

Stalham Baptist Church

Sunday 29th November SBC News

“Blessed are the Persecuted”

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

Jerry is leading and Ron is preaching, from Matthew 5: 10 - 12

“Blessed are the persecuted.”

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

Gen 6:5, Jn 15:18-19, Acts 11:26, 1 Pet 4:12-16, Mt 25:21f

For Your Prayers

Please pray that people in the community can organise their Christmas activities in a Covid safe way as we exit the second lockdown. Please pray for Nathan and Rose, the missionaries SBC supports in Afghanistan, that God will protect them as the situation in the country deteriorates. Also pray for God's guidance as SBC comes out of lockdown so that we can successfully celebrate the birth of our Saviour with candle light services and a Christmas day service. Please pray that the Christmas edition of the Community Scene that will be delivered in December reaches out to the community and will lead people to salvation.

As we pray through the new Church Directory, please remember **John Applegate**.

Prayer Room

On 24th Victoria posted “Please pray for my mum, Kim Child. She has been in a lot of pain with her back for several months. Over the last couple of months this pain has been unbearable. She has finally had 2 MRI scans which have shown she has a tumour in the spine and in the bone. She went to hospital today to discuss treatment and was emergency admitted as they want to ASAP (after Covid test) put pins in her spine, and cement, to stabilise it as they are worried it will collapse. They will also do a biopsy at the same time. Thank you as always x”

On the same day Geoff and Barbara requested prayer for their neighbour, Derrick, who is in hospital following a fall. He already has an ongoing health condition and developed an infection whilst in hospital. His wife asks that we pray that he will be well enough to go home for Christmas.

On Thursday Victoria posted “Please continue to pray for my mum. Her operation on her back and her biopsy is first thing tomorrow morning x.”

Prayer in a time of Coronavirus

Prayer of the Unemployed as it is predicted many millions will be unemployed.

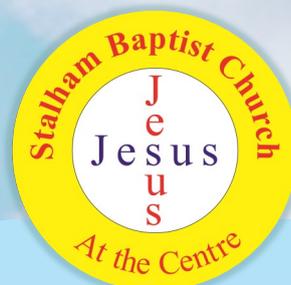
Oh God help those in our country that are faced with the growing anxiety of unemployment, or the fear of unemployment, in the next few months. Guide the leaders of our country that they will make decisions to benefit those who through the economic impact of Covid-19 are going to struggle to support their families and pay rent or mortgages. Help those in the media, as time goes by, not to talk about the unemployed as shirkers as in the recent past, vilifying those who have lost their jobs in an environment of business closures and down-sizing reducing the vacancies available. Help our leadership to show Christ like compassion for those in situations beyond their control and create policies that will serve the community

Tear Fund Prayer

Bring to mind your family and those you love, and thank God for them. Pray for their protection from coronavirus, especially those who may be particularly vulnerable. Pray for God to comfort those around the world who are grieving the loss of loved ones, and for those who may be feeling isolated or lonely by being in lockdown. Pray for Tearfund and other aid organisations to be able get food, financial aid and emotional support to people whose already fragile circumstances have become desperate because of the pandemic. For more information click [Tear Fund](#).

Prayer for uncertain times

Lord Jesus Christ, light of this world, thank you for the hope you have given us. Help us to give our worries to you and, above all, to trust in your unfailing love. For you have promised us “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.” Almighty God, our protector, let us trust in you to carry us through this time of uncertainty. Jesus, hear our cries as we mourn those who've left us. Whatever tomorrow may bring, we will praise your name.
Amen. *Prayer: Sasha Breakenridge, CAFOD volunteer*



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 & PERSONAL PRAYER

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

Monday 30th 9.00am

Zoom Deacons Prayer Meeting

Wednesday 2nd 7.00pm

Zoom Bible Study

Contact Diana for a link

“From the fires of persecution, can come sparks of light.”

Tom Althouse,
Image by Ronald Plett from Pixabay

Christmas Services

Guidelines permitting, we are planning to hold services during December. The measures we have put in place to protect people create a Covid-safe SBC to the best of our ability. You will need to book a place for all our services as space is limited. We are able to have musicians and singers on the stage but currently the congregation will have to wear masks and not be able to sing.

To book a place please contact Diana Gordon on - 0795194928 you can also text or Whatsapp the same number or email secretary@stalhambaptistchurch.org.uk

Candlelight Services Sunday 13th and 20th December

All welcome for traditional Carols

Starting at 4.00pm.

These services will be relayed to the car park we can therefore offer a "drive in option"

When booking your place, you will need to tell Diana which option you are booking

Celebrate Christmas Day Morning at 10 am

This will be a short service to celebrate the Saviour's birth.

Sunday 3rd January. Celebrate the New Year with us - Family Service 10.45am

Please book with Diana Gordon for any of these services.

Please don't book a slot or attend if you have any Covid symptoms.

Christmas Message

Edna Woolsey, Rosina and David Jenkins say they are giving a donation to SBC rather than sending cards and wish everyone blessings and a happy Christmas.

Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at Revelation 6

How many boxes are ticked by this text by our current world? If you would like to suggest a reading or take part in "Testimony Tuesday" contact Diana, Jerry or Ron.

Food for homeless centre in Stalham

We hope to deliver a Christmas hamper to Empanda in Stalham which gives housing related support to young people.

If anyone wishes to donate gifts or home baked items please drop them round to Jan and Henry who will pass them on with greetings from the church, thank you.

Weekly Prayer Focus: 29th November 2020 Church 1v23, Harold Hill

Harold Hill is a large city-edge estate of around 30,000 people, close to Romford on the edge of London.

Church 1v23 was planted in 2009 and has been led since its inception by Revd Richard Shorter. There had been a Baptist Church in Harold Hill, but that closed a few years ago and Romford Baptist Church, Urban Expression and the EBA worked together to establish Church 1v23.

The Harold Hill estate is an area of high deprivation with many of the associated social issues and the church has sought to engage with local people, particularly with families in a number of ways: through a parenting course (with the local authority) out of which came a weekly community meal which included communion, working with families in crisis, youth work, going into local schools, well-being walks as well as meeting together as church.

As with most other churches, its ministry has gone online

during the pandemic, and the church has the challenge of working out how to continue to connect with people.

Richard has produced a video for the Prayer Focus and it can be found on the EBA YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/QstwP9m1RE8>.

The church has three simple prayer requests:

- 1 That the Lord will send more team members to help lead the church.
- 2 That the team will have wisdom in the coming months to know best how to encourage, serve and support vulnerable families.
- 3 That God will continue to draw people to Himself in Harold Hill.

Shoe Box Appeal

Magda Nicholls writes. In conjunction with St. Mary's Church 41 shoeboxes and £320 in donations were sent to the local collection centre for transmission to the warehouse, where they will be sorted and transported to their final destination.

Thank you to everyone who filled a shoebox or donated money.

Quotes of the Week

"Our wretched species is so made that those who walk on the well-trodden path always throw stones at those who are showing a new road."

— **Voltaire**, [Philosophical Dictionary](#)

"Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak."

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**

"It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their [the communists'] terms. It was a deal; we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy."

— **Richard Wurmbrand**, [Tortured for Christ](#)

Watch a powerful excerpt of the video presentation "Tortured for Christ", recorded in the late 1960s. Rev. Richard Wurmbrand speaks about his time spent in Communist prisons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ytiuVBqxHQ>

"Do remember, though, that sometimes the people you oppress become mightier than you would like."

— **Veronica Roth**, [Insurgent](#)

"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

— **Robert F. Kennedy**



Open Doors

Ongoing court hearings over abducted Pakistani Christian teen

Our church family in Pakistan are asking for prayer for Arzoo, a 13-year-old Christian who was abducted and forcibly married to a Muslim man. She recently 'confessed' in court that she was 18 years old and had converted to Islam. There is an ongoing court investigation as to who has custody over her.

Pakistani Christians are asking for prayer for the continuing investigation around 13-year-old Arzoo. She was kidnapped by a 44-year-old Muslim man about a month ago. A few days later, this man presented a 'marriage certificate' in court and the judges allowed him to take the girl home. This is because, during the hearing, she said she was a Muslim and 18 years old. After public pressure, this decision was reversed and the man has been arrested.

One unnamed source says, "The situation here is very tense and could flare up any time. We are grateful that a few days ago the court ordered for the arrest of the man who abducted Arzoo, abused her and forced her to marry him. But there may be public confusion, outrage and even violence because she confessed she is a Muslim."

What happened?

A 44-year-old Muslim man named Ali Azhar took 13-year-old Arzoo from her parents on 13 October in Karachi, Pakistan. Two days later, Arzoo's father was informed that the abductor had produced a marriage certificate stating she was 18 and had converted to Islam. Two weeks later, the Sindh High Court granted custody to the abductor, but the judges ordered the police to free the girl last Monday after protests.

"Arzoo is a third-generation Pakistani Christian girl," says one source, who wishes not to be named. "She is one of many who go through the trauma of abduction and forced conversion annually. Christians in Pakistan are asking for prayer for the legal procedures and trial that lie ahead, for justice to be upheld and lives and families to be safeguarded."

The source continues, "Pakistan's Christians love their country. Many of them are committed to this land. It is their sincere prayer that they will see justice in the days ahead, that they will hear the courts set a clear precedent ensuring future clarity that, regardless of religious affiliation, children are safeguarded from abuse that is legitimised by child marriage, in keeping with the country's child marriage restraint laws. Arzoo is the face of many others."

Thank you for your prayers

One church leader expresses gratitude to those inside and outside of the country who've spoken up: "We are thankful to those Pakistanis who have raised their voices on behalf of Arzoo. We are thankful to those brothers and sisters around the world who have continued to pray for Pakistan and those who are tracking this story and others like it."

Arzoo is currently in protective custody in a state shelter while the courts investigate the following:

- Abduction of a minor
- Forced marriage
- Compulsion to convert or conversion under duress.

Pakistani Christians ask for prayer for the legal bench investigating and for all law enforcement agencies. "Please also pray for Arzoo's family, for their safety, and that this case would not be prolonged in the courts and Arzoo's life held in the balance. Pray that the Christians will recover from this deeply traumatic experience."

For more information on how you can help Open Doors click [here](#).

Prayer News 281 (November-December 2020)

Would you like to be part of Open Doors secret network, supporting persecuted Christians in prayer? The latest Prayer News DVD includes a mix of short videos and audio tracks that will take you across borders and right into their world.

Share this resource with your church, too, by ordering *Prayer News* from our Inspire team on **01993 460015** or by emailing inspire@opendoorsuk.org

Here are some films from the current Prayer News DVD, which you can also watch and download (below):

Colombia: 12-year-old Daniela is facing her second Christmas without her dad after he was murdered last year. But your prayers and support mean that she was able to spend Christmas 2019 at the Colombia Children's Centre.

Bangladesh: Bijli* (10) and her family face daily persecution in their village. But, last year, they were able to celebrate Christmas with their church family.

Iraq: Father Daniel shares some of his experiences of what life has been like growing up as a Christian and ministering as a priest in Iraq.

Vietnam: Chu* is an incredible lady who holds onto her faith despite having been pressured on all sides to deny Jesus.

China: Ron Boyd-Macmillan gives some detailed insights into the persecution of our Christian family in China and shares how we can be praying for them.

Ethiopia: Iris and Muluken have suffered hardship for their choice to follow Jesus, but have been helped with emergency aid as part of the Open Doors Covid-19 appeal.

*Names changed for security reasons

Box? What box?

In the wake of the departure of Dominic Cummings from Downing Street, Martin Sweet reflects on Genesis 24 and what it means to think beyond the box

In the midst of a catastrophic virus, coupled with international negotiations that will forge the shape of Britain's trade for the next decade, the news is full of the Prime Minister's chief aide, Dominic Cummings, exiting stage left. I daresay for some this will be a much-wished-for early Christmas present.

The BBC commented that 'in many ways the government's agenda was forged by his ideas, and Mr Johnson relied heavily on his strategic insights'. Controversial, outspoken and seeing himself as an 'outsider battling an entrenched elite', Dominic Cummings is credited with 'delivering Brexit' and has consequently courted both praise and notoriety (depending on your viewpoint!).

I guess his main impact was that he 'thought outside the box'. This overused expression was thought to have been invented by management consultants in the 1970s as part of their challenge for businesses to find solutions that required some lateral thinking. To step back and look for solutions 'outside the box' has come to refer to the practice of thinking differently, unconventionally, from a new perspective.

The 24th chapter of Genesis is the longest in the book and arguably its most delightful narrative. Here we get to meet Abraham's chief servant. He is not named, though he may have been Abraham's former adopted heir Eliezer. However, here he takes centre stage, not only in his role but in his relationship with God as, for one brief chapter, he becomes the carrier of the vision and the promise. At this point he is the 'main man' in the history of Israel. Abraham and Isaac act as bookends to his faithfulness, a loyalty that extends not just to his master Abraham but to God.

Where did this man learn to pray like he did? His prayers are wistful, expectant and comprehensively answered. In this short story he sees more wonderful, miraculous moments – however small – than the average Christian notices in a year! And that is why this man is himself so wonderful. He uncompromisingly serves, trusting even the simplest prayer requests to be answered.

Recently my wife and I moved to a claustrophobically-parked street in Bedford. It was not long before I had a debate with someone about whether we should pray for parking spaces! The servant in Genesis 24 would have been unabashed at praying for a space – right outside his house! Of course, we all know it's only the spiritual elite who get such prayers answered...

No, I don't pray for parking spaces, but are we right to assume that God ignores this kind of prayer? When Abraham's servant prays, he keeps it simple (Genesis 24:12-14 NIV):

Then he prayed, 'Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a young woman, "Please let down your jar that I may have a drink," and she says, "Drink, and I'll water your camels too" – let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.'

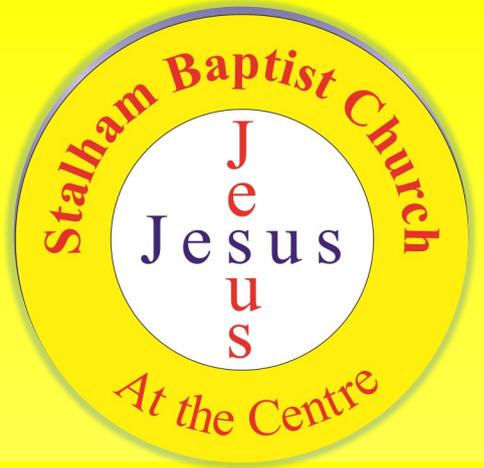
The next verse is simply wonderful:

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.

This man knew something. Had he heard anyone pray like this before? Probably never. But he was in no way confined to a box that deferred the role of prayer to Abraham, the friend of God.

See how he responds when he discovers how God has answered his prayers (verse 26):

Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord, saying,



'Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives.'

One day while driving through South London I heard the radio presenter (I think it was Chris Evans) say something like this: 'Some people

think inside the box, some people think outside the box, but the best people I know are the people who think there is no box.' As I contemplated this comment, I began to see that God had honestly blessed my work 'outside the box' of church, as Spinnaker sought to minister to thousands of school children each week through RE lessons and collective worship. But if Genesis 24 teaches us anything, it is that servants can only think outside



the box when they remain faithful to their master.

We live in a time when the church has been forced to operate 'outside the box', beyond the 'old normal' with its often unnoticed assumptions. Do we dare to envisage a no-box scenario where each member of the church can play the part of a servant like Abraham's, moving freely and boldly within our relationship with God, playing our part in the next chapter of the church in our country? Whether the servant was Eliezer or not, that name sums it up, for it means 'God is my help'. People ask what God is saying during this pandemic. Maybe it's this: there is no box! I can't say that for sure, but one thing does seem likely: the 'box' of church will never be the same again. And maybe that is the plan – to bring ordinary servants to help deliver the promise.

Martin Sweet is the former director of Spinnaker Trust, an organisation with more than 25 years' experience, based in SE London, regularly supporting more than 100 primary schools in London and the Southeast with RE, assemblies and much more. Martin formerly led the Baptist Education Group.

Written for the Baptist Times

Image by [jan mesaros](#) from Pixabay