

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 12th December 2021

Sunday's "Live" Service

Barbara is leading and Jerry is preaching from John 1: 19 - 34

"John the Appetiser"

Sunday's online service: Ron is leading and preaching from
Genesis 12: 1-9 "Father Abraham has many Sons & Daughters"
Jerry will be speaking at the Candlelight Carol Service 4pm



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.



Ron's Reads

Lk 1:67f, Ro 4, Gal 4, Acts 7;2-4, Deut 27:11f

For Your Prayers

Please pray that SBC's Candlelight Carol services will be supported and well received by the fellowship and the wider community. Pray for those who will be performing. Please continue to pray for those who will find it difficult to afford a celebration this Christmas.

Pray that people will discover that at Christmas there may be gifts, celebrations, and a powerful materialistic drive by retailers but Jesus is at the centre of it all.

As Russia moves thousands of troops and tanks to the Ukraine border and the USA and European countries are coalescing to support Ukraine pray that Europe will not be sucked into another conflict.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Jane and Ron Skivington**.

Virtual Prayer Room

On Thursday 2nd December Simone posted "Thanks everyone for your prayers for us today. We had a safe journey to London and are now on the train back to Norwich. We had a good day lots of assessments and information about Anna's surgery. The staff have been brilliant. They created a lovely atmosphere, took their time and explained everything very well. Anna's surgery is now planned for the 7th of January. As much as we thought it would be earlier we are grateful to have a date now and pray that she'll keep well until then. Thanks all again for your persistent prayer."

On Tuesday Jerry posted "Jan and Doreen hope to do some more visiting this morning weather permitting. Please pray for receptive hearts and God's protection thanks."

To join the WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room and Devotion WhatsApp site text Jerry on 07733837687. You will need a smart phone

Prayer for Peace in the World

*God of Peace,
who declares your blessing upon us
when we pursue its cause,
we pray for every place in our world
where war and conflict invade and destroy the wellbeing of people and communities.*

*Our hearts break with yours
when the young, the innocent and the vulnerable
are caught up in conflicts
for which they have no desire
and from which they gain no benefit
help us to be a people of peace;
to be a nation of peace,
and to work with all people of goodwill
to build and sustain peace throughout our world.*

*Particularly we pray
for those whose decisions and political ambition
can and will affect the cause of peace.
Grant them wisdom and courage to do what is right,
through Jesus Christ,
whose peace transcends our human comprehension.
Amen.*

Source Baptists Together

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731
Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687
Secretary: Diana Gordon
07951949128
Ministry Team:
The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary

Monday 13th December

9.00am Deacons Prayer Meeting
10.am WI Meeting in the Stables
10.30am in the Church
Prayers for young people

Wednesday 15th December

7.00pm Zoom Bible Study Meeting
Contact Diana for a link.

Sunday 19th December

4.00pm Candlelight Carols

Monday 20th December

7.00pm Deacons Meeting
10.30am in the Church
Prayers for young people

Tuesday 21st December

9.30am -12 in the Stables
Coffee and Chat

Wednesday 22nd December

9.30am -12 in the School Room
Table Tennis

Thursday 23rd December

7.00pm Zoom Prayer Meeting

Sunday 9th January

12.00 noon Church Meeting

Community Fridge

The Community Fridge is 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

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

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 Service

Sunday 19th December All welcome for traditional Carols
Starting at 4.00pm

The service 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

Church Reading Mark 4: 35-41

Jesus Calms the Storm

³⁵ That day at evening they left the crowd behind and went with Jesus in the boat he was already in. There were also other boats that went with them ³⁷ A very bad wind came up on the lake. The waves were coming over the sides and into the boat, and it was almost full of water. ³⁸ Jesus was inside the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow. The followers went and woke him. They said, "Teacher, don't you care about us? We are going to drown!"³⁹ Jesus stood up and gave a command to the wind and the water. He said, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind stopped, and the lake became calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his followers, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were very afraid and asked each other, "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the water obey him!"

As Christians when storms blast into our lives and it looks like all is disintegrating around us how easy is it to think "Jesus is sleeping, I'm on my own," then get angry, "How can you let this happen to me Lord?"

North Norfolk Foodbank

The following would be much appreciated:

Long Life Milk – full fat or semi-skimmed, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Meat, Squash/Fruit Juice, Rice Pudding, Biscuits, Male and Female Deodorants, Laundry Liquid/Powder, Household Cleaning Products, any Christmas Treats.

See front page for details if you need help, or know someone in difficulty.

EBA Prayer Focus 12th December 2021 Somersham Baptist Church

Approximately nine miles east of Huntingdon lies the village of Somersham, home to the fellowship that meets at Somersham Baptist Church. The small, galleried chapel is centrally located opposite Tesco Express whose footfall provides plentiful opportunities. Currently in pastoral vacancy the church is supported by its moderator, Richard Owen, and led by its deacons.

The church run regular mid-week groups of prayer and Bible study together with Sunday morning worship. A number of community groups also make use of the facilities at

Somersham Baptist Church.

Following recent lockdowns, the church is now fully open with a back-up online for those unable to attend. The church is now getting ready for the upcoming Christmas season and will be using material from J John's at their Carol Service.

Although, relatively, small in number, the fellowship at Somersham is keen to reach out to its community. A new housing development in the village will give fresh opportunity for outreach.

For Prayer :

- The fellowship give thanks that one of the deacons is exploring a call to ministry.
- For the fellowship as they seek to reach their community.
- For good conversations as they distribute drinks as the Christmas lights switch-on
- For the right minister to become part of the fellowship
- Please pray for God's Spirit to bring the people of Somersham into His Kingdom.

Janet Nicholson Asks

If anyone would like to donate goodies for Christmas for the young folk at Empanda e.g. biscuits, chocolates, cakes, gifts etc, please give them to Jan or Henry and we will deliver them near to Christmas,

Donations

We now use the box at the front door marked freewill offerings instead of a plate at the back of SBC. The offering bag on the balustrades on the stage close to the exit door is still in use. Your contributions are always appreciated as we grow SBC.

You can donate to SBC by going 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.

Car Parking

This year, to tie in with our Shop Local campaign, NNC will be offering free car parking in their town centre car parks, on Monday 13th and Tuesday 14th December.

Bric-a-Brac for Coffee & Chat

Coffee & Chat needs more bric-a-brac to display and receive donations for. If you have anything you could drop it in to the Stables on a Tuesday morning or give it to Elaine on a Sunday. Coffee & Chat has been very successful but is running short of items to sell.

Quotes of the Week

"Dear church, John the Baptist died for exposing the sins of others. Jesus died to actually pay for the sins of others. John was great, but we should not follow his model. Our model is Christ. So let's stop telling the world how bad their sin is and let's start sharing how good the Father has always been."

— *Carlos A. Rodriguez*

"Just because you're the voice in the wilderness, it doesn't mean you're wrong." *Mahatma Gandhi*

"God takes everyone he loves through a desert. It is his cure for our wandering hearts, restlessly searching for a new Eden..."

The best gift of the desert is God's presence... The protective love of the Shepherd gives me courage to face the interior journey."

— *Paul E. Miller*

"Nobody was born a hero and no one can inherit heroism; but you become a hero when your whole life has been a sacrifice for others."

— *Bruce Mbanzabugabo,*



Open Doors

Iranian Supreme Court rules belonging to a house church is not a criminal offence

The Supreme Court in Iran has ordered the retrial of nine Christian converts that could see them released from prison, after ruling that the ‘promotion of Christianity and the formation of a house church is not criminalised in law’. This is amazing news – please pray that justice will be done as a result for these nine imprisoned believers, and for all Christian prisoners of conscience in Iran.

In an amazing turnaround, Iran has decided that belonging to a house church does not make Christians ‘enemies of the state’.

The country’s Supreme Court has ruled that nine Christian converts serving five-year prison sentences for going to house churches should not have been charged with ‘acting against national security’, a charge that is often made against believers in court cases.

Mansour Borji, an Open Doors partner and [Article18](#)’s advocacy director, says the judgement has the potential to become a landmark ruling: “We welcome this ruling from the highest court in the land. The Supreme Court’s ruling should now pave the way for the release of the nine Christians following a retrial at a Revolutionary Court. Even more importantly, it will give the Christians – and thousands of others across Iran – hope that they may now be able to worship together in their homes without fear of imprisonment.”

The Supreme Court’s decision, handed down on 3 November – but only communicated to the Christians’ lawyers on 24 November – states explicitly that their involvement in house churches and even the propagation of what is referred to as the ‘Evangelical Zionist sect’ should not be deemed as against national security.

Believers arrested in 2019 for ‘acting against national security’

Khalil Deghanpour, Hossein Kadivar, pastor Abdolreza (Matthias) Haghnejad, Kamal Naamanian, Mohammad Vafadar, Mohammad (Shahrooz) Eslamdoust, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Mehdi Khatibi and Behnam Akhlagh (see image, below), members of a house church in Iran’s northern city of Rasht, were arrested in January and February 2019.



Nine months later, in October, they were each handed a five-year prison sentence on charges of ‘acting against national security through

promoting Christian Zionism’. They appealed their sentences but with no success.

While Iran’s legal system does not allow for a court precedent to be set, the judgement could influence cases against Persian-speaking Christians.

More than 20 Christians are currently jailed in Iran for their involvement in house churches. In all cases, the charges amounted to ‘actions against national security’.

“The formation of a house church is not criminalised in law”

The Supreme Court’s ruling states that: “Merely preaching Christianity, and promoting the ‘Evangelical Zionist sect’, both of which apparently means propagating Christianity through family gatherings [house churches] is not a manifestation of gathering and collusion to disrupt the security of the country, whether internally or externally.”

It adds that the ‘formation of these societies and groups is not [a breach of] Articles 498 and 499 of the Islamic Penal Code, or other criminal laws’. This is significant because these same articles, which relate to membership or organisation of ‘anti-state

groups’, were used in the convictions of each one of Iran’s Christian prisoners of conscience.

The ruling further states: “The promotion of Christianity and the formation of a house church is not criminalised in law.”

Open Doors and Article18 are continuing to call for clarification from the Iranian authorities of where believers can worship without fear of

arrest and imprisonment.

Mansour said: “We further call for Persian-speaking Christians to be provided with a specific place of worship, as is their right under both Iran’s constitution and the international covenants to which Iran is a signatory, without reservation.”

Please keep praying for our Iranian church family While this is incredibly welcome news, there is still very little freedom of religion or belief in Iran. The country is currently [number 8 on the Open Doors World Watch List](#), and the Iranian government sees the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as an attempt by Western countries to undermine the Islamic rule of Iran. Please continue to stand with our persecuted church family in Iran in prayer. For more information about OpenDoors click below.

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/>

Its the most wonderful time of the year.



At least that's what the ever popular song by Andy Williams (pictured below) says but is that true? Writes Ron Skivington for Christmas Community Scene.

Is everything full of good cheer, marshmallowing and carolling out in the snow?

For all too many the answer would be a resounding NO, Christmas is more to be dreaded than anticipated.

We are in a part of the country where the universal credit scheme is being rolled out to replace disability payments and tax credits. Where it has been in place elsewhere for a year foodbank take up has risen by 52%. That simply says people are under tremendous pressures over "How do we pay the rent or mortgage? Can we afford to turn the heating on? So long as the children get something to eat I can do without." And that is without the added pressure of presents, especially when the ads tell us this is a must have and we are depriving our children if they miss out and so buy on credit but credit needs paying some time and debt grows and the cycle gets worse.



What about those for whom this will be the first year minus a loved one around the table? Or those struggling with terminal illness who may not make another year? Or those dreading the holidays because it's when a partner tends to get more abusive? We could go on.

People of all backgrounds and faiths and none can struggle with the thought of needing to be full of Christmas cheer, bad times can affect all sorts of people in all sorts of ways. But then, Yes, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year because of the hope it brings.



I recently read of how Dr Wm Barclay stood in his pulpit a week after his daughter had gone missing off the coast of Northern Island on a boating holiday and said "I am going to preach this morning the sermon I should have given last week." His two themes were "and Moses drew near to the deep darkness" and Jesus said "I am the Light of the world."

Dr Wm Barclay could identify [as many can] and as Moses could, what it was like to feel nothing but deep darkness all around for his daughter was still missing and yet in the midst of all the pain, hurt and anguish he was facing he knew there was a light and there is someone who holds that light out to all of us.

During the war people were constantly reminded of the importance of keeping their blackout curtains tightly closed. Why? Because enemy pilots could see the faintest glimmer from miles away. Light tells you it is there, and in the war context it meant potential targets for their bombs, but in Jesus' context it tells you He is always there. His light guides us towards a loving heavenly

Father; it therefore gives hope that there is someone who knows all about us, who does care for us, who can give us strength, comfort, peace but not always the answer as we might want it. The very fact God's Son was born in Bethlehem all those years ago, identified fully as a man, knew what it was to face all the worst life could throw at Him, tells us He understands our situations.

When He was born a star lit the way, Angels filled the sky with their brightness all saying "The Light has come." That is why *Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year.*