

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 8th August 2021



Today we will be meeting "LIVE" at SBC

Barbara & Geoff will be leading and Jerry is speaking on Ephesians 1:11-14
"The Blessings we enjoy in Christ part 2"

Sunday's online service: Ron will be leading and speaking from
Nehemiah 9:1-38 "Listen to the Psalm."

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



For Your Prayers

On Thursday 5th August a celebration service was held at SBC for David Neill please pray for Eileen and their family and friends.
Pray for all those in the fellowship and wider community that are in the queue waiting for routine operations.

Please thank the Lord that Barbara Reynolds who sustained serious knee injuries is able to be back leading a service this Sunday virtually.
Continue to pray for the Christians in India who are still suffering persecution their situation being exacerbated by the pandemic.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Cyril and Maureen Kerrison.**

Virtual Prayer Room

On Sunday 1st Doreen posted "Please could you pray for Esther. She has been in hospital with a bug in her blood for 16 days, came home for 2 and has been re-admitted to JPH. She has requested prayers. Thanks Doreen x" Please keep praying for Esther and husband Paul.

On Monday Jenny requested "Please could I ask for prayer this morning, we are on our way to N&N for me to have radio frequency identification tag inserted in preparation for surgery I'm hoping that sounds more dramatic than it is! Should be just a straightforward procedure, please pray that it is. Thanks for all your prayers, that are much appreciated Jx" Later that day Jenny posted "Thanks for your prayers. All done very quickly, a little sore but otherwise fine. So grateful to God and all you prayer partners. Jx"

On Tuesday Jerry asked on behalf of Jan Nicholson "Please pray for Doreen and Jan this morning as they visit folk to share Jesus love and have the opportunity to share the gospel that hearts will be open, thank you Jan."

Later that day Jan said "Thank you for prayers, we had a few chats this morning, shared Jesus with a couple of chaps and left leaflets and magazines x Doreen and Jan."

On Wednesday Steve asked for prayers for his operation to amputate his leg from above the knee on the 17th August.

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 the Week

Creator God, you loved the world into life.
Forgive us when our dreams of the future are shaped by anything other than glimpses of a kingdom of justice, peace and an end to poverty.

Incarnate God, you taught us to speak out for what is right.
Make us content with nothing less than a world that is transformed into the shape of love, where poverty shall be no more.

Breath of God, let there be abundant life.
Inspire us with the vision of poverty over, and give us the faith, courage and will to make it happen.

God of the impossible, we pray for justice, peace and reconciliation.
And when the challenges seem too many, remind us of your resurrection power, and the miracles of your love that happen whenever injustice is dismantled and rebuilt with peace.
Help us to hope that the impossible can happen and live as if it might do so today.
Amen.

Source [Christian Aid](#)

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Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
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Secretary: Diana Gordon
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Ministry Team: The Whole
Fellowship

If you are reading this newsletter as a PDF online 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

Community Fridge

Open In The Stables

Monday 2 to 4pm

Tuesday to Friday 10 to 12 noon

For your Diary

Monday 9th August 9.00am

Deacons Zoom Prayer Meeting

Wed 11th August 7.00pm

Zoom Bible study

Contact Diana for a link.

Sunday 15th August Service

Flowers: Barbara Mixer

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 WhatsApp or telephone 07951949128

SBC Refurbishment Project

We have exciting news (I am very excited.) Writes Stewart Marsh. As you will have read in last week's bulletin we have planning permission.

This week we have submitted and paid for Building Regulations permission? We have a company producing Health & Safety documents and they will be responsible for ensuring the project conforms with health and safety regulations throughout the work.

The architects and quantity surveyors are about to start work on a tender package which could be sent out in September. Maggie Harpur is starting work on applying for grant aid.

If we have the finance in place, I am sure we will be ready to start this work in early 2022. After starting this journey in June 2016 I'm sure you will all agree it is exciting to be on the cusp of being able to start this project.

We all need to pray about the finance, I believe we will receive some grants from outside organisations, but I also believe that we will not be able to complete this project without sacrificial giving from God's saints.

Community Fridge

The Community Fridge received lots of lovely home grown produce last week we are obviously blessed by many green fingered gardeners who don't want to see their excess produce go to waste.

For more information contact Jane Skivington on 01692 582091 .

You can also follow the Community Fridge on [Facebook](#)

Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at Romans 8: 18-28 How easy, as a Christian or in life in general, has it been to wait patiently?

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



Big Thank you to Norma

A big thank you to Norma Huxter who was SBC's guest speaker last Sunday.

As always Norma was amusing but her message was powerful. Also she deserves a great deal of credit for dealing with a printing failure resulting in a big chunk of her talk being missing.

EBA Prayer Focus 8th August 2021 Great Sampford Baptist Church

On the Suffolk/Cambridge borders Great Sampford is a small village in Essex. The Baptist Church is one of two churches in the village, the other being the Parish Church.

When Pastor Revd Sue Johnston last wrote for the prayer focus she shared that through the small congregation God was working on a big project – the transformation of the buildings – and this has been continuing and is still a work in progress. The featured images show that much has been done and the church is now a more usable space for the whole community. Sue reports that the church building was closed during the pandemic but is now open again. 'That doesn't mean we haven't been sharing the Good News of Jesus to those in our community by



both our words and deeds. Our work with the local primary school continued and we have been visible (via Zoom) more than we were before lockdown. This has enabled us to support the children, parents and staff and for this opportunity we thank God.'

She adds: 'We are looking forward to starting up some of our other activities like our coffee mornings from September and patiently wait to see what else God will entrust us with to do.'

In the past five years the church has carried out a lot of work on the building by putting on a new roof, removing the pulpit and organ, installing a new concrete floor, creating a new church office, adding new heating, lighting and toilets, redecorating the interior, repairing the front wall and installing new windows, redecorating the front exterior, and the hall has been converted into a lovely four-bedroom home for the minister and family to live in.

This has been done in phases as and when the money has been available and God has never ceased to supply the church's needs.

This has also been a time of prayer and faithful obedience to the call of God on the church's part and Sue says: 'We have been very blessed in the process, although I must add here that it hasn't all been plain sailing and we still have a way to go.'

Prayer focus

- that God will continue supplying our needs as we look to repair the other three walls and replace/repair all the windows before installing a new kitchen
- please pray for those who have become part of the church community but who do not come to the church – that the congregation will continue to support them

Quotes of the Week

By Robert Farrar Capons taken from, Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus

"And the sad fact is that the church, both now and at far too many times in its history, has found it easier to act as if it were selling the sugar of moral and spiritual achievement rather than the salt of Jesus' passion and death."

"The Gospel of grace must not be turned into a bait-and-switch offer. It is not one of those airline supersavers in which you read of a \$59.00 fare to Orlando only to find, when you try to buy a ticket, that the six seats per flight at that price are all taken and that the trip will now cost you \$199.95. Jesus must not be read as having baited us with grace only to clobber us in the end with law. For as the death and resurrection of Jesus were accomplished once and for all, so the grace that reigns by those mysteries reigns eternally - even in the thick of judgment."

"We are supposed to represent a Lord who came not to judge the world but to save it. Our business should be simply to keep everybody in the net of his kingdom until we reach the farther shore. Sorting is strictly His department, not ours."

"Jesus didn't shy away from sinners, so why should the church? And don't tell me the church welcomes sinners. I know better. It welcomes only sinners who repent and then never seriously need forgiveness again."

Thought for the Week

It's often said "A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what a ship is for, they are built to face the storm,"

As Christians is sitting in Church every Sunday enough to bring people to Jesus?

Assisted dying - three questions for Christians

Anyone wishing to seriously engage with the subject must first wrestle with, and come to a view on, three fundamental questions, writes John Elliston

Few end-of-life issues are more contentious than *assisted dying*. From the time of Socrates to the present day, passion has fired the debate over the moral and legal validity of assisting a person to, in certain, clearly defined, contexts, end their life. In late May 2021, a Private Member's Bill to legalise assisted dying as a death choice for terminally ill, mentally competent, adults in their final months of life, was introduced to the House of Lords as a first stage of it entering the statutes. On 26 June 2021, an Assisted Dying Bill was lodged at Holyrood for consideration by the Scottish Parliament. They are the latest in a long line of similar attempts to enshrine assisted dying in law, all of which have failed. So, what has changed?

Comparing the contemporary debate with those of the past, the arguments for and against are almost exactly the same. What has changed, apparently, is the strength of public opinion. Frequent reference is made to [a 2019 poll sponsored by the pressure group Dignity for Dying](#) showing that 84 per cent of the general public support the case for assisted dying, including 'broad support across most faith groups'.

However, public opinion is a fickle guide in matters of law and morality. Concern must be expressed about reading too much into one poll of 5,695 people, particularly when the sample of people of faith is actually just a proportion of the stated sample, and the sponsor of the Bill is also the sponsor of that poll. When deciding about the moral and legal validity of aiding the choice of an individual to die, the voice of principled thought and prayerful reflection must always trump the clamour of the anonymous crowd.

Before a view based on principled thought can be formed, the ground must be cleared. Much of the controversy around the legalisation of assisted dying is due to the emotive language that is, uncritically, drawn into the debate. Terms like euthanasia, voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide and mercy killing are too laden with historical and partisan baggage to be helpful. The term assisted dying is not so tainted.

Simply put, therefore, the question centres upon whether an assisted death should be a legitimate end of life option when palliative care does not offer a terminally ill person a satisfactory answer to their suffering and impending painful demise. It involves an individual making a conscious, informed, decision to end their life prematurely, and being actively assisted in overcoming the obstacles that prevent them from doing so. Accepted, the number of people who might opt for death in this way would likely be relatively small, but the number of takers is far less significant than the fact that the option is available to them.

For a principled debate, it is the head not the heart that must lead. During this last month, two heroic campaigners for the right to an assisted death, Noel Conway and Paul Lamb, have died. Many courageous others have gone before them. No one listening to such individuals pleading for help can fail to be moved as they have sought to contribute to the debate from the perspective of their own suffering.

But, principled decision cannot rest upon emotion. Both Noel and Paul had challenged the current legal position by arguing that the state, by refusing them the choice to die, had breached their human rights. In the law as it stands, however, the individual's right to choose is not the issue. [In](#)

[2009, the then Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer](#), released a policy statement on assisted dying which shifted the judicial focus away from the one choosing to die to the intention of the person providing assistance. He commented: "*The policy does not change the law on assisted suicide. It does not open the door for euthanasia. It does not override the will of Parliament. What it does do is to provide a clear framework for prosecutors to decide which cases should proceed to court and which should not.*"

Since that date, no one acting out of compassion in helping a cognitively, terminally ill person to die has been prosecuted, and no one is likely to be.

So, the question for principled Christian debate is whether, in end-of-life situations, it is morally and ethically acceptable to assist someone to die. Space will not allow for a full explanation of my view on this and how I journeyed to it. However, anyone wishing to seriously engage with the subject must first wrestle with, and come to a view on, three fundamental questions:

First, whether life is sacred or profane. - One of the principal arguments that those with religious conviction use to resist legalising assisted dying is that it challenges the belief that life is sacred. What the word sacred means in this context is particularly important since the word is also used by many without religious conviction in their own argument against the voluntary hastening of death, where sacred seems to act as a metaphor for the fact that life is just so important and so precious that it should not be tampered with. A Christian may want to say more than this, in which case, the meaning of life as a 'gift' of God will need to be fully explored.

Second, whether personal autonomy trumps collective responsibility. Freedom of choice, the ability to make one's own moral decisions and to be responsible for them, lies at the heart of personal autonomy. Personal autonomy does not, however, remove a person from their accountability to others. In the debate over assisted dying, there is a duty of care to the one who assists that needs to be taken as seriously as the personal autonomy of the one who wants to die. A decision to bring one's life to an end has to be weighed and reconciled with the impact on society as a whole. It is a difficult assessment to make. Is society damaged if actively assisting individuals to die is part of it?

Third, whether death is conceived as end or beginning. Within the Christian thought-world, both life and death stand within the sphere of God's love, and there is potentiality in both. Therefore, is to assist someone to die akin to opening a door to let them through, or is it depriving them of an opportunity to find meaning and hope (as Rowan Williams maintained in 2006 when opposing an earlier Assisted Dying Bill)?

Whether legislation allowing for assisted death as an end-of-life option will be passed on this occasion or not remains to be seen. Even if passed, the debate will continue. Just because we can assist (legally) someone to die doesn't mean we should (morally), and even the belief that we should, does not mean we actually could (practically).

The Revd Dr John Elliston MBE is a retired Baptist minister and hospice chaplain. He currently works for a charity that he began 25 years ago, supporting people with complex needs around housing and addiction (www.700club.org.uk)

Source [Baptist Times](#)



Open Doors

Two elderly pastors arrested in Eritrea and a third placed on house arrest

There have been yet more arrests of Christians in Eritrea. Two pastors have been arrested and a third placed on house arrest. All three are in their 70s and from the same church in the country's capital.

Eritrea is number 6 on the World Watch List; Christians in the country face extreme persecution for their faith

Your prayers are needed for three elderly pastors from Eritrea. Last week, two were arrested and a third placed on house arrest. They are all part of the Full Gospel Church in the country's capital, Asmara.

Pastors taken during middle of the night

Pastor Ghirmay (75) and Pastor Samuel (74) were taken from their homes in the middle of the night to an unknown location. Police also intended to arrest Pastor Georgio (72) – who has previously spent five years in prison – but when they found him sick in bed, they told him he was under house arrest until he is well enough to be taken into custody.

Eritrea is number 6 on the World Watch List. Despite almost half of the country's people being Christians, those not from state-approved denominations face extreme persecution. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), Catholic Church and Lutheran Church are the only Christian denominations recognised by the government.

[Find out more about what it's like to be a Christian in Eritrea.](#)

The arrests part of a bigger trend

Last year, the government began releasing detained Christians. However, arrests continue to take place. In June, two Christian men were arrested in Asmara, and in March alone, 30 believers were detained in Asmara and the south-eastern city of Assab. Local sources estimate that Christian prisoners number anywhere between 600 and 1,200 Christians – with none formally charged.

In June, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea called on the Eritrean government to release those imprisoned for their faith 'immediately and unconditionally'. You can read more from Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker in his annual report to the UN Human Rights Commission – and get the observations of Jo Newhouse, spokesperson for Open Doors' work in sub-Saharan Africa – [here](#).

Christians imprisoned in Eritrea are forced to live in inhumane conditions and are even subjected to torture. This is what could be facing the two pastors recently arrested. Please be in prayer for them, and all other believers in the country unjustly detained for following Jesus.

Iranian convert who refused to inform on other Christians begins ten-month prison sentence

Please lift in prayer Hamed Ashouri, an Iranian Christian who has begun a ten-month prison sentence for Christian activities.

An Iranian Christian convert has begun a ten-month prison sentence for 'propaganda against the Islamic republic'.

Hamed Ashouri, age 31, was arrested in February 2019 whilst leaving his home in Fardis, which is located west of the capital Tehran. Agents raided his home and confiscated all Christian items, including Bibles and other literature, as well as computer hard drives. Hamed's initial stint in prison included ten days in solitary confinement.

Update: 28 Christian students released in Nigeria kidnapping

On 5 July, bandits kidnapped 140 students from a Christian school in Kaduna, Nigeria. After 20 days in captivity, a further 28 have been released, and others have escaped already. Please keep praying for 81 students still being held captive.

Praise God, 28 children were released by bandits on Sunday 25 July. There are among the 140 students who were abducted from Bethel Baptist School by armed bandits on 6 July - you can read the full story below. They have endured almost three weeks in captivity, and dozens of students have yet to be released.

"Twenty-eight students were freed this morning," Reverend Ite Joseph Hayab told Reuters, who quote him in [their report](#). "Quite a number of the students before now escaped... but 81 are still in captivity."

A further 28 were set free two days after the kidnapping, and others have escaped. Reverend I.A. Jangado, president of the Kaduna Baptist Conference, has said that the kidnappers will continue to release students in batches. He also gave a message to parents whose children remain missing, saying the 'good Lord who started the work will complete it'.

Please keep praying for the safe return of all the abducted children.

For more information about OpenDoors click on link

[Serving Persecuted Christians Worldwide - Latest News - Open Doors UK & Ireland](#)

