



St John's, Stoneleigh Weekly Newsletter

Sunday 17th May

Collect

Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

A MESSAGE FROM REV. KEN HOBBS

During this week we are looking at the difficult issue of where is God in this COVID crisis? I hope you found the video reflection and the material this morning helpful during this difficult time. Two very modestly priced books have just been published which are full of pastoral and scholarly insights. I commend them to you. You can order online from the websites **Where is God in a Coronavirus World?** John Lennox (The Good Book Company)

Healthy Faith and the Coronavirus Crisis An anthology published by IVP (Inter Varsity Press)

You will see that we have added a Zoom coffee morning each week on a Thursday at 10:30am. I hope you can join us. In the meantime, we await further direction from the Government and the Church of England about any reopening of our churches. Stay well; keep safe and God bless you.
Ken

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Don't forget you can keep in touch by joining the WhatsApp group, visiting our website and following us on Facebook. All your contributions to these groups during this time provide great encouragement to us all. For details of the website and where to find us on Facebook, please see the bottom of this page. To join the WhatsApp group, you will need a smartphone and to have installed WhatsApp. Please contact the office if you have any questions.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

KEEPING IN TOUCH AND PRAYERS

Please don't forget to call if you need some help during this time or if you would like to add something to the prayer board.

Jean Tutton 020 8393 3687

APCM

As you will be aware, all churches were asked to postpone their APCM. St John's APCM has been rescheduled and is currently due to take place on Sunday 11th October after the 10am service. More details will follow nearer the time.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

SUNDAY SERVICES

Don't forget you can join us live on Sunday at 10am using this link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86852818063>

For those of you who do not have access to the internet you can now join our Sunday Worship by phone.

Dial this phone number: 0203 051 2874

You will be asked to enter the meeting ID followed by # (hash).

Key in: 868 5281 8063#

You will be asked for a personal ID, just press # again and you will be connected to the Service.

If you want help with this speak to John Simon (phone 0775 187 4807).

John Simon

ZOOM

For those who are using a tablet or smart phone to join Sunday worship, Zoom has added some additional security which means that before the end of May you will need to update the application on your phone or tablet to Zoom 5. Click on these links and follow the instructions: Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/id546505307> Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=us.zoom.video> meetings Contact John Simon if you have any concerns.

John Simon 0775 187 4807

UPDATE ON CHURCH OPENING

Whilst the guidance received from the Diocese means that St John's must remain closed, it is promising that we have been advised that one clergy person and their household can enter the premises in order to hold services. Whilst this is good news, we at St John's are not in a position to broadcast services live from church so we will continue you in our usual manner with a live service on Sunday via Zoom. We will wait for further guidance from the Diocese and keep you updated.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

THURSDAY COFFEE MORNING

Each Thursday, St John's will be hosting a coffee morning via Zoom. Please join us at 10:30am using this link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83134817320>

The link will be the same each week.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

TRAIDCRAFT STOCK FOR SALE

We still have some food stock which we need to sell as the "sell by" dates approach.

Vanilla Fudge: 8 @ £1.55 each, best before end of August

Double Chocolate Chip Cookies: 4 @ £2.00 each, best before 17th June

Dry Pineapple: 2 @ £2.50 each, best before 11th June

Ginger Cookies: 8 @ £2.00 each, best before 6th June

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Zingy Lemon and Ginger Tea: 1 @ £2.20, best before 6th January 2022

We look forward to hearing from you and arranging contactless deliveries.
Veronica and Michael Gittins

'Thy Kingdom Come' - a prayer initiative led by the Church of England

This invites us to unite with Christians across the globe in praying for people to know Jesus. It will be held between Ascension and Pentecost, from 21st May to 31st May, with denominations in 85 countries praying at the same time, using the Lord's Prayer with the intention of evangelisation.

A key theme for individual Christians who **#pledgetoprayer (Twitter hashtag)** is 'Pray for Five'. Christians are praying for five people they know that at least one might become a follower of Jesus. Thy Kingdom Come is not prescriptive as to how that might happen and individual churches and groups of churches are encouraged to pray for their own ways of outreach.

For suggestions for churches, follow the Link to the website <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/>

There is a 'Light up the world in prayer' section with resources to equip churches to encourage others to pray and shine their light. One of these activities, is a map of the world, which it is suggested we could help to see filled with light; as each individual, family and church commit to pray, more lights will populate the map.

As members of St John's Church, we are asked by other churches throughout the world:

'Will you play your part, as we pray for the light of Christ to penetrate the darkness across the globe?'

What should be our response?

Rev. Ken and the Ministry Team will be discussing this, but we do not necessarily have all the ideas; **this is for us all as members of the church family to think about.** Let us think and pray about what we as individuals and as a church could contribute to this initiative. **Please do send any ideas to the office and/or Rev Ken and Joan Simon, and we'll look at how we might be able to implement and organise any suggestion.**
Joan Simon

DAILY HOPE

There is a free phone line 0800 804 8044, for hymns, reflections and prayers, provided by Guildford diocese, especially for people without access to the internet. It is called Daily Hope.
Janis Forder

RENE GRACE

Rene had a fall at home on Tuesday 12th May and has had an operation for a broken hip. She remains in hospital and is doing well. I will keep in touch with her family and will let you know of any updates.
Joan Simon

FOODBANK

In the past Kerrie has kindly waited for communications to come to us from the Foodbank before she could produce the newsletter. This has delayed the posting of the letter and some people have not had it in time for Sunday. In the future we will be one week behind with the Foodbank Request List for donations so this week there is no list - please use the one published in last week's newsletter.

Meanwhile I would like to thank the people who have found their way to our door to donate cash to help the Foodbank. They have come by car, bicycle and on foot and their efforts have been much appreciated. Thank you too for the kind donations made via Stoneleigh Baptist Church or the dump bins in the supermarkets. You are not only supporting the work of the Foodbank but I'm sure it heartens the staff who are working so hard to meet the increased demand. I'm afraid the need will continue to grow over the coming months and urge everyone to care for the community this way as much as you can.

There are many new families needing to use the Foodbank for the first time. Please note that all the centres are now all temporarily closed and they are operating a delivery service. If anyone is in receipt of a voucher they should contact the Foodbank with information about their households on one of the numbers below. If they cannot physically get a voucher they should contact their issuing agency who can contact the Foodbank. 0208 786 8221 or 07380 670263 or 07380 667995
Polly Elder

NEWSLETTER

Please note that we are aiming to get the newsletter out earlier in the week so those who do not have access to the internet or email can receive a paper copy in the post in time for the service on Sunday. With this in mind, any notices for the newsletter should be sent to the office by midday on a Wednesday. Many thanks.

Kerrie Winter

Worship at Home

"...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:22

Lord, teach us to have faith, because we know that without faith, it is impossible to please you. Thank you Lord that we know that when we believe that you exist and when we earnestly seek you, you will reward us. Amen.

Hymn In Christ Alone my hope is found

Confession

Let us return to the Lord our Heavenly Father and say to him:

Father,

We have done things that are wrong.

We have hurt and offended you and our fellow human beings,

We are not worthy to be called your children.

We want to turn away from the things which are wrong and turn back to you.

Have mercy on us,

Bring us back into your presence

As those who once were spiritually dead

But now have life through Jesus Christ. Amen

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Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

You are the creator of the heavens and the earth,
We thank you for your awesome wonder.

You control the winds and the seas,
We thank you for your majestic power.

You are the one who stands beside us,
We thank you for your incredible faithfulness.

You are the one who reaches out and protects us,
We thank you for your unending love.

God of grace and mercy:
**You know the storms of life that we face,
you hear our prayers as we call out to you.
Give us faith in your Son, Jesus Christ,
that we might trust you with our lives. Amen**

Song – This is Amazing Grace - Sarah Tutton

Reading Luke 13 1-5 read by Maggie Savill

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

Reflection

Many are asking "Where is God in this COVID crisis?" There is a danger for politicians and priests to spend their time answering questions that nobody is asking! But there is no escape from this one as the problem of pain and suffering has reverberated throughout human history. I have no slick or easy answers and only a relatively short time and space at my disposal today. As an earth scientist and amateur theologian and Biblical scholar I can only give a few perspectives and here they are!

1 A Scientific Perspective

COVID 19 is one of just over 20 viruses that wreak havoc with the human body. They are insignificant fraction of an estimated 100 million viruses that inhabit our earth and are vital to our very existence. They are a critical part of our life support system and most are not pathogenic. They are very similar in some ways to earthquakes and plate tectonics (I am on familiar

ground here!). Plate tectonics are essential for the formation of continents ; they preserve the balance between land and ocean; they act as a global thermostat recycling chemicals and maintaining a balance of CO₂ in the atmosphere and without them, mass extinction of life on earth would ensue. Yet earthquakes produce destruction and catastrophic loss of life!

2 A Historical Perspective

Plagues and pandemics are not new! Even in our time Public Health England tell us that on average in the last 5 years, 17000 people per year in the UK have died from seasonal flu. But we have been here before. The Antonine Plague lasted from AD 165-180 and killed an estimated 5 million people. The Justinian plague in AD 541 killed 25 million having spread from rats to humans via fleas! The Black Death of the 14th century killed between 70 and 100 million people and reduced the global population by an estimated 20 % The Spanish Flu of 1918-20 claimed up to 50 million lives, We have had Asian Flu, Bird Flu, Swine Flu. Ebola, SARS and HIV/AIDS . Over the centuries people have lived with epidemics of typhus, TB, Smallpox. Cholera and the rest. Our present situation is not a new situation but it is compounded by a travelling, globalised world population of over 7 Billion.

3. A Theological Perspective.

Where is God in this.? Is He in self isolation? Have we quarantined Him! The oldest question in the world confronted Job in the oldest book in the Bible. Why did God allow him to suffer? The Greek philosopher Epicurus in the 3rd century BC made this statement "**Is God willing to prevent evil but is not able then he is impotent. Is God able but not willing, then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing whence then is evil?**" A tough question!

Theologians distinguish between two types of evil. Firstly "moral evil" which is the result of man's inhumanity to man eg the " 9 11" destruction of the Twin Towers, genocide or the Dunblane massacre("'Evil has visited this place" said the Head Teacher.) Secondly there is "natural evil" such as tsunamis, floods earthquakes, famines and plagues. Both cause problems but the former is less of a problem than the latter. We generally recognise that mankind is capable of the most awful horrors. The latter is very difficult because the innocent suffer. Think of two ruined cathedrals in the world- Coventry and Christchurch. Coventry cathedral was destroyed by German bombing (As Dresden was by the Allies). This was a moral evil. Christchurch wrecked by the New Zealand Earthquake was a natural evil!

In our reading from Luke 13 Jesus responds to a state inflicted atrocity. (moral evil) with a further comment about a natural evil- the collapse of a tower. He challenges the prevailing view that the victims of these events must have been great sinners and this was God's punishment. The Jews of that day believed that suffering and disease were the direct consequence of sin. The Old Testament prophets saw in natural disasters a sign of God's judgement. Our Christian world view is that the general call to repentance does not insulate us from disaster and disease! This is the way the world is and the way things are.

4. A Biblical Perspective

In a nutshell the Bible's view can be summarised in two statements arising from the Genesis account.

- (a) At the dawn of time humanity is given the gift of free will. That is the most priceless possession we have and without it we would just be moral robots. God

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wants us to love him and serve him as an act of our wills. There was always the potential for us to make the wrong choice and go our own way but there was also a rescue plan in place.

- (b) The "Fall" as we call it, did not just alienate us from God, it affects the whole of the created world order. The NT speaks of creation actually "groaning" The environmental alienation and dislocation that we see affects the way the world works and we suffer because of it.

Out of these two statements however there is a message of Christian hope- the coming of Jesus offers redemption for a lost humanity. At the end of time his second coming will bring in a "new heavens and a new earth". In the meantime we have to live "in the now and not yet"

5 A Practical Perspective

So what? John Lennox ends his very helpful little book with 4 injunctions

- (a) **Heed advice-** as I trust we are all doing
- (b) **Maintain Perspective** – let us not exaggerate the novelty of our situation
- (c) **Love your neighbour-** there is love in our streets. The advance of Christianity in the early centuries was because of Christian concern for and ministry to plague affected communities.
- (d) **Remember eternity**

A closing thought

The Corona Virus takes its name from the word "corona" because of the crown like shape it has. At the cross where Jesus shared our sufferings he wore another crown- the crown of Thorns!

Prayers – Joan Simon

We pray for the needs of the world, our community and ourselves

God of mercy:

**You know us and love us and hear our prayers:
keep us in the eternal fellowship
of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.**

We join together in The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn (Listen) "When peace like a river attendeth my way"

The Peace

Thanksgiving Prayer

The Lord is here

His spirit is with us,

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give thanks and praise.

On the night when He was betrayed, at supper with his friends, Jesus took bread and thanked you. He broke it and gave it to them saying "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

At the end of supper, taking a cup of wine, Jesus thanked you and said "Drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this in remembrance of me."

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory, send your Holy Spirit that the bread and wine we share may be for us by faith the body and blood of your dear son

(do share some bread and wine if you feel that is appropriate)

Hymn Guide me O Thou great Redeemer

The Blessing

Book of Remembrance: Doreen Emily Abbotts, Edmund Heddle, Dorothy Heddle, Peter Richard Johnson

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