

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 19th December 2021

Sunday's "Live" Service

Pat is leading and Ron is preaching from Matthew 1: 18-23

"Annunciation"

Sunday's online service: Simone is leading and Jerry preaching from

Exodus 3: 6-17 "The God who promises Salvation"

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.



Jerry's Reads

Genesis 15, Numbers 23:19-24, Joshua 23:14, Isaiah 7:10-25, Matthew 1:18-25
Hebrews 10:23, 2 Peter 1:3-4

Newsletter

As this is the last newsletter of 2021 Jerry, Ron and the Deacons would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and blessings in the New Year and thank the fellowship for all their support and volunteering through another testing year. We pray that the Lord will guide us all through the coming year.

The next newsletter will be produced for the 9th January.

For Your Prayers

As we move into a New Year pray that world leaders can come together and create a world of peace, a world where poverty is eradicated, a world where equality is the norm and people can worship without fear.

Please pray that our leaders can re-establish trust in the country as they take us into a New Year which is predicted to have many difficulties that they will have to continue to deal with and will need the support of the electorate for success.

Pray also that over Christmas people will be able to stay safe while celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Please continue to pray for those who will find it difficult to afford a celebration this Christmas. Also pray for all those who are alone at Christmas.

Pray that this Christmas people will find "Jesus at the Centre" of the celebrations and ask him into their lives.

Please remember in your thoughts those of the fellowship who passed away during 2021 and pray for those who lost loved ones.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Elaine and Steve Smith.**

Virtual Prayer Room

On Monday 13th Maureen posted "Abbie has her MRI scan at Great Ormond Street tomorrow, please pray that all will go to plan this time, thank you Maureen."

On Wednesday Jerry posted for Maureen "Thank you for all your prayers, Abbie had her scan, they will go back in January to discuss the results for further treatment. Maureen"

The same day Julia posted "Hi. We would like to thank you all for your prayers. David had a follow up appointment via telephone yesterday.

There couldn't really be better news at present. David will continue with 6 monthly blood tests but that's all. We are grateful for all your support and God's grace. Julia and David."

Church Reading Philippians 4: 4-7

Final Exhortations

⁴ Always be filled with joy in the Lord. I will say it again. Be filled with joy.

⁵ Let everyone see that you are gentle and kind. The Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks for what you have. ⁷ And because you belong to Christ Jesus, God's peace will stand guard over all your thoughts and feelings. His peace can do this far better than our human minds.

As Christians we approach the celebrations of Jesus birth with the uplifting services and Candlelight Carols there is so much joy to fill us but how easy is it to maintain that through the sometimes darkness of a New Year?

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon
07951949128

Ministry Team:
The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary over Christmas

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 and Carols

Thursday 23rd December

7.00pm Zoom Prayer Meeting

Friday 24th December

1.15-3pm Foodbank in Stables

Saturday 25th December

10am Christmas Day Service

Friday 31st December

1.15-3pm Foodbank in Stables

Sunday 2nd January

10.45am Sunday Service

Tuesday 4th January

9.00am -12 in the Stables

Coffee and Chat

Wednesday 5th January

9.00am -12 in the Schoolroom

Table Tennis

Sunday 9th January

12.00 noon Church Meeting

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

Donations from Candlelight Carols

Donations from the services will be going to Leeway (refuge for Women) and Norwich Homeless Support.

A Big Thank You to Stuart McKay

A Big thank you to Stuart McKay the manager of Tesco's who donated 12 big boxes of goodies for Jan and Henry Nicholson 's collection of food for the group of homeless young people at Empanda. Also a thank you to all in the fellowship who donated.

Another thank you to Tesco's who have also donated large amounts of produce to the Community Fridge as did Nigel at Forrest in Stalham High Street this week.

The project relies on retailers, farmers and those who grow produce in their gardens and allotments and we are grateful for all their help.

Coffee & Chat and Carols

This week's Coffee and Chat will also have some carols and Christmas songs with music from Elwin a brilliant organist from Happisburgh St Mary Church everyone welcome.

Community Fridge

The Community Fridge will be open until Christmas Eve and then will be closed until Wednesday 28th December. A big thank you to all the wonderful volunteers and Sara who have done such a great job of growing the Community Fridge.

EBA Prayer Focus 19th December 2021 Hornchurch Baptist Church

Hornchurch Baptist Church is surely unique among the EBA in its setting above a supermarket in a busy town centre on the East London/Essex border.

The church leases the top floor above Iceland, where they enjoy a flexible suite of rooms that provide space for worship, meetings and church groups. The past 18 months have provided the inevitable challenges of Covid, but also significant change after the church's youth worker left for a new post in August 2020.

As is the case for most churches, Covid has taken its toll, and as the church adjusts they are seeking God's fresh vision and purpose for the times that lie ahead. The congregation are led by Revd Vivienne Alexander and a team of deacons, with the upcoming AGM an opportunity for new individuals to be

elected onto the diaconate.

A number of ministries have restarted including an established youth and children's work on Sunday mornings and midweek, as well as an outreach work for young people. Plans are being made for a Christmas carol service aimed at encouraging the young children and families of the church's Stepping Stones toddler group to attend, followed by a Christmas party in the church.

Worship has been ongoing again on Sundays for some time now, but restrictions remain, including the wearing of face masks and social distancing.

We would value prayers for:

- The months that lie ahead and how we continue to adjust to changes in attendance and how we balance worship needs against practical restrictions in the winter months.
- Please pray for strength for ongoing deacons and also for any new ones that come onto the diaconate, and that we reflect God's heart to our church fellowship.
- For our Christmas carol service and its outreach possibilities – that many new families may attend and see Christ exalted through our worship.
- For strength for the leaders of different groups as they move forward in their reopening of ministries in the church and also for the continuing adjustment to church life post-Covid.

Donations

We will 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 will still be in use. Your contributions are always appreciated as we grow SBC.

Jerry's Quotes of the Week

"Christmas has a deeper significance to followers of Jesus. It's not all about the gifts underneath Christmas trees or the elaborate meals served in extravagantly decorated homes. Christmas is the season of Immanuel. We celebrate the good news that He is near, that He cares for us, and that He transforms lives. **His presence was the greatest present God gave mankind. May we be present carriers of that presence!**" — Katherine J. Walden, *Dare to Call Him Friend*.

"God, Who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet He seems sometimes to be present, sometimes to be absent. If we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present." — Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island*.

"Jesus is the guarantee of the promises. He that spared not his own Son will deny nothing to his people. If he had ever thought of drawing back, he would have done so before he had made the infinite sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. Never can there be a suspicion that the Lord will revoke any one of the promises since he has already fulfilled the greatest and most costly of them all. "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" — Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *According To Promise*.

"You cannot judge God by your calendar. God may appear to be slow, but he never forgets his promises. He may seem to be working very slowly or even to be forgetting his promises, but when his promises come true (and they will come true), they always burst the banks of what you imagined. . . . God's grace virtually never operates on our time frame, on a schedule we consider reasonable." — Timothy Keller

"In Jesus Christ, we who are born of God have the unspeakable privilege of knowing Yahweh as our Father — I AM WHO I AM — the God; who exists, whose personality and power is owing solely to himself, who never changes, from whom all power and energy in the universe flows and to whom all creation should conform its life." — John Piper.

THE HOSPITAL, THE MIRACLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE SECRET

A story from Bethan and Gareth Shrubsole who are missionaries supported by SBC who work in Chad.

Pictured when visiting SBC



Ahmat* came to Guinebor II hospital (G2) because his father had badly broken his leg. They'd tried to get help elsewhere, but that had just ended up making it worse, and now he needed surgery in order to fix the damage. Doctors at G2 told them they would have to wait for his leg to heal, so they could break it again and set the bone

properly.

BMS World Mission worker Bethan Shrubsole, who works at G2, began to get to know Ahmat. He began to come and speak with Bethan and her colleague, Pastor Berihun*, a few times a week. Berihun and Bethan prayed for Ahmat's father before his surgery – and that's when something miraculous happened. Kalbassou, BMS' Hospital Director and surgeon, took the cast off and found his leg had healed, and they wouldn't need to do any surgery. "Kalbassou said it was a miracle," explains Gareth Shrubsole, Bethan's husband. "No-one had expected that." And it was this display of God's miraculous healing power that led Ahmat to come faith in Jesus.

Sadly, when the rest of Ahmat's family found out about his new faith, they kicked him out. It's a tragic reality, but not surprising. It's why Berihun advises people not to share their faith with their families when they find new life in Jesus, at least not straight away. But many new believers find it impossible to keep their new faith a secret. And while it can lead to much heartache if their families can't accept them, BMS workers on the ground are there to make sure they're not alone.

Wonderfully, Ahmat has found somewhere to stay in N'Djamena and is in touch with other local Christians. But Ahmat's journey isn't over, and he and other believers like him still need our support and prayers.

**Names changed.*

To support more bold believers like Ahmat, please give to our I Will Stand appeal, supporting Christians living in hard places across the world:

bit.ly/IWSGive



7 ways to pray for Christians in Nigeria this Christmas

For many of us, the approaching festive season is

cause for excitement and celebration. But for Christians globally, Christmas brings acute risk of attack. This is certainly the case in Nigeria, where believers are experiencing escalating and targeted violence at the hands of extremist groups and bandits. Nigeria is [number nine on the World Watch List](#) of countries where it's hardest to follow Jesus – but it has the highest violence. More Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world. Your prayers are desperately needed.

1. Protection of church activities over festive period

Following the deaths of several of its leaders, so-called Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) have sworn in replacements, and the new leaders are committed to attacking Christians in Nigeria and beyond. And they aren't the only persecutors. In northern Nigeria – which is majority Muslim – the church is experiencing a high level of threat, with Christmas and New Year festivities likely to be targeted. Only this week, the church in Zamfara State, northern Nigeria, received a letter from a group of bandits demanding that they close churches or risk 'ferocious' attacks.

Heavenly Father, bring supernatural peace to fearful hearts in Nigeria as Christmas approaches. Thwart the plans of those intent on harming your people and protect all Christian gatherings over the festive period. Amen.

2. Provision for families devastated by ransom demands

Christian families are carefully selected and targeted for abduction from schools, church services and while travelling, with perpetrators demanding overwhelming sums of money for their release. It's a calculated strategy that's led to the impoverishment of thousands of Christians, with families even forced to part with their homes to pay ransoms.

Lord God, provide for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of families devastated by such calculated acts of evil, and heal their trauma. Intervene to bring about the release of Christians held captive. Amen.

3. Fresh revelation of God's grace

Many Christian families are losing enthusiasm for the gospel, and struggling with feelings of anger and resentment towards those who persecute them. This reflects how increasingly unbearable life is for many Christians in Nigeria, and how much they need your prayers to stand strong in their faith.

Lord Jesus, we can't imagine how challenging life is for our family in Nigeria. Give Your children a fresh revelation of Your love and grace, and use this to strengthen them to stand firm despite persecution. Amen.

4. Stable economy and reunited families

The activities of extremists across northern Nigeria have led to rising food prices. Many families are living in hunger and uncertainty. Large numbers have fled to internal displacement camps (IDPs), with families even being separated from each other.

Father, reunite families, provide for their needs, and enable Christians to return to their homes. Stabilise the economy through a reduction in food prices and opportunities to earn a living. Amen.

5. Strength to withstand pressure

One of the expansion strategies used by Islamic extremists is the establishment of a propagation initiative called the Islamic Dawah Movement. This involves putting intense pressure on believers from Muslim backgrounds, targeting church leaders and their children for conversion, inciting Muslim youths to attack missionaries working among Muslims, and injecting fear into converts considering Christianity.

Lord Jesus, protect Christians targeted in this way, and give them continued boldness, fervency and strength in the face of intense pressure. Soften the hearts of those who persecute your people and lead them to You. Amen.

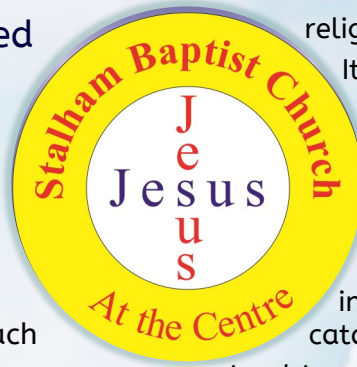
6. Protection of Open Doors trauma centre

The centre where traumatised believers receive care – and which your support helps fund – is currently undergoing expansion to accommodate more people and ensure vital help is given to more believers affected by persecution. However, the area is experiencing threats by Islamic militants.

Father God, thank You for the wonderful work of this trauma centre. Strengthen, encourage and equip all those who serve there. Protect the centre, bless its development and increase its impact on the lives of your hurting people. Amen.

7. More international awareness

Nigeria has been removed from the US State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) regarding religious freedom, released in November. It was added last year 'due to systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of



religious freedom'.

Its removal from the list has been met with widespread consternation. Frans Veerman, Managing Director of World Watch Research, CHRISTMAS CAROL said, "The situation in Nigeria has not improved and there is no clear reason why Nigeria should lose CPC status. There are several indications that Nigeria is heading towards a catastrophic situation."

Lord Jesus, intervene to make those in power, both nationally and internationally, more acutely aware of the awful suffering facing Christians in Nigeria, and stir their hearts to do more to prevent this. Amen.

How do children of the persecuted church celebrate Christmas?

Despite conflict and persecution, children around the world are determined to celebrate Christmas.

What are you doing for Christmas this year? It's a

question many of us are asking, not just in the UK and Ireland but around the world.

For children living in countries where believers are persecuted, it's a question that reveals not only the traditions precious to them, but the strength of faith they have in

the face of opposition and suffering.



Your prayers for vulnerable Nigerian Christians are urgently needed

Sharing food and faith in Kenya

In Kenya, the word associated with Christmas is 'Together'. "After the Christmas service, we eat and drink together because there are those who do not have money to buy food to celebrate in their homes," says Mary (13).

The sharing doesn't end there. "Christians from all churches go around sharing the gospel," Mary continues. But opposition is never far away. Believers are pushed, insulted, even attacked with water. But Mary is undeterred. "My prayer is for the church to be so full that we don't all fit in anymore."

Dancing for joy in Laos

The activity that perhaps gives greatest expression of joy is dance – and that's exactly how a group of young Christians celebrate Christmas in Laos. "We celebrate Christmas by dancing," says Deng (12), as she rehearses for a Christmas service. "To show glory to God, sing songs and worship God with the adults."

This desire to celebrate the birth of Jesus is even more inspiring given that, in Laos, Christian activities are heavily monitored by the Communist authorities, with many believers at risk of severe persecution.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPENDOORS CLICK [HERE](#).

SHEET

Discover more stories in our new suite of Christmas resources, including a carol sheet that explores the Christmas story through the eyes of children of the persecuted church.

Click to [FIND OUT MORE](#)