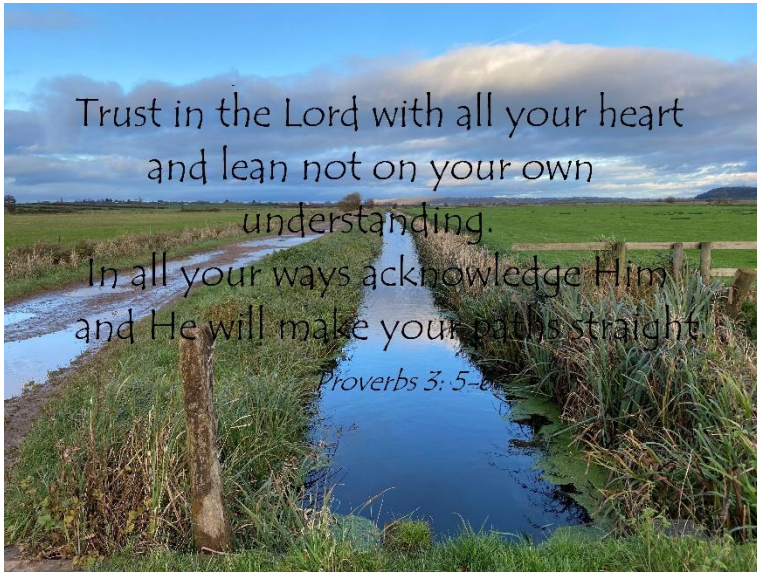


Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

February 2021

News



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From Sonya

Most people I have spoken with are finding this lockdown harder. Last Sunday we explored James 1. These verses are relevant to us at the moment: James 1:2-3 “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.” Joy is not the first thing we think of when we experience difficult times, but James says that a positive outcome is that we can develop endurance.



Think of the endurance seen in a marathon runner. They keep on going through long hours of training whatever the weather. During the race, they have to keep running however uncomfortable or painful it is, in order to reach the end and receive the prize. Life at the moment feels a bit like a marathon. So, we need to take care of ourselves in a similar way that a long-distance runner does. They need good food to keep their body fit. This is like feeding on the Bible and doing what it says. They need fresh water. This is like prayer and receiving the Holy Spirit. They also need good rest. This is like setting aside times of Sabbath – to rest and to focus on God. An athlete running a marathon paces themselves. They don't sprint but set out at a pace which they can sustain over the long haul. We need to do this too. Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus is vital in order to endure.

The difference between our lives and a marathon is that we run the race together. We are called as a community of God's people and have a responsibility to help each other to endure. We can all listen and pray for each other. So, let's continue to be the community of God to each other during this time, encouraging and supporting each other so that we can all endure.

Blessings, Sonya

Church Meeting

**Monday, 1st February,
7.30pm
on Zoom**

Verse for 2021

When I sat down to pray and asked God for a verse for this year, this is the verse that I sensed God bringing to mind: "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)

As I thought more about it, this verse seems appropriate for us in our current situation of continuing uncertainty. The only firm foundation that we can trust in is God. Sometimes we are tempted to rely on our own logic, but God's ways are often very different to our ways. As we choose to put our trust in God, He will walk with us through the difficult times and He will lead us into the future.

From the Deacons



We met by Zoom, as usual. Sonya led us in a discussion about the church's core values, the principles that guide our decisions.

We then looked at the draft accounts for 2020, which show a deficit. Jamie suggested five strands for a financial strategy; increasing our giving, increasing the fellowship, reducing costs, fundraising events and other income generating opportunities. This will form the basis of future discussions.

Donations for the newsletter: we are very happy to print and deliver the newsletter to your door if you are unable to receive it by email. We would appreciate a small donation to cover the cost of printing and paper and postage if you receive it by mail. Thank you very much to those who have contributed.

People often remark how well kept the church looks outside. If you have a family member interred in the graveyard we would appreciate a small donation towards the cost of the upkeep.

Open The Book is making monthly video recordings for the schools, which have been well received. Sonya is looking into organising "Messy Church in a bag".

New Ministers

Our friends at Fivehead have called a new minister, Matt Cottingham. His induction service took place on Saturday 23rd January. He and his wife, Sarah, have a young family including twins.

They have come from Millbridge Church in Minehead.

The Athelney Benefice has also chosen a new minister, The Rev Simon Bale, (pictured) who will be licensed by Zoom at the beginning of February. He has a wife, Louise, and two grown sons.



Lent Courses

Ash Wednesday is on 17th February. There will be a lent course based on Sister Wendy Beckett's "The Art of Lent". This is a beautiful little book with a picture every day and a short reflection:



"We cannot control our life. As Hokusai shows so memorably, the great wave is in waiting for any boat. It is unpredictable, as uncontrollable now as it was at the dawn of time. Will the slender boats survive ...?"

If you would like a copy of the book they can be ordered online or Tim will get one for you (490142). We plan to phone each other once a week to discuss the reflections. Please contact Liz or Tim if you are interested in joining in.

The Prayer Course

The Prayer Course has been produced by 24-7 Prayer. It is advertised as an eight-week journey that will help you and your community to grow and deepen your prayer life. Each session focusses on a different aspect of

prayer and consists of a video to watch, some discussion questions and then an opportunity to practice that kind of prayer together. I have heard good reports from other churches who have explored this course in small groups. If you are interested in studying this course in a small group during Lent (by Zoom), please contact Sonya.



Unsettling the World

On Ash Wednesday at the end of February last year, having recently arrived in Trinidad and catching up with two friends over a cup of tea, Sylvia had brought me the 2020 'Lenten booklet', as we always referred to it: daily mediations for lent, put together by St Andrews Theological College, contributions by ministers, elders and members of the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago with input from some Anglican friends. The title for 2020 edition *Unsettling the World* "seeks to explore the Word of God with 'new eyes' so that our witness can inspire change in a world plagued with violence, injustice and corruption; divisiveness and class distinction..."

... A few days later I was at a Nature Reserve, happy to see visitors enjoying their experience from both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time there were Government Public health posters urging us all to protect ourselves from COVID-19, and while there heard that a group of naturalists from Japan had cancelled their April/May booking. Two weeks later Trinidad and Tobago was in lockdown, the same day as I arrived at Gatwick. Unsettling indeed! *Alison W*

The End of An Era

It was November 20th 1979, a very cold day that Ron and I moved from Ascot, Berkshire to take over The Rose and Crown in the rural village of Stoke St Gregory. We built up a thriving business very well known in the area for our food.

When we retired our sons, Steven and Richard, and their wives, Sally and Leonie, took over and carried on the good name. Richard and Leonie went on to pursue their own catering career, leaving Steven, Jo and Hayley to carry on. A total of 41 years. Finally deciding to call it a day, The Rose and Crown was sold as a house and we do hope the new owners have a happy life in their new home. All the Brownings would like to say a big Thank You to all our loyal customers and to the wonderful memories you made for us.

Irene Browning.

"The Rosie" was a major part of village life for so many years; Irene and Ron were noted for their warm hospitality. We wish them many happy years in retirement.





CEFAW is a three-year AHRC-funded project to develop a Christian ethics of farmed animal welfare and an associated new policy framework for Christian institutions, with 13 institutional partners including major UK churches and the University of Chester.

Tim recently attended a webinar: “Why should Christians care about farmed animal welfare?” Humans have raised animals for food for millennia, but it is only in recent decades that farm animals have been farmed intensively. Farmers and those who work on animal farms know the needs of the animals in their care but pressures to increase efficiency and reduce costs have given rise to production systems within which most animals farmed in the UK do not enjoy lives in which they can flourish as animals, rather than as potential products.

The ultimate purpose of all creation is to express God’s love and goodness. Animals kept in intensive systems are unable to express themselves and flourish as animals should. They cannot dust bathe, scratch for food, care for their young, grow to maturity and have young. The best way animals can give glory to God with their lives is when their needs are met and their interests accommodated by those responsible for looking after them. Farming cannot provide animals with all the opportunities and experiences their wild ancestors had, but domestic animals are protected from some of their risks.

Unjust economic structures threaten the well-being of both farmers and animals. Our greed and demand for cheap food at any cost affects the whole of creation - the environment, the soil, wild animals, wild plants, humans and farmed animals. These social structures and economic ‘needs’ cannot be changed overnight but Christians, individually and as communities, can consider how our consumption of farmed animal products affects other people, the environment and animals themselves. The whole of creation is groaning for God’s Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

So we eat them. We should be aware of how our food is produced and at what cost to the farmer and to the product. All Christians bear the responsibility to make sure all of God’s creation are treated fairly and decently.

For our Prayers

David and Eileen Hunt
Ian and Lyn Greenaway
Joan Upham
Rachel and Simon Robinson,
William and Thomas
Stuart Mark
Our neighbours and neighbourhoods.

Please keep in your prayers:

Des and Lesley and their family. Des' mother died on Sunday 10th January. Please pray for Georgie, her carer who had tested positive for Covid.

Anne J whose sister died on 16th January. They were able to spend some time together before Janet died, thanks to kind family.

Ron, Freda, and daughters Christine and Anne. Ron is not at all well and was receiving treatment in Musgrove but is being cared for at home now.

Joan and her granddaughter, Hannah, who has contracted the virus. John and Karen B, whose daughter Katie has been diagnosed with cancer.

Jean P has returned home following her operation and is recovering with help from her family.

As we hear about families in our neighbourhoods contracting Covid, and from others further afield, many now are mourning the loss of friends or family members. We continue to pray for the medical teams and support staff with extra-ordinary workloads, patients and those who have sadly lost loved ones due to the pandemic.

If you are called for your vaccine and need help getting to the vaccination centre please contact me (Liz 490828) and I will try to arrange help with transport.

We are mindful of some in our fellowship who are out of work or whose businesses have been forced to close, with all the stress and financial hardship this brings. Please pray for them and others in the community in the same situation.



BMS Birthday Scheme

Our love and best wishes to Anne Coate as she celebrates her birthday on 25 February.

Sunday 31 January is BMS' annual Day of Prayer. Please join in!

Head to www.bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer



You may remember we supported the BMS 2020 Harvest appeal *Operation Chad*. This week we pray for continued safety for the team as they work and share their faith with patients, staff and communities.

We will be thinking of BMS in our worship that Sunday and inviting contributions for their work. This can be done online and details will be given out during the service.

February Calendar

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

1st Feb 7.30pm	Church Meeting	
7th Feb 10.30am	Morning worship with Communion	James 3:1-18
14th Feb 10.30am	Café Church	7 signs in John: John 11:1-45 The raising of Lazarus
15th Feb 7.30pm	Deacons Meeting	
17th Feb	Ash Wednesday	
21st Feb 10.30am	Morning Worship	Prayer: Why pray?
28th Feb 10.30am	Morning Worship	Prayer: Petition and intercession

Candlemas – 2nd February

Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,
For God was coming with them to His temple.

