

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church NEWS August 2020

Minister:

Rev. Sonya Setchell

01823 490975

07485 004486

Secretary:

Tim Spotswood

01823 490142

www.ssgbaptist.com

From Sonya

Do you find it easy or difficult to connect with God in prayer? I think we all find it difficult at times. Sometimes we feel like our prayers bounce off the ceiling or that God is faraway. But God wants prayer to be a two-way communication with us. He longs to tell us many things and so He delights in teaching us how to hear Him.



Here are two ways which might help you to connect with God at this time. The first is that the Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church building is open for private prayer and reflection on a Monday morning from 10am – 1pm. Many people find that a quiet space helps them to draw near to God. There are a couple of prayer stations set up in the building to help people to reflect on topics like direction, hope, peace. A small water feature creates the sound of running water. Social distancing and safety measures are in place to keep people safe whilst in the building, and someone will be there if you have any questions.

The other opportunity is an online quiet day run by a couple of Baptist ministers entitled, "A day to stop, look and listen." I used the resources recently and found them really helpful to me. You don't have to set

aside a whole day. You could do it in sections. The way it works is that you watch a video for about 15 minutes then take about 45 minutes to pray and listen to God. This could be by going for a walk, journalling, colouring or other ways of praying. The video guides the time spent with God. This is the link if you would like to try it sometime:

https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/578284/A_Day_to.aspx

However you seek to connect with God at this time, I pray that You will be aware of His Presence and hear Him speaking to you.

Blessings, Sonya

Re-opening the Church and Worship

Some of you will have received this letter from Sonya – either by email or post. We think it's worthwhile repeating it here for the benefit of those who may not be on the mailing lists:

Dear church family,

It's been a strange time over the last few months, hasn't it? It feels like so many things in our lives have changed, and we have needed to learn how to do things in new ways. Ian received a picture from God in the prayer meeting the other week which I think sums up where I sense we are now. He saw a picture of someone leaving a dark tunnel and entering a completely new landscape. The landscape was unfamiliar, and the person didn't know how to live in it, but there was a strong sense that God was there. As we enter a strange new landscape and are not sure how to proceed, let's be encouraged that our God is going ahead of us, leading and guiding us in the way forward.

The deacons have been meeting to pray and discuss the way forward regarding when to restart services in the church building. The Baptist Union has provided us with a detailed risk assessment which we are working through, so you can rest assured that we will do everything we can to keep people safe. We listened to everyone's views via the survey and conversations. Some church members wanted to restart services in the building as soon as possible, but the majority had some concerns about restarting too quickly. The deacons discussed the advantages and disadvantages of worshipping together in the building,

bearing in mind the current government restrictions about what we can and can't do. We also discussed how best to include everyone.

Taking all of this into consideration, we have decided to continue services on Zoom for the time being, whilst gradually reintroducing services where we can meet in person. The first of these is planned to be an outdoor service in the chapel grounds at 10.30am on Sunday 23rd August (depending on the weather of course!) Following this, we are planning to hold a service in the building in September. We will continue to keep an eye on the ever-changing government guidelines and will continue to review our plans for services. We will keep you informed about future plans.

Recently, I listened to a talk from Lynn Green, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union. She spoke about what she has heard from God and where she feels the church in the UK is at present. This is the verse she feels is particularly relevant for us at this time: Isaiah 43:18+19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." She believes that we are in an in-between time. Our old ways of doing things are gone for now and we can't go back to the way things were. We need to go forward, trusting God that He will lead us into new ways of being church.

If you have any questions about any of the above or any ideas to share, please contact me and we can have a chat.

Blessings to all of you and I look forward to speaking with you soon,
Sonya

The church continues to be open every Monday from 10am until 1.00pm. Please contact Gill Yaskin if you would like to help with this. Prayer stations are set out by Ian and Sonya, which you may find helpful.

Our friends at St Gregory's are holding a shortened service of Evening Prayer every Sunday at 6.00pm. A peaceful and reflective way to end the day.

We are very grateful to Ian and Tim for wading through the regulations and carrying out a risk assessment before putting the necessary arrangements in place – sanitiser, signage, cleaning materials, disposable gloves ...



Finance



Thank you to everyone who has set up a regular direct debit. It has put our finances on a surer footing and made the treasurer's life much easier.

Thank you also to those who have made bank transfers, sent cheques or cash. It's all gratefully received.

July: Receipts	2395
Payments	<u>3150</u>
Deficit	-755

Newsletter

Alison and I would like to say a big

to everyone who delivers this newsletter, whether by hand, post or email. It seems to have been particularly appreciated by those living alone or in isolation. Thank you also to our contributors, some of whom have been very honest about the difficulties they have been facing.



Luncheon Club

We have been thinking about the Luncheon Club and the people who come for the company as much as the food. It is not possible to go back to providing a meal at the moment but we are hoping to host a cream tea outside in August (possibly 12th), weather permitting. Please let us know if you would like to come. If you rely on a friend for transport then they will be welcome to join us but we will need to know numbers in advance.

Liz 490828, Alison 490380

At this time we are particularly mindful of the mental health of some of our friends, especially those who have been in isolation, unable to receive family visits, have health problems, have been threatened with redundancy ... We hope you will find these articles useful.

Samaritans are always there for you.



Coronavirus is impacting all of our lives, with many people feeling anxious and stressed. There's no doubt that these uncertain and challenging times can affect our mental health and wellbeing.

Samaritans volunteers are busy 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

and this hasn't changed during the pandemic. Nationally, we are currently providing emotional support over 7,000 times a day (via phone, email and letters) and one in three calls for help to Samaritans is about coronavirus, with people feeling anxious and distressed. It is essential that we look after our volunteers as well as our callers and, in March, government measures designed to prevent the spread of coronavirus and ultimately protect the safety of our volunteers, meant that we anticipated around 30 per cent of our volunteers had to self-isolate. We are working hard to minimise disruption to our helpline and, while it might take us a little longer to answer the phone and emails, our volunteers are still there for those who are struggling to cope at this crucial time.

The Taunton branch of Samaritans has stayed open as usual throughout the pandemic, with the only change being that we are unable to see callers face-to-face at the moment. Generally, the calls have not been very different from before the Coronavirus outbreak, except that the lockdown situation has, perhaps, increased the feeling of loneliness for many people. There is the added worry that many have of becoming ill themselves or concern for family and friends. Those suffering from anxiety or depression seem to be the worst affected in this way. As ever, the reasons why people call Samaritans vary hugely. The important thing is that we are always available to listen with empathy, in confidence and without being judgmental. It's a safe place to talk - just pick up the 'phone and dial 116 123. It's entirely free and we are there 24 hours a day, every day.

The Ghost Town Effect



One of our church members, Dr John Barnes, a mental health professional, has been looking at the role art plays in maintaining and restoring good mental health. During the last eighteen months he has been collaborating with Tonic, a local organisation with a mission to raise mental health awareness, challenge stigma and promote mental wellbeing through music and the arts.

John has recently been blogging on the subject of COVID and its effects on mental health, as well as performing his own song, called 'All in it together'. He discusses how our living environment and social inequality can combine to have an impact, not just on our physical health, but also our mental health.

He says: "The 1981 hit Ghost Town by The Specials reflects the anger of young people at social conditions of the time; "no job" and "all the clubs closed down". It is amazing just how badly physical health and mental health are affected by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live and work.

Focusing on the differences in health outcomes due to economic poverty in this blog, I am calling them the *Ghost Town Effect*."

The blog and song can be found at the link below.

<https://www.ahsw.org.uk/latest-news/tonic-music-blog-and-all-in-this-together-recording-a-response-to-the-current-climate/> It contains further links to a range of information from academic sources. It describes some of the causes of mental health problems and how to help get through the difficulties experienced. Ultimately though, we are part of a community and we need to look out for each other and be there for each other in these troubled times. In John's words:

"We're all in this pandemic, but we're gonna make it through
We depend on each other, that means me and you"

Please pray for health care professionals, especially those working in mental health.

**Church Annual
Meeting
Monday 12th
October at 7.30pm**

This has been delayed because of the restrictions, however we still have to have a meeting.

Des will be retiring as deacon and we need to start praying now about who could be called to serve on the diaconate.

The meeting may be held by Zoom but we are hoping to put arrangements in

pace so that no one is at a disadvantage because they do not have access to the technology.

Response to the BMS World Mission Coronavirus Appeal

BMS has mobilised quickly, raising over £215,000, helping more than 22,000 people, building a satellite hospital, providing phone credit to pastors to reach their congregations, counselling patients ... and more in countries as diverse as Sri Lanka, Chad, Nepal, Afghanistan

Read more online at www.bmsworldmission.org/covid

A global pandemic requires a global response, that's why BMS World Mission is helping to co-ordinate one.

We are all feeling uncertain about the future. Many of us are scared. And if our hearts are breaking because of the effects of Covid-19 here in the UK, they are likely to be far worse beyond our borders.

In shanty towns and slums, in refugee camps and displaced people settlements, in countries with limited medical resources and low levels of health education, Covid-19 will be devastating.

In the UK, we are unlikely to face all those challenges. But human beings like us will face unimaginable suffering.

Now is the time for Christians to truly love their neighbours – wherever they are. Now is the time when we can give to help them.

BMS supports local workers to deliver a local response.



BMS Birthday Scheme

Our love and best wishes to Kathleen Staple and Chris Coate as they celebrate their birthdays on 23rd and 26th by giving a gift to the Birthday Scheme. Happy birthday to you both!

For our Prayers

Maurice David

Liz and Robert Hembrow

Alison Katte

Pamela Merritt

Julia and Tim Spotswood

All school staff, pupils, parents, grandparents.



As we begin August, we remember all 'shielded' friends for whom isolation has entailed more restriction than for most of us. We pray that they feel confident as they interact with more family and friends or go shopping, and especially those who have the added anxiety of returning to their workplace; that they may all keep safe.

Catching up...

Colin and Jan travelled to Cumbria in January to celebrate Colin's mother's one hundredth birthday. Her birthday cake was a Scrabble Board, since she still played regularly and sometimes won! Always mentally alert, sadly Jessie Bell Gorton, passed away on 10th June, with close family at the graveside service in Cockermouth.

Best wishes to Matthew and Chloe on the birth of a daughter, Elliott on 24th June, a happy occasion for Ruth and Steve Loveridge as they welcome their first granddaughter to the family.

Congratulations to Jenny Katte, who has been awarded a First Class honours degree in American Studies and English Literature by the University of Nottingham. The online graduation ceremony took place on 24 July. To mark the day they loaned a gown and mortar board and Alison made a hood and took photos in North Curry church, sitting on hay bales in Stoke and on the top of Burrow Mump!

2nd August	Zoom	led by Jamie with communion
9th August	Zoom	John 6:5-14 The feeding of the 5000
16th August	Zoom	Worshipping offers us fresh insight
23rd August		Outdoor service in the chapel grounds
30th August	Zoom	Worshipping transforms our ordinary actions