

Stalham Baptist Church Weekly News



Sunday December 10th The Second Sunday in Advent
This Sunday Barbara and Geoff are leading and Ron is continuing the sermon series "The Characters of Christmas"

This Sunday "Joseph"

Reading Matthew 1:18-25

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

Deut 22:23f, 1 Sam 7, Jn 2:1f

For Your Prayers

We pray for Church Pastoral Group 6, please pray for: **John Higgs, Tanya Diggins, Hilary Hinton, David Ash, Edna Woolsey, Eiddwen Brace and Steve Slade.** During December please pray for the residents of **Upper Staithe Road and Millside.**

Prayers for Advent

1. **Candle of Hope** - "O God, as we light the first candle of Advent, may the flame remind us of the hope we have in Christ. Amen."
2. **Candle of Peace** - "Gracious God, as we light the second candle, fill our hearts with the peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen."
3. **Candle of Joy** - "Heavenly Father, with joy, we light the third candle, anticipating the joy that comes from your salvation. Amen."
4. **Candle of Love** - "Loving God, as we light the fourth candle, may the flame symbolize the love you have poured into the world through your Son. Amen."

As we light the Advent candles Lord bring us together in unity that our praise, worship and carols might echo in the walls of our church and throughout the community, especially as Carols are sung in the Swan Inn reminiscent of the way Jesus's birth has been celebrated over hundreds of years in public houses.

Christians in Parliament

Christians in Parliament is an All-Party Parliamentary Group, which exists to support all Members and staff in their work in the Houses of Parliament. They do this through:

- Bible study and prayer groups, one-to-one contact and chapel services.
 - Speaker events and discussion groups examining the truth and relevance of the Christian faith to personal and political life.
 - Policy discussions and briefings informed by the Bible and Christian theology.
- Please pray for the Christians in Parliament. Please pray that their faith may be strengthened in these difficult times and that they will be given more wisdom and discernment as they have important decisions to make, not only leading up to Christmas but also in the new year.

www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/

Virtual WhatsApp Prayer Room

Monday 4th December Victoria posted "Please pray for Poppy. She is at home today poorly after having a high temperature yesterday eve of 39.5 and disappointedly woke up this morning with swollen eyes leaking protein at the highest level of 4+. This is either caused by whatever virus she has or is just a coincidence and as so high she could have been leaking protein for longer but we didn't know (we don't check very regularly anymore as she's been off treatment since July 2022).

Please pray she doesn't relapse and has to start treatment again and please pray I hear back from either her consultant or her specialist today about the plan of what happens next. Thank you xx"

On the same day Suzanna posted. "Thank you so much for all your prayers so far. We arrived at Thailand safely and visited my father in hospital. Please pray for him, he wanted to come back home so we brought him back today. He has dysphagia which means swallowing anything is difficult for him. Also, when God is willing to take him back, please pray that he goes with God peacefully. 🙏"

For your Diary

Monday 11th December

- 9.00am Deacons Prayer Meeting
- Prayers for SBC and young people
- 10.30 to 11.30am in the Church
- 1.00pm Stables School Rehearsal
- 2 to 4pm Warm Space in the Stables

Tuesday 12th December

- 9.30am -12 Coffee and Chat in the Stables
- 7pm Bible Study at Geoff and Barbara's Acts and the church.
- Everyone welcome

Wednesday 13th December

- No Table Tennis
- 9.00am Academy School Rehearsal in the Church
- 10-12pm Warm Space in the Stables
- 7.00pm Zoom Bible Study
- Contact Diana for details

Thursday 14th December

- 9.00am Academy Christmas Production in the Church
- 10 to 12pm Warm Space in the Stables

Friday 15th December

- 10.15 to 12.00pm Prayers for Revival & Israel at Three Windows, Brumstead Road
- 1.00pm Stables School Production
- 1.15 to 3pm Foodbank in Stables & Citizens Advice Service

Saturday 16th December

- 8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Stables
- 2.00pm Bereavement Memorial Service in the Church

Sunday 17th December

- 10.45 Sunday Service
- Welcome: Jean & Tom
- Flowers: Christmas Flowers
- 4.00pm Candlelight Carol Service In the church

Thursday 21st December

- 3.15 to 5pm MESSY CHRISTMAS in the Church
- All welcome.

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

Tuesday 5th December Suzanna posted "Thank you much for all your prayers, my father died peacefully this morning at 10:27 am."

Also, on Tuesday Victoria posted. "Thank you for your prayers for Poppy. It's been a long couple of days with a very poorly Poppy, and we have been in hospital all day today. She's very happy to be home now. Unfortunately, she has relapsed from her Nephrotic Syndrome and restarts her treatment tomorrow. She also has 10 days of antibiotics to fight whatever infection she has. Please continue to pray for Poppy. High dose steroids come with their side effects and aren't ideal for a little girl navigating their first year at high school. In the past, too, this treatment caused a bone to die in her foot. Please pray she responds quickly to the treatment, with limited side effects and for the kindness of others. Thank you xx"

Wednesday 6th December June White posted "Could you pray for our friend Julie who goes to table tennis she struggles with nerve pain in her back which they are not sure why, may the latest treatment work thanks June."

Jerry's Bible Reading Blog Romans 6: 1-14 When Death Becomes Life (MSG)

6¹⁻³ So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

3³⁻⁵ That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

6⁶⁻¹¹ Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer captive to sin's demands! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

12¹²⁻¹⁴ That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

As Christians how easy is it to be drawn away and be tempted by the things we did before we met Jesus?

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"

Christmas Cards

If you'd like to write a Christmas card to the fellowship at SBC there is a scrapbook at the back of the church for you to stick it into. Your good wishes can then be appreciated by us all and the book can be taken to members of the congregation who are not now able to attend in person. [This was something that happened in the past.]

Although there is no need to do so some may like to give a donation to church funds or a charity in lieu of buying and writing lots of cards.

Candlelight Services

Sunday 17th at 4.00pm all welcome followed by tea and coffee in the Stables. The collection will be shared by Tearfund Middle East Emergency Appeal and Norwich Homeless Support.

The Norwich Homeless Support Charity says "We reach out to the 'most vulnerable' citizens of society, helping & assisting with major needs. We provide a wide range of services, including, shelter on our coach, signposting, referrals, food provision and 1-1 support. The list is endless." www.norwichhomelessupport.co.uk/

Middle East Emergency Appeal: how you can help today

Right now, thousands of people in Gaza and Israel and the wider region are experiencing devastating loss, trauma, and overwhelming need. The situation continues to worsen on a daily basis, increasing the number of people being displaced from their homes.

Tearfund is working with local churches and partners to support their preparations and help them respond to the needs of people across the region.

Your help can make a difference. Please give if you can and join us in praying for the lives that have been ruined by the unfolding crisis.

www.tearfund.org/campaigns/middle-east-emergency-appeal

Christmas Carols at the Swan

Join us in the Swan Inn High Street Stalham for Christmas Carols Monday December 18th at 7.00pm. The Swan Inn has held a Christmas Carol evening with SBC since 2015. Carols started in pubs and weren't sung in churches until the late 1800's.

The evenings have been a great success over the years so come and join us.

Food Bank

During December 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.

EBA Weekly Prayer Focus 10th December Belle Vue Baptist Church

Belle Vue Baptist Church is located in Southchurch, just to the east of Southend city centre. The church has been led for the past thirteen years by Rev Andy Goodliff who has



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.

recently gone part time. The church has been able to appoint Jeanette Pool as a Families and Community worker.

The church has a regular Sunday congregation of about 80 who are mainly drawn from the surrounding area. Many people have been associated with the church for a long time. There is an excellent sense of fellowship and a strong programme of outreach into the local community which includes:

- The well-attended Centre Café with play space which meets every Tuesday for all ages, from the youngest to the oldest to come and chat, play, and enjoy refreshments.
- In the past year a weekly Renew Wellbeing space has opened for shared activities, to talk and to pray. It encourages good habits in mental and emotional wellbeing.
- There are over 100 boys and girls aged between five and eighteen who are part of the flourishing Boys Brigade company.
- The church was a founder partner of Southend Foodbank which has just celebrated its tenth anniversary. There is a weekly distribution centre at Belle Vue and the food storage warehouse facility is hosted at the church.

Once a month there is a shorter service on a Sunday which is then followed by messy church (pictured).

Belle Vue is already a Bronze Eco church and is working towards silver status.

When not at the church Rev Dr Andy Goodliff is a lecturer in Baptist History and Theology at Regent's Park College in Oxford.

Please pray:

- For all the activities taking place at the church and those who are reached by them.
- That new people will come to faith and get to know Jesus as their own saviour.
- For the church leadership team and wisdom in taking the church forward.

Quotes of the Week

Joseph was an unlikely choice to be the earthly father of Jesus. There was nothing about him on the surface that would have prompted any of us to consider him worthy. And yet, no other man in history has been charged with the tremendous responsibility he was given. He wasn't randomly chosen by God. He wasn't chosen simply because he and Mary were engaged to be married. He was, most definitely, not an after-thought or a footnote. He and Mary were betrothed because God had chosen them both and ordered their steps accordingly from before the beginning of time. God had been at work in Joseph's life long before he ever knew the events that would unfold in his life. God carefully moulded and shaped Joseph into the man to whom He could entrust this special assignment.

Kenneth Winter

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.

Time to listen to one of history's most important women

In our reading and telling of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ, Mary's point of view is seldom considered - yet she had some voice, writes Amy Orr-Ewing

In the run-up to Christmas, there is a peculiar amount of work to be done that might fall into the category of "physical and emotional labor." This is the endless, unseen work of caring that generally, if not exclusively, often falls to women. Despite all the advances in opportunity and equality in our society, women appear to carry the brunt of domestic and emotional labour. At Christmas time, it would be all too easy to exhaust ourselves further after the work, turmoil, trauma, and anxiety of the year that has just passed.

Centring a woman's perspective at Christmas is about far more than empathising with the eye-watering feats of planning that go into pulling off seasonal festivities. Paying heed to a woman's viewpoint is necessary if we are going to truly celebrate Christmas, because the central character of the Christmas story, other than the baby Jesus, is a woman called Mary.

At Christmas time we remember that an ordinary, young, poor, oppressed woman was chosen to play a significant, and break through role in the redemption of the world. Evil would be crushed and defeated through her seed. Her body was to play a part in showing the world that Jesus really is Emmanuel—*God with us*. Her theological insights and reactions are recorded for us in the New Testament.

By positioning Mary in this way, the New Testament is unlike any document of the era. We can see what kind of person is invited to be a gospel witness, a teacher of profound theology and an example of simple, humble faith. It is no mistake that a woman gets to be a part of all this, and that her voice, her questions, her fears, her actions and her obedience matter.

We first encounter Mary as a young unmarried teenager, but for many of us she remains fixed in our imaginations as a remote "other worldly" figure, with the faint glimmer of a smile talking to an angel or holding a baby. Held up by some as the unattainable ideal of purity or the example of perfect motherhood, Mary is a distant figure for us in our busy lives in this technological age.

In our reading and telling of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ, Mary's point of view is seldom considered. In the many re-enactments of the nativity story around Christmas time Mary is usually a mute figure, saying nothing as the story of the journey to Bethlehem, the search for accommodation and the birth of the child surrounded by animals, unfolds.

We may be familiar with the star of Bethlehem, the manger as a cradle, the shepherds, the angels and the visit of the Magi. Portrayals of the nativity abound, but amidst it all Mary is a passive and silent figure. I once played the role of Mary in a school play and for the entire

show I did not utter a word.

Yet Mary is described in Luke's gospel as a woman who exercised choice, questioned things, reflected, responded, spoke up and demonstrated great faith. Mary had a voice. I can remember exactly where I was when I was first truly struck by Mary's voice. I had slipped into a pew in one of Britain's most beautiful Cathedrals on a Wednesday at dusk for evensong. I was chilled to the bone in the moment of the service when the choir sang the words of Mary's Magnificat recorded for us in Luke's gospel: *'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.'*

I had spent that day sitting in the public gallery of a court supporting someone who was giving evidence in a criminal trial concerning childhood abuse. Mary's words expressing hope on behalf of the poor, the humble and the powerless felt especially meaningful that evening in the aftermath of the horrors of trauma recounted.

Until this point, Mary had been a somewhat remote figure for me. A woman often depicted wearing blue clothing in paintings, idealised as the perfect mother of a cherubic baby. Mary was stuck in my mind in suspended animation in the early stages of her motherhood, holding a baby and remembered each year as a rather remote figure when Christmas rolled around.

Yet here was Mary's voice, her actual words recorded in Luke's gospel, prophesying about what Jesus had come to do, identifying Jesus as God, Lord, and the source of justice and mercy in this world.

Mary had offered theological insights and shared her unique perspective on the person of Jesus Christ. Her front row seat on history had somehow passed me by. But I realised in that moment that Mary's voice is worth listening to.

As we enter the Advent season and once again take the opportunity to contemplate the coming of Christ, may I encourage you to listen to the spoken words of Mary recorded in the Bible. This teenage woman is filled with the Holy Spirit and the words of the Magnificat pour out of her, pointing us to the Messiah Jesus, her son and declaring what He has come to do.

Mary testifies of her faith about who Jesus is going to be and her anointing by the Holy Spirit is observable through her witness. May this also be said of us this Christmas.

Dr Amy Orr-Ewing is an international speaker, theologian, and apologist. She is the author of multiple books, including *Mary's Voice - Advent Reflections to Contemplate the Coming of Christ*

<https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/>

'Incredibly challenging - but tangibly showing Christ's love'

Baptists at the heart of the Israel-Hamas war have been sharing their anguish and grief at the situation unfolding before them, how they are helping support those affected - and their prayers for a brighter future

Bader Mansour, Development Officer of the [Association of Baptist Churches in Israel](#) (ABC), said the past few weeks 'have been incredibly challenging' in his latest email. He thanked people for their unwavering support in prayer, describing how 'these messages from distant lands have been like cold water to a weary soul.'

Baptist churches in Israel have been holding continuous

prayer meetings and in the midst of sorrow and anxiety, he continued, 'we are spreading the message of God's love to those who are hurting.' ABC has established a relief fund to assist those affected by the war. These funds are distributed through its ministries and member churches, and in collaboration with partner ministries operating in restricted areas.

Gaza Baptist Church is one of just three churches in Gaza, and the only Protestant church. It is based in Gaza City in the north of the country and is vulnerable due to its proximity to the main police station which can be a potential target. Gaza Christian families were forced to evacuate their homes, and have sought refuge in St. Porphyrius (the Greek Orthodox Church) and the Holy Family Catholic Church.

[Christianity Today](#) documents the anguish of Hanna Maher, who pastored the Baptist church from 2012-2020, and his wife and three children. He is stuck in Egypt having travelled there to seek denominational partnerships prior to the war and is now unable to return; wife Janet and their children are trapped in Gaza existing on one meal a day and sheltering at the St. Porphyrius Orthodox Church alongside several hundred others.

On 19 October an Israeli air strike, targeting a Hamas command centre nearby, resulted in the deaths of 20 people taking shelter there, including 18 Christians.

Among them were Janet's cousin, one of her close friends, the sister of an elder in the Baptist church, the Baptist librarian, his wife and granddaughter, and three children who regularly attended the Baptist Sunday school.

Before the bombing, Janet had been reading the Bible and praying with many.

'She was encouraging others in the shelter,' Hanna Maher said. 'Now she needs someone to encourage her.'

The Christianity Today piece ends with Hanna Maher sharing a message to remember with empathy all children killed in the conflict so far.

The people in Gaza and Israel continue to suffer, hate, and seek revenge. In this atmosphere we at Nazareth Evangelical College insist on the Gospel and on teaching our students to create a better future for both Palestinians and Jews. A future that is marked with dignity, mercy, justice, peace, and love.

'Although this message sounds acceptable to many, it is in fact a radically prophetic message during this season.'

'Therefore, we ask you to pray for us in the following way:

- May God grant us the courage to love even if it hurts.
- May God protect our community and help us to be peace makers.
- May God grant wisdom to our leaders to preserve life and dignity for all people.
- May we continue to train and empower both men and women to be peace makers and followers of the King of Peace despite all the challenges.
- For all of those who are suffering and those who have lost their loved ones.
- 'Thank you for your continued love and support in spreading God's Kingdom in this land.'

You can read the entire article by clicking

https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/675978/Incredibly_challenging_but.aspx