority. He isn't one of the scribes,

he's not part of the establishment, therefore the ministry and the healings performed by Jesus must be the result of him being in league with dark powers, or the god of their enemies. In other words, they are saying that Jesus' ministry comes from evil.

Now, this is where the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit comes in. As I said before I was often left confused about what this is, but to understand it we needed to unpack what the scribes said about Jesus' ministry. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then, is likely about denying that the Holy Spirit, God's Grace and healing power in the world is good.

In other words, the work of Christ does not come from God, but from evil.

Why then is this unforgivable? Well, a theologian called Tom Wright explains it like this; "If you decide firmly that the doctor who is offering to perform a lifesaving operation on you is in fact a sadistic murderer, you will never give your consent to the operation." Put simply, if we refuse to accept God's love and goodness, then we simply walk away from it. God does not withhold forgiveness; we refuse to accept it. How can you accept something if you perceive it to be evil? God is not angry at us for a specific sin, we just refuse to have forgiveness.

The idea that God denies us forgiveness or love is untrue. God is not a tyrant waiting for us to muck it up so we can be punished. But we often struggle to accept forgiveness, not only forgiveness from each other, but from God. I myself am guilty of this. But God is not naïve, God is not foolish. God knows what God is doing when God extended forgiveness to us. To deny that forgiveness or say that we don't deserve it, is to say that God is wrong to forgive.

God's forgiveness is always extended to us, it is good, and it is right, but we have to accept it, and that is our challenge. So, this week when you feel unworthy or unforgivable, remember this and accept that you are forgiven.

Amen.

Songs for Sunday 13th June – Hear the call of the Kingdom; I am a new creation.

Bible Readings for Sunday 13th June

2 Corinthians 5:6-10,(11-13)14-17.

6 So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil

14 For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 15 And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view;[b] even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view,[c] we know him no longer in that way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Mark 4:26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the

head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

The Use of Parables

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Please see the online service for the thoughts for today by Rev John A



Vicar – Rev Liz Chamberlain, 01543 480286 vicar@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk
 Curate - Rev Graham Wigley, 0121 352 0899 curate@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk
 Associate Minister: Revd John Aston, 01543 480388, bradston@btinternet.com
 St John the Baptist Church Wardens: - Bonnie 01543 480278 & Bill Whitney 01543 480652
 St Peter's Church Wardens: - Peter & Patsy Toulouse 01543 361778
 Parish Admin: - 01543 480286 admin@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk
 St John's Hall Bookings & Administration: - 01543480286 admin@shenstoneandstonnall.co.uk
 Website: www.stjohnthebaptistshenstone.org.uk
 Facebook: St John the Baptist Shenstone and St Peters Church Stonnall