

# Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 23rd May 2021



Today we will be meeting "LIVE" at SBC

Jerry will be leading and preaching from Acts 2: 1-4 and Genesis 11: 1-9  
"When God Came Down"

Pat is leading this Sunday's online service and Ron will be preaching from  
Nehemiah 2: 1 -10 "Nehemiah meets the king"

You can watch the online 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 right.



## Ron's Reads

Ezra 4:17f, 8:21f

## For Your Prayers

Please pray that despite the latest Covid variant taking hold in many places the current strategy will be able to contain the virus enabling the country to safely continue to return to pre - Covid life without producing another spike in infections. As we look round the world pray that God can enter the stony hearts of those who are instrumental in creating the persecution of people for their beliefs. Remembering the Christians in many countries who are having to hide their faith to avoid imprisonment, torture and death. More than a million Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province in China are reported as being herded into so called education centres where women are being sterilised and people are being beaten and forced to work. Also pray that those perpetuating the conflict in Israel and Palestine will respond to God's wisdom and love and find a lasting peaceful solution that will allow people to live together, recognising each other's needs and differences.

Pray also for all the businesses that are reopening locally that they can attract the trade needed to help them stay viable and employ people. Remember those who are still feeling uncomfortable with socially mixing with people after a long period of isolation.

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

## Virtual Prayer Room

On Thursday 13th Maria Marsh posted "Please pray for my boss's 4 year old daughter Esme who was taken to hospital last night, he says she seems well in herself this morning and they are waiting to speak with the consultant. Please pray for her mum and dad during this uncertain time. Thank you x.

On Friday Jane posted "Please can we pray for Quintin Jones. He is going to be executed in Texas next Wednesday if he doesn't receive clemency. He admits to killing his great aunt in 1999 when he was twenty (stealing \$30 to purchase drugs) but is a changed man and his family have forgiven him."

Quintin was executed on Wednesday The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles denied Jones' petition for clemency, despite having granted it in a similar case three years ago for a white man.

On Tuesday Jerry posted details of WhatsApp changes to its settings that would include "everyone" by default in its group settings. To change the settings click [here](#) for the information.

**To join the WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room that gives support with the power of prayer and/or the Devotion WhatsApp site text Jerry on 07733837687. You will need a smart phone**

## PRAYERS FOR PENTECOST

### Gathering prayer

May the exuberant Spirit of God, bursting with the brightness of flame into the coldness of our lives warm us with a passion for justice and beauty.

May the exuberant Spirit of God, sweeping us out of the dusty corners of our apathy breathe vitality into our struggles for change.

May the exuberant Spirit of God, speaking words that leap over barriers of mistrust convey messages of truth and new understanding.

May the exuberant Spirit of God, flame, wind, speech; burn, breathe, speak in us; filling our world with justice and joy. Amen

### A prayer recognising our frailty

We call to mind our contrition for the state of our world in the presence of the Pardoning God, Sender of the Spirit, and Spirit. In our sorrow may we meet forgiveness pouring out on us even before we have thought and spoken and prayed and wept. So, when creation is defiled; when homes are broken by war and violence; when oppressed people long to overthrow the tyranny of the greedy and powerful, may we be assured that love prevails in individual hearts all along. Amen

Source [The Church of Scotland](#)

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Secretary: Diana Gordon  
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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](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 [miniister@stalhambaptist.org.uk](mailto:miniister@stalhambaptist.org.uk)

## For your Diary

**Mon May 24th 7.00pm**

Deacons Zoom Meeting

**Thur May 27th 7.00pm**

Zoom Prayer Meeting

Contact Diana for a link.

## Wed July 14th

Bethan & Gareth Shrubsole our link missionaries are home from Chad and will be visiting us.

## Church Open

The Church is now open on Sundays and a Covid secure system is in place requiring masks to be worn and a booking system requiring those attending to book each week by contacting Diana by email [secretary@stalhambaptist.org.uk](mailto:secretary@stalhambaptist.org.uk) Whatsapp or telephone 07951949128.

## Big Thankyou

Opening the Church for Sunday services has been very successful. The service on the 9th May attracted around 40 people and last Sunday was edging towards 50.

At the same time the online services are still available and being well supported and currently we are exploring how to stream the Sunday services and so far the trials are very promising.

Producing the Sunday services and the online service has increased the work load so a big thank you to all those involved.

## Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at Acts 2. How many times have you doubted your ability to speak about Jesus and passed the opportunity by?

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

## Evangelism and Community

As a church, we are seeking to send teams of 2 around the homes in Stalham to share the love of Jesus and to see how folk have been over the last year regarding the pandemic. Please pray about this and if you feel led to be part of a team let Jan or Elspeth know. For more information phone Janet Nicholson on 01692 581529

## The Good News

You will find copies of the Good News paper at the back of the church with an interesting article by Ron.

## EBA Prayer Focus 23rd May 2021

### Frinton Free Church

Known locally as "The Free", Frinton Free Church is located on the Essex Sunshine Coast in the Tendring District. Pre-pandemic, The Free was an active church with the premises in full use and groups meeting every day. Frinton Free Church has a team ministry. Senior Minister, Mark Massey is supported by Sally Bates (Associate Minister), Chris Halls (Youth Worker), Clare Thurston (Children's Worker) and Mark Betteridge (Operations Manager).

Part of the church's vision for bringing blessing to their community was realised when, in 2017, they partnered with the education charity TLG, and opened TLG Tendring. This offers an alternative education provision that helps young people aged 11-16 who are at crisis in their educational experience. Under-pinned by a Christian ethos, the TLG program encourages either reintegration back into school, or progression on to further education or employment with training

Recent events have led the church to further engagement with the online community. It has also given them the opportunity to reflect on how they engage with their local community post pandemic. The fellowship at Frinton believe that they are being called to be a "hub of hope" for their community.

Centred around the Oasis Coffee Shop, the church is looking to develop a Renew Wellbeing space, Dementia

Support, Relaxation Groups, AA and Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Groups. Each activity offers the hope that is found in Christ and builds on a relationship with him.

Should the current plan to ease restrictions continue, the fellowship at The Free look forward to meeting, in person, from 23<sup>rd</sup> May to celebrate Pentecost together.

### For Prayer:

- Please pray for wisdom and guidance as the fellowship continue to explore becoming a "hub of hope for our community"
- Please pray for the staff and volunteers at TLG Tendring
- Please pray that the leadership will have wisdom as they discern God's leading out of lockdown

## Quotes of the Week

"Pentecost was the day of power of the Holy Spirit. It was the day the Christian church was born."

**Billy Graham**, [Billy Graham in Quotes](#)

"Our task, as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption to the world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to the world that has discovered its brokenness, to proclaim love and trust to the world that knows only exploitation, fear and suspicion."

**Henry Blackaby**, [Experiencing the Spirit: The Power of Pentecost Every Day](#)

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**N.T. Wright**, [The Challenge of Easter](#)

"When the apostles spoke at Pentecost everyone truly listening understood the message. Some may have suggested they were drunk, others thought that the apostles didn't have the intellectual capacity because of their backgrounds to be speaking in the way they were, but those listening could clearly hear the words and understand the message.

We live in a time when often the opposite is true. Messages from powerful leaders, global businesses, politicians, advertising and social media are regularly distorted and jargon filled, containing half-truths that mislead, resulting in many accepting them as truth. It is now staple thinking by many in power that if you keep telling a lie long enough people accept it as truth. The disciples would have faced similar problems, but driven by the Holy Spirit of God they broke through and announced the truth of Jesus to the world.

As Christians Pentecost challenges us to stand strong against those misleading people, those decrying Jesus's gift and speak about God's love, mercy and forgiveness with simplicity and clarity so all will hear the message and fully understand its powerful meaning."

**Franky Dilch**.

"If all you are looking for is a miracle you are wide open to follow the antichrist and the false prophets because they are going to have a big league of signs and wonders ministry. If signs and wonders do not bring glory and honour to Jesus Christ, then you must be watching a false prophet whose anointing does not come from the Holy Spirit of God."

— **Patience Johnson**



# Bethan and Gareth Shrubsole

## Home again May 2021

[www.bmsworldmission.org/bgshrubsole](http://www.bmsworldmission.org/bgshrubsole)

As most of you will now have heard, we are back in cold and drizzly Britain experiencing the new stage of opening-up after what has clearly been a long and difficult lockdown here.

We are very grateful to be back here, after 15 long months of being in Chad, although of course the circumstances were not what anyone would have chosen. We were already coming towards the end of our first term and had begun to look forward to our Home Assignment in the UK, planned for June to August. The Chadian elections passed, seemingly without event on Sunday 11th April and in the following week there was some talk of rebel activity in the north of the country, but this is not uncommon in Chad. What surprised everyone, was that by Saturday night (17th April), we were hearing news that the rebels were surging down the country in columns of pick-up trucks towards the capital, N'djamena, where we were quietly (and in pools of sweat!) eating our dinner.

Things changed very fast and talk progressed from the need to check emergency supplies for locking down within the hospital, to leaving Chad in the next few days. Then there was talk of us leaving the next morning and, by the time we had put the kids to bed and gathered up our 'grab bag' of essential documents and valuables, and after several calls with BMS's emergency team and UK embassies in Cameroon and London, an air ticket was printed at 2am and we were due to leave at 6am to catch an Air France flight back to the UK! Gareth and I spent the rest of the night packing bags that we could carry with speed and dexterity. We tried to rest a bit before we woke the children up at 5am and told them that we needed to leave in half an hour! They had their individual responses but were very good and after the initial Sunday morning dozy-fog had passed, whipped into gear and were troopers all the way until our arrival in the UK at midnight the same night! That was our last 24 hours in Chad.

But we don't want to dwell on that, because it shadows the things that we had been doing for the previous six weeks since our last newsletter. We were pretty tired during these last weeks, the 6am starts were hotting up (30 degrees by 7am) and it was getting harder to sleep during the night with temperatures still well over 35c at bedtime. But this was our second hot season and we were ready to go through it all again! When the heat all got too much, we'd found that a family swim in the river Chari was a good way of cooling down at the weekend! Gareth had been continuing to make progress on following up some recommendations made from our full external audit of the hospital, including a review of all our suppliers in order to ensure value for money in hospital procurement.

Thankfully, given our sudden departure, we had also just managed to hire a capable hospital secretary and completed fitting out his office. He is now busier than he had first expected to be!

Unfortunately, Gareth was also quite ill with D and V, needing six bottles of drip one night and Bethan's energy was sapped by a cold and irritating cough. Generally the difficulties of living and working in Chad were grinding us down. However, Bethan had just started the counselling/discipleship course with the 5 new Acacia ladies, which had a very

encouraging start with all five ladies turning up and engaging wonderfully with the course material and each other. (This course lasted a week before the trouble caused our evacuation.)

Bethan and Kalbassou (the hospital Director/surgeon and fellow BMS mission worker) had also met with the new believer mentioned in the last newsletter (I'll call him Mohamed), to pray with him and encourage his new faith. He wanted us to pray for his sister, who had suffered from an illness for the last three years and was basically about to die. Mohamed had been sharing his new faith with her and she was now keen to pray and explore Jesus with him. Bethan had also made many links through a government-organised conference for people with disabilities. She was trying to organise meetings and networks to allow for better safeguarding of children and vulnerable patients in the hospital. In the process, it transpires that Bethan is the only person known in the country to be working through social/ communication therapy with children with mental disabilities. This may lead to some workshops with other professionals working with children with disabilities elsewhere in N'Djamena. The children have been doing well at school, with the boys' assessments showing that they are working above their age level in their school subjects. Eva has been loving school, chattering away in French and getting to grips with forming letters and numbers. They now all miss their friends but are happy to be back in the UK for a break and catch up with friends and family here.

Please pray for the nation of Chad. Please pray for the Transitional Military Council now in power following the death of the President. Please pray for wisdom for them and that they will manage to steer the country back towards a more democratic, prosperous and inclusive future for all Chadians.

Please pray for peace for all in Chad. Pray for those who have felt their only option is violence or protest to get their voices heard. Please also pray for those responsible for law and order. Pray for grace and justice orientated compromise on all sides as well as a new sense of hope instead of anger. Please pray for Guinebor 2 Hospital, and particularly for Kalbassou and Allain. They are both working hard to keep the hospital running despite the sudden departure of all British and German mission workers and all the other challenges they face. Please also pray for the French and American mission workers who have remained in Chad and that they will soon be able to resume their work.

Please pray for all those who've been making journeys of faith recently, especially during this month of Ramadan when many Chadians seek to draw closer to God. Pray that God would continue to unveil his true character, revealed fully in Jesus, to many in Chad and around the world. Following Jesus is not easy in Chad so please pray for strength and wisdom for those who are seeking to put their trust in Him. Please give thanks for our safe return to the UK Pray that we will manage to balance home-schooling our children, contributing to our ministries remotely in

whatever ways we can and having some much needed rest and family time.

Please pray that we will be able to return to Chad in August as planned. As ever we continue to thank you all for your prayers, support and encouragement in all their forms. We hope to see many of you in person over the next three to four months!

Bethan & Gareth Shrubsole our link missionaries will be visiting SBC on Wednesday 14th July.





# Women without walls

**Baptist minister Mary Cotes introduces her new book, which looks at women as bringers of God's Kingdom, both from the gospels and in Christian history**

Over the last few years my ministry has taken me, both in person and virtually, to French-speaking Europe. I am currently a team member of the French association Servir Ensemble and look after the Biblical exegesis page of its website. I am also a tutor for the ministry training course for women offered by Lifespings International in Lyon. My book *Women Without Walls* first emerged out of this context. I wrote it initially in French[1], and it has now appeared, updated, in English translation.

Based in Matthew's Gospel, the book looks at women as bringers of God's Kingdom. Offering a fresh reading of each Bible passage concerned, every chapter presents a woman from the Gospel and pairs her story with that of a woman from Christian history. In one chapter, for example, the Canaanite woman is twinned with [Sojourner Truth](#), the 19th century freed slave turned evangelist and abolitionist.

In another, the mother of James and John is twinned with [Alice Domon](#), the 20th century French religious sister, active in Argentina with the mothers of the disappeared. The interwoven stories are explored together in the light of one of Jesus' most dynamic parables of the Kingdom: the parable of the yeast (Matt.13:33). The common themes that emerge are seen against the backdrop of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, while the women themselves are revealed as strong, visionary and prophetic characters, inhabiting public spaces as much as private ones. The book asks what they might have to teach us today.

It is now over a hundred years since the congregationalist pioneer [Constance Coltman](#) became the first woman in Britain to be ordained to a Trinitarian denomination. It is over 90 since the Baptist [Madeleine Blocher-Saillens](#) became the first woman ordained in France. Since those momentous events, and in recent decades especially, considerable work has been done by female and male scholars alike to explore the stories about women in scripture.

Their work has not only shed new light on Biblical texts, but has also freed interpretations from the traditional, gender stereo-typed lenses through which they had been read for centuries. Historians have also been at work, uncovering and rehabilitating stories of Christian women which long lay lost or forgotten, and bringing to light stories hitherto untold.

Those with theological formation are undoubtedly familiar with their work. However, in recent years I have become increasingly concerned that – for whatever reason – the kind of Biblical insights that can dramatically change our perceptions of women do not always reach the grassroots of churches. This is not just true of certain churches on the continent. I find that on both sides of the Channel, there are churches where women's gifting is often still painfully underestimated, undervalued and under-encouraged. I also find that still – with the exception of Roman Catholics who usually come up in a flash with the name of a woman saint – many worshippers have trouble naming more than a very few Christian women from history whose stories really inspire them.

I wrote *Women Without Walls* in response to this. If members of our churches are to understand women to be strong ambassadors of the Kingdom in today's world, both women and men need to see those strong ambassadors modelled in the Gospel texts. If women are to understand themselves fully not as those who stand on the side-lines of God's purposes for the world but, alongside men, as pro-active players at the very heart of them, they need to own the stories of women

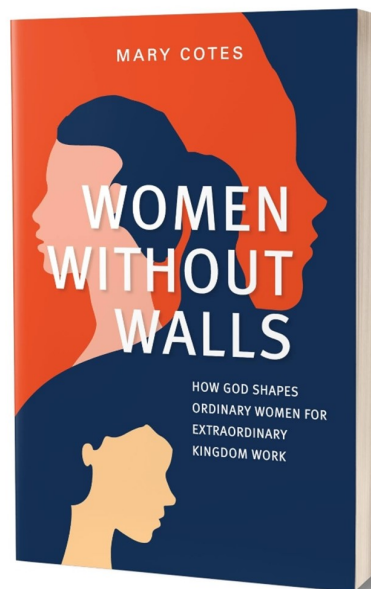


who have made Christian history before them. They need to be inspired and energised by them.

With this in mind, I chose to draw on a range of different stories for the book, each remarkable woman from history coming from a different church background. I hope that many of the stories will be new to most readers, and that any which are already familiar will come across in a fresh way, thanks to their being twinned with a woman from the Gospel. The powerful testimonies and stories I have explored have stuck in my own mind and heart, and I hope that they will stick in the minds and hearts of readers also.

The book can serve as a resource for anyone looking for insights into the women in Matthew or seeking biographies of women as sermon illustrations.

However, my intention from the first was to write in such a way as to appeal to a wide readership, and I have endeavoured to make the style easy-going and accessible. My prayer is that through the stories and reflections in the book, God will empower women – and men – on their Christian journey. Standing side by side as Christian disciples, we are all called out of our comfort zones to be ambassadors of God's Kingdom in the world. And that Kingdom is a kingdom without walls.



**Mary Cotes is a Baptist minister and writer living in Milton Keynes. She is a team member of the French association Servir Ensemble and tutor for the bilingual Lifespings School of Ministry/Formation Zoé, based in Lyon.**

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