

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News

Sunday October 29th

This Sunday Barbara & Geoff are leading and Ron will continue the five-week sermon series from the Book of Jonah.

Reading from Jonah 3

This week's theme is "Shortest but greatest sermon ever"?

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

Acts 2:22f, Ex 34:6, Heb 13:8, Jer 18:7-8, Mt 12:38f, 2 Pet 3:9

For Your Prayers

We pray for Church Pastoral Group 8, please pray for: Annette Barks, Jenny Jackson, Linda Marsh, Stewart Marsh, Brenda Mitchell and Magda Nicholls. During November please pray for the residents of Lower Staithe Road, Albion Road, Old Market Road including Market Mews and Chapel Court.

We are moulded, each one of us, in the image of God, and within our souls there is a fingerprint none can erase.

We pray for those who have no regard for anyone but self, who put no value on human life.

For nations and individuals who abuse and kill.

We are not called to be judge or jury, but we are called to be agents of change, and if the butterfly that flaps its wings should be our attitude to others then so be it, Lord, and may the hurricane this generates somewhere within the world reach into the hearts and souls of those for whom we pray, and reveal to them how precious are those for whom they have no love, and how precious are they who now bring tears to the eyes of God.

God of wholeness, God of Grace, to you we bring our thanks and praise.

To a world that searches you are a lamp that shines,

to a world that is hungry you are food that sustains,

to a world that suffers you are hope of release,

to a world that's broken you are one who restores,

to a world full of hate you are love that forgives,

to a world that denies you are truth that endures.

To you we bring our thanks and praise,

God of wholeness, God of Grace. Two prayers by John Birch

Virtual WhatsApp Prayer Room

Friday 20th October Tim Manley posted "A number of folk in parts of the estate can't flush their loos and are at risk of flooding from the sewers as it appears Anglia Water are not pumping. One has (probably not really meaning it) asked for prayer for the rain to stop and Anglia to tum the pumps back on. Praying for any of you badly affected also."

Also on Friday Diana posted "Had my last treatment cycle this morning. Whey Hey. My side effects have got increasing worse since my 4th cycle. Talked to my Haematologist this morning and have been prescribed medication that hopefully will help and got some advice from the nurse and from my support group on how best to prevent and manage the worst of it. So prayers for that would be appreciated very much."

Saturday 21st October Jerry posted "Please continue praying for *David and Norma's Daughter-in-law Kirsty*.

Norma says,

"She is going into the hospital early tomorrow morning for some tests, which will help them confirm whether the diagnosis the doctors have thought is right or not. We spoke to her yesterday after we arrived back home to Essex, and she was very emotional. Our grandson Elijah is coming to stay with us overnight, and we're making some meals for them. Kirsty's parents are travelling to Essex tomorrow and will stay a few days."

Sunday 22nd October Jerry posted "From Norma: "Kirsty had her procedure done this morning. She is now back home, and she will see her consultant in November - so I'm not sure what they are going to suggest she does at this stage. But it looks more positive. Thanks for your prayers."

Tuesday 24th October Jerry posted "Please pray for *Sandra's cousin Jeane*,



Pastor: Rev. Ron Skivington

01692 582731

Assistant Pastor: Jerry Otieno

07733837687

Secretary: Diana Gordon 07951949128

Ministry Team: The Whole Fellowship

For your Diary

Monday 30th October

9.00am Deacons prayer meeting

10.00am to 11.30 in the Stables

Bible Study – Jesus and the Gospels

All welcome

10.30 to 11.30am in the Church

Prayers for SBC and young people

2 to 4pm Warm Space in the Stables

Tuesday 31st October

9.30am -12 Coffee and Chat in the

Stables

Wednesday 1st November

Table Tennis

9.30am to 12 in the Church

10-12pm Warm Space in the Stables

7.00pm Zoom Bible Study

All Welcome to join in

Contact Diana for details

Thursday 2nd November

10 to 12pm Warm Space in the Stables

Friday 3rd November

10.15 to 12.00pm Prayers for Revival &

Israel at Three Windows,

Brumstead Road

1.15 to 3pm Foodbank in Stables &

Citizens Advice Service

Saturday 4th November

8.30am Ladies Breakfast in the Stables

Sunday 5th November

10.45 Sunday Service

Welcome: Jean & Tom

Flowers: Susannah Pegg

Personal Prayer, Food Bank, & Citizens Advice

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.

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.

who had a fridge freezer fall on her and damaged the base of her spine. She is 93 years old and has been in hospital for three weeks. Please pray that the care plan the hospital is organising for her will be the best for her medical needs.”

Also, on Tuesday Tim posted “The lady was grateful for being prayed for. Please again pray for the rain to stop – today’s downpour has started the problem again.”

Bible Reading Blog

David is Anointed 1 Samuel 16: 5-13 (MSG)

⁵ “Nothing’s wrong. I’ve come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of GOD. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship.” He made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Here he is! GOD’s anointed!”

⁷ But GOD told Samuel, “Looks aren’t everything. Don’t be impressed with his looks and stature. I’ve already eliminated him. GOD judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; GOD looks into the heart.”

⁸ Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, “This man isn’t GOD’s choice either.”

⁹ Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, “No, this man isn’t either.”

¹⁰ Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, “GOD hasn’t chosen any of these.”

¹¹ Then he asked Jesse, “Is this it? Are there no more sons?”

“Well, yes, there’s the runt. But he’s out tending the sheep.”

Samuel ordered Jesse, “Go get him. We’re not moving from this spot until he’s here.”

¹² Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking.

GOD said, “Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one.”

¹³ Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of GOD entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life. Samuel left and went home to Ramah.

As Christians how easy is it to judge a book by its cover and miss the talents in people who could serve the Lord?

To listen to Jerry's short blog click [Jerry's Blog](#). Or go to www.stalhambaptist.org.uk/ and click on “Our Weekly Bible Commentary”

Warm Space Help Needed

We are intending to re-commence soup on our Thursday morning warm space slot. As we always need to have 2 people present because of safety we currently do not have sufficient volunteers to do this every week. Although the initiative was started because of the economic crisis and the difficulties households are having with heating costs and feeding themselves, there are many reasons why people come along to warm space. It can just be for companionship and a chat with a friendly face. Loneliness and mental ill health is a nationwide problem and we simply don't know what prompts a person to come along. But as a church following in the footsteps of Jesus we are here to serve. So if you feel you can give up a couple of hours on a Thursday to help out please talk



to Diana.

Norfolk Food Bank

During October any of the following would be much appreciated:

Tinned Meat, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Tomatoes, Squash/ Fruit Juice, Pasta Sauce, Jam, Long Life Milk, Cereal, plus any toiletries or household cleaning items and also reusable shopping bags.

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

Craft Fayre

We intend to have a Craft Fayre at Eureka, St John's Road. (Edna's house) on 7th and 8th December to raise funds for SBC. We will need artificial Christmas trees to cut up for making Christmas Wreaths and also Pinecones, Rose hips etc which can be passed on to Edna or Henry.

EBA Weekly Prayer : 29th October Focus Avenue Baptist Church

The newly-made city of Southend is home to a number of Baptist churches. One such fellowship is Avenue Baptist Church who are just a stone's throw from the Cliffs Pavilion, in Westcliff-on-Sea.

Rev Jane Guest has been the minister at Avenue for just over a year. She joins the fellowship having been Chaplain at Fair Haven and Little Havens Hospice and, prior to that, she worked at Leigh Beck Baptist Church on Canvey Island.

The church family at Avenue are working hard to reach out to their community. Recently, the fellowship officially opened their revamped Courtyard Garden with a legacy in memory of one of their members.

Part of their vision is that “children are our ‘heritage’ and this is seen in the growing numbers attending the Superstars Sunday children’s activity. During the course of the three day Summer Fun event, over 100 Mums and children attended, taking part in cooking, eating, craft and fun!

After prayer they have recently started a Day Care for Avenue Seniors. It has been well received and is a happy place.

With new members, and an upcoming baptismal service, Avenue is a busy fellowship!

Please pray:

- For God’s person to apply to become the new Outreach Worker.
- For Jesus to build His Church. Give thanks to God for all that is being established in Avenue Baptist Church.

Quotes of the Week

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

“There's never been a true war that wasn't fought between two sets of people who were certain they were in the right. The really dangerous people believe they are doing whatever they are doing solely and only because it

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.

is without question the right thing to do. And that is what makes them dangerous.”

Neil Gaiman, American Gods

“I am young, I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, and fatuous superficiality cast over an abyss of sorrow. I see how peoples are set against one another, and in silence, unknowingly, foolishly, obediently, innocently slay one another.”

Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front

“Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.”

Martin Luther King

4 ¹⁻² Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it.

^{2- 3} You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way. James 4:1-3 (MSG)

Israel, Hamas, and theological responsibility

The recent atrocities perpetrated by Hamas and Israel have rightly provoked theological reflection in many places. But great caution and wisdom is needed in order to avoid fuelling the conflict further, writes Helen Paynter

The bloody violence that erupted out of Gaza on 7 October 2023 was evil and utterly unjustifiable. The bloody violence that has been perpetrated by the nation of Israel against the Palestinian people since the 1948 Nakba has been evil and utterly unjustifiable.

Comment and opinion pieces since the outbreak of the fresh hostilities have commonly sought to pit one of these atrocities against the other, in terms of severity, cause, or justifiability. It is unhelpful to do so. Evil is not a quality found on one side alone. Violence does not justify violence. Calling one side's actions evil does not (should not) equate to the endorsement of the other side. Suffering is not a competition sport. Sympathy for the victims of violence is not a zero-sum game. We must be aware of those waiting in the wings who seek to instrumentalise these stories for their own ends. They are [the antisemites](#) who crawl out of the woodwork whenever they find a pretext. They are [the Islamophobes](#) whose hatred has also found renewed expression. They are [those pushing an unconditional pro-Israel stance](#), which endorses an aggressive war where vastly superior military force is brought to bear upon a population that is 50 per cent children. They are [the political actors beyond Israel-Palestine](#) who are promoting their own ends and would like nothing better than to stir up a proxy war. (Of course, it is nothing new that powers beyond that small strip of land have sought to control and manipulate it for their own ends. That goes back at least as far as the Babylonian Empire.)

All of these complexities should curb our instincts to rush to comment. They should lead us to scrutinise what we have written before publishing it, double-checking whether anything we have said might be interpreted as a commendation of violence or oppression. This goes for political commentators, protestors – and theologians.

The Bible has much to say about violence. It lays bare the human tendency to distorted desire and imitative rivalry which

is the root of most of the violence in the world. It exposes the cycles of shame which further fuel violent action. It unflinchingly recounts the brutality of violence in the world, and testifies to God's patience with humanity, and his unflinching commitment to restore shalom. It bears witness to the non-violent life and death of Jesus Christ, and anticipates the eschatological shalom which his death and resurrection inaugurate.[2]

But incautious use of isolated texts or decontextualised themes can be dangerous.

Yes, [the Amalekites](#) – ancient enemies of God's covenant people, [slated for annihilation](#) – are exemplars in Scripture of those who violently assault the weak and defenceless. But [to equate them to the activities of one actor](#) in the present conflict might lead the reader to assume that the other actor finds itself represented in the story of ancient Israel. That theology has been employed for great harm, by those who have promoted the displacement of Palestinian people and supported the settling of Jews on their homeland, all in the name of God.

Yes, the psalms invite us to pray urgently against all evil:[3] to entreat God to 'break the fangs' of those whose

(metaphorical) teeth are tearing apart the innocent ([Ps 58:6](#)). But the cursing of evil can never be a focussed thing. It must begin with the evil in our own hearts (e.g. [Ps 139:19-24](#)), and it must equally confront evil on both sides of a conflict. To invoke these imprecatory psalms with relation to the violence of Hamas only disregards – and encourages others to disregard – the preceding and responsive violence of the Israeli government.

Yes, the Old Testament refers to the people of God as 'Israel' – though the name is also used for a man, a land, and the northern ten tribes after the division of the nation. To equate the modern nation of Israel with the ancient people of the same name is to eviscerate the Christ-event of its meaning.

[4] To refer to biblical (Old Testament) Israel alongside reference to a contemporary nation-state that bears the same name is dangerous to the point of negligence, in this highly charged political context. To do so alongside comparison of Hamas to the Amalekites (whose fate, remember, was total destruction) is reckless. This is – at best – irresponsible theology.

Telling half a truth can be an untruth. Criticising one side of a bilaterally aggressive war can be dangerous. The incautious use of even true and good theological themes can be harmful. The Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence stands against the wilful or careless use of Scripture to promote violence. We condemn all aggressive violence, especially when it is perpetrated against non-combatants such as [the 260 festival-goers massacred in Re'im](#) on 7 October and [the thousand children killed in Gaza](#) since that date. We call for Hamas and Israel to de-escalate their violence, and for the international community to promote such a de-escalation. We call for peace with justice in the Holy Land. And we call our fellow-theologians to avoid adding fuel to the fire. In June of 2023, the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence co-hosted a theological conference with Bethlehem Bible College's Christ at the Checkpoint. The videos from this conference *Let Justice Roll: Scripture and Power in Palestine* are available [here](#).

The Revd Dr Helen Paynter is founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence (CSBV).

Oh Lord, have mercy!

It might be helpful to pull together some of the voices in the Bible about war to see what kind of perspective they give us, writes Colin Sedgwick .



The Lord Almighty... makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says: 'Be still and know that I am God...' Psalm 46:9-10

Oh, how one's heart sinks! Surely not another war! We've got used to what's going on in Ukraine. We thought it might last days or possibly weeks; but it's running into years and there is still no end in sight. And now renewed conflict in the so-called "Holy Land", right out of nowhere, and the familiar, distressing statistics... so many dead, so many injured, so many missing. Not to mention grim facts that can't be quantified: the increased intensity of hatred and the burning desire for vengeance in people's hearts on both sides. Oh, Lord...!

If we are Christians we naturally ask the question "What can we do?", to which there is no simple answer. Pray, of course; that goes without saying. But somehow – even if wrongly - it seems such a feeble response.

See what light we can gain from the Bible, which has much to say about war? Yes; but even there it seems to speak with mixed voices. No wonder many people, including Christians, find themselves slipping into hopelessness and even despair. But it might be helpful to pull together some of those voices to see what kind of perspective they give us.

The voice of Jesus, of course, is paramount: "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars"; but he then goes on to tell his followers not to be "alarmed" (Matthew 24:6).

These words reassure us that he is Lord of all, that nothing happens outside God's ultimate control. There is indeed real comfort there – but let's be honest and recognise that it can seem pretty cold comfort. Who would want to preach a sermon on that verse to a congregation today in Jerusalem or Gaza city? How would it be possible to avoid a hollow ring? One thing we mustn't do is to read Matthew 24 and respond inwardly with, "Oh, so that's all right then. Jesus saw it coming and tells us not to give in to anxiety". Yes, Jesus *did* see it coming, and his words *do* offer reassurance; but to individual men and women and to boys and girls caught up in the horrors of bombs and shells, collapsed and burning buildings, and dead and mangled bodies in the streets, to those poor people something more than words is needed, even the words of Jesus.

Perhaps this is a prompt to focus prayer on those who are genuinely working to provide that "something more" - that they will see what that means in practice, and be given the means to provide it. On the radio I heard two people speaking, one Palestinian and one Israeli, both of them parents of children killed in previous atrocities. They work together for an organisation determined to find a measure of reconciliation between the warring factions. Let's pray for them and others like them.

In general, of course, the Bible sees war as an evil. The psalmist plaintively laments its prevalence in his day and place: "Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war" (120:5-7). Isn't that the authentic voice of the ordinary people who, suffering

terribly, just long to "get on with their lives"?

There has never been a time in human history when war has not been part and parcel of life. I still find it slightly startling every time I read 2 Samuel 11:1, which speaks of "the spring, *the time when kings go off to war*". It almost seems that just as we speak of "the holiday season", so in the ancient world they had a corresponding "war season"! It's just what they did.

The very existence of Israel as a nation depended on being victorious in war. How else would they survive? That didn't make it *right*, but simply a fact of life. And that is what explains to at least some extent those uncomfortable passages where God - the God of peace - actually *commands* war, and why Psalm 144, for example (traditionally ascribed to David), celebrates God as "the Lord my rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle".

Not to mention those episodes where God commands what today we would see as genocide or massacre, such as Joshua 11:16-21 (which includes that terrible word "exterminate"). I doubt if those words get read very often in church! It's as if God adapts himself to the ways of sinful humankind in order to bring about his purpose of fashioning a viable nation, while at the same time using war as a form of judgment.

Other passages tell us that, terrible though war is, it is only for a time. Micah 4, paralleled in Isaiah 2, holds out a vision when "all nations" will stream to a new Jerusalem. We are given the wonderful prospect (take time, please, to soak this up!) of armies "beating their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks", when "nation will not take up sword against nation, nor... train for war any more", when "everyone will sit under their own vine and their own fig-tree, and no-one will make them afraid".

That's desperately hard to imagine in times like the present. But come it will, come it will! If not, the Bible is unreliable and Christianity itself a cruel lie.

Those prophecies will be finally fulfilled in Christ, the Prince of Peace. It is of him, ultimately, that it is said: "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, 'Be still and know that I am God'..."

It takes faith to believe in that. But if we know the love and grace of God in other areas of our lives, why should we doubt him in this one? Lord, have mercy!

Lord God, help me to believe these promises – and, until they come true, to work day by day to be a peace-maker in my own little world, following the example of Jesus himself. Please look with compassion on all people who are currently caught up in the horrors of war. And please bless and give success to all those movements and agencies that are committed to working for peace in our troubled, groaning world. Lord, have mercy! Amen.

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

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