



# St John's, Stoneleigh Weekly Newsletter

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

## Collect

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:  
teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command,  
that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory  
of God the Father.

**Amen**

## A MESSAGE FROM REV. KEN HOBBS

Welcome to this edition of the St John's newsletter. As I said in my video reflection this week it is remarkable that while we are all socially distanced (to coin a phrase!) the community is, ironically, coming closer together. We had the largest number so far for our 45 minute service on Zoom last Sunday. From this week it will be possible to listen and join in audibly using your phone and details of how to do that are given below. If you are able, do connect with us via email, the website, telephone, Facebook, Zoom and WhatsApp. If you walk past St John's you will see some posters with thought provoking messages of hope and we are hoping in the next few days to have a large banner up with the message saying that the church may be closed but God is open for business! Thank you to everyone for supporting one another in these uncertain days.

God bless you all and keep safe.

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**

## PASTORAL CARE

Thank you to all those who are involved in our pastoral care in the parish. If you would like to receive a call from St John's during this time, please contact Jean Tutton to make arrangements.

**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**

## NEWSLETTER

Please don't forget to get in touch with the office if you'd like to add anything to the newsletter. We would welcome any good news stories that you may have. Whilst the newsletter is emailed out each week to those on our emailing list, the emails are sometimes delayed or for some unknown reason, do not arrive. If this is the case, you can always go straight to the website and you'll find all the newsletters online. If you'd like to forward the St John's newsletter on to friends and family, please do so. If you do not have access to email but people you know do, then please let them know they can also be added to our emailing list.

**Kerrie Winter**

## FINANCE UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who continues to give by standing order. Your monthly giving is even more vital at this time as St. John's is no longer receiving income from letting the hall. If you normally give using numbered envelopes and can afford to do so, please continue putting money in your envelopes each week. These can be put in the collection once services resume. Envelope givers can switch over to paying by monthly standing order if they wish. This would be particularly helpful for St John's cashflow, as we do not know how long the lockdown will last. Please email your contact details to [office@stjohnsstoneleigh.org.uk](mailto:office@stjohnsstoneleigh.org.uk) and Kerrie will arrange for the Treasurer to provide a calculation of your monthly giving amount based on your previous weekly envelope giving, and help you set up a standing order.

**Tim Rogers**

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## **'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*

## **NOTICE FOR CHURCH KEYHOLDERS**

Just a reminder to all key holders that the church and parish centre are closed to everyone except Kerrie, for photocopying purposes and members of the leadership team that call in regularly to check both properties are safe and secure. This is because there could be a potential insurance issue in the event of there being a problem. While writing this notice may I please ask anyone that is holding keys for the church or parish centre and does not have a particular reason for keeping them, to return them to myself. Thank you

*Janis Forder*

## **FOODBANK**

The foodbank has written to say that feel as if they have been caught up in a whirlwind. The demand for help has more than doubled as families have lost incomes and are still awaiting government help and school lunch vouchers have not yet been issued to all who are entitled to them. However the food donations have been amazing and they now have a good stock to cover the increase in needs. The way the service is operated has had to change and they can only offer a food delivery

service now but are currently serving in the region of 300 people. The logistics of organising the collection and sorting the higher volumes of food with fewer volunteers (necessary because of social distancing) has been challenging. This means that they have had to regretfully turn down kind offers of help. The feeling of being supported though has made the remaining staff so grateful. There are few ways in which we can still help. First of all please include the foodbank volunteers and recipients in your prayers. Donations via the dump bins in Sainsbury's or at Stoneleigh Baptist Church on Wednesdays are still welcome between 10am and 12 noon. They also really need financial help to cope with all the increased costs. These can be made via the website - just click on the red Donate button and, if you are a UK tax payer, a click on the Gift Aid option would increase the value of your gift. Cash donations (in an envelope please) can be put through my door 59 Highfield Drive and I pay them in through the Foodbank website. Next week we'll resume the list of useful donations but for now the Foodbank wants to say how very thankful they are for all the support.

*Polly Elder*

## **Worship at Home**

**"O Lord our God, your greatness is seen in all the world. Your praise reaches up to the heavens" (Ps 8.1)**

We have come to worship God our heavenly Father; to recognise his power and authority; to give thanks for his care and keeping and to offer ourselves in the service of Christ.

He is the Creator of this wonderful world;

**He gives us life and breath**

He is the preserver of all life;

**He sustains us day by day**

He is Redeemer of his people;

**He shows us his love in Christ**

He is Lord of Lords;

**He controls all things.**

**O God our Father, we bring you our love and praise and give you thanks for all your goodness, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Hymn How Great Thou Art**

## **Confession**

**O Lord our Heavenly Father, we confess that we have sinned against you and done many things to grieve you. We have often been selfish and unforgiving. We have forgotten to pray to you and we have not loved you as we should. For these and the other things we have done wrong we ask for your forgiveness and we pray that you will cleanse and renew us and strengthen us in the days ahead. Help us to walk in the light of your presence. Amen**

## **Collect**

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

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## Hymn As the Deer

### Prayers

We pray for the needs of the world  
(Chris Redrup)

**Almighty God, we thank you for your mercy and your grace: Thank you for the wonder of your presence and power in Creation. You are our light in darkness, our strength in weakness and our comfort in sorrow. You heal our bodies and our minds; you ease our pain, you lift our anxieties; you give us hope and you set us free.**

**So fill us with your Spirit's power that we may take your healing love to a world in need, with your strength rebuild broken lives, and bring glory to your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name  
Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
Now and for ever Amen**

### 1st Reading Romans 5 1-11

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### Song "Faithful One so unchanging" (Sarah Tutton)

### 2nd Reading Luke 4. 14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet

Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

### Reflection

#### Bold I Approach!

This is a line from Charles Wesley's famous hymn "And can it be" Today I want to share with you some thoughts on how that is possible and why the death of Jesus is so central to the Christian Gospel. From the Old Testament to the New Testament the theme of sacrifice and atonement is self evident. The Old Testament is like a landscape painting or a well designed garden where the eye is drawn to a "focal or vanishing point" – the "signposts" in the landscape include sacrifice, covenant, law and priesthood which converge on Jesus and are fulfilled and completed in him. The OT points forward to his coming and the NT explains why he came. The Epistle to the Hebrews in particular gives a coherent account of how this happens but it is generally found in the whole of the NT.

Do you remember the "pick and mix" sweet counters in the old Woolworths?! It is tempting to have a pick and mix view of Christian doctrine. There are things we prefer and things we might pass on. One of these is the notion of the "wrath of God". The great hymn "in Christ Alone" has the line "the wrath of God was satisfied" Some feel uncomfortable with this sentiment and yet it is built into our historical Christian tradition and practice. His sacrifice is the basis on which we can approach God but how is it possible that the sacrifice of an individual 2000 years ago is in some way effective in this process?

If Jesus is not who he claimed to be then Christianity is exploded and we are left with just another beautiful religion with some noble ideas and ethics but its unique distinction has gone. There is something remarkable about Jesus' ministry- there is a strange magnetism about the man who talked so much about himself yet gave so much to others

Jesus began his ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4) where he addresses the synagogue congregation quoting words from Isaiah and effectively saying "Isaiah was talking about me!" It was a prophecy and a message about SALVATION. It set the parameters for Jesus' ministry- "good news for the poor; freedom for the prisoners; sight for the blind; release for the oppressed and the arrival of the year of the Lord's favour. The primary dimension of the Messiah's ministry is salvation- the Messiah, the Sent One is the Saviour

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In the movie Superman 3 Lois Lane says "The world doesn't need a Saviour and neither do I" HE replies "Then why is it that every day I hear people crying out for one!" The Roman writer Seneca speaking of the culture of that time wrote "ad salutem spectat" –"The world was looking toward salvation.

You may remember the Controversial IFV/Fertility treatment involving the notion of conceiving a child to provide a match for a sick brother or sister- the concept of "Saviour Siblings"- literally born to Save! The notion of Jesus as Saviour is built-

- into our **liturgy** "to save us for our sins and be our advocate in heaven"
- Into our **theology** "You shall call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins
- Into our **hymnology** old hymns like "And can it be" has "no condemnation now I dread" or the newer "My Jesus my Saviour"
- Into our **experience** as a personal Lord and Saviour?

The focus of Christian worship and teaching is the Cross A survey revealed that the most widely recognised symbol in the world for many is the M of Macdonalds! But what about the Cross? We see them everywhere- in jewellery ; in windows, on gravestones, churches often built in a cruciform shape. Can you Imagine wearing a gallows round your neck! How macabre! In 315AD the Romans abolished crucifixion as an inhumane execution

A huge proportion of the Gospels are about the trial and death of Jesus Half the NT is written about the Cross- Christ died for our sins! The NT does not dwell extensively on the physical sufferings of Christ (a la "The Passion" with Mel Gibson)- it highlights the spiritual sufferings- "My God My God why have you forsaken me"

The old fashioned Biblical word is SIN- not some form of Christian neurosis but a realistic description of the human predicament. We have missed the mark and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans3.23) The NT reminds us of

- (a)The **Partition** of Sin- like a sort of Berlin Wall that separates us from God.
- (b)The **Power** of sin- It holds us in a grip. The NT calls it spiritual slavery
- (c)The **Pollution** of Sin-the night skies over cities are often obscured by pollution and sin gives us obscured vision
- (d)The **Penalty** of Sin The Bible uncompromisingly reminds us that "The wages of sin is death"

Do you remember the great rescue missions of recent years? The Apollo 13 astronauts, The Chilean Miners. The Thai footballers in the cave. None of them could help themselves. They needed an international, inspirational and incarnational act of rescue, to cross huge distances and to come to them where they are. These were human acts of rescue

We need a Divine act of rescue- represented by the cross There is what has been called the **mighty paradox**- Like two sides of a coin God's character is two sided- he is pure and holy and just cannot be approached. He must punish sin. But He is loving, forgiving and gracious . The internal tension is this question. How can God who is just and holy and therefore hate sin yet at the same time love me the sinner?

The Biblical solution to this dilemma is the CROSS. We find it difficult to get our head round this but just for our encouragement the New Testament does too! The NT struggles with language to describe this. There are four illustrations or Biblical metaphors which we are going to look at next time.

But to finish with a closing story this morning. At a Pre War conference in Oxford there was a discussion among leading religious academics and faith leaders about the uniqueness of Christianity. There was an empty chair at the table. The discussion was detailed, wide ranging and inconclusive. Eventually an unassuming man in dishevelled raincoat arrived late and took his seat at the table. They turned to him with the question "What is unique about the Christian Faith?" And CS Lewis replied with a single word "GRACE" ! GRACE spells "**God's Riches at Christ's Expense**" In every other religion of the world merit is achieved by keeping the rules, obeying the laws and observing rituals etc . People hope to reach up to God in this way. The transforming and radical message of Easter is that God has reached down to us.

A Christian is not a good church goer; a kindly neighbour, a baptised or confirmed individual; not a responsible citizen... a Christian is one who has personally and committedly embraced Jesus as My **Saviour** and my **Lord**- everything follows from that! The resounding message of the Gospel is, as the NT puts it, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"

(to be continued!)

#### Hymn "Amazing Grace"

A closing prayer from Barbara Glasson (President of the Methodist Conference)

**We are not people of fear; we are people of courage.**  
**We are not people who protect our own safety; we are people who protect our neighbour's safety .**  
**We are not people of greed; we are people of generosity .**  
**We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs for as long as it takes wherever call us**

**From our Remembrance Book:** William Ramsey

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