

# Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 31st January 2021

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



**Ron is leading and is preaching from Acts 1:12-14 continuing the theme "How do we do Church in 2021?"**

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

1 Cor 11:24-26, Rev 21:1-5, Lam 3:23

### For Your Prayers

Sunday 31st is World Leprosy Day. Please pray that the easily treated disease can be eradicated from our world and those suffering will receive the help they need.

Also pray for Jane and Ron who are traveling to Leeds to help Bee and David as Bee will be giving birth soon, pray they will have a safe journey and that Bee has a comfortable birth and all will go well.

Remember all those in the fellowship who are undergoing hospital treatment and waiting for medical procedures.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Greg Chapman**.

### Virtual Prayer Room

On Thursday 21st Jerry posted for Jan Nicholson "Please pray for Karen Powley a care worker in mental health home who has tested positive with Covid although she had a jab on Monday."

On Friday Jenny posted "Thank you all for your prayers, much to be grateful for. I had a telephone consultation with a consultant at Addenbrookes this morning. Last November's scan revealed that the tumour has not grown, though I was hoping it might have shrunk. However, I have been reassured that this is a good result and that 90% do not grow again or need further treatment. Indeed the next scan is not scheduled until Nov 2022. Praise God!"

On Tuesday Pat Dabbs said "Alan was diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation in September 2018. He has been experiencing strange feelings in his head. Our GP believes this is heart related. Alan has an appointment tomorrow at Norfolk and Norwich with a cardiologist. We would appreciate your prayers with regards to diagnoses and treatment."

On Wednesday Pat updated the situation "Alan has been diagnosed as needing a pacemaker. The cardiologist say he should get a letter in the next week or two with an appointment as he would prefer it done quite soon. We thank God for a speedy and straightforward diagnosis and we thank you all for your prayers."

Pat posted on Thursday "Just had a call from N&N. They want to fit Alan's pacemaker on Sunday. We thank God for such a speedy outcome but it has left us feeling a little bewildered."

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

### Where your treasure is, there your heart will be

Treasure glitters and attracts.

We can be captivated so easily by so many things, so many people.

Magnetised, our hearts get drawn towards what we most value.

So it is that Jesus says: 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

You are speaking a word of judgement and of grace, Lord.

Judgement – for we can find much to give allegiance and honour to that does not draw us to you.

Grace – for we can be captivated by your love and goodness, drawn closer and closer into your embrace.

Help us to choose the life your love would have us know.

Help us to treasure the joy you would have us feel.

Help us to honour the goodness you would have us share.

Help us to uncover the riches you would entrust us with.

Help us to find, in you, life's fulfilment and life's truth.

So may we obey: 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

Rev Neil Thorogood, who at the time of writing is Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge. <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings>



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**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 Feb 1st 7.00pm**

Deacons Zoom Meeting

**Thursday Feb. 4th 7.00pm**

Zoom Prayer Meeting.

Contact Diana for link.

**"For it is in giving that we receive."**



## Church Meeting

A big thank you to all those who took part in last Sunday's Zoom Church meeting. The Deacon's recommendations were accepted, voting as follows:

Appoint SGM-For- 97%

Appoint A Morton - For - 97%

Instal Ceramic Heaters - For - 90%

Not to instal Solar Panels but to explore later - For - 79.32%

Accept private loan-For - 86%."

## Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at Matthew 6. Is your giving done with joy and not for self gratification? As you go through the day do you reflect on the Lord's Prayer and how it fills your life? Does the materialistic world and celebrity culture erode your love of Jesus? 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.

## Community Scene

David is making a start on the Easter Edition of Community Scene and is looking for short contributions about people's recollections of Easter. If you can help email him on [publicity@stalhambaptist.org.uk](mailto:publicity@stalhambaptist.org.uk)

## EBA Prayer Focus 31st January 2021 Clarence Road Baptist Church

Clarence Road is a town-centre church in Southend-on-Sea, with a history of pioneering social action, being sensitive to the needs of people in our diverse town. One of our strengths is our welcome and hospitality.

Our congregation is made up of people from quite different backgrounds, and we value our connections to the wider community; the building is used by lots of different community groups which offer support and friendship for those who are vulnerable in our town. We also host a pioneer Baptist Church, 57West, in part of our building, which works primarily with rough sleepers and those most in need in Southend.

As for us all, this year has been difficult for our church. Many of us have been self-isolating since the beginning of March. While we re-opened our building, we discovered that this only served to highlight our disconnection rather than bringing us together again. So, we have decided to worship online using YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom.

These times of fellowship have been meaningful, and we are adapting to this mix of technologies while also using more traditional communication methods – sending letters again! Each weekday evening, we meet for 'Compline @Clarence,' a daily time for quiet, contemplative reflection on the day, at 10pm using Facebook Live.

We have joined with other churches locally on various Christmas projects. And we have continued to meet on YouTube and Zoom Sunday mornings to worship and celebrate communion together. This pandemic has truly highlighted the importance of building meaningful relationships as a church family. We thank God for his

continued care and guidance for our church.

Please pray:

- For those most vulnerable in our church, that with a vaccine now on the horizon they will be able to connect in-person again
- For the relationships and friendships of the church, both as a church and with local groups and projects
- For new opportunities to connect with our community in a post-pandemic world, and wisdom to know where to put our energies!
- For our finances – like many small churches, we have lost a large portion of our income. Please pray for wisdom and faithfulness in managing our resources

## Donations

If you would like to donate to SBC you can go on line at <https://www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/donate.php> where you will find details of how to pay by BAC's, SMS or debit or credit card. You can also put cash or cheques through Henry Nicholson door at Three Windows

## Quotes of the Week

"Until we can receive with an open heart, we're never really giving with an open heart. When we attach judgment to receiving help, we knowingly or unknowingly attach judgment to giving help."

— Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

— Winston Churchill

"Help others without any reason and give without the expectation of receiving anything in return."

— Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart*

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another."

— Charles Dickens

"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."

— Mother Theresa

"What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other—but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humour, of his sadness—of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in itself exquisite joy. But in giving he cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him."

— Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*

"Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?"

— John Wesley



# Fake news and conspiracy theories

In my early years as a professional geologist and a Christian, I spent a great deal of time explaining to people who took a literal view of Genesis chapter 1 that the unequivocal discoveries of science pointed to a universe some 13-14 billion years old and planet Earth about 4.5 billion years old.

I was dismayed and puzzled by one defence of the literalist interpretation, which stated that scientists were deluded and were in a conspiracy of deception. Why scientists might do this was never articulated, and certainly was a claim that made no sense to anyone who was involved in scientific research, the premise of which was to discover truth.

Later in my life as a practical theologian I wrote a number of texts on the dialogue between science and faith to demonstrate the complementarity between these two ways of exploring the truth about creation.

As part of my research into the relationships of science and faith I became concerned about the burgeoning environmental crisis, the dangers of which have become ever clearer in the last 20 years.

The denials of the reality of climate change have also disappointed me and the suggestion that environmental scientists are seeking to mislead the world is also both puzzling and frightening. While the objections to the evolution of an old earth can be to some extent understood as an affirmation of the truth of scripture, the denial of climate change and our biblical mandate to care for creation cannot.

So why do people maintain these views in the face of scientific facts? It seems to me as a Christian that the reason is the age old sin of a desire for power and control – the very thing for which Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The demand for allegiance to a literal interpretation of

Genesis 1-11 as a basis of faith can be part of an exertion of the power over and control of church members; and a denial of climate change as an excuse to continue with the exploitation of the planet as a means of increasing profits for large companies.

Does this help in our understanding of today's 'fake news' and conspiracy theories?

In the UK many videos have been posted online which claim to show empty hospitals as evidence that the coronavirus pandemic has been exaggerated or even a complete fabrication. While these have provoked a strong reaction from healthcare officials, who have encouraged the public to heed government advice in the face of rapidly rising coronavirus infections, there are those who believing this particular conspiracy theory want to get on with selfishly living their lives as if there was no emergency.

In the United States the conspiracy theories have proved to be more disastrous and dangerous with the storming of the Capitol building in Washington DC, mostly based on Donald Trump's claim that the election was 'stolen' with hundreds of thousands of 'illegal votes'.

Disinformation and claims of 'fake news' have dominated the rhetoric of the White House in the last four years. There has been a consistent attack on the media as purveyors of lies rather than sources of truth, while the President's representative Kellyanne Conway, during a 'Meet the Press' interview on January 22, 2017, used the phrase 'alternative facts' in defence of the White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's false statement about the attendance numbers at Donald Trump's inauguration.

'Alternative facts' is a phrase that occurs in George Orwell's

dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where we find four ministries of the government of Oceania: The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation. These deliberate ways of 'doublethink' are designed to exercise power and control over the masses. At the beginning of 2021 *The Guardian* newspaper expressed the conviction that everyone deserves access to information that's grounded in science and truth, and analysis rooted in authority and integrity.

So how do we as Christians respond to conspiracy theories, 'fake news', and a denial of scientific facts?

Our experience, what happens to us, has both inner and outer elements. Inner elements include thought, feeling, memory, attitudes, hopes, hang-ups, values. This is not objective, but is dangerously intimate and subjective. Our honesty and level of self-awareness will affect how we handle our own truth.

We see this in the film *A Few Good Men* (Columbia Pictures, 1992) with Tom Cruise as Lt. Daniel Kaffee; Jack Nicholson as Col. Nathan R. Jessep; and Demi Moore as Lt. Cdr. Joanne Galloway. Perception of and the interpretation/value of the truth is at the heart of the court case, which dominates the film. At the climax of the court scene where Jessep is caught in a lie he shouts out: "You can't handle the truth!"

The film explores how each of the characters represented in the film discover the truth about themselves and the truth by which they live. It revolves around Jessep's comment/question about whether or not they, including Jessep himself, can handle the truth by which they seek to live.

This film triggers thoughts of Jesus on trial before Pilate, where we find that Jesus declares his purpose is to exemplify the truth, a statement that leaves Pilate musing, 'What is truth?' (John 18:37-38). In his commentary, *The Message of John* (IVP, 1993) Bruce Milne notes that in a world of illusion and unreality, Jesus offers the one true reality which is found in a relationship with God.

Milne then wonders if Pilate's question indicated the wistful longing of a professional politician, steeped in the daily compromises, the prudential balancing of forces, the application of ruthless power, the half-light world of greys and polka dots where people grope wearily for truth and the soul withers and dies.

Jesus might well have said, 'You can't handle the truth.' But for us truth is not in a book or a creed but in a person; Jesus who said "I am the way, and the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and "In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth" (John 18:37).

As Christians we measure the truth presented by politicians, scientists, economists, and medical personnel by what we learn in the life of Jesus. Do the views presented in the media accord with the Gospel of love, are they true, and do they build up the people of God's world?

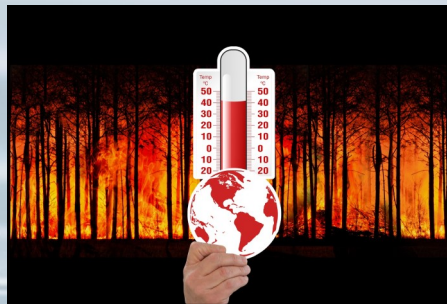
The call to us remains the same as it did in the days of Micah: *What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8)

The Revd Dr John Weaver was President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 2008-9, and served as Principal of South Wales Baptist College from 2001-2011. He is vice president of the John Ray Initiative (JRI), an educational charity focused on connecting environment, science and Christianity.

A version of this article first appeared on [Good Faith Media](#), and is republished with permission in the [Baptist Times](#)

**The thoughts expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministers and Deacons of SBC.**

Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)







**The Leprosy  
Mission**  
England and Wales



## World Leprosy Day 2021: eradicating leprosy is not a pipe dream

World Leprosy Day will be marked on 31 January - the last Sunday of the month, chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, on January 30, 1948.

It is 67 years since the French philanthropist and writer Raoul Follereau initiated World Leprosy Day in 1954 in his effort to raise global awareness of the disease and make people aware that it is preventable, treatable and curable.

The biggest obstacle to its prevention and cure is ignorance. The idea that it is a curse, that it's a result of sins committed in a past life, that it can easily be caught by touch are among the many myths that result in people, routinely, being cast out by their communities. It means people hide their symptoms and fail to seek treatment for fear of being disowned by their families. More than three million people worldwide live with disabilities caused as a result of late treatment of leprosy.

"While treating, curing and rehabilitating those affected by leprosy are a big part of our work, our focus is also very much on raising people's awareness of the treatability of this disease. Otherwise the stigma will force people to keep hiding their symptoms and they will end up disabled."

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by *mycobacterium leprae*. It is easily curable with multidrug therapy - a combination of rifampicin, clofazimine and dapsone tablets taken for six months to a year.



Leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease, after Norwegian scientist Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen who discovered its cause in 1873. It is not hereditary or highly contagious and can only be caught by close, repeated contact with nose and mouth

droplets from someone with untreated leprosy. It is prevalent usually in places of extreme poverty and poor hygiene.

Leprosy affects mainly the skin, peripheral nerves, upper respiratory tract and the eyes. It damages the nerves on the skin's surface leaving it without sensation or pain. As no pain is felt burns to fingers and ulcers caused by stepping on stones or glass go unnoticed and can lead to amputation, muscle paralysis and other disabilities. Blindness is also a common consequence caused by the inability to detect grit in the eye.

It is one of the oldest diseases known to mankind and people with leprosy have been stigmatized and

considered to be at the extreme margins of the society. The aim of World Leprosy Day is to change this attitude and increase public awareness of the fact that leprosy can now be easily prevented and cured.