

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 28th November 2021

Sunday's "Live" Service

Diana is leading and Ron is preaching from Isaiah 52: 1-10

"The Advent of Hope"

Sunday's online service: Pat is leading and Jerry is preaching from
Genesis 2: 4-9 & 15-25 "Advent in Creation"



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.



Jerry's Reads

Gen 1:1-23, Ps 104, John 1:1-18, Rom 8:1-25, Col 1:15-17.

For Your Prayers

Please pray the two Candlelight Carol Services at SBC in the coming month will bring people to find Jesus and accept him over Christmas.

Also pray that governments can come to an agreement to help those migrants on borders in makeshift camps around Europe in the winter cold. Pray: Lord guide those in power to get migrants out of the hands of the traffickers so no more people in desperate situations will perish in the waters of the English Chanel. Lord a Citizen Advice survey shows One in 10 UK families – about 3m households – are facing a cost of living crunch this winter, unable to cover even basic bills such as food and heating, and heating. One in five adults had cut back on their food shop or turned off the heating, while one in 10 anticipated having to use food banks. As the UK is the fifth largest economy in the world, Lord, we ask you to guide our government to help so many of this country's poor who will suffer through this Christmas and winter.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Barbara and Geoff Reynolds**.

Virtual Prayer Room

On Friday 19th Jane asked "Please pray for Jean Mollett who hopes to go into Broad Acres residential home for month from Weds 24th for respite care. She's struggling with back pain. Thank you x" On Sunday Sue posted on behalf of Dawn "Hi Sue please can you put my niece on your prayer list. Kirsten is 14 and has been taken into Alder Hays hospital with bleeding on the brain, the next 48 hours are critical. Thanks Dawn."

Also on Sunday DJ Steve sent an audio message saying "Hi everybody, I was just wondering if you could pray for me as I hope to find out this week about my new social worker thankyou."

On Monday Sue posted for Dawn "Hi Sue, please let people know Kirsten passed away this evening thanks Dawn," Sue added "Let's pray for Kirsten's family and friends."

On Tuesday David posted "Please pray for Kjell and his parents. He will be having another operation in Germany to remove the brain tumour. Three neurologists are taking part. Kjell's parents have been told it is unlikely he will live another year."

Also, on Tuesday Jerry posted on behalf for Maureen and Cyril "Thank you once again for your prayers for Abbie, today they are travelling to Great Ormond Street Hospital, where Abbie is having another MRI scan to monitor brain activity, Many thanks."

Later Jerry updated "Hi due to problems with trains, the scan for Abbie had to be postponed and will be arranged for a later date. Love Maureen."

On Thursday David posted "Please pray for Kjell his operation to remove the tumour started 30mins ago." Also on Thursday Simone posted "Update on Anna. She has been booked for a pre-operation appointment at Ormond Street Hospital next Thursday. They'll do all the necessary tests and discuss the operation with me. Only one parent allowed so I'll travel with Anna. We will then receive a date for the surgery within 1-6 weeks' time. Please pray that everything goes smoothly and also Anna stays healthy."

Church Reading Plan

Romans 3: 27-31 full reading [Romans 3: 21-31](#)

²⁷ So do we have any reason to boast about ourselves? No reason at all. And why not? Because we are depending on the way of faith, not on what we have done in following the law. ²⁸ I mean we are made right with God through faith, not through what we have done to follow the law. This is what we believe. ²⁹ God is not only the God of the Jews. He is also the God of those who are not Jews. ³⁰ There is only one God. He will make Jews^[2] right with him by their faith, and he will also make non-Jews^[3] right with him through their faith. ³¹ So do we destroy the law by following the way of faith? Not at all! In fact, faith causes us to be what the law actually wants. *As Christians is it sometimes easy to think we are superior to others because we have asked Jesus into our lives? In George Orwell's Animal Farm a sign on a barn says "All animals are equal but some are more equal than others." In God's eyes everyone on our planet is equal, no nation or individuals are more equal.*

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

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon
07951949128

Ministry Team:

The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary

Monday 29th November

9.00am Deacons Prayer Meeting

10.30am in the Church

Prayers for young people

7.00pm Alpha Zoom Meeting

Tuesday 30th November

9.30am - 12 in the Stables

Coffee and Chat

Wednesday 1st December

9.30am - 12 in the School Room

Table Tennis

7.00pm Zoom Bible Study Meeting

Contact Diana for a link.

Sunday 5th December

Flowers: Barbara Reynolds

Monday 6th December

7.00pm Deacons Meeting

10.30am in the Church

Prayers for young people

7.00pm Alpha Zoom Meeting

Thursday 9th December

7.00pm Zoom Prayer Meeting

Community Fridge

Open In The Stables

Monday 2 to 4pm

Tuesday to Friday 10 to 12 noon

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 minister@stalhambaptist.org.uk

Christmas Services

To book a place for the Christmas services please contact Diana Gordon on - 07951949128 you can also text or WhatsApp the same number or email secretary@stalhambaptist.org.uk

Candlelight Services

Sunday 12th and 19th December

All welcome for traditional Carols

Starting at 4.00pm

These services will be relayed to the car park so we can therefore offer a "drive in" option.

When booking your place you will need to tell Diana which option you are booking

Celebrate Christmas Day Morning

Starting at 10am youngsters can bring their presents and the fellowship can be festively dressed.

Christmas online Service

Will be available from 1.00am On Christmas Day

Sunday 2nd January

The New Year's - Family Service 10.45am

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

Advance Notices

The next Church Meeting will be on Sunday 9th January at 12 noon.

Great News

The joint Shoe Box service at St Mary's last Sunday received 100 shoe box and £345 in donations which will be sent off to the Samaritan's depot in Brundall.

A big thank you from Magda.

Prayers for Israel by Janet Nicholson

Israel is surrounded by her enemies, and we are told in the Psalms to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let us petition the Lord for continued protection from attacks by countries that are hostile to Israel. Also, to pray for unity among believers of various backgrounds both Jewish and non-Jewish. Pray for the protection of Jews scattered around the world against the spirit of anti-Semitism and that doors will remain open for them to return to Israel.

Ezekiel 36(v24-28) says I will take you out of the nations, I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean, I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you, I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people and I will be your God.

EBA Prayer Focus 28th November 2021 Hawkwell Baptist Church

Hawkwell Baptist Church is located in Hawkwell, part of Rochford in Essex. It is a community-minded church and its pastor is Rev Richard Iles who introduces the church's ministry to the local neighbourhood in a video which is on the EBA YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/vOHpRVOp_eO Since the lockdowns the church has proceeded with projects in Hedingham Place, a parade of shops a short distance from the church. They have run a charity shop called Faith Hope and Charity for over twenty years here but more recently extended the shop to include a cafe and bookstore. They are currently converting another unit into a Resource Centre to provide counselling and support services to the local community. The church runs a number of other missional activities that benefit both community and church. There is a Nostalgia group for older people to share memories, Girl's Brigade, a Men's Shed group that have done a lot of work on the new

cafe, and there is a Knitted Together group where those who come can knit and natter.

The church also takes opportunities to reach out with special activities such as their All Saints Sausage Sizzle, held on Halloween, offering hot dogs and burgers to passers-by. They contacted over 200 people in this way in 2021.

All these activities are a challenge and Richard asks us to pray the following for the church:

Please pray:

- that we will have the opportunity to share the gospel and faith to those around us and to see the kingdom explode in this part of Rochford.
- for continued contacts with the local community, and finance to support the agencies the church is bringing into the new ventures.
- that the Holy Spirit will enable what we are doing to flourish in this area.

Christmas Norfolk Food Bank

The residents of Robert Smith Court Stalham donated four boxes of Christmas goodies for families who are going to find Christmas a difficult time. SBC is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 12 noon for donations that will help families over Christmas. All the basic foods and toiletries etc. are still needed but some Christmas goodies, toys and colouring books would be much appreciated by many children. Ron Pictured receiving the donations.



David Away

David is away on Wednesday 8th and Thursday 9th of December. He will produce a newsletter on Monday and Tuesday of that week.

If you have any items for the newsletter dated 12th December please get them to him by Monday 6th of December.

Jerry's Quotes of the Week

"Life in a prison cell may well be compared to Advent; one waits, hopes, and does this, that, or the other- things that are of no real consequence- the door is shut, and can be opened only from the outside." — *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters from Prison - November 21, 1943*

"As the season of waiting, Advent has a particular word of comfort for those suffering from bodily aches. During Advent, the church waits twice—for the first coming (adventus) of the Christ child in the humility of the manger, and then for his second coming upon the clouds in judgment and glory. By pointing to the coming of our Lord, Advent transforms our suffering by giving us hope to endure."

—*Pst. Derek Rishmawy*

"One of the essential paradoxes of Advent: that while we wait for God, we are with God all along, that while we need to be reassured of God's arrival, or the arrival of our homecoming, we are already at home. While we wait, we have to trust, to have faith, but it is God's grace that gives us that faith. As with all spiritual knowledge, two things are true, and equally true, at once. The mind can't grasp paradox; it is the knowledge of the soul." — *Michelle Blake*.

"For a second you catch a whiff in the air of some fragrance that reminds you of a place you've never been and a time you have no words for. You are aware of the beating of your heart. The extraordinary thing that is about to happen is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens. Advent is the name of that moment."

— *Frederick Buechner*.

Slaying the giant of loneliness in God's presence

Christian minister, counsellor, mentor and lecturer Julie Porter introduces her book *Loneliness versus Being Alone*, which delves into the juxtaposition of loneliness and solitude

Who would have known in 2010, at the genesis of this book, that exactly 10 years later the world would be hit by a global pandemic? I began the year of 2020 with hopes, dreams and plans for achieving many goals but by February of 2020 Covid-19 put a big red "stop" sign in front of all my plans. I'm sure I'm not unique to share this testimony.

Next came a deluge of language such as lockdown, social distancing, isolation, closure, redundancies and furlough (I mean to be honest when I heard the word 'furlough' I thought "what's that? Isn't that to do with horse racing?"). Managing an after school club in a school meant I was furloughed (thankfully a quick internet search gave me the correct definition and yes I learnt that a 'furlong' is actually not a 'furlough!'). As such I had plenty of time on my hands to reflect and revisit my manuscript.

Frankly at no other time had I heard so much about the topic of loneliness, as to prevent the spread of coronavirus people were told to ostracise from one another. Actually at the time of writing *Loneliness versus Being Alone* 4.2 million people in England identified themselves as lonely and there were globally 63 million cases (and rising) of Covid-19.

Unfortunately, I now see the residue of loneliness seeping through the veins of society. It seems that it has become a type of pandemic in itself but one that possibly is not treated as seriously as it should be.

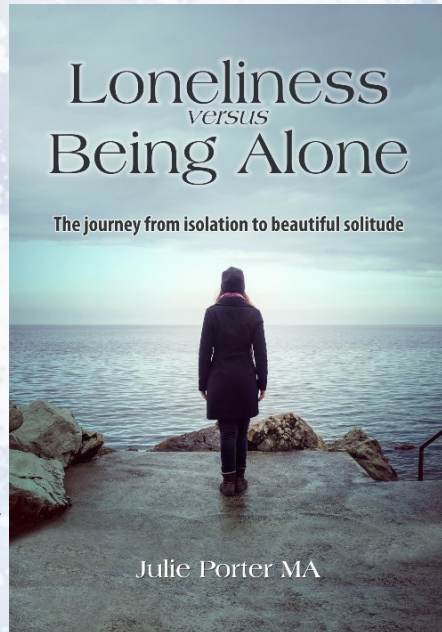
I mean think about it, if you have a toothache where do you go? If you're anything like me you reluctantly, but expeditiously, find a dentist. Or what about a chronic stomach ache or a terrible ear ache? In all of these ailments it is common practise to find some kind of remedy to ease your excruciating pain. However, what do we do when we experience loneliness or what Professor Etzkorn interestingly calls a 'soul-ache'? Do we seek help and talk to someone or do we just 'get on with it' in a hope to get through it somehow?

Through Loneliness versus Being Alone aims to provide some kind of guidance and strategy from a Biblical perspective of how we can treat our 'soul-aches'. I don't claim to be an expert, but I have been observant of others and have had my own bouts of deep loneliness that have found their relief in the Word of God. I personally have felt that loneliness can be like a tiger sitting patiently in the bushes. At the most unexpected moments it pounces on its prey.

Yet there is a way to slay this giant called 'loneliness'. To assist you this book has been helpfully dissected into two

sections. Part one openly and honestly discusses the definition and some causes of loneliness. There is also exploration into my own story of bereavement and financial problems explaining its effects on my life.

Part two delves into the joy and triumph of solitude focusing on the biblical accounts of Jesus, Jacob and Hannah. Just like these biblical characters we all need that alone time to reflect and recharge before that proverbial 'rubber band' that surrounds our lives snaps due to unwanted stress.



Through Loneliness versus Being Alone it is my intention to take you, the reader, on a journey from isolation to beautiful solitude. So if you want to enjoy the ride – please jump on board!

Julie Porter is a Child Care Practitioner and Child Mentor by profession. As well as being a licensed minister she is also a part-time lecturer at a Christian training college and she specialises in teaching Christian counselling from Diploma to Master's degree level

Approaching death with faith

Death is never easy. But if we belong to Christ, the crucified and risen one, how can we not approach it with faith,

however faltering, and with hope, however fragile? By Colin Sedgwick

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on'. Revelation 14:13

We had a chat recently about dying, my wife and I. Which of us would go first? In what form would it claim us? Would it be very painful and distressing, or would we be spared suffering?

I can't remember now what prompted our conversation – perhaps the death of a friend, or the fact that we had chalked up 40 years of marriage. It wasn't a long conversation, and in no way morbid; in fact we managed without any difficulty to find some aspects to laugh about. I think it was a healthy conversation to have – not trying to hide away from a topic that we all find unwelcome, but looking it fair and square in the face.

The New Testament is not just up-front about death, it positively shakes its fist at it: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?... Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). So exclaims the apostle Paul, quoting from Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13.

Even more striking, there is that moment when he plainly states that he has reached the point where death, for him, would be preferable to staying alive: "... to me, to live is Christ, *to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21).

To die is gain! What a thing to say! Can he say it because he is so exceptionally "spiritual"? Or is he simply, after many years of suffering for Christ's sake, his body battered and beaten, his mind worn down, simply – well, ready to go?

We don't know. But what we do know is that he looked into the face of death with strong confidence. And if him, why not us too?

I don't mean, of course, to make light of death – please don't think that. Death is a horrible thing, and it's entirely natural that for most of our lives we shrink from it. Paul may describe it as "the last enemy" (1 Corinthians 15:26), but enemy *is* the word he uses! I'm conscious that there may be some reading this for whom death is a very present enemy, and certainly no laughing matter.

(I've never been quite comfortable with that verse of Francis of Assisi's great hymn, "And thou, most kind and gentle death, Waiting to hush our latest breath". For many, death comes as anything but "kind and gentle". And I'm always grateful for the little detail Luke gives us in Acts 8:2, that after the stoning of Stephen, "Godly men buried him and *mourned deeply for him*". They knew he had gone to be with Jesus, but that didn't stop them feeling the bitterness of death – they didn't cry "Praise the Lord!" and dance a jig.)

Death is best looked full in the face. Let me share three scenarios from my own experience...

First: a sitting room where an elderly man is rapidly approaching death, and some neighbours have come round to offer support. They're kind, well-meaning people, but, I have to admit, I find myself getting more and more cross. "Oh, we'll soon have you up and running around again, old chap!" – that's the form their comfort takes. And I'm sitting there thinking "Oh, stop it! What's the point of this? The dear man is dying. And he knows he's dying. His wife and family know he's dying. And *you* know he's dying. Stop this pretence!" I don't say it, but that's the way I'm thinking. (Easy for me, of course.)

Second: another sitting room where a really elderly lady welcomes me. She hasn't been out of the house for some years, and her body has pretty well closed down. We always pray for a few moments before I leave, and she says: "Oh, Colin, please pray that the Lord will take me!" Which, of course, I gladly do.

And which, of course, he gladly does (though not quite immediately!).

Third: a young married woman has been fighting terminal illness for several years. She has received the best

treatment available, and been loved and prayed for by her family, church and friends. But it's clear the time is approaching.

So she and her husband arrange occasional "Getting ready for heaven" parties. I personally

never attended one, so I can't vouch for what went on. But I have a pretty good idea: nice food and drink; plenty of chat and laughter; plenty of prayer. And, I suspect, not a few tears.



What a difference Jesus makes!

No, death is never easy. But if we belong to Christ, the crucified and risen one, how can we not approach it with faith, however faltering, and with hope, however fragile?

May God help us to cling to the clear promise of his word: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be *no more death* or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Thanks be to God!

Loving heavenly Father, thank you that Jesus conquered death, and that by faith in him I share in his victory. May that peace and hope fill my heart until the day when I see him face to face. Amen.

Colin Sedgwick is a Baptist minister with many years' experience in the ministry.

He is also a freelance journalist, and has written for The Independent, The Guardian, The Times, and various Christian publications. He blogs at sedgonline.wordpress.com

Picture by Myriams-Fotos Pixabay

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Prayer for Migrants

Help us to welcome you in newcomers, migrants and refugees. **Blessed are You**, God of all nations. ... God of all people, grant us vision to see your presence in our midst, especially in our immigrant sisters and brothers. Give us courage to open the door to our neighbours and grace to build a society of justice.

REFUGEES by Brian Bilson

They have no need of our help
So do not tell me

These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are

Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves

They are not
Welcome here

We should make them
Go back to where they came from

They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries

Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us

A place should only belong to those who are born there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

Now Read from the bottom up

For poems by Brian Bilson click on <https://brianbilston.com/>