

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday 27th February 2022



Sunday's "Live" Service

Ron is leading and is preaching from Numbers 6: 22-27 "Be Blessed"

This Sunday we will celebrate the Lord's Supper

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

2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12 "Has the day of the Lord come yet?"

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.



Structure of Jerry's Talk

Paul mentions three things that deserve a closer look:

(1.) The Rebellion 2:3. (2.) The Man of Lawlessness 2:3-4,7-10. (3.) The Restraint v 7.

Jerry's Reads

Daniel 9:24-27; 11:1ff, Matthew 24:9-14, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 3:1-9 & 1 John 2:18-25.

For Your Prayers

Please Lord, as we witness a war between Russia, a major military world power, and Ukraine we pray You can bring your wisdom to those controlling the situation and break into their hearts of stone before an escalation engulfs Europe. We pray also for the civilians whose country is becoming a war zone with the evitable deaths that will bring and also pray for those families in Russia and Ukraine that will lose their love ones in battle.

We also pray for people in the community and fellowship that are struggling with the cost of living and will suffer another escalation in food, heating and fuel costs.

We pray Lord that those in the fellowship who are struggling financially and cannot donate to SBC and the refurbishment project will not feel in any way they are letting You down.

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Edna Woolsey.**

Virtual Prayer Room

On Sunday 20th Jenny posted "Please could you pray for my sister-in-law, Gill. She has stage 4 cancer and has spent the last week in hospital with DVT and PE. Then today she has tested positive for covid. My brother is currently trying to get antivirals prescribed for her. Please pray this happens very soon. Thank you J."

Later Jenny went on "Quick update, Gill has just been taken to the QA hospital in Portsmouth, as her doctor at the Royal Marsden wants a whole series of tests done before she is given the antivirals. Please pray for Paul too, the last 10 days have been tough for him. Thanks."

The same day DJ Steve posted an audio message saying "Hi dear friends please pray for me as I settle into my new home I don't know if it's going to be fulltime or parttime but could you all pray for me I would appreciate that and as you know dear friends I love you all and can't wait to get back to church all my love DJ."

On Monday Julia posted "Hi, a quick update. David has been cancelled again. We think it is because the doctors are all talking to each other now. A new date has been set for April 4th. Jx"

On Wednesday Jenny posted "Thanks for all your prayers, Gill will finally get antiviral infusion tomorrow at 8.30am. She continues to be very tired and anxious and also has a nasty cough."

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

Church Reading John 15: 12-17 (MSG)

¹¹⁻¹⁵ "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

¹⁶ You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

¹⁷ But remember the root command: Love one another."

How easy is as a Christian to deal with the thought that we are the friends of Jesus and He trusts us to creatively find ways of bringing people to Him? Is it much easier to be a servant and just wait to follow instructions?

Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon
07951949128

Ministry Team:

The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary

Monday 28th February

7.00pm Deacons Meeting

10.30am in the Church

Prayers for young people

Tuesday 1st March

9.30am -12 in the Stables

Coffee and Chat

Wednesday 2nd March

9.30am -12 in the School Room

Table Tennis

Thursday 3rd March

7.00pm Zoom Prayer Meeting

Contact Diana for link

Friday 4th March

1.15-3pm Foodbank in Stables

Sunday 6th March

10.45am Sunday Service

Flowers: Janet Nicholson

Saturday 2nd April

11am Gunton BC Visit

Sunday 10th April

12 noon AGM

Food Bank & Personal Prayer

SBC is open Monday to Friday from 10.00am to 12 noon to receive donations for the food bank and for 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

Community Fridge in the Stables

Open Mondays 2.00 pm - 4.00pm

Tuesday to Friday 10.00am to 12 noon

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.

Fundraising

Early, but Daffodils are being Picked

Daffodils are now being sold at Edna's gate and at Community Fridge at 50p per bunch to raise money for the building fund. Last year a grand total of £808 was raised.

Gracie's Fundraiser

Gracie would like to thank everyone who kindly bought a hama bead cross last week. She has so far made £66! She is aiming to sell 34 more crosses this Sunday, so that she can donate £100 in total to the building fund. This fundraiser was entirely her own idea and she has put a lot of time and effort into making so many crosses to sell.

Pledges

At the last church meeting Stewart spoke about the need for pledges being required to cover the loan being applied for and the one offered to the church from a member. We appreciate these are financially tough and uncertain times for some but if you are able to support in this way please return any pledge forms to Stewart. Please also pray that grant applications that are beginning to be sent out meet with favour. Many thanks Ron.

Sponsored Walk

In aid of the SBC building fund Ben & Barbara Mixer and Henry will be undertaking an approx. 6 miles walk on a pleasant day within the next few weeks as weather permits. We will be collecting sponsorship from those who wish to support this. Thank you and we will update in due course the funds raised. There is a sponsor form at the back of the church.

Pop up Coffee Morning Saturday 5th March

The Stables will be open 10 till 1pm for a Pop up Coffee morning to raise money for the Schoolroom project. There will be light lunches, quiche and salad and bacon rolls. Donations of cakes and bric-a-brac appreciated. For more information contact Elaine 0779687585 or email elainemsmith364@btinternet.com.

AGM

Our AGM will be held on Sunday 10th April this year at 12.00. As usual it will begin with the election of deacons. This year Josh Hollebon, Stewart Marsh and Elaine Smith are the 3 deacons whose terms come to an end.

Please be prayerful about who should be nominated to serve us as deacons as we continue to go through interesting times. All nominations, in writing and seconded, should be given to Diana no later than Wednesday March 30th

Energy Needs

If you are, or know someone who is, struggling with their energy bills North Norfolk Food Bank offers a scheme called Energybank that can help. Contact the Food Bank on 07826376343, or contact Ron Skivington at minister@stalhbaptist.org.uk Citizens Advice Bureau can also give advice and possible assistance. Click [here](#) for a link.

EBA Prayer Focus 27th February 2022 Swaffham Baptist Church

Swaffham is a small rural market town in Norfolk located between King's Lynn and Norwich with lots of new housing development taking place. It is home to Swaffham Baptist Church which has been long established in the town with its imposing nineteenth century building.

The caring and loving fellowship is about twenty-five in number and has a very positive and outward-looking attitude. The church has an older demographic and there are currently two serving deacons.

The church has been without its own pastor for seventeen years but is blessed with good lay preachers who can lead the services. The variety of different speakers who faithfully bring God's word each week is a blessing in itself. And there is a good range of other people who step up to participate in the services with readings and prayers. The church premises are used by a lot of people for community activities including the local Foodbank, a Pilates class, the Mother's Union and a local

amateur dramatics society for their rehearsals.

Throughout covid and lockdown the fellowship has held together well and has now readjusted to a more normal situation since opening for services last Easter. The church has a very positive attitude about the future and has a burning desire to move forward in faith. Everyone is looking forward to the challenge and adventure that God has for them in the coming year. Please pray:

- That more members will join the church. More deacons are needed and people are required to step up to the leadership team.
- That more young people will become part of the fellowship. Pray for the joint youth work in the area alongside other churches.
- For guidance as the church wants to do God's will and step out in faith.

Church Open

We would like to maintain a covid secure environment in the church so although we no longer require people to book for services we still recommend masks be worn for the time being.

Innocence Lost by Else Burt (Peter's Mum)

A chronicle of carefree childhood days and bitter years of a German War. Two copies are still available. Please speak to Monica (01692 580947) if you would like a copy. Donations for the building fund appreciated.

Reminder Re Recycling

Each week I find items e.g. sweet boxes, plastic and milk containers, glass jars, waste paper which need NOT go to landfill. It would be helpful if all recycling items could be taken home and put in your household green bins.

Please could you help – either making sure items are put in your own recycling bin or, if this not convenient, put them either in the box in the play store or in the Church kitchen, both marked for this purpose. Thank you Monica.

Jerry's Quotes of the Week

"Some of the saints are SINGING about the Second Coming, but it is one thing to sing the national anthem during the war and quite another to go into battle. The best evidence that the Lord's return has really gotten hold of us is when we occupy till He comes, do business for God, buy up the opportunities because the days are evil."— **Vance Havner**.

"The centre of Christianity is the coming of the Son of God into the world as a real man to destroy the works of the devil and create a new people for His own glory. The very heart of our faith is that He did this by obeying the law of God, dying for the sins of His people, rising victorious over death, ascending to God's right hand with all His enemies under his feet. The second coming of Christ is the completion of His saving work. If you take it away, the whole fabric of His saving work unravels."— **John Piper**

"The doctrine of the second coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realise that at every moment of every year in our lives, Donne's question, "What if this present were the world's last night?" is equally relevant."— **C S Lewis**

"Two men left the factory where they worked and approached a car belonging to one of them. 'What does that mean?' asked one man, pointing to a bumper sticker that read, 'Maranatha!' The car owner, a Christian, replied, 'It means 'The Lord is coming!'' 'I don't believe that!' his companion snapped. 'Well,' said the Christian, 'I've got news for you. He's not coming for you!' That blunt reply awakened the man to a sense of responsibility and concern regarding the future and his preparation for it."—A story told by **Donald Campbell**.

"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." — **A.W. Tozer**, *Preparing for Jesus' Return: Daily Live the Blessed Hope*



2022 will define the shape of church for the future ...

Some people like doing church from home. Is this a new face of church for the 21st century? Is it a Fresh Expression of church?

Or is this another face of consumerism and not really “church” at all? By Chris Goswami

Another Sunday morning service is over. Today, our onsite congregation was maybe two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels, but with fewer chairs out, it looked decently full. Anyway, I drive home and, during the afternoon, I notice the views on YouTube. As usual, the number is surprisingly high. Not the ridiculously high numbers we saw in the heady days of 2020, but still intriguing.

And I find myself asking the same questions, *who ARE all these people? And, will they ever attend physical church?* In these dark winter mornings, church from home is easy and convenient, but it doesn't look like this trend will end just because the pandemic ends. Some people like doing church from home.

"The pandemic wasn't a blip, it was a reset"

Is this a new face of church for the 21st century? Or is it a Fresh Expression of church? Or is it this another face of consumerism and not really “church” at all?

Some have no choice: those who need to isolate, or work shift patterns, or who are “just looking”. For all these groups, online church is a Godsend. But there are many others around the country who *choose* to do church at home. And it's not the “home” bit that's the problem – house churches have been around since the first century. It's more the fact that we are doing church alone.

Working from home ... shopping from home ... churching from home?

Church has become optional

Attending church in a physical building became “optional” long before COVID. In our individualistic western world, church over many years has become secondary, a private pastime to blend with a busy life when convenient. So perhaps home church actually helps these people to engage, at least to an extent? But at best, home church is a thinned-down imitation of church. It may even encourage the idea that church is simply another “life accessory”.

Premier's Digital Theologian Pete Phillips points out that, when COVID first hit, many churches started off engaging their online audience in innovative ways, including online spaces to meet for coffee, Zoom



house-groups, and online ways to request prayer.

But now, they side-line the online congregation favouring a smaller core who physically meet. He says, *“... often live-streaming services is simply putting your physical church service online. It is a broadcast experience which leads to the congregation simply consuming a piece of media When I (physically) come to church, I am part of a community – saying hello to friends, asking how people are, drinking the coffee... a rich multisensory experience which shows why church is so much more than live streaming”*.

The lead minister at my own church, Jonathan Bramwell, agrees, “When we meet, we are naturally drawn to looking after the visible rather than the unknowns. The occasional shout out, *‘... welcome to those online!’* doesn't really cut it in terms of trying to be a hybrid church. I feel we are drifting back to being a live church but with a streamed service. Is this model of any use? Or does it offer the worst of both worlds? We need to do more reflection”.

Home church also means there is no sense of discipleship or accountability. People may engage some of the time or none of the time or get their teaching from sources that might concern a church leadership team. It is disconnected from the living body of the church, and it is creating the impression among a generation of children that “... church is watching YouTube”.

"We are drifting back to being a live church but with a streamed service – is this the worst of both worlds?"

But then a good question to ask is:

What is church?

You would think this would be easy to answer and, if you ask a non-Christian, it is easy – you just point vaguely to a church building. But theologians have struggled to define what makes a church a church.

The identifiers or “marks of church” are classically defined in The Creeds as “one”, “holy”, “catholic”, and “apostolic”. But, if you are sitting on your couch at home, wondering whether you are really doing

church, these marks don't help. Others have tried to define church around phrases like "a mystical communion".

A more practical explanation comes from the Archbishops' Council. In their book, *Mission Shaped Church*, they state that the church is where the Word is preached, and the sacraments celebrated (baptism and communion/eucharist). In addition, they say, church requires worship and community.

OK, that says that a church has five elements, the Word, Baptism, Communion, Worship and Community. Not a bad definition. No matter which Christian tradition you belong to, you can't do all these home alone. (Although, if you occasionally drop into a physical church, maybe you can?)

Of course all definitions of church pre-date the idea of pandemics and online congregations, so perhaps we need new definitions?

Could home-church become a Fresh Expression of church?

In the late nineties, [the Fresh Expressions movement \(FX\)](#) began. FX flies in the face of the "bums on seats" church mentality that we often have if we're honest. Fresh Expressions reverses the "attractional" approach of drawing people to a building on Sunday and reverts to an "incarnational" approach of enabling people to become church exactly where they are, ("incarnational" loosely means Christ coming to us, not the other way around).

At its heart is a desire to engage with people who don't go to church. One of the best-known examples of FX is "Messy Church", a mix of games, crafts, Bible stories and food run in public buildings across the country. But there are hundreds of other examples of FX, including bikers meeting in a pub to talk about Jesus, and mums' breakfast clubs. The question "is this church?" is not one that troubles advocates of FX. Their goal is to bring the gospel to people in specific contexts, such as dads, or farmers, or a book club.

We have work to do before home-church could be considered a Fresh Expression. We especially need better ways of building community online. Getting the social experience right is the hardest part. *Is this "church"? ... Does it matter?*

What matters most

We are all accustomed to the phrase "the church is the people not the building". But even those Christian traditions which downplay buildings (including mine) would say, after two years of repeated closures, that buildings are rather helpful in gathering the church. More than that, a building can facilitate many activities we need to flourish. It



can occupy a central place in people's lives, a place of conversation, hospitality, humour, purpose, and, for some, it's a place to pass the time.

Can you do all those things online? Yes, you can. Do you want to? No, not really. Zoom coffee and chat just isn't the same, as we learnt early on in COVID. But on the other hand, online prayer does seem to have caught on. Some things actually work really well online.

The pandemic isn't a blip, it's a reset. We have to accept that the face of church has changed and it won't change back just because the pandemic goes away. Many of our churches will have a smaller core in the building and a larger, new "fringe" online compared to pre-pandemic. This fringe will include church members who prefer church at home, people who attend multiple churches online, and people who are surfing for reasons we are yet to discover.

Looking ahead, asking "what are the non-negotiable elements of church" may be less important than the question: *how do we reach out to this fringe of church who we may never see?*

And there is an even more basic question. *Do we want to create an authentic fresh expression of church for people at home, or do we really want to flush out our congregation and get them back in the building?*

Chris Goswami is Director of Communications at Openwave Mobility and Associate Minister at Lymm Baptist Church. He is the author of www.7minutes.net, where this reflection previously appeared. It is republished with permission.

