

Stalham Baptist Church

Sunday 20th December SBC News

The online service "The Shepherd King"

The Candlelight Service is in the Chapel at 4pm



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 is preaching - continuing the series: "The King of Christmas" (Matthew 1 & 2) with Matthew 2:1-12 "The Shepherd King"

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

Jn 5:31f, 2 Kings 17-19, 2 Sam 7:12f Josh 15:2of1 Cor 1:27
2 Sam 5:2f, Mic 3:1f.

For Your Prayers

Please pray for the family and friends of Allan Diggins. Whose thanksgiving service for his life is in the church on Tuesday 22nd 11.00 am. To attend please book with Ron. Please also pray for the family of Tony Banester whose funeral is on the 21st. Please pray that people can safely celebrate the birth of Jesus during the Christmas celebrations.

Please also remember those in our community for whom Christmas can be a very lonely time which this year will be exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. As we pray through the new Church Directory, please remember **Eiddwen Brace**.

Police Christian Association Prayer Request

Claire Hamilton-Dean, writes;

Good Morning All,

I write to ask for your prayer support over the coming Christmas period. Could you please pray for those officers and staff working during this time, particularly over the 5 days where they will not be able to be part of a family 'bubble' and will miss out on spending time with their loved ones.

Please also pray for the protection of those officers and for them to have the wisdom to know how best to uphold the COVID19 rules being sensitive to the many issues this causes.

OUR MISSION

A National Voice for Christians in Policing

Encourage and support Christians in the Police Service.

Communicate in words and action, the truth, message and hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ to colleagues and the community we serve.

Build bridges between the Christian community and the Police.

OUR VISION

A National Charity which actively leads on issues relevant to Christians in Policing

An active and growing branch of CPA in every Police Service in the UK and every Christian in the Police Service to fulfil their potential in Jesus Christ.

Colleagues and those we serve to know Jesus Christ personally.

Police and Churches working together in every community to reduce crime and improve quality of life.

OUR VALUES

Prayer, Organisation, Justice, Truth, Peace, Love, Hope and Compassion

Virtual Prayer Room

On Friday 10th Jenny Payne posted "Please could I ask for prayers for my sister-in-law, Gill again. She has a scan tomorrow to see how the chemotherapy has worked and then will have an appointment soon to discuss future treatment. She has been quite poorly at times with chemo and is pleased that it is now finished. Thank you."

On Tuesday Victoria posted "Please pray for my mum today. She is returning to hospital for x-rays etc. and also the results of the biopsy they took. Thank you x "

On Wednesday Victoria posted "Update on my mum - the consultant was very pleased with the surgery and how she's healing though they had to pin higher than they wanted as the tumour had totally destroyed L2 L3 and half of L4 Biopsy showed it is from the breast so she is now awaiting an appointment with oncology. Please pray for an appointment to come through asap. Many thanks x)



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

Stalham Baptist Church will not be open from December 24th to the 4th January. Other than for services.

Those needing help from the Food Bank are being catered for. **Food Bank & Personal prayer**

From the 4th January SBC will be open Monday to Friday from 10.00am to 12 noon as normal 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** will be open on Fridays from 8th January in the Stables, 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

For your Diary

Monday 21st 7.00pm

Zoom Deacons Meeting

Thursday January 7th 7.00pm

Zoom call to prayer

Wednesday January 13th 7.00pm

Zoom Bible Study

Contact Diana for the links

Candlelight Services December 20th Starting at 4.00pm

There are still some spaces left for the Candlelight service on Sunday 20th, but Diana will need to hear from you by 5.00pm on Friday 18th December. Contact her on - 07951949128 you can also text or WhatsApp the same number or email secretary@stalhambaptist.org.uk.

These services will be relayed to the car park we can therefore offer a "drive in option" so you could sit in your car and sing.

When booking your place, you will need to tell Diana which option you are booking. As the service is being relayed to speakers in the car park you could socially distance and stand on the pavement to listen to the carols.

If you are attending the Candlelight service in the chapel please park in the Staithe Surgery car park.

This year's collection at the Candlelight Services is being donated to The Sir Norman Lamb mental health and wellbeing fund.

Celebrate Christmas Day Morning at 10 am

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

Please feel free to dress up in Christmas costumes.

A Christmas day service will also be available online find it by going to the www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/

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

We are hoping to hold this service, if there are no changes in the guidelines. Please book with Diana Gordon for any of these services. Please don't book a slot or attend if you have any Covid symptoms.

Last Newsletter of 2020

This is the last newsletter of 2020 and the next will be available on the 10th January 2021. A thank you to all those people involved in producing our online services, producing and delivering the Community Scene Magazine and to all those who have donated to the food bank.

Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 Are we always happy givers? If you would like to suggest a reading or take part in "Testimony Tuesday" contact Diana, Jerry or Ron.

Big Thankyou to Tesco's Stuart McKay

A big thank you to Stuart McKay (pictured right with Henry) the manager of Tesco's Stalham for donating seven boxes of Christmas goodies for the young people at the Empanda centre in Stalham, which Henry delivered on Tuesday.

Stuart has generously supported SBC's collection of food for the centre, organised by Henry and Jan Nicholson for the last few years and his help is greatly appreciated.

Henry and Jan are still collecting

Henry and Jan will be delivering donated goods from the church to Empanda some time next week. If anyone would like to donate any Christmas goodies or homemade cakes or biscuits please drop them round to Henry or leave in porch before Thursday please.



Weekly Prayer Focus: 20th December 2020 Clare Baptist Church

Known as "the smallest town in Suffolk", Clare boasts as many churches as pubs (though two of these are currently seeking new tenants – the pubs, that is). Clare has many historical links from the wool trade which provided them with a large Parish Church through to the Doomsday Book signatories that gave them their, now-ruined Castle. The Baptist Church has been an active hub of the community for generations. Not so much now, though...

However, they haven't let COVID-19 stop them from keeping in touch, caring for each other, and supporting the local community. Working with the local council, community groups and the nearest Foodbanks, they have been helping look after their neighbours in many different ways, including setting up a free book and jigsaw delivery service through the first lockdown.

Zoom services have kept the fellowship connected and "Thoughts" and "Musings" are sent out twice a week via e-mail, or hand-delivered for those who are offline. These different ways of engaging have given more people the chance to "preach" via the written word, something that they are keen to continue and encourage.

As with everyone else, Christmas will be celebrated differently this year, so the fellowship at Clare decided to go all out to decorate the church so the message of hope at Christmas is more visible from the outside. They are also delivering Christmas gift packs, including a card, bookmark, Hope magazine and "Real Christmas" booklet to every household in Clare as well as a Christmas story booklet to each school child at two local Primary schools.

As most of the regular activities have stopped, it has given the fellowship a chance to take a step back and re-evaluate what they do and why they do it. They have been reminded that "doing" church is not the same as "being" church; they are working at getting the balance right.

Please pray:

- for the opportunities that have been opened up over these past few months
- for the continuation of the sense of community in Clare and the church
- for the Christmas gift packs to be well received with their message of hope
- for the future – what the fellowship should be doing and why

Quotes of the Week

"Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home." — **G.K. Chesterton**,

"The Word we study has to be the Word we pray. My personal experience of the relentless tenderness of God came not from exegetes, theologians, and spiritual writers, but from sitting still in the presence of the living Word and beseeching Him to help me understand with my head and heart His written Word. Sheer scholarship alone cannot reveal to us the gospel of grace. We must never allow the authority of books, institutions, or leaders to replace the authority of *knowing* Jesus Christ personally and directly. When the religious views of others interpose between us and the primary experience of Jesus as the Christ, we become unconvicted and unpersuasive travel agents handing out brochures to places we have never visited." — **Brennan Manning**,

Though I cannot stand in the stable or kneel at the manger thank you, Lord, that I can meet with you now and know you always. With shepherds and wise men, I kneel before you, in grateful praise and joyful worship.— **Nick Fawcett**

God's Shepherd — a Christmas Story

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

The frost of forty winters had etched deep lines into the shepherd's face. Having spent his entire life outdoors on Bethlehem's hills, he was old at forty — and cold. The hillside where he sat this day was cold, too, and he pulled his mantle close about him to block the wind.

Every so often he would shift position, not out of discomfort so much, but from a sense of unease, anxiety, crowdedness. Instead of hundreds of sheep with whom he felt quite at home, this hillside was flocked with people — thousands of them — listening attentively to the Teacher. They could hear him fairly well, except when the wind whisked away his words.

Tobias ben David (pronounced da-VEED) was the shepherd's name, though people called him Toby. His flocks were in good hands this week, cared for by his grown sons, but Toby had left them to listen to Jesus of Nazareth. Today the Teacher was talking about salvation, how God came to save his people from their waywardness and sins, to rescue them and gather them close.

Now Jesus' illustration turned to sheep. Toby felt better. He knew a lot more about sheep than people.

"The good shepherd," Jesus was saying, "lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand who doesn't own the flock runs away when he sees the wolf coming, but not the good shepherd...." One night, years ago, the men Toby had hired to watch the flock with him fled when they saw a mountain lion roaming the hills. But Toby had stayed. Shepherding was his livelihood. He knew the sacrifices that good shepherding required. He knew about defending defenceless lambs. He knew about putting his life on the line for the sheep. That's what good shepherds did.

Jesus continued, "Suppose you have 100 sheep and when night comes one is missing. What do you do? You leave the 99 sheep all safe together and then climb the hills, looking, searching until you find the lost sheep. Then you pick him up, put him on your shoulders, bring him down the hill to the camp, and ask your fellow shepherds to rejoice with you."

"Your heavenly Father is like that," Jesus said. "When you have lost your way, he will rescue you and save you and never give up on you until he finds you — and you find him."

Toby's heart was racing. He felt a lump in his throat. He understood. *Toby* had combed the hills for lost sheep, not stopping, not quitting. *He* knew the

joy of discovery, of rescuing the sheep from a thicket, of bringing it back and celebrating with his friends. He had *been* that kind of shepherd.

But he also knew how it felt to wander off, feeling lost, aimless, trapped. Clueless about where he was and where he was going. Flailing about, struggling to climb out of what seemed like a steep ravine. That's why he came today to hear the Teacher, hoping to regain the faith he had felt as a child, a ten-year-old child.

His mind spun back to the evening of his tenth birthday. Like nearly every night, he was out on the hills with his dad or his uncles, caring for the sheep. The stars were brilliant, dancing in the black sky. But suddenly an overpowering bright light flooded the hillside. A voice boomed out, "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!"

A saviour, a rescuer — shepherds' work. He had often wondered about the boy-child they discovered that night, lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. Toby had knelt down and worshipped the baby who bore the world's destiny upon his tiny shoulders. What had become of him, this baby? By now he must be thirty-something. Had this saviour saved anyone yet? Rescued anyone? Could he rescue me from my aimless existence? Toby wondered.

Just then the wind caught Jesus' words and blew them Toby's direction. "I am the Good Shepherd," Jesus was saying, "who lays down his life for the sheep. Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me," he said with warmth and joy full on his face, "for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I wonder? thought Toby as he felt big tears begin to roll down his cheeks and into his beard. I wonder? thought Toby as joy and the certainty of God's love began to fill his heart until it seemed like he would explode. I wonder? thought Toby, if this Jesus is the little baby I saw that night, the Saviour of the world? Yes, thought Toby, he must be. His words found me and, frankly, he sounds just like he's ... God's shepherd.

For more short stories go to [Joyful Heart](#)

Image by [Mehmet Turgut Kirkgoz](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Depth change

Why I feel we need to go deeper in our sermons, so people can grow and grasp the upside down nature of the Kingdom of God. By Michael Shaw
A few years ago a couple in the church approached me. He had been in the leadership (before I became the minister), she helped with the pastoral team. They wanted deeper teaching, telling me they needed "meat". Another church leader advised me to "go deeper" in my sermons in response, so I did. However, within a few months they left, moving to a different church where, ironically, the teaching was less deep. They didn't tell me that was the reason, instead giving me lots of "good" reasons why it was time for them to leave our small church community to go to the bigger church up the road.

A few weeks ago the teenage son of a church member said that his church, a big church near the city centre, was great at presenting the Gospel simply, but thinks our church was far better at allowing people to be discipled. Sometimes young people are far wiser than we give them credit for! I believe that is the case: I can understand why young people his age go to the church he does, but what I can't understand is mature



Christians who still find a home there.

You see most Christians don't want to be stuck on milk. Most want to grow and develop to mature, or they want to be seen to be mature. Yet many don't want to be too challenged on the average Sunday.

The first Sunday in Advent I preached on the pain and difficulties of [infertility using the first chapter of Luke](#). Someone who was new to our congregation was stunned, firstly because my story was their story, and secondly because I don't think they expected a church to touch on an issue like that! As a church we are happy to explore deeper issues, and regularly include issues such as social justice or creation care in our services, and how they impact our world.

I was once told by a church member that I preached too much about poverty. Funnily enough he has also left!

Surely the main task is to preach the Gospel? Well for me the Gospel is about liberation, and social justice issues and sentimental issues are about liberation, whether that is liberation from poverty or bigotry, or liberation for the whole Earth from the damaging impacts of climate change. I am happy to go deeper than just the superficial ideas of what



the Gospel is.

Jesus' parables are simple stories, but are often his deepest form of teaching. They often talk not of the Gospel but of what the upside down Kingdom of God looks like. One time, in response to the question *who is my neighbour?*, Jesus tells a story that we know as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. At the heart of the story is that your neighbour is the alien you hate who lives in your country. It is a deep story of social justice.

Going deeper does not mean going more academic. One of the best things someone new said to me a few weeks back is "you say complicated things so simply". The art of going deeper is not making things more confusing, but making complicated ideas simple.

All churches should be wanting to take their church members deeper, but sadly, in order to attract new people, I believe some go to the lowest common denominator and sermons become extended platitudes, sounding nice on the surface, but lacking depth. With Christianity on decline in the United Kingdom we think we need to make the sermon simpler for people to understand, but I feel we need to go deeper, so people can grow. When they grow, then the church will grow!

Michael Shaw is minister of [Devonport Community Baptist Church in Plymouth](#)

First published in the [Baptist Times](#)
Image | Randy Jacob Unsplash

Thought For the Day

'It is not those who think they have all the answers who are wise, but those who dare to ask questions, and it is not doubt we need to fear but certainty: the bigot who will not listen and the zealot who refuses to think. Truly, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, yet which of us has more?'

(from *The Teacher*, Nick Fawcett, 2016)