

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday June 25th

This Sunday Elaine & Maggie are leading and Ron is preaching from

Luke 11: 14 - 23 "What team are we on?"

The online service will also be available from Sunday.

Go to www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/

Then click on "Join Our Online Service"

Ron's Reads

Jn 10:10, Jn 3:30, Haggai 1:6

For Your Prayers

As we pray through the Church Directory, please remember **Dorothy & Peter Bane**. During July please pray for the residents of **Lancaster Close, Ellis Close and Lynford Road**.

Please pray for the family and friends of Marie Read whose funeral service is at 11.00am on Thursday.

Also pray for the Ladies breakfast on Saturday and Sunday's Shared Lunch with the Shrubsoles.

Lord, we come before You first and foremost with hearts of gratitude. You have seen us through another week, and we stand at the threshold of a fresh week, full of new beginnings. Lord, help us start this brightly embarking with You. Stir in us a deep desire to come into further communion with You.

Lord Jesus, we pray that Mr Sunak's leadership will be compassionate and attentive to the needs of the poor, the vulnerable and those who were always just coping with their finances and are now facing severe problems with their mortgages. We pray that the eyes of his heart would be opened to Your will. In Your name, Amen.

Father, we thank you for the freedoms we have to pray, worship and participate in public life. We pray for good and healthy relationships to grow between churches, local MPs and all Governmental departments. We would like to begin to see increased collaboration which seeks the common good, greater engagement and integrity throughout all levels of Government. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we pray for effective and gracious Christian presence and influence in political debate. Strengthen those you have placed in the corridors of power to wisely explain Biblical truth, allowing the truth about human flourishing to be attentively listened to and courageously acted upon. Amen.

Based on prayers from **Care** (What You Believe) Their mission is to bring a uniquely Christian insight to the policies and laws that affect our lives. They believe in a better story for our society and culture, one where the life of every human being, from conception to natural end, is respected and upheld.

Virtual Prayer room

Tuesday 20th June

Jerry posted for Maureen "GOSH, need to see Abbie tomorrow after sending pictures of the wound to them. Please pray all is well, and also for the journey, Love Maureen."

Wednesday 21st June Jerry posted for Maureen "Thank you for your prayers. Abbie has seen the consultant, and he is happy that all is well. Praise the Lord, Love Maureen."

The same day Diana posted "Hi all. Reporting back from my consultation with Professor Bowles this morning. Things not quite as straightforward as thought. Bone Marrow Scan as expected. Still showing low grade NHL. However, PET scan seemed to show something unusual. A very tiny gland outside of my spleen (below my left ribcage,) was enlarged. He didn't fully understand the scan report and said he needed to see the pictures for himself. That means until he does that he can't fully be sure of the treatment. No problem with my spleen treatment and to start that on the first available Tuesday. The nurse indicated they might not be able to fit me in next Tuesday, so likely to be the week after. Because of this gland issue he now can't be certain of the total plan so might be 4 weekly or might be 3 weekly. He will come and see me on the Tuesday I start my treatment and said he might have to change it depending upon him viewing the PET scan pictures. So, a little unsettling and your continued prayers are much appreciated."

To join the WhatsApp Virtual Prayer Room that gives support with the power of prayer text Jerry on 07733837687. You will need a smart phone.



Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington
01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno
07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon 07951949128
Ministry Team: The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary

Monday 26th June

9.00am Deacons Prayer Meeting
10.30 to 11.30am in the Church
Prayers for SBC and young people
2 to 4pm Warm Spaces in the Stables

Tuesday 27th June

Coffee and Chat
9.30am - 12 in the Stables
7.00pm Potter plus Bible Study group
at Penny and Steve's
Staithe Road Barton Turf

Wednesday 28th June

Table Tennis
9.30am to 12 in the Church
10-12pm Warm Spaces in the Stables
7.00pm Zoom Bible Study
All Welcome to join in
Contact Diana for details

Thursday 29th June

10 to 12pm Warm Spaces in the Stables
11.00am Funeral service for Marie Read
7.00pm Prayer meeting in the Church

Friday 30th June

1.15 to 3pm Foodbank in Stables &
Citizens Advice Service

Saturday 1st July

8.30 Ladies Breakfast in the Stables

Sunday 2nd July

10.45 Sunday Service
Welcome: Jean & Tom
Flowers: Magdalena
Shared Lunch 12.30 - 2.30pm
Including a talk by the Shrubsoles [our
BMS missionaries from Chad]

Thursday 6th July

10 to 12pm Bible Art in the Church

Sunday 9th July

12.00pm Church Meeting

Food Bank, Citizens Advice Service & Personal Prayer

SBC will be open Monday to Friday from 10.00am to 12 noon to receive donations for the food bank and for personal prayer. The **Food Bank**: if you need help, or know someone in difficulty, either contact the Food Bank on 07826 376343, or contact Ron Skivington at minister@stalhambaptist.org.uk The **Citizens Advice Service** is open on Friday in the Stables, 1.15 to 3.00pm. Contact Food Bank on 07826 376343.

Bible Reading Blog Mark 12: 41-44 (MSG) "The Widows Mite"

⁴¹⁻⁴⁴ Sitting across from the offering box, he was observing how the crowd tossed money in for the collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions. One poor widow came up and put in two small coins—a measly two cents. Jesus called his disciples over and said, "The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all."

As Christians how easy is it to miss the small things that glue a fellowship together?

Listen to Jerry's short blog based on this verse click [Jerry's Blog](#). Or go to www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ and click on "Our Weekly Bible Commentary"

Meet the Shrubsoles on 2nd July at Shared Lunch

Gareth and Bethan Shrubsoles and their three children (pictured above) joined the Guinebor II hospital team in Chad in January 2020. Gareth has a non-medical senior role in the management of the hospital, working to oversee some of the operations of Guinebor II. Bethan works as a music therapist, with a project run by BMS partner TEAM, helping vulnerable women affected by abusive relationships or the sex-trade.

Can You Help?

Extra volunteers for the prayer corner on Sundays would be welcomed. If you can help talk to Diana. Volunteers needed to clean/tidy the premises during the cleaner's holiday. 18th July to 19th August. Please put your name on the rota on the table at the back of the sanctuary if you can help with any of the dates. Speak to Monica (01692 580947) for further information.

EBA Weekly Prayer Focus: 25th June

Countess Free Church Ely

Located in the centre of the beautiful cathedral city of Ely for over 200 years is Countess Free Church. The church has been led for the past twelve years by Rev Karl Relton but he is moving on in July to a new pioneering opportunity in Leicestershire.

In addition to a busy and regular church programme on Sundays and weekdays, there are a lot of community activities taking place such as Foodbank, CAP, Recovery from Drugs and Alcohol, and chaplaincy in secondary schools. A new addition to the team is Cate



Allen as a Minister in Training. Cate is a member of the church and is now placed with Countess Free for training purposes. Her part-time placement role is to further the pioneering work of the Rich Tea Community, enabling the church to reach out and work with adults with learning disabilities.

Countess Free is very involved with events organized by the local Churches Together group and hopes to build on the success of the recent Coronation Street parties to develop ongoing opportunities for community outreach.

The church has about 80 members. There have been quite a lot of new members recently as people move to Ely from London and Cambridge and the large new housing developments surrounding the city. And there has been a steady number of baptisms taking place too. The church became a member of the EBA a few years ago. The elders and deacons are now preparing for a time of pastoral

vacancy.

Please pray for:

- Karl as he concludes his ministry at Countess Free and takes up his new role.
- For the church and the deacons as they move into a period of pastoral vacancy.
- For MIT Cate and her pioneering work among adults with learning disabilities.
- For all the different outreach activities of the church into the local community.

Don't forget What's Coming Up this Week

Prayer Meeting

Thursday 29th June at 7pm. Prayer is the life blood of the church and we encourage you to join us either in the Sanctuary.

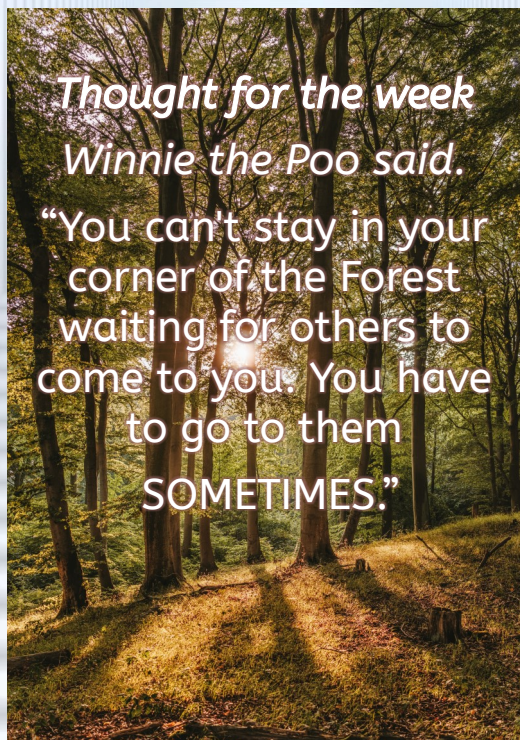
The Ladies Breakfast is on Saturday 1st July at 8.30am in the Stables. Breakfast includes cereal, Fruit

Juice, Pastries, Cooked Breakfast. The speaker will be Elaine. No fixed charge, but all donations are appreciated, all profits will go to a charity. Please contact Elaine on 07796 875785 or email Elainesmith364@btinternet.com for more info.

Shared Lunch

Sunday 2nd July at 12.30 – 2.30pm in the Stables or Church add your name on the poster at the back of the church. List of items needed is on prayer corner notice board. Please note in the space provided what your contribution will be.

Bethan & Gareth Shrubsoles are our visiting speakers and will also join us for lunch. Diana and Elaine will be coordinating the food arrangements so those of you able to contribute a food item please speak to them. For more information contact Diana on **07951949128**.



Fire Evacuation In the event of a fire everyone should make their way to the fire assembly point which is outside Trett Phillips Residential in the High Street. For more information speak to Daniel.

North Norfolk Foodbank

During June any of the following would be much appreciated:

Long Life Milk – full fat or semi-skimmed – Tinned Fruit – Tinned Meat – Tinned Vegetables – Tinned Tomatoes – Pasta Sauce – Rice Pudding – Biscuits – Pot Noodles/Mugshots – Squash – Cereal – Coffee – Plus any toiletries or household cleaning items

Please note that we cannot accept any fresh food or items that contain alcohol.

Citizens Advice Service in the Stables

The Citizens Advice Service is back in the Stables every Friday 1.15 to 3.00pm. To make an appointment contact Food Bank on 07826 376343.

Quotes of the Week

"When you ask God for a gift,
Be thankful if he sends,
Not diamonds, pearls or riches,
but the love of real true friends."

Helen Steiner Rice

"This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive.

Love is not possessive.

Love is not anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own ideas.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage.

Love is not touchy.

Love does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails.

Love knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that stands when all else has fallen."

Elisabeth Elliot

"A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"If you are reading this newsletter as a PDF or online you can click on the red highlighted links and you will be taken to the relevant websites.

The Church in England and Wales is changing shape – not declining

Is this narrative of decline actually true? Bible Society has found it isn't, for when we ask wider questions, we begin to see things rather differently, explains Mark Woods

As usual I enjoyed [the latest edition of Baptists Together magazine](#), which had some [inspiring stories](#) in it.

I did feel, however, that there was an underlying tone of gloom in the magazine, and a dogged determination to look on the bright side that was not entirely convincing. Celebrating flourishing oases of growth might provide a

temporary boost to morale, but when the wider narrative is one of increasing spiritual desertification, over the longer term this is the one that prevails. Not only Baptists are declining, but the Church is declining; the Census shows us that the country is steadily becoming less Christian; step by step, church closure by church closure, we are losing the spiritual battle, and all we can do is try to be faithful and trust that the climate will one day change again, and perhaps we might even live to see it.

This isn't an attractive proposition, particularly given the sheer hard work it takes to keep the average church show on the road – particularly, [as the recent Theos report indicates](#), during this cost-of-living crisis. But is this narrative of decline actually true?

Bible Society has found that it isn't.

First, the numbers. There are two ways of calculating church attendance. One is by counting people; the other is by asking them.



Back in 2018 Bible Society carried out a massive piece of research – using what we think is the largest ever sample size for this kind of poll – into the attitudes of people in England and Wales toward Christianity and the Bible, along with other questions around their behaviours and spiritual practices. We've repeated that survey at intervals since.

One of the questions was, 'How often do you go to church?' We found that around seven per cent of the population attend weekly, with one in ten attending at least monthly.

When we asked the same question last year, the answers were the same. In other words, while church attendance has (obviously) declined as a proportion of the population over the last few decades, it is not still declining.

How do we square that with the fall in membership and attendance figures to which Lynn Green alludes in [her leading article](#), and which could be echoed by the leader of any of the historic denominations? 'It's pretty bleak,' she says. Well, yes. But when we ask wider questions, we begin to see things rather differently.

It's these historic denominations – the CofE, Methodists, URC etc – which are by and large declining. They are also the ones that are very good at collecting statistics – ie counting people. But because they're declining, they are skewing the whole picture, which is far less gloomy.

There are parts of the Church that are growing, but they tend to be its newer expressions and – particularly – churches in minority ethnic communities, neither of which find their way into 'official' figures. For instance, our research shows that the number of Chinese Christians in England and Wales has increased by 25,000 in just the last two years; and a significant Durham University study, [New Churches in the North East](#), paints a picture of dynamism and growth in congregations outside the historic denominations, with major input from BME communities.

In terms of overall numbers, the Church in England and Wales is not declining. But it is changing shape, and

increasingly less white. However, when historic denominations extrapolate a narrative of inevitable decline from their own difficulties, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – who wants to take a cruise on a sinking ship? A more fruitful approach would be to learn from the (many) expressions of the Church where there's growth, and seek humble partnerships with the newer kids on the block.



happening.

More about Bible Society's research can be found on our [lumino.bible](https://www.lumino.bible) pages.

Image | Bible Society's Lumino Project

Mark Woods is a Baptist minister and head of

communications at Bible Society

The Good News From BMS World Mission

Can you believe it's already June?

No, nor can we (and neither can the changeable weather!) At least, that's until we look back and realise how much BMS World Mission supporters have achieved in the first six months of 2023, using your generosity and prayers to change the world.

After transforming a Nepali village last year through the *Good Land Harvest* appeal, you've continued to bring hope to Nepal. Anshu, Kaku and Hari can all trace back the [exact moments when their lives changed forever](#) as a result of BMS-supported healthcare – protecting and restoring them, and in Anshu's case, even saving her life.

You've also stood with people on the move, whether through [responding to the plight of Albanian migrants](#) with counter-cultural kindness, [remembering Syrian refugees](#) 12 years into the civil war, or lifting hundreds of prayers to God on the one-year anniversary of the Ukraine conflict.

And your radical desire to help didn't stop there. We were so excited to see lots of you engaging with BMS Creation Stewardship Co-ordinator Laura-Lee Lovering's [invitation to get involved with The Big One](#), a climate pilgrimage focussed on restoring the wrong that's been done to God's beautiful world. And in all of this, your commitment to sharing the good news of Jesus remained front and centre. From standing with churches in France and Uganda to [supporting young people following Christ in Cambodia and Palestine](#), your heart for the gospel has shone throughout the past six months.

We'd love for you to shout about the transformation you've made possible, whether it's sharing these good news stories in your church, with your friends and family, or just giving God praise in your personal prayers. You can find regular stories like these on [the Stories page of our website](#) every other week!

Every blessing,
Hannah Watson
BMS World Mission

For more information from BMS World Mission click [HERE](#)

For more information from Baptist Times click [HERE](#)

Second, that Census. Church attendance is one thing, but what about the underlying cultural currents, which seem to be set against Christian faith? [Bible Society reflected on the Census here](#). For the first time, fewer than half the population claimed to be Christian, and this provoked a fair amount of doom and gloom.

But again, that's very far from the whole story. For one thing, declining to identify as Christian is not the same as identifying as atheist, or as hostile to Christianity. Among other things it might mean that people are more aware of what being a Christian is and are no longer thoughtlessly ticking the 'Christian' box by default. As our head of research, Dr Rhiannon McAleer, remarks, 'It may be that people are less willing to wear a label that doesn't accurately describe them. It's not necessarily that they have lost a genuine and heart-felt faith.'

'There's also far more permission for people to admit that they don't identify as Christians; they don't have to claim a faith they don't actively hold in order to win social approval.'

As Baptists whose whole way of being church is based on actively opting in to faith, we should be delighted about this.

But also, to return to our huge survey: we found that as well as the 13 per cent who are committed to Christianity to some degree, just under a quarter of respondents belonged to a group that was curious about faith and open to finding out more about Christianity and the Bible. This is not by any means a negligible proportion of the population – and in fact, it rather neatly reflects the proportion of 'good soil' into which the sower sowed his seed in Jesus' parable (Matthew 13.1–9). And the proportion of those actively hostile to faith is clustered towards the far end of a very broad spectrum; most people are more indifferent to faith than dismissive of it.

Now, admittedly this is all big-picture stuff, which may not seem immediately relevant to the small church with a large and leaky building in the wrong place that can't afford ministry, or whose minister is struggling under the load of too many problems. The problems faced by the Baptist denomination and its churches – and others – are real. But there are grounds not only for theological hope, but for real-world confidence.

The Bible is relevant; the gospel is true; church can be attractive and life-giving; growth is not just possible, it is

