

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church
March 2021
News



Minister:

Rev. Sonya Setchell

01823 490975

07485 004486

Secretary:

Tim Spotswood

01823 490142

www.ssgbaptist.com



From Sonya

I wonder how you are thinking of marking the season of Lent this year? Some people choose to give something up for Lent – for example, giving up chocolate or social media. Self-discipline and self-control are important in the Christian life, so giving up something can be a spiritual practice and can lead us closer to God if that is our motive in doing it.



In recent years, there has been a move towards taking something up for Lent, for example, supporting a charity or doing generous acts. I know that this year, some of our church are going to be looking at art which depicts Lenten themes and seeking to allow God to speak to them through it and to connect to each other by speaking on the phone. Over the last few years, Ian and I have tended to choose a Lent book and read a section of it every day together during Lent.

Whether you are choosing to give something up for Lent or to take something up, may I encourage you to choose to open yourself up to God during this season. Take time to be in God's presence, maybe while out walking. Listen to what God is saying to you. Allow God to comfort and strengthen you during this challenging time. Be open to any opportunities which God brings for you to be a blessing to someone around you. And remember that Easter is coming with all the hope which that brings.

May you experience God's blessings during this season,

Sonya

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all Your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. *Proverbs 3:5-6*

Front cover: Man on a bench – Bruton.

From the Deacons

We spent some time thinking and praying about pastoral concerns. So many people have suffered the death of a close relative or have been struggling with ill health.

Easter will be different this year as we plan to hold services remotely or out of doors. However, just because things have to be different doesn't mean they will be worse and being forced to rethink what we traditionally do can be a good thing. More details nearer the time.

We reviewed our fees as we usually do once a year. We also thought about our finance strategy, which was discussed at the church meeting. All members will be receiving a letter from the deacons. If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us. A year has gone by and it's time to renew our Zoom account. We think that this way of doing business may be with us for some time to come and for some meetings there are benefits to not having to go out on a cold February night.

Adrian Male has completed the Quinquennial Inspection and recommended that we mend the loose slates, clean the gutters and downpipes as soon as possible.

Sonya organised Messy Church bags which went out to 7 families and were gratefully received. She plans to do some more for Easter so please contact her if you'd like one. She has also sourced some Easter booklets for families. The Open the Book team have been making videos for the school assemblies. These have been cleverly done and were popular with the children.

Finally – do think about signing up to Easyfundraising: This is a simple way of raising money for the church:

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church needs your help! Sign up to easyfundraising & raise FREE donations every time you shop online with over 4,300 retailers. John Lewis, Argos, Uswitch, eBay and many more are waiting to give a free donation. Plus once you've signed up and raised £5 in donations, easyfundraising will give us an extra £5 bonus donation!

Sign up to support us here

– <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/w54eif/>

Fairtrade Fortnight



22nd February – 7th March

The pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally. Fairtrade Fortnight 2021 highlights the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the

communities Fairtrade works with. The facts are straightforward.

Farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected by it. Low prices for their crops mean they are struggling to fight back.

This fortnight we are being asked to “Choose the world you want”.

There is an online festival and resources to help us to spread the word. www.fairtrade.org.uk and www.traidcraft.co.uk give more details about their campaigns and what you can do as a consumer to make the world a fairer place.

BMS World Mission publishes a prayer guide available online or it can be posted to you. For the week 7 – 13 March we are being asked to pray for creation stewardship - “BMS is exploring new ways of working and living as worthy stewards of God’s creation. Pray that we might be bold and creative in these endeavours.”

Following the BMS Annual Day of Prayer at the end of January we took up an offering which, including Gift Aid, raised over £1000! Many thanks to everyone who contributed so generously to this vital work.

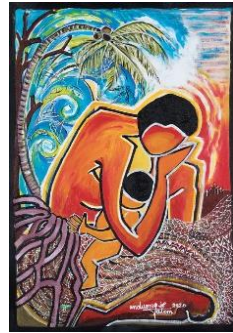


Celebrating birthdays this month are Tim Spotswood on the 4th and Dianne Callaghan and Alison Katte, both on 17th. Our love and best wishes on your special day!

Also this month we pray for the BMS’ work in Mozambique covering many areas with their partners on the ground: agricultural projects, pre-school education, legal advocacy and sewing groups, (praise God that they sewed 31,000 face masks for Covid 19 relief work in 2020).

World Day of Prayer – Friday 5th March

This year's service has been compiled by the women of Vanuatu and the theme is "Build on a firm foundation". There will not be a joint service for the World Day of Prayer in Stoke and North Curry until later in the year. There may be other services nearby or you could watch a service being livestreamed. Details are available on the website: www.wwdp.org.uk.



Easter Services



This year, Anne Coate is working on an Easter display which will be erected outside the church building on the corner where the bench is. It will consist of a 6-foot-high metal framed cross with willow strung across it alongside an Easter garden. We will be encouraging people from the church and the local community to write a word or two representing their fears and/or griefs and we will attach them to the cross on Good Friday, knowing that Jesus cares and understands what it is like to suffer. We can safely give all our baggage to Him.

On a separate card, we would like people to write a word or two representing their hopes and/or joys. We will attach these to the cross on Easter Sunday, knowing that because Jesus rose from the dead, we have hope. We will also be adding flowers to the cross on Easter Sunday representing new life. If you would like to make a contribution, please either send electronically to Sonya's email address, or collect 2 cards to write on and then drop them into Sonya's letterbox ready to be put up. Exact details yet to be finalised. More information will be available soon.

Zoom zoom

For those without computers or poor broadband connections this has been a time of frustration and feeling increasingly isolated. However, if you can get online there is a new opportunity to visit a variety of services in different locations.



The first virtual service I attended was a Baptist Church in Exeter. The minister was in his sitting room and listening to his sermon was like having a friend in my kitchen explaining the bible passage. For the next two Sundays I went to Taunton Baptist Church. Several of their elders and deacons have been to take services here in Stoke and I felt among friends. Their services are by Zoom, the link is easily available on their website, and comes from the church itself where the minister and his wife hosted the service. At the end they have 'breakout rooms' where 5 – 6 of the congregation can exchange news. The hot topic is vaccines – who's had them and who hasn't. One elderly lady said she had one booked at the Racecourse. Immediately another member offered to take her there.

On Plough Sunday the FCN (Farm Community Network) hosted an evening service. Someone had put a lot of work into this production with the words of the prayers and hymns scrolling down the side of the screen and lots of pictures, mainly of ploughs. Rob Walrond, the diocesan agricultural chaplain spoke about ploughing a straight furrow in a way that his audience of farmers could easily relate to. Another slick production came from Wells cathedral. This service was livestreamed so one can listen to it at any time of day. Anglicans definitely have the best tunes – familiar hymns were played, the words displayed on screen with appropriate scenes from around the cathedral.

A more homely service came from the parish church. There was a good turnout from around the benefice eager to see their new minister in action. It was also good to see the inside of the parish church and hear Steve Loveridge play the organ. We are all on mute while we sing hymns but the prayers are communal. We all finished the Creed at different times – a bit like children singing a round. My only gripe is people who don't use their video link. It must be very disconcerting for the minister to preach to a row of black blobs.

Wherever you choose to worship on Sunday we are all still part of the "company of heaven". Happy zooming.

Liz H

For our Prayers

David and Judith Hincks
Irene and Ron Browning
Lys Kellett
Mike and Kath Long, Rory,
Toby and Harry
Alison Mellors, Betsy and Emily
Our schools, pupils, teachers
and parents.



Sadly there are a number of families grieving in our church family and our immediate community:

Kathy Davidson's dad, Eric Manning died suddenly on 27 January in Chelmsford. He was 96. Some members may remember Eric and his wife coming to our church several years ago. Our thoughts and prayers are with Kathy and Mike, Kathy's brother John and their families.

We are sorry to hear that Joan Sparkes died on 8 February at the great age of 98. She enjoyed being part of Lunch Club from the beginning of 2015 when Joslyn, her daughter, negotiated obstacles as she wheeled Joan to a table where she joined three other nonagenarians. Our love and prayers are with Joslyn and Paul and the rest of the family.

Our love and prayers are with the Kellie family following the death of Keith who died on 14 February; his wife Mary, daughters, Mandy and Anne, grandson Ronan and their families.

Ronald Gadsby died at home on 18 February lovingly cared for by Freda and their daughters Anne and Christine. The family has a long association with SSGBC. Our prayers are with Freda, Anne, Christine and Chris and the wider family.

Mrs Morgan of Athelney Farm has died aged 105.

We continue to pray for all stretched medical teams and those in their care and families known to us with on-going medical concerns.

We give thanks that David Akerman is slowly recovering from Covid and continue to pray for the rest of the family, especially their daughter, Catherine, who is still poorly.

We give thanks for the speedy rollout of the vaccination. Many of us have had our first jab.

Chris Fry

Anyone who has held office in a church over the last few years will probably have spoken to Chris at some point. She has been a kind friend and helper, source of wisdom and advice – more than her official job title ‘Operations Manager’, suggests. Mike Law of the SWBA trustees writes:



“Chris has accepted a call to be the Minister of Barton Baptist Church, Torquay. We are delighted that God has made clear his new plans for Chris and pray for his blessing on her, her family and the church at Barton. We are sad to be losing Chris as a Regional Minister.”

March Calendar

The church continues to remain open for quiet prayer every Monday 10.00am – 1.00pm.

All Services and meetings will take place by Zoom until further notice.

7th March	Prayer: Contemplation and listening	communion
8th March	Deacons' Meeting	
14th March	Fruit of the Spirit 1: Love	Mothers' Day café church
21st Mar	Prayer: Spiritual warfare	
22nd March	Deacons' Meeting	
28th March	Prayer: Adoration	Palm Sunday
1st April	2-4pm and 7.30-9pm Easter prayer stations in the chapel	Maundy Thursday
2nd April	10.30am Good Friday service on Zoom	Good Friday
4th April	6.30am Easter sunrise service?	
4th April	10.30am Easter service	Easter Sunday – communion
12th April	Church Meeting	