



St John's, Stoneleigh Weekly Newsletter

Sunday 29th March

Collect

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

A MESSAGE FROM REV. KEN HOBBS

Welcome to the second bumper edition of the newsletter which comes to you in exceptional circumstances. If you are receiving this by email do forward it to anyone you know who might be interested and ask them to email the parish office if they would like to be a regular recipient. If you are receiving it by post do pass it on to someone else.

Our aim is to keep the St John's community together and to support and encourage one another in these worrying and anxious times. We have been instructed at the moment to close the church building but we can keep in touch via this newsletter; on Facebook; on the website and on the St John's WhatsApp group. Do contact the office for help with connecting with us. There is a weekly video message from me on the various platforms and a copy of the script is included at the end of the newsletter if you are unable to connect.

If you have an urgent need, I can still make a pastoral visit to you as long as we observe the now normal social distancing and sanitizing rules! Again, please contact me via the parish office.

This newsletter is carrying a powerful and poetic reminder that whatever the circumstances WE ARE THE CHURCH! If you have any Good News Stories to share do email them to the office and we will endeavour to print them, bearing in mind that they can also be added to Facebook, WhatsApp Group and the Website.

Ken

A Litany for the Dispersed Church

In our kitchens, in our lounge rooms. In our yards and in our streets:

We will always be the church

Tucked in bed or on the couch. In the garden, on the porch:

We will always be the church

When the news is bad or scary. When the pain is overwhelming:

We will always be the church

With our children and our elders. With our neighbours and with strangers:

We will always be the church

At computers and devices. On the phone or over the fence:

We will always be the church

When supplies are running low. When the hungry must be fed:

We will always be the church

When we hear misinformation. When the panic spreads too quick:

We will always be the church

Even when we're scared or lonely. Even when we're lost and broke:

We will always be the church

Filled with joy and hope and longing. Laughing loudly, smiling broadly:

We will always be the church

In the noise or in the silence – feasting, fasting, dancing, crying:

We will always be the church

When we're called to fight injustice. When we're called to speak up loudly:

We will always be the church

Generous giving, secret helping. Quiet, humble, acts of love:

We will always be the church

Until Christ returns in glory, when his kingdom knows no end:

We will always be the church

We will serve and persevere:

We will always be the church

We will always be the church:

We will always be the church

RELIGIOUS BROADCASTS

BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong Wednesdays at 3.30.p.m. and Sundays at 3.00.p.m.

BBC Radio 4 – Sunday morning services at 8:10am

BBC One – Sunday Worship at 11:30am

BBC One – Songs of Praise at 1:15pm

WHAT'S APP GROUP

St John's now has a What's App group. To join, please go to <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EhOW3GIH4027UnkycN4Eo6>

Rev. Ken Hobbs

REVISION OF ELECTORAL ROLL

The annual revision of the Electoral Roll will take place at the end of this month. If your name is already on the Roll you need do nothing further unless there are any changes to your details such as telephone numbers or email addresses. The Roll is a register of members of the congregation and others who live in the parish if they so wish. It entitles you to attend and vote at the Annual Parish Council Meeting. You must be over 16 and

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baptised to qualify. For more information call me, a churchwarden or Rev. Ken.

Lynda White (0208 393 2743)

CHURCH AND PARISH CENTRE

Please be reminded the Church and Parish Centre are both closed until further notice.

Please note the legal business of the APCM has been postponed until October 2020 for all parishes.



DON'T FORGET TO CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS

If you're anything like me, being out of routine will mean not knowing which day of the week it is so I thought I'd remind everyone that the clocks go forward this weekend. I don't know about you but I'm very much looking forward to having an extra hour of daylight.

Керrie Winter

Holy Communion on Easter Morning (April 12th)

For my video message for that day I propose to lead a short filmed version of Holy Communion. Do join in and you can prepare for that by having a glass of wine/juice and a piece of bread roll to hand so that together we can celebrate!

Rev. Ken Hobbs

KEEPING IN TOUCH

For many of us the next weeks and months are going to be difficult and stressful with worries about our families, friends and ourselves. Even though we can't meet face to face it will be important to keep in touch with our church family. If at any time you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed or need some practical help do give us a ring - even if just for a chat. We'd be very happy to hear from you.

Jean Tutton 020 8393 3687 and Joan Simon 020 8393 6155.

PRAYERS

As the church is now closed it is no longer possible to put prayer requests on the prayer board. If you do have a request which you would like to be included in the newsletter please either email Kerrie at office@stjohnsstoneleigh.org.uk or ring me and I will pass the details on to Kerrie.

Jean Tutton

LIGHT A CANDLE

Last Sunday the Archbishop of Canterbury asked us to light a candle in a window as part of a day of prayer, thank you to all those who joined in and shared photos on the WhatsApp Group. Some of us at St John's have decided to continue doing this every evening for as long as needed as a visible symbol that there is light in the darkness. Do join us!

Jean Tutton



FOODBANK

It's been much appreciated that so many people have tried to continue to support the Foodbank even though we have been coping with stripped shelves etc. I was able to take a fair sized donation of foodstuffs to the Resource Centre before we had to close the church.

Now, of course we can no longer put items in the box to be delivered as contributions from St Johns but I've checked with the Foodbank and they are planning to still collect from the dump bins in Sainsburys so please consider putting your donations in this way if you are able to get out and shop. Some people have asked how they can donate money instead. This is now especially useful as the Foodbank is going to have to purchase food to issue to the growing number of people relying on the service.

You can donate money in several ways.

1. open www.epsomewell.foodbank.org.uk and you'll see a red DONATE button, click on that and follow the instructions to pay online.

2. cheques should be made payable to Epsom and Ewell Foodbank and may be posted to Epsom and Ewell Foodbank, Generation Resource Centre, Ruxley Lane, Ewell KT19 0JG **Please put your name and address on the reverse.**

3. If you are unhappy with any of the above or prefer to give cash and you can get out or ask someone else to deliver, you may put your donation in an envelope marked 'for foodbank' and post it through my door 59 Highfield Drive and we'll get it to the Foodbank.

At the moment the Foodbank is surviving with its existing volunteers but they may have to train some people up to take over if volunteer numbers drop. If you wish to offer your services please do so through the website.

If it's at all possible for you to support the Foodbank please continue to do so; if you cannot, don't fret about it but please would you include the Foodbank in your prayers as it strives to cope with the huge effort required to help the people in need our local area. Thank you.

Polly Elder

WORSHIP AT HOME

Collect for the Day

If you able, do listen to a piece of Christian music- traditional or contemporary that encourages you. Can I suggest the 23rd Psalm "The Lord's my Shepherd". Either the traditional "Crimond" version or the contemporary piece by Stuart Townend which has the haunting refrain "And I will trust in you alone... your endless mercies follow me, your goodness will lead me home"

Reading Psalm 23 - The Divine Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;

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your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

Reflection

This psalm has brought hope and reassurance to men and women of all ages, of all walks of life, of faith and no faith, of young and old- read at the birth of a child; at a couple on their wedding day; at a hospital bedside; in the trenches of WW1; on the beaches of Dunkirk and in the smouldering ruins of Ground Zero in New York. Here are four pictures from this Scripture Reading

1 A picture of Caring

"The Lord is my Shepherd"

One of the distinguishing marks of the early church was how they cared for one another. In a beggar ridden culture "There was not a needy person among them" One of the features of this moment in our nation is the upwelling of care for those who are elderly and vulnerable from complete strangers. Within our church community we are called to care for others because we follow the Good Shepherd.

2 A picture of Calm-

"He leads me beside still waters"

The psalm speaks of peace and tranquillity- an inner rest. In a 24/7 culture where to be busy is to have moral worth, many of us are in an enforced period of rest. We have been urged to "stay at home" and if we are able, to take a time of outdoor exercise each day.

It is my prayer that you will find peace in trying and difficult circumstances

As I quoted in my podcast this week. **Jesus said "Peace I leave with you my peace I give to you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

3 A Picture of Comfort

There is something reassuring about the notion of security and protection- **"your rod and your staff they comfort me"**. People everywhere are looking for protection and security. It is difficult in the current world of "social distancing" to sense that without a personal touch or a face to face encounter. Yet in the face of everything that life can throw at us, the Psalm says three important words FEAR NO EVIL

4. A Picture of Closure

The psalm ends with a glimpse of the future. **"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me..."** It has been said that "death is just a horizon and what is a horizon but the limit of our sight". My prayer as you read this psalm is that you will find closure and you will find hope.

We all know the Christmas carol "O little Town of Bethlehem" Remember the words? **"Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light."** Life has its dark streets and its dark COVID moments yet in our uncertainty it can be our experience that **"the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight"**

There is a story about a stagecoach stranded in the snow and the weary travellers were forced to spend the night in an inn. Entertainment that evening was provided by "party pieces". At the end of the evening one of the travellers, a famous actor, was asked to recite the 23rd Psalm which he did with great gusto and panache. There was silence in the bar, punctuated only by the crackling of the log fire. An elderly resident then asked if he also could say the 23rd psalm. He stumbled his way through it. Then the actor spoke "I know the psalm. He knows the Shepherd!"

May we know the presence of the Good Shepherd in our lives this week.

Ken

Prayers

Some prayers for the beginning of the day

I/we pray for all for whom the pandemic and resulting changes make each day even more difficult:

- those who are facing war, conflict and displacements
- those who face each day with continuing mental, physical or emotional challenges
- families going through relationship difficulties and break-ups
- those who do not have enough money, anywhere to live or anyone to turn to
- those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies, that they may make wise decisions
- doctors, nurses, all healthcare professionals and medical researchers, that they will be safe and that, through their skill and insights, many will be restored to health

God of Love I/we place all your precious people into your hands today. Amen.

Lord God, whose Son Jesus Christ understood people's fear and pain before they spoke of them, I/ we pray for those in hospital; surround all who are frightened with your tenderness; give strength to those in pain; hold the weak in your arms of love; and give hope and patience to those who are recovering. I/we ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Christ be with me/us, Christ within me/us, Christ behind me/us, Christ before me/us, Christ beside me/us, Christ to win me/us, Christ to comfort and restore me/us. Christ beneath me/us, Christ above me/us, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me/us, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. Amen.

Some prayers for the end of the day

You may find it helpful and comforting to light a candle as you pray:

God the life of our world and I /we light this candle and pray that your love may be a light in the darkness of all this night. Enfold in your love and protection those:

- who are far from family, friends or loved ones
- who are isolated, lonely and worried

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- who are sick
- who are in hospital
- who struggle with pain, fear and sadness
- who are grieving this night
- who care for others, whether as family or friends, or as doctors, nurses, carers and all health professionals

May the peace of the Spirit be mine/ours this night
 May the peace of the Son be mine/ours this night
 May the peace of the Father be mine/ours this night
 The peace of all peace be mine/ours this night
 In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
 Amen.

From our Prayer Board: An end to the COVID-19 crisis, for all who are sick, for the medical staff and scientists.

Enid Stone RIP

Humankind to be more tolerant, thoughtful and decent to our planet and those who live on it.

From our Continuing Prayer List: Keith, James and Ian Webb

From our Remembrance Book: Peter Miles and Doris Eileen McDowall.

VIDEO MESSAGE

Hopefully you will have seen my video message from 22nd March 2020. This is available on the website and on Facebook. For those who haven't had the opportunity to view online, here is the script.

My name is Ken Hobbs and I am the minister of St Johns Stoneleigh. The church is open every day for prayer and reflection. Do keep in touch with us through email, the weekly newsletter. WhatsApp and Facebook. Each week during these challenging times I will be sharing a brief message of encouragement and hope. One definition of a leader is "a dealer in hope"

In the Old Testament the people of God were often under Immense pressure. In the time of Isaiah (around 700 BC) the northern kingdom of Israel had collapsed to the invading forces of Assyria and the smaller southern Kingdom of Judah was threatened by another superpower Babylon. This tiny kingdom was sandwiched between Babylon and the other superpower Egypt. These were times of great uncertainty, fear and stress- there was an air of foreboding about the future. There is nothing new under the sun!

Isaiah was a prophet in Jerusalem and he had messages for troubling times. Here is one

God says "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in You" (Is. 26.v3)

It is not just our circumstances, but how we think about them that robs us of peace. Focussing on our circumstances causes us more anxiety because circumstances constantly change and easily spin out of our control. However God never changes and nothing ever spins out of His control. Peace and worry ought to be mutually exclusive. Worry can throttle our confidence, choke our perspective and suffocate our spirits. Walking in Stoneleigh this week I hear only one topic of conversation and see worry on people's faces

Worry can so easily rob us of the peace of knowing a God who can handle everything and through whom all things are possible. Someone has said that "worry is a no confidence vote in God" We do not intend it that way. It is easy and even understandable to believe that God can't handle this for me. I just have to shoulder the burden and carry on and take care of the problem myself.

God is either the object of my trust or some part time helper to call on in an emergency. The story is told of an elephant and a mouse who walked over a rickety bridge in the forest. When they got to the other side the mouse announced, "Man we really shook that bridge!" When we see God as playing the major role and ourselves as the minor role, we can walk the COVID 19 bridge with peace and confidence and hope.

Jesus said "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.....Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"

May God bless you and may you know His peace this week.

Ken Hobbs

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