

Stalham Baptist Church

Sunday 4th October SBC News

This Week's Online Service

"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington 01692 582731
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 Ron preaching, from Matthew 5:1-12
"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"

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

Mt 4:17, Lk 18:9f Isa 6:1f Ps 34:6, 35: 25

For Your Prayers

Please pray for the deacons as they continue to review different ways of getting the fellowship back in to the church. Pray for those vulnerable people in our community that are uncertain and anxious about the guidance from government and how best to protect their selves in the pandemic.

Please pray for the Lighthouse Church in Durban SA who SBC shares sermons and talks with. This Sunday they are resuming in-person meetings, videoing the service and broadcasting it later on Sunday. Pray that they can successfully develop new skills to reach out to the fellowship and community and bring people to faith.

Pastor Alan Wagner wrote an article about Lighthouse Church in the Harvest Community Scene. Find it by clicking [here](#)

As we pray through the new Church Directory, please remember **Gloria Turner**.

Virtual Prayer Room

Victoria posted on Monday 28th September "We have Poppy's meeting (by video link) with her consultant and specialist this morning. Please pray for the right decision on treatment to be made. Thank you x" On Tuesday Elspeth said "Please pray for my neighbour Yvonne who has many medical problems. She is asking for prayers."

On Wednesday Jenny Jackson was asking for prayers for her close neighbour whose cancer had returned. On Thursday Victoria posted "Update on Poppy - after a meeting with the specialist we have decided she will go back on the Tacrolimus (she can go to school as long as she doesn't relapse). We are hopeful that this will get her off the steroid and stop any further relapses. We chose it because it proved it worked before (she was on it 18 months previously but had to stop but it kept her in remission for 2 years). Over time (ironically) it can cause scarring and chronic changes to the kidneys. The specialist suggested using it as a stop gap for 6 months/1 year and see how she gets on. She tolerated it very well last time but prayers please for the same this time and for it to work successfully again. Tacrolimus is an immunosuppressant so obviously will lower Poppy's natural immunity and she did pick up lots of colds/ infections last time so prayers she doesn't this time please. After a blood test this morning she has returned to school after almost 3 weeks at home. She still has a week of her steroid treatment left (at a lower dose). Her levels this morning did show she was leaking protein again. Please pray this is just a blip and if it isn't that the tacrolimus treatment she should start tomorrow works quickly to stop another relapse. Thank you as always x"

Prayer From St Andrew Holy Cross Basildon

We come together as God's people, united with Christians around the world, to pray for your world and its people. So let us pray.

Heavenly Father we bring all Christians before you, we lift to you those believers around the world, who are persecuted and facing hardship for their faith in you, give them courage, shelter, safety and hope as they continue to seek and serve you throughout the most unimaginable situations. Recently we have learnt so much more of what it means to be your church, having to find new ways to worship, pausing much loved outreach, or adapting it to new ways to suit the current world. We find ourselves asking questions and looking back to what has gone before and mourning what we feel we have lost or missed out on. Lord we know that none of this has been a surprise to you and we ask for you to continue giving your church visions, show us how to serve, bring us back to the heart of worship and help us to lean not on our own understanding, strip away the pride and ambition and help us to rely and focus solely on you. Help us Lord to look only to the future, in hopeful anticipation of all you have planned and in store for us. By Jackie Stubberfield



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.

This Week

Wednesday 7th 7.00pm

Zoom Bible Study

Contact Diana for a link



"Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin."

Thus, our sorrow leads to joy!

Christmas Community Scene

We are considering whether to do a print copy of the Christmas community scene. If we do, that entails 1600+ copies and they will need to be delivered around Stalham which means we need people to put them through letter boxes, might you be able to do that? If so please let Ron or David Child know even if you have been a regular post person in the past.

Gunebor Hospital Chad

Ron says "I have the BMS DVD we used last week- end about the work in Guinebor 11 if anyone wishes to see it."

Jerry's Training

As you will remember Jerry had interviews with the EBA ministerial recognition committee and his call to ministry was recognised by them. Their requirement is that Jerry does the Spurgeons College 3 Year minister

in training course which will mean him attending 3 training weekends each year [the first is at the end of Oct] and have regular Zoom meetings with Spurgeon's staff.

A Year that's been Different

Ron wrote an article for the Harvest edition of Community Scene.

"When 2020 rolled in no one foresaw the lockdown conditions and restrictions that have been in force since March and not just here in the U.K. but across the vast majority of the world's nations," writes Ron Skivington. "Who would have believed we could go so long without physically seeing one's family or friends and still not be able to give them a kiss or cuddle?"

As per human nature most have been very good at following and keeping to the guidelines as best we can, while others appear to view it all as a personal slight and want to flout things as much as they can and even got physical with those who asked them to be a bit more considerate.

It's been a time of local communities pulling together in support and care of one another, though the opposite in the earlier days when panic seemed to grip some, caused by fear creating selfishness.

The worlds of business, sport, the arts, and all manner of social activities stopped, but in the fields around us life continued. All manner of cereal crops, potatoes, rape seed, corn on the cob, berries and other fruits have grown, some already harvested, and fields will soon be under preparation for the next crop

[Read more](#)

Prayer Focus: 4th October 2020

Central Baptist Church Chelmsford

Central Baptist Church is a large and vibrant church family situated in Chelmsford city center. Before lockdown over 300 people gathered on Sundays for services. People come from a wide social and ethnic mix in Chelmsford and the surrounding areas. There are lots of children and young people and representatives from over 20 different nationalities in the congregation. The church currently has a team of four full-time staff led by Revd. Phil Marsden who has been at Central for two and a half years.

However with lockdown all the regular work and services ground to a halt. The church moved online with Sunday services using Zoom to maintain good communication with each other and keeping the worshipping community

together. There have been weekly programs called "CBCheer" on the church YouTube channel, daily three minutes reflections and a weekly newsletter to keep everyone in touch. Aaron Griffin, the youth and children's worker has also been preparing online resources for the young people and children each week.

The church weekend away planned for July had to be cancelled. Over 220 people were set to go away together, and this will now be rebooked at a future date.

Current plans are for physical Sunday services to start up in a limited way from October allowing those who want to attend to do so although numbers will be limited to allow for social distancing. The online activity will continue and develop to reach everyone in the church family and beyond.

For prayer

- Pray for wisdom in knowing the right speed to start things up again.
- For the restructuring of the leadership team and the forthcoming election of deacons which have been held over because of lockdown.
- For the continuing online ministry, streaming services and learning to make these new things effective.

Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at Matthew 21: 23 - 32. Why did Jesus tell the Jewish Leaders that the tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the God's kingdom ahead of them? If you would like to suggest a reading or take part in "Testimony Tuesday" contact Diana, Jerry or Ron.

Quote of the Week

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; yours is the kingdom of heaven! What could the church do, not just say, that would make the poor in spirit believe that? Blessed are the mourners; they shall be comforted! How will the mourners believe that, if we are not God's agents in bringing that comfort? Blessed are the meek; they shall inherit the earth. How will the meek ever believe such nonsense if the church does not stand up for the rights against the rich and the powerful, in the name of the crucified Messiah who had nowhere to lay his head? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for God's justice; how will that message get through, unless we are prepared to stand alongside those who are denied justice and go on making a fuss until they get it? Blessed are the merciful; how are people to believe that, in a world where mercy is weakness, unless we visit the prisoner and welcome the prodigal? Blessed are the pure in heart; how will people believe that, in a world where impurity is a big business, unless we ourselves are worshipping the living God until our own hearts are set on fire and scorched through with his purity? Blessed are the peacemakers; how will we ever learn that, in a world where war in one country means business for another,, unless the church stands in the middle and says that there is a different way of being human, a different way of ordering our common life? Blessed are the persecuted and insulted for the kingdom's sake, for Jesus' sake; how will that message ever get across if the church is so anxious not to court bad publicity that it refuses ever to say or do anything that might get it into trouble either with the authorities, for being so subversive, or with the revolutionaries, for insisting that the true revolution begins at the foot of the cross?"

— N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church.*

When I feel self-pity...

It's easy to topple into self-pity at a time like this, writes Colin Sedgwick. Let's take a moment to reflect

I've never been a great fan of J R R Tolkien (give me *Narnia* any time!), but he certainly said some good things. A friend recently sent me this quote from *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Frodo and Gandalf are in the thick of an ominous danger threatening the whole world, and poor Frodo expresses a plaintive regret – "I wish it need not have happened in my time". Whereupon wise old

Gandalf gently puts him right, saying in effect...

"That's perfectly natural, Frodo. That's how anyone would feel at a time like this. But it really is a waste of time. This is the way it is, so our job is to look facts in the face, roll up our sleeves, and do the very best we can."

The cards we have been dealt are the only cards we can play. The scrabble tiles you've got are – well, the ones you've got; so why waste time lamenting that missing "e" that would have given you a seven-letter word? Or again, if there's a short straw to be drawn, well, someone must draw it, mustn't they? And why not us? That's just the way it is. The present-day application is obvious: Why did this pandemic have to happen *now*? Why in *my* lifetime? Why should *my* work, or leisure, or ambitions, or pleasure, be disrupted in this way? And not far under the surface is the thought, "*It's not fair!* I expected a nice easy ride!"

To feel ourselves entitled to a basically comfortable life is natural to human nature, especially if we live in a prosperous part of the world. But of course no such "entitlement" exists, so we'd better get used to the idea. I don't think Frodo is to be blamed for what he felt – as I said, his complaint was natural enough. But when we feel this way it's very easy to topple over into self-pity – "Poor me!" And that is something to be avoided.

The people of Israel, wandering in the wilderness, forgot the miraculous way God had set them free from Egypt, and lapsed into self-pity about their boring manna-food. They started "wailing" and hankering after those beautiful "cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic" (Numbers 11:4).

And God was not pleased...

The prophet Elijah, fresh from a miraculous victory over the prophets of Baal, complains that the people of Israel are



really not worth bothering with: they "put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left..." (1 Kings 19:14).

Oh poor me!

Even the godly Jeremiah had his moments: "Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me" (Jeremiah 15:10).

It's not fair!

I don't mean to make light of people whose sufferings are so much greater than anything I have ever known (so far!)... The young couple planning to get married in early 1940 – only for the second world war to break out in September 1939... The young man on the brink of a brilliant football career – who suffered a broken leg and never played again... The world-famous medical professor who fell foul of the authorities in her country and ended her days scrubbing public lavatories.

Above all, perhaps... Those millions of unknown people born into a remote village where there is no education, no opportunities, no health-care, just a likelihood of death by the age of forty-five. Why them?

The apostle Paul asked the Christians of Corinth to "put up with me in a little

foolishness" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Perhaps you might be willing to do the same for me...

My problem is simple. From *my* perspective I am of course - this goes without saying - far and away the most important object in the whole universe, so everything should work out to suit my convenience. But unfortunately the universe seems to have a slightly

different perspective – it sees me as worth about the same as a millionth part of a grain of sand. Huh! How dare it! But...that's the way it is.

And yet... I have a consolation even bigger than the universe... *the God who is known to us in Jesus Christ puts an infinite value on even that millionth part of a grain of sand...*

The story of [Joni Eareckson Tada](#) is well known, especially in Christian circles. As a young girl she dived into shallow water and was totally paralysed. She very naturally struggled to come to terms with such an appalling change in her situation. But a breakthrough occurred when she reached the stage of asking not "Why me?" but "Why *not* me?" She has gone on to live a full, satisfying and creative life.

Thanks be to God for people like her.

Oh, and never forget Esther – and Mordecai, her Gandalf! Mordecai said to her (Esther 4:14): "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Lord God, please keep me from any trace of self-pity. Help me to look at my situation, however less than perfect it may be, and to decide every day to seek only your will, and to carry it out with faith, cheerfulness and hope. Through Jesus, who suffered more injustice than we can ever know. 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

Why would you choose to lose?

An Open Doors resource, Blackout, encourages you to choose to lose what you love, to raise funds for the persecuted church. But why would you choose to lose something? Jesus, of course, has the answer...

If you believe the hype, we humans love to win. Whether it's Darwin and the survival of the fittest theory, a Premier League footballer desperate for a trophy or when you're just trying to wind up your little brother or sister in a board game, the desire to win is supposed to be part of our DNA. So why would you ever choose to lose?

Did you see that Spanish triathlete, Diego, [in the news recently](#)? He was in fourth place with just 100 metres or so until the finish line. He had no chance of finishing third and getting a medal. Then the guy in front, James, misreads some signs and runs the wrong way. Diego overtakes him. A few metres from the finish line, Diego stops to let James take third. He gave up his medal-winning place.

Diego said: "When I saw that he had missed the route, I just stopped. James deserved this medal."

Winning isn't everything. Diego realised that choosing to lose was the right thing. And in doing so his morals and sportsmanship have been praised around the world.

Want to be first?

Jesus spoke to this desire in our character to win in both His life and teachings. He lived it. And instead of being the traditional strong, winning hero character, He pushed a different mentality:

"Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last. They must be the servant of everyone." (Mark 9:35)

"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:14)

He regularly challenged and angered those who were 'winners' in His society. The ruling religious elites just couldn't get their heads around His ideas. Jesus said it wasn't about being rich and powerful or praying and doing the right things at the right times, but about humbling yourself before God in everything and at every time. Think about it: 2,000 years ago He was falsely accused, put on trial and then crucified – hardly a winning end in the eyes of the world. But we know that isn't how it all finishes.

The upside-down

By all accounts, the rich young ruler was a winner (Mark 10:17-27). He had devoutly followed all the religious rules and had gained money, influence and property. But his interaction with Jesus ends with the implication that he couldn't give up his wealth – the thing God had pinpointed in his heart. In contrast, when Jesus and His disciples see people giving money at the temple, Jesus praises not those who have the most, but the poor widow who gave the least. He explains: "They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:44).

In Jesus' kingdom, everything is turned upside down. Wealth, security, reputation, medals, abilities – all the things that help us to believe we're winning in life - Jesus doesn't really care about. These things fade and He sees right through them. We may value them now, but Jesus says that it is our relationship with God that is the real win. Not fame, followers or funds.

The 'losing choice'

Back in April, Nhung* and his family from northern Vietnam chose Jesus. They knew their decision would have consequences - Nhung was a government official and, because Vietnam is run by the Communist Party, he wasn't supposed to be involved with any religion. In August, the local authorities found out about the family's choice to follow Jesus.

There was a lot of pressure on the family to give up their faith, but they stood firm, telling those intimidating them how God had changed their lives since they became Christians.

Because they refused to give up Christianity, Nhung lost his party membership and his job. Since then, the family has a new dilemma: give up Jesus or be forced out of their home and village.

By all accounts, in choosing Jesus, Nhung has made a losing choice. So why have he and his family stuck with it? Why would he give up a decent life and job, his reputation, money and nice home?



Nhung and his family – we can't show their faces for security reasons

Nhung deeply knows what we sometimes miss – that in choosing Jesus we can never lose. He knows that the last will be first and first will be last. He knows that in Jesus, things spin upside down and that our source of worth and value can never be found in things, but only in God. Paul said something similar in Philippians. In his life he faced arrest, prison, riots, beatings, ship-wrecks and eventually execution. In the midst of it all he wrote: "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:8)

With Jesus, no matter what life throws at us and whether it looks like we're losing we know we've already won – and that is the upside-down.

Could you choose to lose?

So, could you choose to lose? What is that thing that you love. Read through the story of the rich young ruler and see what God pinpoints in your heart – something you love doing, having or eating!

Could you get sponsored to give that up for a short time to raise money and prayer for persecuted Christians - those prepared to lose everything because they have chosen Jesus?

Could you stand with them, and explore their incredible brave and courageous faith?

Could you use that time to draw closer to God, choosing to put Him above all else... the ultimate winning choice?

Join the Blackout and choose to lose something you love – we'll send you a pack to help you raise funds and connect with God and the brave faith of your persecuted family.

Sign up below.

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/blackout-choose-to-lose/>

