

Stalham Baptist Church

Sunday 23rd August SBC News

This Week's Online Service

"BOASTING IN OUR WEAKNESS PART 1"

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Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno 07733837687
Secretary: Diana Gordon 07951949128
Ministry Team: The Whole Fellowship

Welcome to this Sunday's Online Service

Diana is leading and Jerry preaching, continuing the series on 2nd Corinthians. This week 2 COR 11:16-33

You can follow the service on the SBC website on Sunday

www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ Then click on the icon pictured left.

Sermon Structure:

1. Boasting Of Fools (V 16-21a)
2. Boasting For Fools (V 21b-29)
3. Boasting in Our Weakness (V30-33)

Jerry's Reads

Deut 25:1-3, Matthew 10; 16:24-28, Acts 22:1-21; 26:1ff,
2 Cor 4:8-9; 6:4-10 and Phil 3:1-21

For Your Prayers

Please pray that as a fellowship we can come to a decision about reopening SBC or not safely in the near future. As we pray through the new Church Directory, please remember **Jane and Ron Skivington**. Please pray that they enjoy their holiday with friends and family.

Praying for the UK's government and politicians

You were surprising, creative, ingenious and shrewd as you lived out the most compassionate and effective leadership the world has ever seen. Lord Jesus in your mercy, we ask you to send your Spirit of wisdom into the corridors of power and the hearts of the powerful. May it move our leaders into a new humility and compassion that truly seeks to serve the people of this nation as they place the NHS and the welfare state alongside deficits, balance sheets and economic growth. Also, as they try to determine our path in an international community facing so much conflict, terror and uncertainty. Lord in your mercy, guide them. Lord in your mercy, soften their hearts and enlighten their minds. Lord in your mercy lead them – whether they know you or not. Amen
Taken from; The Sanctuary where the world and worship meet.

WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room

On Friday 14th Daniel Nicholson posted "Thank you very much for your prayers. I had my scan and they found a superficial blood clot in my lower left leg and have given me 6 weeks of blood thinners to help it disperse. God bless."

On Saturday June White said "Thanks for your prayers my sister is back home. Recovering will take time, blessings June."

On Sunday Jerry posted on behalf of Henry Nicholson "His brother Roger collapsed last night and has been taken into James Paget Hospital. He has a punctured lung due to the fall, please pray for him and Ann and family."

On Tuesday Victoria Nicholson posted "Prayers for my brother Paul Child please. Thank you as always. The following is from his Facebook page.

On Bit of a setback - due to an adverse reaction to the chemo pills I've been told I can't have any more this cycle. Bloods are ok, so they'll most likely lower the dose for next time and go from there.

So, in short, chemo sucks, I feel rubbish and your prayers are appreciated."

On Wednesday Victoria asked "Further prayers for Paul and family please. The following is from Paul's wife Miriam's Facebook today. Please pray that their daughter Phoebe's (who has Downs Syndrome) heart function improves - Well overdue heart checks today! I hate heart check day and Phoebe does too and vomited from anxiety before we even left the house! Phoebe's consultant doesn't beat about the bush (I usually put my guard up but my ears and mind weren't braced for this today with everything that's going on). He thinks she looks amazing and expects to see a lovely functioning heart on her scans- BUT her "heart still looks horrible" which remains a "worry" (though it is a little better since resynchronising earlier in the year!) I didn't need him to tell me "he has kids on the heart transplant list with hearts not as bad as hers!" But as she looks so great we will just keep up monitoring and meds! I'm holding on to the fact she's stable and looks great- my warrior and hero."



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.

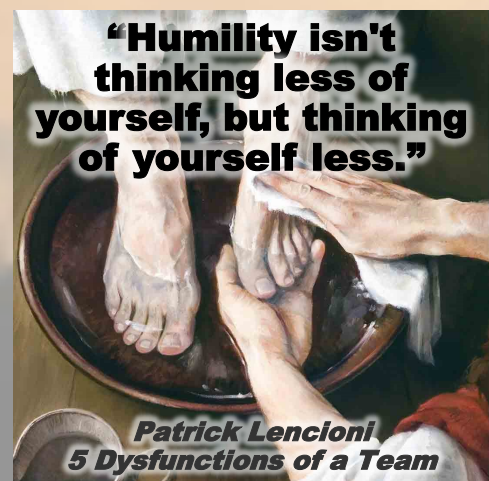
Don't forget you can also follow what's happening at SBC on twitter <https://twitter.com/StalhamChurch> and on Facebook www.facebook.com/stalhambaptist

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 the time that the Food Bank donations are being received. Jerry or Ron will be on hand to ensure all safety measures are met.

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.



Questionnaire on Opening SBC

As you know the deacons are looking at when and how we might open the church for services and are working on Policies, procedures and risk assessments. So we can move forwards we would like to seek the views of the church fellowship on opening, and to this end you will receive a questionnaire. Those who receive a paper copy of the bulletin will also receive the questionnaire at the same time and it will be collected the following week . Those with internet access should receive an email from survey monkey to allow you to complete and return on line. I will email the fellowship to provide more information on this. Diana Gordon. Church Secretary

Ruth Adams' Goodbye Card

Ruth Adams is moving closer to her family in Cambridge and Alan Jarman is organising a goodbye card for her. If you would like to give Ruth a goodbye message email David on davidfchild@gmail.com or text on 07561603586 and he will print it in the card being produced by Century Printers, up to about 12 words would be good but if you wanted a few more it wouldn't matter to much.

Church Reading Plan

Our weekly reading plan takes us to the Epistle of James writes Maggie Harpur, with 5 chapters to look at over the coming week. This is a short letter full of **practical** and **challenging** insights into Christian living.

James was a prominent leader of the early church. He uses this letter to give us a clear and detailed explanation as to the true nature of faith. It teaches us about the consistent behaviour that believers should embody so that we might be a demonstration of the life of the Lord Jesus to one another and unbelievers.

BMS Website

Hi All the weekly update is now live on the BMS website, there is an interesting article on "lamenting" in these covid times and our need to remember that above all things GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Prayer points for this week below.

Freedom of religious belief is a bedrock of civil and political liberties. Please pray for people without religious freedom this week.

- Pray for BMS partners in Nepal. Anti-conversion laws introduced in recent years have meant that Christians are fearful of sharing their faith.

- Pray for protection and boldness for BMS evangelists in certain states in India where Christians alongside other minority faith groups have found themselves marginalised and persecuted.

- Pray for a country in northeast Asia which has been named as the worst place in the world to be a Christian. Pray that believers there would bring solidarity, hope and light.

- Saturday 22 August is the first UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Praise God for this recognition and pray regimes of religious oppression would not prevail.

For more information go to. [BMS World Mission](#).

Cheers, Geoff

Praying and Doing

I was talking to someone in the fellowship. He said " It's important we pray for others and ourselves but also do everything to protect ourselves and those around us in this pandemic.

His comments reminded me of this story.

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help. He had a vision in his head of **God's** hand reaching down from heaven and lifting

him to safety.

Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you."

The stranded fellow shouted back, "No, it's OK, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me."

So, the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. "The fellow in the motorboat shouted, "Jump in, I can save you."

To this the stranded man said, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, "Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety."

To this the stranded man again replied, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the helicopter reluctantly flew away.

Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, "I had faith in you, but you didn't save me, you let me drown. I don't understand why!"

To this God replied, "I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?"

Jerry's Quotes of the Week

"As much against the grain as it is for a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain for a humble man to speak in his own praise"

— **Matthew Henry**

"Humility is not a popular human trait in the modern world. It's not touted in the talk shows or celebrated in valedictory speeches or commended in diversity seminars, or listed with corporate core values. And if you go to the massive self-help section of your sprawling mall bookstore, you won't find many titles celebrating humility. The basic reason for this is not hard to find. Humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes. In fact, you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. We can expect to find humility applauded in our society about as often as we find God applauded."

— **John Piper in "Future Grace"**

" This "world".... is the way in which our collective life of society (and the culture that goes with it) is organized around the self in substitution for God. It is life characterized by self-righteousness, self-centeredness, self-satisfaction, self-aggrandizement, and self-promotion, with a corresponding distaste for the self-denial proper to union with Christ."

— **David F. Well, God in the Wasteland pg 40**

"The nature and depth of human pride are illuminated by comparing boasting to self-pity. Both are manifestations of pride. Boasting is the response of pride to success. Self-pity is the response of pride to suffering. Boasting says, "I deserve admiration because I have achieved so much." Self-pity says, "I deserve admiration because I have suffered so much." Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak. Boasting sounds self-sufficient. Self-pity sounds self-sacrificing. The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be so needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego. It doesn't come from a sense of unworthiness but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness. It is the response of un-applauded pride." —

John Piper, Desiring God pg 302

He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease."

John 3:30

A blessing in disguise?

With congregational singing not allowed for the foreseeable future, writing for the Baptist Times, Colin Sedgwick has a suggestion that could lead to a deeper understanding of our psalms, hymns and spiritual songs

So... churches everywhere are starting to think about meeting together again as the lockdown eases. Everyone recognises that this has to be a very careful and cautious process. And one thing that seems quite clear is... *no singing*.

We might very well respond, "But I just can't imagine coming together for worship without some form of music and singing! It's something the church has done from the earliest days, and of course it's right there in the Old Testament too."

True enough, but if that's the way it has to be, well, so be it. The church, over two thousand years, has come through far worse problems than that, so we mustn't doubt that we will come through this too.

I wonder too, though, *if this might actually be something we can benefit from*.

Already churches are reporting unexpected blessings and opportunities that lockdown has brought, like visitors "turning up" at virtual services; so why not also in this matter of services without song?

My thought (nothing particularly revolutionary) is this. If we can't for the time being sing our songs and hymns, *why don't we read them?* The reason this might be a

blessing in disguise is that very often when we sing, I suspect that we fail to take any serious notice of the words. Because we're enjoying the tune and being carried along by the music, the words just float over our heads.

Long before lockdown I have often felt that this is a serious fault of many of us. The church has inherited a truly wonderful treasury of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (as Paul calls them), but they are simply wasted on us. All right, a lot of worship material, both old and new, is pretty mediocre, to put it mildly; but boy there's some good stuff there as well! Yet we fail to benefit from it – like people wandering around an art gallery and admiring the wall-paper instead of the paintings.

There's a hymn we sing quite often at our church which contains the lines "*I dare not trust the sweetest frame, / But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*"

Walking home after the service in pre-pandemic days my wife and I sometimes wondered what this "sweetest frame" was that we "dare not trust". Not a window-frame, presumably. A frame of mind, perhaps? That also seemed rather unlikely. Reading the rest of the hymn suggests that it's a frame in the sense of something that offers you support, something you can lean on. Yes, that must be it. But it isn't exactly obvious, is it?

We decided to do what you might call a bit of consumer research, and ask some of our fellow-worshippers what they understood by it. And each time there was a blank look and, "Oh, I must admit I'd never really noticed that word... Yes, what does it mean?" Yet they had sung it many times.

I'm not criticising the hymn, of course. It's a good hymn, though given that in its original form it's nearly two hundred years old (written in 1836 by a Baptist minister called Edward Mote) it's not surprising if it's dated a bit.

No. The point is that our little experiment confirmed my suspicion: that very often we sing mindlessly – and therefore really might as well not bother.

Here's my suggestion, then. Why not reduce the number of songs and hymns we include in our services, but focus on just three or four *which we read out loud?* (Given current guidelines this is most safely done with one hymn reader for the service from the front, rather than sharing the responsibility too widely.) And then the musicians could play the tune while everyone "sings" the words internally, perhaps quietly humming along (lips clamped tightly together, of course).

That leads to another thought... Opera isn't really my thing, but I do know one specially magical tune from *Madame Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini. It's known as "*The Humming Chorus*" because – well, I think you can probably guess. And it sounds wonderful. Mightn't a similar thing add a whole new dimension to the way we worship? – assuming, as I say, that we have the words in front of us and are "singing" them in our minds and hearts.



Whether that's a worthwhile suggestion or not, I'll leave you to decide. But the vital point remains...

Let's *value* our "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" and not just take them for granted. Let's honour those who wrote them in the past, and let's pray for those who are writing them today. We'd

be in a bad way without them!

And when the time eventually comes that we can again sing whole-heartedly, hopefully we might do so with a richer, deeper understanding.

Father, thank you for the gift of music and for the vital place singing has in our worship. Thank you too for the rich heritage of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that has been passed on to us from centuries gone by. And thank you especially for those whom you have gifted in producing such worship material today. Please help us to value it, and to make good use of it. Amen.

Colin Sedgwick is a Baptist minister with many years' experience in the ministry.

He is also a freelance journalist, and has written for *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and various Christian publications. He blogs at sedgonline.wordpress.com

COVID-19 and calls for a slum revolution could pave the way to ridding India of leprosy

Lessons learnt from COVID-19 in India have shone a light on the spread of disease in city slums that could lead to leprosy rates being slashed. Reports [The Leprosy Mission](#) Mumbai is dubbed 'the city of dreams' and features in the world's top 20 wealthiest cities, according to New World Wealth's October 2019 report. But despite being home to Bollywood stars and world class cricketers, it has the largest slum population of any city in the world.

Almost half of Mumbai's population, around nine million people, are slum dwellers. Yet slum dwellers and those living in nearby luxury homes are reliant on one another; the slums being home to cooks, maids, drivers and cleaners.

Whereas previously it was of little concern to the wealthy as to where their domestic staff lived, COVID-19 has exposed India's social divide. Recent testing revealed that more than half the residents in Mumbai's slum areas have the antibodies for COVID-19. Outside of the slums the rate was 16 per cent.

While the risky goal of herd immunity is within clinching distance in the slums, it is feared domestic staff pose a real health risk to the wealthy they serve. They are desperate to return to work and earn but many employers are too frightened to let them back into their homes.

Head of Programmes at The Leprosy Mission, Sian Arulanantham, said its partner organisation Stepping Stone Charitable Society had worked hard to ensure COVID-19 health messaging reached those living in Mumbai's slum communities. "The need to isolate with symptoms and the importance of good hand hygiene and social distancing have been relayed," she said "But in reality, these measures are almost impossible to follow. The slums see people live in cramped and unsanitary conditions. There is often no running water or even proper light and ventilation. Dozens of families share a single toilet.

"In short they are the perfect conditions for the spread of both the COVID-19 virus and leprosy.

While COVID-19 is a highly-infectious virus, leprosy is a mildly-infectious bacterial disease that the middle classes are far less likely to catch. Long term exposure to leprosy is needed for someone to catch the disease as well as a weakened immune system, usually from the effects of malnutrition and poor living conditions. While leprosy has always been in the slums, it is COVID-19 that has provided the wake-up call and exposed the health disparity between rich and poor. We are hoping and praying that some good will come from the lessons exposed by COVID-19 and there will be a renewed drive to end slum living.

More than half of the world's new cases of leprosy are found and treated in India each year. Improving living conditions is likely to radically slash the number of new cases. After all, countries like the UK saw an end to leprosy long before a treatment was discovered, for that very reason."

In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Housing for All by 2022' initiative in a bid for India to be slum free by building around 20 million affordable homes.

There are renewed calls for this target to be met by Jitendra Awhad, Housing Minister in Maharashtra, which has Mumbai as its state capital. Mr Awhad said COVID-19 had ended the indifference from the middle classes to how their staff live.



Dr Rohit Roy, director of India's National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, said the pandemic had provided the perfect opportunity to rid India of its slums. "If not for the sake of the poor, for public health," he said.

The Karuna ambulance project brings medical care to the Mumbai slums. Its aim is to reach out to leprosy-affected people and other marginalised groups, including those with HIV and commercial sex workers.

Despite Mumbai's lockdown restrictions, the Karuna ambulance has been permitted as essential services to enter five slum communities.

Jayaprakash of Stepping Stone Charitable Society, which operates the ambulance, said: "The Karuna team has been in constant communication with the leaders of the communities we serve throughout lockdown.

Food shortages have been a big concern so we have been delivering emergency food parcels as well as face masks and ulcer care kits.

Leprosy causes nerve damage which sees people injuring their numb hands and feet, often without even realising. Ulcers then develop that can cause serious disability or amputation if left untreated.

Thankfully, after a two-month gap, we were allowed to restart the mobile clinic and treat some severe ulcers our patients had suffered while having no access to medical care.

There were tears of relief and joy when people saw the Karuna team again.

The living conditions in many of Mumbai's slum are dreadful. However, we do realise the enormity of the task to end slum living.

Slums don't just provide accommodation; they are homes to communities and provide accessibility to employment. It's not as simple as just relocating people.

But something has to change and as bad as COVID-19 is, if it means action is taken to improve the living conditions and health of millions of people in Mumbai, at least it will not have been in vain."

