

Stalham Baptist Church

Sunday 2nd August SBC News

This Week's Online Service

"Who are you looking at?"

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington 01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno 07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon 07951949128

Ministry Team: The Whole Fellowship

Welcome to this Sundays Online Service

Barbara is leading and Ron preaching, continuing the series on 2nd Corinthians. This week 2 Cor 10: 11-18 .

"Who are you looking at?"

You can follow the service on the SBC website on Sunday www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ Then click on the icon pictured left.



Ron's Reads

Acts 15, 1 Cor 3:6, Phil 1:12f, 1 Cor 12, Lk 18:9f Num 13:32

For Your Prayers

Please pray for those who are receiving hospital treatment and those still waiting for appointments. Pray for those Stalham businesses that are struggling to restart and stay viable. Also pray for those in our community who are struggling financially due to the pandemic that our benefit system may support them promptly and pray for blessings on those that regularly donate food at SBC for the Food Bank

As we pray through the new Church Directory, please remember **Alex and Elspeth Pelling.**

WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room

On Saturday 25th Jenny posted "Just heard from my mum that Steven had been contacted and was given 48 hours leave to visit his mum Gill. Thank you so much for all your prayers, Gill is reported to be very unwell today and not able to eat."

On the same day Ruth Hayward asked "Can you please pray for me and the family as I am hoping to go back to work I have been applying for jobs and hoping I will at least get an interview."

On Tuesday Julia Maile posted "Hi. Thank you for your prayers. David has been diagnosed with prostate cancer but there is not much of it, it has not spread and it is the least likely type to do so. He will be monitored every six months at the moment. So, the best of bad news! We are very grateful to God and will leave it with Him."

The Merton Prayer

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will, does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you and I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire and I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen

Thomas Merton's mother died when he was a child his father was absent most of the time increasing Thomas's loneliness and he spent most of his time with extended family and at boarding schools.

Ronnie Mcbrayer wrote "The emptiness drove him toward self-destruction. Heavy drinking. Promiscuous relationships. Frivolous spending of money. Anxiety and rage. But in the midst of this recklessness, like the Prodigal Son coming to his senses, Merton came to Christ. It was profound, redeeming, and life changing."

Thomas Merton wrote more than 50 books in a period of 27 years, mostly on spirituality, social justice and a quiet pacifism, as well as scores of essays and reviews. Among Merton's most enduring works is his bestselling autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948) and he was ordained in 1949.



If you are reading this newsletter as a PDF you can click on the red highlighted links and you will be taken to the relevant websites.

Don't forget you can also follow what's happening at SBC on twitter <https://twitter.com/StalhamChurch> and on Facebook www.facebook.com/stalhambaptist

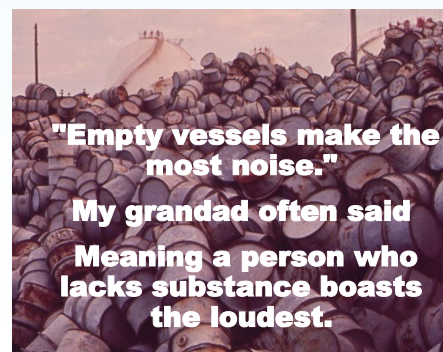
FOOD BANK & OPEN FOR PRAYER

SBC is open Monday to Friday from 10.00am to 12 noon to receive donations for the food bank and for personal prayer.

Since June 15th people have been welcome to pray quietly in the church at that time the Food Bank donations are being received. Jerry or Ron will be on hand to ensure all safety measures are met.

Also, The Good News paper, bibles, books and the Community Scene Magazine are available at the back of the church.

The **Food Bank** is open on Fridays in the Stables from 1.15 to 3.00pm. If you need help, or know someone in difficulty, either contact the Citizens Advice Service 0344 411 1444, the Food Bank on 07826376343, or contact Ron Skivington at minister@stalhambaptist.org.uk.



"Empty vessels make the most noise."

My grandad often said
Meaning a person who lacks substance boasts the loudest.

Looking Back and Forwards

Looking back to the bulletin dated 4th August 2019 there were an array of activities going on in the following week including prayer for revival, Coffee & Chat over 60s table tennis, getting together to pray and a coffee morning in the stables. The "For your Diary" section highlighted upcoming events including the Vintage and Collectors Fair that SBC supported, and Rosina raised £160, the Town Hall stall, Men's Breakfast and gave details of the Harvest Festival and supper and auction scheduled for September.

The main focus was on the Holiday Club that was going to start on 12th August. The bulletin for the 25th August reported "The Holiday Club was another huge success with 58 children signing up for the event. The busiest days were Tuesday and Wednesday when 48 youngsters attended. Eight mums stayed with their under 5s and many parents and carers stayed on Wednesday for the Pop-up Café. We were also blessed with a family holidaying from Northampton who attended services and brought their children to the Holiday club. So popular is the Holiday Club that one mum asked Barbara for the date of next year's club as she always works her family holiday around the holiday club dates."

SBC was blessed with many holidaying families joining the services throughout the summer holidays of 2019.

The pandemic has brought a halt to all those activities in the summer of 2020.

Currently Ron, Jerry and the deacons are working on ways to restart services and events within the Government's restrictions which require a Coronavirus policy and a series of risk assessments.

Although as a fellowship we have lost much of what would be considered "normal" there have been some real successes to keep the fellowship together and reaching out to the wider community. The online services have been watched by the fellowship but also by many in the community as well as people around the country and in South Africa, Vietnam, Chad, Thailand and the USA.

We have built a relationship with the Lighthouse Church in Durban SA and we share our service with them, and we share the YouTube talks from their Pastor Alan Wagner with the fellowship and wider community.

House groups have used inventive ways to stay in touch with each other. People have accessed Zoom meetings for a host of activities.

Coffee and Chat was a very popular and successful Tuesday morning event organised brilliantly by Monica and Frank.

Jerry and Diana have got together to create a virtual Coffee & Chat and Prayer meeting on Thursday 6th August starting at 6.30pm and finishing at 7.30pm.

This is another step forward in keeping us all together as we battle through the pandemic with the aim to come out the other side spiritually and as a support to the community, stronger.

Virtual Coffee & Chat and Prayer on Zoom.

Join us over Zoom on the Thursday **6th August, at 6:30pm-7:30pm** for a time to get together to chat and pray together with a hot coffee by your side, in the comfort of your home.

Come share your lockdown stories and experiences, as well as praises, prayer requests and some spiritual lessons God has been teaching you during lockdown.

Anyone and everyone is welcome to drop in and out as little or as much as they want to.

The link to the Zoom Meeting will be sent round by Diana over email.

For more info, please contact Jerry by email at asstpastor@stalhambaptist.org.uk or call/text **07733837687**.

A prayer for leaders of every kind...

Servant King, You taught us that all who would seek to be first should be last And all who would lead should serve but we often redefine leadership on our own terms and for our own gain. We lift to you today all who have the responsibility of leadership, influence and power. We ask for your strengthening where decisions are tough and Your wisdom to discern the best way forward, Your softening towards those they lead and your courage to balance risk and safety. Bless every selfless act of leadership they display for all that is good comes from you – and every servant leader is a reflection of your best plan. Amen.

Quotes of the Week

"The logic of worldly success rests on a fallacy: the strange error that our perfection depends on the thoughts and opinions and applause of other men! A weird life it is, indeed, to be living always in somebody else's imagination, as if that were the only place in which one could at last become real!"

"It is only the infinite mercy and love of God that has prevented us from tearing ourselves to pieces and destroying His entire creation long ago. People seem to think that it is in some way a proof that no merciful God exists, if we have so many wars. On the contrary, consider how in spite of centuries of sin and greed and lust and cruelty and hatred and avarice and oppression and injustice, spawned and bred by the free wills of men, the human race can still recover, each time, and can still produce men and women who overcome evil with good, hatred with love, greed with charity, lust and cruelty with sanctity. How could all this be possible without the merciful love of God, pouring out His grace upon us? Can there be any doubt where wars come from and where peace comes from, when the children of this world, excluding God from their peace conferences, only manage to bring about greater and greater wars the more they talk about peace?"

— **Thomas Merton, The Seven Storey Mountain**

SBC Catch up Service

If you have missed any of the online services you can catch up on them by going to www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ where Greg has posted the services from 22/3/20.

You can also find any bulletins you missed by going to <https://www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/publications.php>

You can find all the members and public information on the forum pages. Stewart has posted SBC's current financial position on the fellowship forum page.

The services are also available as a CD or DVD contact Ron if you would like to receive one each week.



Open Doors

“When I was hungry...”: Feeding Indian Christians in Covid-19 crisis

“Christians in India are often last in line for essential Covid-19 food and aid because of their faith - and this is on top of the persecution they already face for following Jesus. Akash*, an Open Doors partner in India, explains how his team are helping those in crisis.

Akash is facing the risk of the pandemic and the risk of persecution, but he and many other Open Doors partners are courageously going to those in need. He says these words as he’s preparing to take another delivery of food to vulnerable Christians in his region. For them, the sight of Akash and his team arriving is the difference between survival and starvation. Things really are that stark for many thousands of the poorest Christians in India. And this is on top of the persecution they already face.

“People are so scared”

When India went into lockdown to combat the coronavirus, hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs overnight. Many of these Indians usually work as daily labourers and earn each day what they need to survive: without the day’s income, they have no money to buy food. There is no financial safety net or furloughing scheme, and official aid isn’t anywhere near enough for the number of people who need it. Even worse, Christians are often [deliberately overlooked when this aid is distributed](#). As the months have passed, the situation hasn’t got any easier for many believers.

“People are so scared,” says Akash. “They don’t know how long this is going to last. They are not able to provide even a single meal for their family.” Christians are often from the Dalit caste, which means they are among the poorest communities in Indian society. Many live in slums where social distancing isn’t possible and even basic hygiene would be a luxury. As another Open Doors partner shares, “In the slum areas, people are now totally dependent upon the food being distributed by the government and social organisations.

We constantly receive calls and messages from Christian communities where people have no food for their children or family members.

Met with tears of joy

Many hundreds of families are relying on the courage of people like Akash, bravely travelling to bring them vital aid. In India, thanks to your giving and prayers, Open Doors partners can provide relief packs including, for example, wheat flour, rice, pulses, tea, cooking oil, turmeric powder, sugar, salt, matches, chili flakes, snacks and soap. Where possible, they also include masks and sanitiser.

Open Doors partners are among a small number who are still trying to bring resources to these desperate people, as Akash relates: “Very few NGOs are reaching out to them properly. In fact, agencies are scared to help – scared of the movement restrictions imposed, and also of the disease. God enables us to be strong and courageous and keep serving.”

This service is certainly received with gratitude. Akash is emotional when he describes what it’s like to arrive with the aid. “In many places, people are so desperate,” he says. “We provide them food sufficient for at least 15-20 days – and people have tears in their eyes while receiving it, as if we are giving them a treasure.”

You can provide that treasure to your persecuted Indian family. When Akash uses that word, it reminds us of the times ‘treasure’ is mentioned in the Bible – whether it is a simile for the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:44), a reminder that ‘where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ (Luke 12:34) or a comparison with wisdom (Proverbs 2:4). It’s an important word in Scripture that speaks to our values as Christians.

“It was challenging to provide food for the family,” says Kabir*, father of a family of five. “Thank you for remembering us in these tough times. I am grateful for your kind and timely help.” Sandhil* is head of a household of six, and agrees: “I thank God for rescuing us. We have no job and no food for the family. I thank you for the help you gave to us.”

These Christians are just a handful of the many who have expressed their thanks – your gifts and prayers have made an extraordinary difference in the lives of these believers. With relief aid, believers can be strengthened to be the light of Christ in their communities. But there are many thousands more who need help just as urgently, and Open Doors partners are ready to take the risks needed to help sustain their, and your, family.

Persecution continues

It’s not just risky because of the virus – though Akash and other Open Doors partners have already made a personal sacrifice on this front, deciding to isolate from their families to avoid spreading the virus. It’s also risky because the persecution of Christians is continuing in India, and there are Hindu extremists still attacking vulnerable believers and those trying to reach



them with help. In fact, Christians in rural areas are facing more opposition than ever from their communities because of their faith. It's a long-term problem and it's peaking. Not just being last in line for food: reports have surfaced of our brothers and sisters being falsely accused, threatened and attacked. In perhaps the most serious incident reported during the lockdown, a Christian girl named Jyothi* was shot twice by extremists. She and her family had previously received threats.

One attack has taken place against an entire community of believers. Some villagers forced the Christians in the area to come to the village community hall. As the believers gathered, the villagers started beating them. One of the Christians managed to call the police during the attack, but they took no action. Christians in the area are now living in intense fear.

It's particularly hard for secret believers. A lady called Kavita* used to spend time praying in the fields where she worked and reading her Bible away from home, because her husband is angry that she is a Christian. Now she has to try to find opportunities to pray, read the Bible and

worship in her own home – but faces severe abuse from her husband when she tries to.

"A time of wilderness"

Reports like these are likely to be the tip of the iceberg. Open Doors local partners say that many incidents are going unnoticed due to social distancing restrictions, poor connectivity and lack of resources.

An Open Doors local partner says, "There is no doubt this is a time of wilderness for

many of us, and the thing about this pandemic and isolation is that we don't know where it's going to lead, or how long it will last. It seems that there's no end in sight. India needs more prayers than ever during this time."

There's no quick fix to the persecution faced by Christians in India. This is a long-term problem, made all the worse by coronavirus. Will you stand with your family so that they can survive the impact of this pandemic, and grow as a mighty church for the future?

*Name changed for security reasons

The Heavenly Repair Shop

A thought for the day from the Revd Stuart Davison of the South Eastern Baptist Association

WANTED: Criminal with stolen sewing machine...

... Police say he is following a pattern.

Before it got moved to BBC 1 and became mainstream, Gill and I got hooked on *The Repair Shop*. It is described as 'the antidote to the throw-away culture'.

I am always moved by the stories of restoration and repair; of people in tears when seeing things that hold such memories being brought back to life. It takes a hard heart to not find one's own tears flowing. A miner's lamp that saved the life of great-grandpa; a radio that had stopped working but been part of the life of a couple since 1967, the wife now dead; a chair that had been brought from Germany by a Jewish family as they fled because of the rise of Nazism; a juke-box that had been part of the family since being providing the music for a couple's wedding - and the widower breaking into tears as it plays again 'their song.'

The love and care that they put into the restorations – and not with the intention of

making them 'brand new' but making them usable with memories still evident. The miner's lamp was shining and working again – but with the dents that told of its past use in holding up the cave-in in the mine and saved his life. Jay Blades, the presenter, says, 'We can mend anything except a broken heart'. Some of what they do makes a good stab at that!

It spoke to me of how God lovingly restores us, with such care and love and skill. Yet we still carry the marks of the past, as Jesus Himself

does in carrying the marks of our salvation into heaven. And he can mend broken hearts.

Thank God He is not into throw-away!
"He has anointed me to bind up the broken-hearted."

