

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 29th August 2021

Today we will be meeting "LIVE" at SBC

Ron is leading and guest preacher

John Leaf is preaching from Psalm 121

Sunday's online service: Barbara Reynolds will be leading and Ron preaching through Nehemiah 13: 1-9 "How did that happen"



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.



Ron's Readings

Dt 23:3-4, Num 21:1f, Mt 25:31-46, Ro 8:31Ps 41:9Jn 2:13f

For Your Prayers

Please pray that as SBC starts to re-instate many of our pre-Covid activities volunteers will come forward so we can continue to reach out to the community and also restart the Sunday school for youngsters as planned in September.

Pray for St. Mary's Church Stalham and the churches in the Stalham Benefice who will lose their minister the Rev Canon Simon Lawrence who is soon to retire.

BBC Health states North Norfolk had 155 cases per 100,000 people from 15th to 21st August 2021 the third lowest in the UK. Lord we pray that by being vigilant and following sensible procedures we can continue to stay safe in a still troubled time.

Please continue to pray for those in Afghanistan as the air bridge ceases on the 31st of August. Pray also for those who have protected and managed the evacuation and those waiting to leave Kabul who are now under attack.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Gillian Meale**.

Virtual Prayer Room

On Sunday 2nd Simone posted "We'd like to ask prayers for the coming week. I have been booked in for a c-section on Friday 27th August, at 37 weeks as the baby is getting less nutrients than it should ideally get. I'll have to get steroids to boost baby's lungs and then we'll have to isolate from Tuesday afternoon. We appreciate your prayers for everything to go smoothly and a safe delivery. Simone xx"

Also on Sunday David posted "Please pray for Rebecca who visited SBC this Sunday. She is awaiting an important operation which as yet has not been arranged. Also pray for her husband Graham,"

On Wednesday Jane posted "Please pray for Lorraine Stuart and family as Donald passed away peacefully at home last night."

Also on Wednesday DJ Steve sent an audio saying hi all its DJ I am now at Pine Cottage sending my love to you all.

On Thursday Ruth Hayward posted "I know this is selfish but can you guys please pray for me, having a bit of a hard time at the moment but I am waiting on hearing about a job interview for my dream job in funeral directors."

Prayers for the Week

Lord, I dare to dream of a world
where your truth spreads like wildfire
Ignite in me the will to fan these flames
That a new spirit of powerful collaboration
may transform our communities. Amen.

Creator God,
Set my imagination free
To weave a world
Of celebration, welcome and love
In which all people may have hope
In your name, Amen

Father, thank you that you still speak to us today. I am sorry that I expect you to speak so little. I promise to keep my ears open today. Put a fresh word into my heart and mind, if you wish. And give me grace to respond to it. Amen

Lord, give me more of your kind of compassion, the kind that sees past my own prejudices and assumptions and responds appropriately to genuine need. And keep my mind open when this need is brought to my attention by the kinds of people I have good reason to have little time for. 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 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 30th August 7.00pm

Deacons Zoom Meeting

Thursday 2nd Sept 7.00pm

Zoom Prayer Meeting

Contact Diana for a link.

Sunday 5th Sept Service

Flowers: Barbara Reynolds

Church Open

The Church is 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

Table Tennis Re-Starting

Table Tennis in the Schoolroom is restarting on Wednesday September 22nd 9.30am to 12 noon.

The Over 60's Table Tennis started on 17th September 2008 by Alex Pelling, after a request by non- members of the Church, as an experiment, which has now become very much part of SBC's recognised Church activities. Although the title provides a minimum age limit, there are a good proportion of players actually over 80. The approach was that this would be a 'Blue Moon' event, open to all, encouraging non Church members to attend the Church and to join in. Coffee and tea are provided and the break for these allows us time for socialising.

A huge thanks to Alex Pelling who was the driving force of the Over 60's Table Tennis for the last 13 years.

We are grateful to Stewart Marsh who is taking over the organisation of the club, adding it to his treasurer responsibilities and his work on the refurbishment of the schoolroom.

Prayer for Revival

Prayer for revival fortnightly meetings started again on 27th August at 10.00am at Three Windows, Brumstead Road. If you would like to come and pray, please let Jan Nicholson know.

Church Reading Plan

This week we are looking at [John 6: 25-59](#).

As a Christian, should we be asking Jesus to prove Himself to us and looking back have we done so sometimes?

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

The Alpha Zoom Course

The Alpha course is an internationally renowned course that encourages people from any background to discuss the big questions of life in a friendly and non-judgemental atmosphere. You can find out more about Alpha by searching: [alpha course](#)

Dan StJohn will be hosting SBC's first online Alpha Course running for 10 weeks from September 13th using zoom. Now you can join an Alpha course from the comfort of your own home!

There may be the opportunity to meet face to face for any who would like to, but the Alpha course sessions will be run virtually/online so you can take part from home.

Please use the email address below if you would like to sign up or would like further information. We look forward to hearing from you. alpha@stalhambaptist.org.uk

Re-Instating Stalham WI

Valerie Hughes is hoping to re-instate the Stalham WI she already has 18 ladies interested in joining. If all goes well, they will meet in the Stables once a month on Monday mornings. Valerie is holding a meeting to explore the re-instating Stalham WI on 6th September at 10.30am in the Stables. If you would like to be part of a fellowship of more than 200,000 women, forge friendships, learn new skills and make a difference in your community by joining the largest women's organisation in the UK contact Valerie on

valerie.hughes08@gmail.com

Donations

Each Sunday there is a collection bag on the

railings to the left of the stage as you leave by the side door and a collection plate at the rear of the church. You can donate to SBC 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's door at Three Windows Brumstead Road.

EBA Prayer Focus 29th August 2021 Great Leigh Free Church

Great Leighs is an attractive Essex village halfway between Chelmsford and Braintree which has been home to Great Leigh's Free Church since 1934.

This lively all-age fellowship usually has about fifty people meeting together on Sundays, but that is currently reduced to forty with social distancing. During lockdown the church has been blessed by meeting on Zoom with over twenty devices connected each week and some new visitors joining too. All sorts of activities like Bible study and prayer meetings have continued on Zoom, but now everything is face-to-face once again.

The church does not have a pastor, but the ministry team lead Sunday services along with different visiting speakers each week who provide a dedicated and devoted ministry to the church.

There is a full programme of weekday activities such as Boys' and Girls' Brigade (now meeting again after running on Zoom), a coffee morning and a group for older people. And there is a Toddler Group for the whole village which starts again in September.

There was a successful Thanksgiving day in August to raise funds to cover the cost of purchasing new equipment to livestream services.

At Easter there was an Easter Egg Hunt and the church had its own Easter garden display. Easter cards were sent to all the village to celebrate the good news of the resurrection.

For prayer

- Give thanks for all the blessings during lockdown and the ability to continue to meet online.
- Pray for all the activities as they get back to face-to-face formats once again.
- For witness and outreach to those living in the village, and that the fellowship will have an impact on the lives of many local families and individuals.

Quotes of the Week

"If men build it, it's not a refuge. Only God possesses that kind of material and only He has the craftsmanship to use it." — **Craig D. Lounsbrough**

"Every one of us can do something about the truth. You can at least stand for the truth wherever you are. You can refuse to compromise the truth. Of course you can tell the truth. Truth could be proclaimed. Truth could be protected. There are so many responses to the truth that would please the heart of our master. Heaven awaits only your decision" — **Sunday Adelaja**

"To build refuges of my own making is to construct fortresses of sand at ocean's edge, where the relentless tides of time will leave my most magnificently constructed walls as perfectly flat sand. And now that I am subject to the very tides that destroyed these walls of mine, I am left with the reality that my single and sole refuge can only be the God who created both tides and sand."

— **Craig D. Lounsbrough,**

"After all the painful accusations, came the mighty truth and whispered, "you're free"."

— **Mitta Xinindlu**

Thought for the Week

It's often said "Don't judge a book by it's cover," but as Christians how often do we stumble into judging people?

Photo by [Shiromani Kant](#) on [Unsplash](#)





Open Doors

The church in the Soviet Union: watched like 'a fish in an aquarium'

Thirty years ago in August, the collapse of the Soviet Union began. How did the church survive behind the Iron Curtain, and what challenges did it meet following the dissolution of the USSR? Olga, a Christian woman from Central Asia who grew up in this era of persecution, shares her story.

Secret police, informers and spies were everywhere. Olga was aware of it. Growing up in Central Asia, she knew of people who had confessed their Christian faith and as a result ended up in the Gulag, the Soviet labour camp, from where only few ever returned. A deacon from her local church did not; his dead body was sent to the village. Olga's own father was a prisoner of conscience far away in Siberia.

"As Christians we always felt the tension of persecution," Olga told Open Doors in 1991, shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

"It was like being a fish in an aquarium – everything you did or said was monitored. Even your own apartment could be bugged; you did not feel free anywhere. You continually felt the hot breath of the KGB (the Soviet Union secret police). My brother and I discovered at one point that our apartments had been bugged. We were walking on eggshells constantly."

Christians were 'second-class citizens'

In a federal state of 15 nations, with many cultures and languages, the Soviet Union imposed a single "unifying" doctrine. For 70 years, a wholly atheist Marxism was the official ideology, clouding people's intellectual and spiritual lives.

"We were second-class people, enemies of the Communist ideology, so we were enemies of society, of the country. Enemies of the state!" Olga continued.

"Many things happen to you when you are a second-class citizen."

'Fear and mistrust' among churches

Officially recognised churches continued their quiet existence, but outreach was forbidden and almost impossible. The leadership of the official, more orthodox, churches – which were under state control – had to compromise for the church to survive. More evangelical churches preferred to go underground: they were the main targets of the authorities.

The fear among Christians in those churches was sometimes overwhelming. "We never knew who we could trust. The KGB made sure that division and mistrust were sown," Olga said. "Even with your own brothers and sisters you'd be very cautious. You can still see that same fear and mistrust among Christians nowadays in countries where there is persecution."

Fines, harassment, discrimination and imprisonment were all components of the persecution. In the early 1960s, under Nikita Khrushchev (leader of the Soviet Union from 1955-1964), the authorities had the right to take children away from Christian

parents and put them in an orphanage so they could be raised by the state, Olga recalled.

Christian faith severely hampered the development of a person's career. Entrance to university was almost impossible; involvement in politics or government functions was out of the question. "It was all part of the package we had to deal with as Christians during the Soviet times," Olga said.

Winds of change

Two years after Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Communist Party, he signed a special amnesty for the prisoners of conscience and political dissidents who were still in detention. On 18 June 1987, the Soviet government published a decree about the amnesty. Olga's father's name was on the list. He returned home after four years of imprisonment.

With the final dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, the waves of persecution against Christians came to a halt. The introduction of freedom of expression and belief made it possible to preach Christianity in the strongly atheist, post-USSR society.

Describing the early 1990s, Olga said: "In some traditional churches, the style of services changed, and many new churches were formed. The number of Protestant denominations increased rapidly."

The church faces new challenges

Although people were now officially free to preach and believe in Jesus, the church soon started facing new challenges. The mixture of nationalism and religion was one of them. This was particularly true in Central Asian nations; despite the 70 years of atheism, following the collapse of the USSR, Islam was seen as part of national identity there. Those who left it to convert to Christianity were considered traitors.

As in the Soviet times, traditional churches in the post-Soviet countries were expected to support the government.

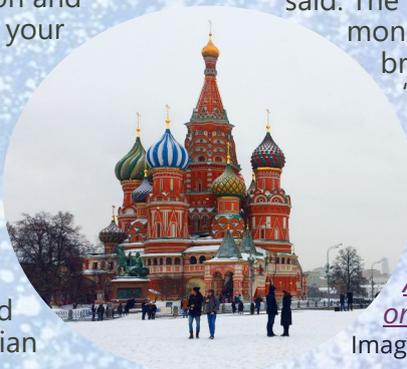
"Traditional churches have always been on the side of the government. The moment a church is seen to be against the government, it moves into a danger zone," says William Hollander, Open Doors International Relations Officer for Central Asia. "As it was in the Soviet era, this issue still exists in many of the post-Soviet countries, including Russia and Belarus. The problem mainly comes with the evangelical and Protestant churches; Belarus is increasingly unsafe for them, and Russia keeps a serious check on and limits their international funding."

However, with Communism consigned to history, Christians were ready to embrace these challenges, Olga said. The relief of no longer being constantly monitored meant she and her family started to breathe again.

"Instead of feeling like we were fish swimming inside an aquarium – always being watched – we began to swim in the ocean! We had that incredible sense of freedom. We had freedom to preach the gospel. Nobody would stop us."

A version of this article originally appeared on [Christian Today](#).

Image by [Eliane Meyer](#) from [Pixabay](#)





You can help to change the world.

Something to read

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.' He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I do choose. Be made clean!'. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'

- Matthew 8:1-4.

Something to think about

It's surely no accident that the person who expresses doubt about Jesus' willingness to heal him is a leper. Here is someone who is used to being excluded and on the margins of society. He just accepts it. Everyone just accepts it. It's the way life is, the way life has to be.

We all need the world to be the way it is, for our part of it to carry on as normal. But once we accept this way of dealing with chronic problems in the world – like leprosy, or poverty – then all the urgency goes out of finding solutions. And those who live in poverty come to doubt whether the rest of humanity really is willing to find the solutions – while knowing (like this leper knew) that if only we were willing, we could change their situation.

Jesus did not heal every leper in his day, or invent a cure for leprosy. But he helped this one. And in the process he changed attitudes – which in turn changed the world.

Something to do

Identify someone you come across frequently in your life,

who others consider an 'outcast' like the leper in this passage. Try to have a conversation with them today. Don't be put off by the fact that they may not trust you. Try to establish a relationship and break down the barriers.

Something to pray

Dear God, forgive me that I just go along with the way life is and accept the ways that society is divided. Grant me grace to cross the boundaries that keep rich people rich, and poor people poor. Help me to serve those who no longer believe you are willing to help them. Amen.

Today's contributor is Andy Parnham, Pastor of Brockley Community Church, London at the time of writing.

Source Christian Aid

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

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