

# Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 24th January 2021

This Sunday's online service "How do we do Church in 2021?"



**Pat is leading and Ron is preaching from Acts 1: 12-14 - 2:42**

You can follow the service on the SBC website from Sunday morning. go to [www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/](http://www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/) Then click on the icon pictured left.

## Ron's Reads

**Gn 1:27, Deut 6:4f, 1 Cor 12-14**

### For Your Prayers

Please pray for those in our community who are isolated have started to feel despair and cannot see the purpose of life in the darkness of loneliness pray that the Lord will be the light at the end of the tunnel and He will guide them to a time when they can feel safe and can bask in the warmth of their social contacts.

Pray for the families struggling to buy enough food, pay their rent or mortgage and are racked with anxiety about their futures.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Geci and Peter Burt.**

### Virtual Prayer Room

On Tuesday 19th Victoria posted "Please pray for my mum, Kim, who begins a combination of different treatments today. Thank you x"

The same day Jerry posted on behalf of Jan and Henry "Please would you pray for our brother-in-law Geoff who had a fall and was taken into N&N and has covid and is on oxygen, thanks."

On Thursday David posted "Please pray for Lyn Matthews who lives in Durban SA and is part of the Lighthouse Church. Lyn evangelises in some of the poorest areas in Durban that have many social problems. She receives the SBC newsletter every week and watches the online services and we have shared her talks on video.

Lyn has contracted the Covid virus and is very unwell."

**To join the ever-growing WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room and Devotion WhatsApp site text Jerry on 07733837687. You will need a smart phone**

### Prayers for Isolation in the current Lockdown

Isolation written by Jill Gower

Father God, we pray for those who are isolated within their homes, especially the lonely and vulnerable. We pray that you would surround them with your love.

Lord, in this time would you minister to each one, that they would know that they have a Father in Heaven who loves them and is with them.

We declare over them that You, Lord, are with them and that You will never leave them or forsake those who call on Your Name.

We bless our communities with the love and peace of God that passes all understanding. We bless our communities with being rooted and grounded in the love of God. Amen.

[Network Norwich and Norfolk](#)

**Isolation written by Alison Lawn, Eileen Clarkson, Mary Hobbs, Christine Cumber, Trevor Gay**

Father, we adore you and we ask that your loving arms reach out and embrace those who are alone at this time. Be with them Lord as they miss the regular contact they would normally enjoy with neighbours, friends and family. May your Holy Spirit enable the isolated to know that you are always here. Let this time allow us to reach out to others by prayer, word or post so that the isolated know your compassion and heart of love. Protect them in their isolation and may they know that they are never truly alone as you are always there with them. Comfort them Lord by your presence in their darkest hours. May they sense your presence in a very real & new way. May your blessings abound to them even in their times of feeling "low". Loving God, even though we are separated from those we love we are never separated from you. You hold us close. Jesus you promised never to leave us. Thank you, faithful God. Lord as we look to the future with uncertainty, we thank you for being with those people who are alone. Your comfort and love at this time will surely strengthen them. Amen

[Church of England Diocese Norwich](#)



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**Ministry Team: The Whole Fellowship**

**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](http://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, 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 [miniter@stalhambaptist.org.uk](mailto:miniter@stalhambaptist.org.uk)

### For your Diary

**Monday Jan. 25th 9.00am**

Deacons Zoom Prayer Meeting

**Wednesday Jan. 27th  
7.00pm**

Zoom Bible Study.

Contact Diana for link.

"If you're reading this, I hope God opens incredible doors for your life this year. Greatness is upon you. You must believe it though."

— **Germany Kent**

## Church Meeting This Sunday at Midday

We have been blessed with a good number of people to form a quorum for the meeting. Any queries in regard to joining the meeting please contact Diana."

## Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at 1 Corinthians 1. Is there a difference between open debate and an argument? Have there been times when you have become angry because someone didn't agree or you felt they should have known better? If you would like to suggest a reading or take part in "Testimony Tuesday" contact Diana, Jerry or Ron.

## Foodbank

The following would be much appreciated by the foodbank.

**Long Life Milk – full fat or semi-skimmed - Sponge Puddings - Fruit Juice - Household Cleaning Products.**

## Sunday Church Opening

SBC will not be open on Sundays until further notice. It will still be open on weekdays for Foodbank donations and personal prayer.

## Message from Network Norfolk

Network Norfolk helps keep people connected in virus outbreak

**At this important time, the [Network Norfolk](#) website will continue to share news of the local Christian community and to help with the vital role of keeping people connected.**

Our purpose remains to build up the local Christian community by sharing news stories, opportunities to support people and testimonies of those who take action inspired by their Christian faith, along with your alternative ways of doing church for the next few months.

### Sign up for weekly enews bulletin

One of the best ways for you to keep in touch with the local Christian community is to visit regularly and to sign up for our weekly enews bulletin.

We will continue to send our weekly newsletter with a summary of stories for the week. If you don't receive it or know someone who you think would appreciate receiving this, please ask them to email [web@networknorwich.co.uk](mailto:web@networknorwich.co.uk) with their full name and email address to subscribe.

### Send us a story

Our team of four – Keith, Helen, Tony and Eldred are already used to working from home to write and edit the stories for the website and invite contributions from the Christian community. If you have a story for us please email [web@networknorwich.co.uk](mailto:web@networknorwich.co.uk)

## EBA Prayer Focus 24th January 2021 Colchester Baptist Church

Colchester is Britain's oldest recorded town and Colchester Baptist Church, located in the heart of the town, is one of the oldest Baptist churches in the country with roots dating back to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

This thriving and growing church with over 200 members is currently led by Revd Cole Maynard who has bought a new vision of 'strong Christians rooted in Christ' to the church since he joined in 2018.

Since March the Sunday services have moved online benefitting from the recent technology upgrade in the church, and there have also been restricted numbers of 80 at socially-

distanced services when these have been permitted. Online service require a lot more work and input from a wider team but provide new ways to reach more people. In fact online viewings of Sunday services are almost twice the pre-lockdown in-person attendance and new people have joined the online church community in recent months including some from outside the local area.

Just before the first lockdown a new pastoral care system was put in place, especially focussed on the elderly, and this has been adapted to remote working so no one is excluded or feels left out of the church fellowship.

The church has an active long-term programme to reach vulnerable people through the successful Open Doors ministry which has a part-time Director and a part-time Manager and a varied programme of weekly activities including a café and 'Sunday at 1' which has an alternative-style service and a meal.

For prayer:

- For the opportunities to grow and start to move the church into new areas
- For continuing blessing and encouragement during the current lockdown restrictions
- For wisdom in delivering online services and harnessing technology to adapt to a new way of being church

## Quotes of the Week

"In all ages the people have honoured those who dishonoured them. They have worshiped their destroyers; they have canonized the most gigantic liars, and buried the great thieves in marble and gold. Under the loftiest monuments sleeps the dust of murder."

*Robert G. Ingersoll,*

"Burdened with debt, racked by anxiety from another day striving to maintain his materialistic lifestyle he spent the evening relaxing with bottle of red wine, worshiping the TV celebrity idols and those of sport on his state of the art 2020 65" Q80T QLED 4K HDR Smart TV a bargain at £1800. At the same time, he used social media to amaze his friends and family how great his life was and how happy he was. But often, he was not happy in fact more often than not. He was always searching for something and in the calm soft quiet of that night a voice whispered....."

*Franky Dilch*

"The Christian says, 'Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage.

I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same."

*C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

"Always, everywhere God is present, and always He seeks to discover Himself to each one"

*A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine*

# Is your church Hong Kong ready?

**The UK is about to welcome hundreds of thousands of people from Hong Kong. Simon Goddard explores how Baptists are responding, and what your church can do**

Last year the UK government made a pledge to the people of Hong Kong in the light of the clamp down following their pro-democracy demonstrations. That promise comes into effect at the end of this month and it is estimated that between 130,000 and 300,000 people from Hong Kong will be arriving in the UK over the next year.

This is expected to be the biggest planned migration of people to the UK from outside of Europe since Windrush, and a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the church to play its part in offering hospitality. After Covid-19 spread across the globe from Wuhan, the Chinese community in the UK have experienced [shocking racism and abuse](#), and there is an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of previous generations and for the church to be proactive in witness and welcome.

While many of those arriving will be leaving Hong Kong as economic migrants there will some who will need to leave for their own safety. Indeed, some Baptists have been at the forefront of the pro-democracy protests, and early targets of the new security laws. This is not just an opportunity for us to offer hospitality, but also to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Indeed, if as Baptists Together we can be both welcoming to Baptist ministers needing to leave Hong Kong, as well as being centres of welcome for those arriving in our communities, we we're likely to discover that this is also an opportunity to participate in the mission of God.

Although things are tough for all of us at the moment, and the Covid restrictions means there's a lot to think about and a lot we can't do at the moment, here is one opportunity to do something positive and hopeful. Baptists Together Mission Forum has already discussed how we might be able to facilitate and co-ordinate our response as a Baptist family, and here are some of the ideas that we're beginning to work on:

- Developing a network of churches in areas that already have a high Cantonese speaking population to help them prepare a local response;
  - Helping churches to welcome Baptist leaders who are looking to leave Hong Kong, perhaps enabling them to plant new Cantonese speaking congregations;
  - Working with smaller churches who might have a manse, but little resources for a stipend, who might benefit from the ministry of a pastor from Hong Kong (many of whom may speak good English) while they take on some 'tentmaking' employment locally.
  - Creating a network for these Hong Kong Baptist pastors as they arrive in the UK, linking them to local churches who would like to help them settle in and maybe subsequently benefit from their ministry in some way.
- Working with BMS and the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World to offer training and support for both

churches and these 'reverse missionaries'.

**We've created a mailing list for those who would like to be part of our response and to be contacted directly as more details emerge. You can sign up here: <http://bit.ly/hkbaptist21>**

**There's also a Zoom event on 28 January being hosted by Dr Krish Kandiah exploring this "once-in-a-generation" opportunity further. Places are limited, but you can register [here](#).**

I've been co-ordinating our response until now but hope that we might soon be able to release some funding to appoint someone part-time to take this further. It's been so encouraging to see the positive engagement with this already and am looking forward to seeing how Baptists will once again creatively respond to the new thing God is doing in our midst.

**Simon Goddard is one of the three Baptists Together Pioneer Ambassadors and Director of [RiverTree](#), an organisation he set up in 2018 to catalyse, cultivate and collaborate to enable fruitfulness in the mission of God.**

**The fruit of recent collaborations include the [Godsend app](#) and the recently launched book *21st Century Christian: Following Jesus where Life Happens*.**

**Simon is married to Lisa, and together they recently became a foster-parents to their 14 year old godson.**



Photo by [Travel Sourced](#) from [Pexels](#)



# Open Doors

## Five Christians in China charged for distributing audio Bibles



In further evidence of the intensifying crackdown on Christian activity in China, five Christians have been charged for involvement in the distribution of audio Bibles. In the latest World Watch List, released last week, China re-entered the top 20 for the first time in a decade.

*The Chinese government is targeting the distribution of Bibles and even manipulating its content*

Four Christians in China are facing prison sentences of between 18 months and five years for involvement in the distribution of audio Bibles. A fifth Christian involved in a separate business is currently on trial and could face a similar sentence. It's part of a wider government campaign to 'eradicate pornography and illegal publications'.

On 9 December 2020, four men part of Life Tree Communication Co. Ltd, which mainly sells audio Bibles, appeared in court in Shenzhen, south-east China, on charges of 'illegal business operations'. The prosecutor recommended a prison sentence of five years for the business owner, Fu Xuanjuan, and sentences of between 18 months and three years for his three colleagues.

Two days earlier, on 7 December, Lai Jinjiang appeared in the same court on charges of selling audio Bibles. Open Doors understands that his case is ongoing, with the court yet to reach a verdict.

### Businesses meet high demand for audio Bibles

"Audio Bible players first appeared in China around 2006 and they became popular, especially in rural house churches," a local source told Open Doors. The devices are easy to use and, unlike printed Bibles, are widely available on the internet. They also contain sermons, songs and other Christian content.

The source believes Lai's business likely caught the attention of authorities some time before being charged. "His trial is most likely part of the bigger crackdown movement on the Christian churches, which started seven to eight years ago and has, particularly in the last two years, developed into a nationwide repression of Christian activities."

### The targeting and manipulation of the Bible

Restricting distribution of audio Bibles is not the only way in which the Chinese authorities are seeking to stop its citizens from being impacted by God's Word.

In church raids – which are becoming increasingly common – Bibles are often confiscated and verses on walls defaced. In 2018, printed Bibles were removed from online platforms. Now they can only be sold in state-affiliated church bookshops. Bible apps are popular and still accessible, though closure of some apps on online platforms have been reported.

### Find out more about the intensifying regulation and surveillance of Christian activities in China

Meanwhile, the Bible itself is being manipulated according to socialist values. Churches have been forced to display government-prepared posters which feature Bible verses that reflect the 12 principles of socialism, including prosperity, democracy, patriotism and dedication. Furthermore, an official ethics textbook includes a twisted take on Jesus' encounter with the woman

caught in adultery. In it, Jesus stones her and says, "I too am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead."

According to [VOA](https://www.voanews.com), the Chinese government announced in 2019 that they will be producing an 'official translation' of the Bible as part of 'a comprehensive evaluation of the existing religious classics aiming at contents which do not conform to the progress of the times'. Any content deemed incompatible with socialist values will be amended accordingly.

### Please continue to stand with Chinese church

These are concerning times for Christians in China as the government seeks to stifle and suppress Christian freedom – and, in doing so, stop the number of Christians exceeding that of the Chinese Communist Party.

Believers are standing strong and adapting, just as they have done before when persecution has hit. Your prayers and support are an enormous source of encouragement to them. Please continue to stand with them.

### Please Pray

- That all charges against the five men will be dropped, and that each of them (and their families) will continue to stay strong in their faith and know that their 'labour in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- That every Christian in China will have access to a Bible
- That the authorities will recognise the sanctity and power of the Bible and will stop reinterpreting it according to socialist values.

For more information go to <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/>

