

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Saturday 1st May 2021



This Sunday's online service "Stephen - The First Christian Martyr Part 1"

Ron is leading and Jerry is preaching from Acts 6: 8 – 15.

You can follow the service on the SBC website from Sunday morning, go to www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ Then click on the icon pictured right.



Structure of Jerry's Sermon:

1. The Character of Stephen 6: 3,5,8
2. The Conflict With Stephen 6:9-12
3. The Charge Against Stephen 6:13-15

Jerry's Reads

Exodus 34:29-35, Mark 14: 53-65, Luke 12:8-12; 21:15-18; 23:1-5,
John 2:18-22 & Galatians 5:16-24

For Your Prayers

Please continue praying for India as Covid deaths are still escalating to record proportions.

Pray also that the Covid vaccines will be available to all in the world and not the preserve of the richest countries.

Also pray that people will engage with the elections on May 6th, both local and for the Norfolk Police Commissioner.

Pray for those in the fellowship and community who are still waiting for appointments with hospitals for routine operations.

As the Church is due to open on May 9th please pray that SBC can reach out to the community and radiate the love of God.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Diana Gordon**

Virtual Prayer Room

On Thursday 22nd Geoff posted "Have heard that all British personnel are safely home (from Chad) but they request prayers for their co-workers and friends they have left behind."

On Saturday Jan posted "Can you please pray for David Neale he has been taken into hospital thank you."

On Wednesday Jane updated David's situation "Please continue to pray for David and Eileen, David now has a diagnosis and is on antibiotics he will be in hospital for another fortnight thank you."

Also on Wednesday Doreen asked "Please pray for Steve Slade, he is going into hospital tonight for an assessment."

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 the Week

Thank you God for the diversity of the human race.

Thanks for the different races, languages, religions, cultures and peoples of the world.

Help us to treasure the diversity of life and we pray that individuals, governments and communities strive for unity in diversity.

Amen.

Loving God, I thank you for your gift of life, given through Jesus and his sacrifice. Help me understand more fully what it means to be adopted by you in order that you may be glorified as others see how my life is transformed by your grace and the experience of your unconditional love for your children.

Amen

Dear Lord, thank you for rescuing us from a world caught up in the effects of sin. You lived a life which was ours, so that one day we can live a life which is yours. Thank you for showing us the true meaning of leadership and may we seek to lead through the example you have set for us. Amen

God of life, creativity and beauty, help us to treasure and cultivate your creation according to your will.

Strengthen those who are vulnerable because of our misuse of your creation and inspire us to seek a better and more sustainable way of living so that the whole of your creation may be renewed. Amen.

Source [Christian Aid](#)

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon
07951949128

Ministry Team: The Whole
Fellowship

If you are reading this news-letter 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, 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 miniister@stalhambaptist.org.uk

For your Diary

Mon May 3rd 9.00am

Deacons Zoom Prayer Meeting

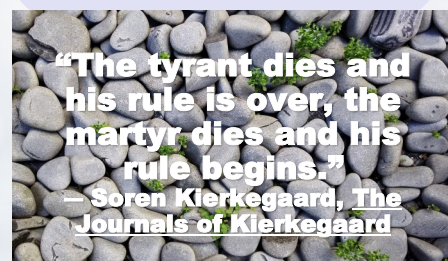
Wed May 5th 7.00pm

Zoom Bible Study Meeting

Contact Diana for a link.

"The tyrant dies and his rule is over, the martyr dies and his rule begins."

— Soren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard



Church Re-Opening 9th May

We are planning to reopen SBC on the Sunday 9th May unless there is any change in Government Guidance.

A Covid secure system will be in place including a booking system requiring those attending to book by contacting Diana by email secretary@stalhambaptist.org.uk Whatsapp or telephone 07951949128.

Fund Raising Success

Victoria Nicholson writes. The NeSt March Marathon event raised a massive £8330! An amazing amount towards helping find a cure for Nephrotic Syndrome which Poppy suffers from. I am so proud to say that out of that total we raised an amazing £910! Thank you so much to those who donated. For more information about NeSt click on the following <https://nstrust.co.uk/>

Pictured. Victoria, Gracie, Daniel, Autumn and Poppy wearing their medals.



Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at 1 Corinthians 12. We are all of one spirit. How easy is it to challenge somebody who is using bigoted language because they cannot accept differences in race, culture, religion or gender?

If you would like to suggest a reading or take part in "Testimony Tuesday" contact Diana, Jerry or Ron.

EBA Prayer Focus 2nd May 2021

Framlingham Community Baptist Church

The ancient market town of Framlingham is nestled in the East Suffolk countryside and is home to a magnificent 12th Century castle and Framlingham Community Baptist Church.

Members of FCBC are drawn from the town and local villages, with around 30 forming the regular congregation. The church does not have a pastor, instead relying on a small but dedicated leadership team and visiting speakers to share God's Word.

Services usually take place at the local youth centre. Attendance has actually increased during lockdown as the church migrated to Zoom for its Sunday services and midweek meetings. The use of technology has been a blessing for those who would otherwise be unable to attend in person to regularly connect with the church family.

The pandemic has inevitably affected the regular activities, but by working with other churches support has continued for a number of mission endeavours, including the local food bank and CAP debt centre.

The church decided to support the youth centre by continuing to pay rent during lockdown, and is now helping with an upgrade and renovation, using the expertise of a church member. It is hoped this growing partnership will bear fruit for God's Kingdom.

Prayer points

- We thank God for holding us close in uncertain days. Please pray for unity in perceiving and following God's agenda for our church and for the town's Churches Together network moving forward.
- Pray for the new housing developments. For Christian families to move in and for opportunities to share the gospel with new residents.

- The pandemic has increased mental health-related issues. If we are called to be a hospital ship rather than a cruise liner, pray for God to equip us for the task. We are few in number and the need is great.

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

Jerry's Quotes of the Week

"What Jesus meant when he said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," was that he himself was taking the place of the temple—by dying for sin once for all, and by rising from the dead to reign as the everlasting priest and Lord of glory. When I die, the temple system dies. And when I rise, I am the temple. I am the sacrifice for sins. I am the priest and go-between with God. I am the presence and radiance of his glory. The temple is

finished...He destroyed the temple the way the rising sun destroys the need for streetlights and headlights. He destroyed the temple the way a descending reality destroys its shadow." **John Piper**

"The church had to fight for her life from the very beginning. From the moment it was born, the church has had to face a world that has done everything it could to exterminate it."- **Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"But do your worst, and rack your inventions for tortures for Christians—it is all to no purpose; you do but attract the world, and make it fall the more in love with our religion; the more you mow us down, the thicker we rise; the Christian blood you spill is like the seed you sow, it springs from the earth again, and fructifies the more."-**Tertullian in 197 A.D.**, in his book, *The Apology of Tertullian for the Christians*

"God has so ordered the church from the very beginning that death is the way to life, and the cross the way to victory." -**John Calvin**

"It is in the field of prayer that life's critical battles are lost or won. We must conquer all our circumstances there. We must first of all bring them there. We must survey them there. We must master them there. In prayer we bring our spiritual enemies into the presence of God and we fight them there. Have you tried that? Or have you been satisfied to meet and fight your foes in the open spaces of the world? I am trying to say in the spiritual realm what Lord Fisher once said in the realm of material warfare. He said, "Compel your enemy to fight you on your own drill ground." Yes, indeed, and when you fight the world and the flesh and the devil on the drill ground of prayer, we have a certain victory. Let us bring our evil thoughts on the field of prayer. Let us drive our mean judgments on to the field of prayer. Let us drive our ignoble purpose on the same field, and our insane prejudices, and our malicious practices, and our tyrannical passions. Let us fight them on our own drill ground and slay them there. Men ought always to bring their evil antagonisms and besetments into the presence of God. Force them into God's holy place and there fight and slay. Men ought always to pray and they will not faint in the heaviest day."- **Dr. J. H. Jowett**

Our Passover Lamb

To listen to an audio click [here](#).

“Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed”, 1 Corinthians 5:7

On the eve of Passover, the same night He was betrayed, Jesus gathered for an intimate meal with His disciples. I'm sure they talked about Passover, looking back to their liberation from Egypt, and longing for similar deliverance from Rome. Maybe they retold the stories of how God came down to judge the gods of Egypt and answer Pharaoh's challenge, 'who is the Lord that I should obey Him'? The feast itself focuses on the climax of those judgements, when a distinction was made between every household in the land, based on the obedience of faith. God gave the command to Israelite and Egyptian alike. To be spared from what was coming, they had to kill an unblemished lamb, and apply the blood to the door frame. The instruction was sufficiently strange so as to appear of no practical value. Carrying it out could therefore only be an expression of faith and obedience.

As surely as the first nine plagues had arrived so did the tenth. A destroying angel brought death to the firstborn in every household not covered by the blood. Social status and ethnic heritage gave no protection, and wailing was heard from the palace to the lowest dungeon. The gods were powerless to protect their chosen representative and he in turn was powerless to protect his people. Pharaoh now understood he was dealing with someone far greater than his pantheon of spirits. Finally, he stopped saying 'who is the Lord', and obeyed.

The disciples believed they were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover with Jesus, as they had done each year. But Jesus knew this time would be different. The focus would no longer be on the ceremonial lamb slain by the High Priest at the Temple. Instead, the 'Lamb of God', the Son with firstborn rights over all creation, would be sacrificed for us.

God's perfect lamb was examined for days in the public square and in the courts, proven to be 'without spot or blemish'. He kept silent like a sheep before her shearers, led by others, like a lamb to the slaughter. He was prepared for sacrifice by flogging and adorned with a crown of thorns. He was paraded as a spectacle through the streets of the city and up to the mountainside, where a makeshift altar would suspend Him between heaven and earth.

The lamb in this context doesn't represent the joys of spring! The gruesome work of preparing the lamb for sacrifice was a reminder that sin has consequence. Innocent blood needed to give the guilty a temporary reprieve. But unlike the quick slaughter of a lamb, crucifixion was drawn out and painful. Even with symbols like bread and wine, it is easy to forget the details. The victim is pinned in place by nails through their hand and feet. Once in position, they would have severe difficulty inhaling, due to hyper-expansion of the chest muscles and lungs. Each time they pushed their body up to relieve the chest, they paid dearly in excruciating pain through their arms and legs. Lungs slowly filled with fluid adding to the challenge of breathing. If they passed out, a reflex forced them upwards to gasp for breath, and the pain cycle would start over. There was no

relief until the victim, too weak to struggle any further, died from suffocation, internal bleeding, or other complications.

God made His soul an offering for our sin. Christ made atonement, so that we could exchange our guilt for His righteousness, and appear perfect before God! Like the burnt offering, He offered up a life that was pleasing to God, something precious that made up for mankind's deficit of righteousness. He had no sin of His own to account for, so His death was a freewill offering to unlock God's purpose for us. He Himself became the mercy seat, the sacred ground where we can be reconciled to God and enjoy His presence. His blood, applied spiritually to our own lives by faith, marks us out as His people, and confirms Him as our God. His death on the cross resulted in a transfer of ownership rights, a triumph over the powers of this age who suddenly lost their claim on those with faith in Jesus. His acceptable sacrifice means a way out from the oppressive kingdom of darkness and access into the kingdom of the Son.

John had introduced Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world'. He had some idea of the anointing that rested on the Messiah, but perhaps not fully, when he sent messengers to ask if they should 'seek another'? No, there was no other. Only one way to God. Only one mediator between God and man. Only one name given under heaven, through which we must be saved. Have you grasped the significance of Christ as your Passover? Understood that his blood not only shelters you from judgement but also cleanses you from sin? Entered into the deliverance from sin's dominion? Discovered the promised rest of life in the Spirit? His body broken for you. His blood shed to seal a new covenant, far superior to the old?

The verse we read sits in an unlikely context. A church being disciplined for overlooking immorality, the kind that 'even the pagans would not tolerate'. How could they boast of their spiritual progress when there was such rotteness in their midst? Didn't they know the church is held to a higher standard than the world? Didn't they know there was a distinction between the children of light and the children of darkness? Didn't they know that we are no longer our own masters, since we have been bought for Christ, at great cost? If they were so diligent in cleaning out their houses before the Passover, how come they'd neglected to clean out their sinful practices as a church? Get rid of the contamination as a matter of urgency, it's long overdue, for Christ has already been sacrificed for us!

We do our best to translate the egg and bunny metaphors from 'ancient Pagan' into 'modern Christian'. But what if we pause amongst all this ritual and check our hearts? Maybe bread, wine, and a meal of lamb with bitter herbs would be a detox from sugared frivolity. Walking the difficult path that leads to life is better than wandering down the highway that leads to destruction. Scripture says 'He who knew no sin was made a sin offering for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your

body and in your spirit, which belong to God!

Written by Nabil Abou-Rahme. Before the lockdowns Nabil and his family visited SBC when on holiday.

You can find more of Nabil's blogs at

[Stories of Mercy – Faith Comes By Hearing](#)

Picture The Passover Lamb [Agnus Dei](#). (Francisco de Zurbarán, 1635)





Open Doors



How are believers persecuted in the Middle East if their faith is discovered?

Peter: "They could be beaten up or imprisoned at home; their family will put a lot of pressure on them to return to their old faith. They can be expelled from their home and family, and some – like [Taher and Donya](#) – have to flee from home to a safe place somewhere else in the country, or in another country."

Jonathan: "In other families, believers are seen as a curse for the family: 'Uncle Achmed has coronavirus: that is your fault!' They are ridiculed and humiliated. Men are beaten and may lose their job. Women are locked up or sexually abused. Because converting from Islam to another religion is illegal, they can't just go to the police."

Rashid: "It's not just that the police won't help them when they reach out, the police might even persecute them. Raids on house churches are common and many Christians are imprisoned for their faith. These raids often lead to further isolation."

On the topic of isolation – are secret believers able to form communities?

Peter: "For secret Christians, it is so important to know they are not the only believer in their city or region. Twenty years ago, some even thought they were the only believer in their country. When they find out that there are more believers in their city, and get connected, they feel more comfortable. In the past, some believers kept their faith secret their whole life – that is happening less."

Rashid: "At the same time, we see a dynamic in the opposite direction. Believers that *do* have a fellowship find it increasingly risky to gather and therefore become more isolated. And that can give way to unhealthy beliefs and practices in house churches."

Jonathan: "I often hear that isolated believers feel like they have two identities: one as a Christian in their house church or online and one as a person in their family. This causes an identity crisis: some ask themselves if they can still be a citizen of their country, if they are a Christian."

Peter: "They also struggle with their safety: How to hide their newfound faith? Where to hide their Bible, if they have one? How can they hiddenly pray?"

How has Covid-19 changed the situation?

Peter: "Lockdown has made life harder for secret believers – particularly those whose families aren't Christian. They need to be in the same space as their family the whole time, without having an 'escape'. It is more difficult to hide their faith. There are more incidents because of them being close to their potential persecutors the whole time. More secret believers are being discovered, arrested and imprisoned during the pandemic."

"But on the other hand, the number of secret believers engaging in our online programmes has doubled! That's because so many people have to stay at home, and spend more time online."

How do Open Doors partners' projects help secret believers?

Jonathan: "Community really is the key word here. Having others to share faith with helps to endure persecution. We have a lot of online programmes to be able to reach seekers and new believers, and help them get connected to people who can follow up with them. These people give new Christians pastoral care, help them grow in faith and connect them to a community of believers if possible."

Rashid: "There's material for more advanced believers and help to develop the skills that are needed in a house church. For instance, we invest in leadership and trauma care and help the church 'love their neighbour' by providing care in this crisis. This was a calling strongly felt by local Christians."

Peter: "We also help secret believers with their direct needs. Sometimes this will be practical help like food and medicine, but also legal support or helping believers move to another part of the country, to escape persecution."

Jonathan: "The interesting thing is that, while one might expect the practical help to be valued most, it's not always the case. There is a real hunger to know more about Christ in our region. Recently a group of believers in a bad economic situation told me that they were happy with their food packages, but that they valued the discipleship material even more."

What can Open Doors supporters do?

Rashid: "We need supporters to help the church to find hope amid suffering and persecution. The church can still be the ambassadors of Christ's life-transforming gospel if supported and encouraged. We need to continue equipping them to grow in discipleship and disciple making. This growing church will need to develop its emerging leaders and look after its suffering members."

Jonathan: "When we don't support the Christian community in the Middle East to grow in faith and stand strong in the face of persecution, many will fall back in their old faith. This isn't only a loss for themselves, it prevents the church from maturing."

Rashid: "The worldwide church needs to speak up for secret believers and for those who have been exposed and are in prison. These persecuted believers need to be assured that the church globally is amplifying their voice and advocates for them."

Jonathan: "Most importantly, we need our supporters to not cease their prayers. Apart from the value prayer has in itself, it also helps secret believers to know that people are praying for them. Even though we don't speak their language, and can't put an arm around them – nobody should face persecution alone."

For more information about Opendoors click [here](#).