

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church
June 2021
News



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From Sonya

I wonder how you are feeling as you look ahead to the future. Hopeful that the lockdowns are over, and that life will return to normal? Uncertain about whether life will ever be the same again and wondering what things will be like from now on? Anxious that things are reopening too quickly and worried about the consequences? A mixture of the above?



Within our community there are people who are feeling hopeful, uncertain, anxious or a mixture of the above. At this time, let's seek to be patient with each other, to listen to how others are feeling and to show that we care. Look out for people who may be struggling and ask God how you can help.

As we look to the future and seek to plan ahead, let's be aware that some of us will want to travel at different speeds and be uncomfortable with the pace others are setting. Let's make it our priority at this time particularly to "encourage one another and build each other up" as 1 Thessalonians 5:11 exhorts us to do. Let's remind ourselves that God is with us and that He has good plans for us. Let's take some time to reflect, both looking back and also looking forward. Let's recommit ourselves to following Jesus wherever He leads us, knowing that this is the best way that we can live.

Blessings to you all,

Sonya

From the Deacons

At our Deacons' meeting in May our focus was on looking forward and prioritising our work in the community. To begin with Sonya led our devotions based on the book "Pursuing God's Will Together". One of the questions was: What is love calling us to do?

Front cover: Which way now? Fingerpost near Fivehead.



Many of you will have received a booklet, "Thy Kingdom Come", praying that we will all be made new in the Spirit, ready for the work that lies ahead.

Sonya has met with Rev'd Simon from the Parish Church and together with Open the Book they have organised a rota for going into the School once a week to take an assembly. Sonya has to take each assembly twice, once for Keystage One and slightly altered for Keystage Two. The same topic but at a different level. She says it is interesting to see the different levels of engagement and questions. Songs of Praise with the Parish Church will resume this year with a service on the Playing Field on Sunday 18th July.

As more activities become possible we will be reviewing each ministry that we are involved in and considering what should remain or be altered or cease. We may start by planning a few one-off events. A thank you day for the NHS was suggested on Sunday 4th July and the service will be led by Jamie. As there is more to do, Sonya feels that she is doing too much



organising and needs to delegate more. We would particularly welcome someone to take on publicity – advertising events on the village website, Facebook and other media. Please speak to Sonya or one of the deacons if you feel this is something you have a gift for. There will be a deacon on duty at services in the building so you may be asked to help with intercessions, readings coffee, etc.

Sonya and Ian will be taking a well-deserved break at the end of June/beginning of July.

Finally, I will be retiring as deacon at the AGM. This leaves just four people on the diaconate, not an ideal situation, please consider whether you might be called to this ministry.

Liz.

Joe and Lois Ovenden



What a privilege it was to virtually meet our mission partners in Uganda at morning worship on 2nd May. They are an inspirational family.

They spoke about the work they do: Joe works with church development and also with the agricultural community. His assistant has a

lovely name: Genesis! The way of life is so different to anything we have experienced. “What you earn in the morning pays for what you eat at night”, Joe said. A phrase that continues to haunt me. Farming is all done with hand tools, there are no tractors, only the hire of an ox – if you can afford it, which most farmers can’t. The seasons are irregular and unpredictable made worse by climate change. Farmers depend on the rain as there is no irrigation. Lois continues her work with speech therapy. She now has an assistant. But the clinic closed at the start of the covid outbreak and she has also been home schooling the children.

They spoke about the people they work with who inspire them, particularly their pastor and his wife, Jimmy and Phiona Okello. Many ministers in Uganda preach the prosperity gospel but Jimmy speaks of discipleship and how that affects your life and everything you do. Jimmy is hoping to secure some land for the University Community Church and a permanent base. The Ovendens asked us to pray for them. They are returning for their final season in Uganda so much of their work from now on will be about empowering and investing in their team and handing over, please pray for that to go well. This will include the ongoing development of an income generating agricultural business that will subsidise the agricultural training activities. Their children will be coming back to school in this country, having never experienced English schools before, so please pray for the family. They don’t know where their next assignment will be but are content to leave it in God’s hands.

It is not too late to make a donation to their work. You can make a transfer to the church’s bank account marked BMS. Please contact Liz if you need the bank account details.

Baptist Union Assembly

For our service on Sunday 16th May, we joined in worship with 5,000 other Baptists via Youtube. This was an interesting new venture.



Worship began with hymns and choruses, one of which came from Gulu, Uganda. Geoff Colmer has been called as president of the Baptist Union for 2021 and we were asked to pray for him, particularly as he has been diagnosed with myeloma. Secondaries have developed in his spine and he suffers from back pain.

We also prayed for the fully accredited ministers. Normally they would have been there in person but it is possible to see them on line in short video clips.

The reading was from Matthew 25: 31 – 46, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” followed by an address from the keynote speaker, Shane Claiborne, a prominent speaker, activist and best selling author. Shane is an activist for social justice and practices what he preaches. His address can be viewed online and is well worth watching as he is an inspiring and amusing speaker.



Dipak Rai, from Nepal spoke movingly about the covid situation there. Many Nepalis work in India and have come back home, bringing the virus with them. Most people there rely on their daily wage for food and if they don't go out to work – they don't eat. Young Baptist leaders have died from the virus. The government is starting a programme of vaccination but they need fridges to keep the vaccines as well as supplies of essential equipment such as oxygen. He contrasted this situation with vaccines being wasted in the western world.

Baptists are campaigning for a covid free world with just access to the vaccine. By donating to BMS World Mission you can help to provide vaccines, fridges and training for people to administer the vaccine.

There is more information online at

bmsworldmission.org/appeal/campaign-for-a-covid-free-world

South West Baptists Gathering and AGM

Will take place by Zoom on Wednesday 16th June at 7.30pm. All are welcome to attend, so email kathy@swbaptists.org.uk if you'd like the link to the meeting.

This year's speaker is Hayley Young, the next president of Baptists Together and her theme is "Build a bigger table", encouraging Baptists everywhere to welcome people in to enjoy their hospitality and to make their churches places of joy.

Reports for the AGM

Minister's annual report 2021

The last year has been an unprecedented year for the church as it has been for all of society in the UK. It has been challenging for all of us and we have really missed our togetherness as a community. We have been reminded of the importance of some things we used to take for granted: singing together in worship to God, sharing a cup of coffee and a chat, hugs, an encouraging word face to face. As we look forward, let's not forget the preciousness of these things but make the most of our opportunities to build each other up.

As a church, we adapted well to different ways of being church. We thank God for Zoom and the opportunity it has given us to worship together on a Sunday, to pray together, to participate in homegroups during lockdowns and even to record stories with Open the Book for the local schools. We used the telephone, letters and cards more for caring for each other.



Pentecost, singing outside.

We delivered 'Messy Church in a bag' which was appreciated by local families. We look back and thank God for the way He has been with us during the year. We also ask God to show us anything He wants to teach us from the past year.

We also look forward in hope. First, we want to focus on rebuilding community – spending time together as a church and with others from the local area. We will continue to listen to God together so that we can hear clearly how He wants us to move forward. We look forward to being a blessing to our local community, in ways that we have done before and maybe in new ways too. We know that God has not finished with us yet and has great plans for us as a church. We take time to reflect and to recommit ourselves to following God wherever and however He leads us.

Wednesday evening Home Group

Zoom” has given seven or eight of us the opportunity to meet as a “virtual home group “ with one welcome exception last summer when we felt confident enough to meet outdoors, socially distanced in Sonya and Ian’s garden and enjoy a barbecue.

We have continued to use the Bible Society *Lyfe course* to focus our thoughts and prayers and encourage us to explore our faith in Jesus. As 2020 ended the focus changed to the Advent course shared in the church fellowship *Worship in the Waiting*.

Lent 2021 we have followed a prayer course. See prayercourse.org which is free and available online.

It has also been good to encourage and listen to one another and pray about small things and be thankful. As well as the video clip from course material of the week and discussion we share needs and answers to prayer and pray.

The next few weeks we will be listening to Luke’s Gospel if you would like to join us.

Phone Group

Since the last AGM we have continued to be restricted by lockdown and we have really missed meeting together. Study books, however good, cannot replace the benefits of discussing and being challenged as we listen to one another.

Tim and Liz have been such an encouragement, keeping in touch and coming up with new ideas. One such idea was that we study a book and each week phone a member of the group to discuss and share what it has meant to us. Liz compiled a rota and this has worked well

and proved to be interesting and popular. We have appreciated getting to know more about each other as we talked together. The book chosen was “The Art of Lent’ by Sister Wendy Beckett and was an interesting and imaginative way to journey through Lent looking at some of the world’s great paintings and relating them to the particular theme for the week. Wendy Beckett’s reflections were interesting and sometimes we struggled with how they related to the picture but always we appreciated her wisdom and enthusiasm.



We all enjoyed our weekly phone calls and are continuing with each in turn choosing a poem, reading or hymn that has a particular significance or that is just a favourite.

We look forward to the time when we can meet again and it would be lovely to welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Mary's choice for one of our weekly reflections.

Newsletter

Alison and I have been preparing this newsletter for some years and feel that it is time to make way for someone with fresh ideas. Amanda has very kindly offered to take over from August. It is much easier to work as a team – have someone to bounce ideas off. Please come forward if you would be willing to help her. Kathy has offered to proof read.

We'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to the newsletter over the years. It makes life much easier when people come forward with ideas and articles.

We'd also like to thank everyone who distributes the newsletter, particularly Veronica Andrews who has delivered the newsletter around Woodhill for a number of years and is stepping back now to care for her husband.

Open the Book 2020 – 2021



After eight months hiatus due to the Covid restrictions imposed in March 2020, the Open the Book team, supported by new material sent by OtB, met by Zoom in November to explore the possibility of producing a virtual presentation for Christmas.

The result was recorded by Sonya, which was welcomed by Head Teachers, Dawn and Helen, and much appreciated by the pupils. In February we welcomed Rev Dr Simon Bale, Vicar Athelney Benefice, to the OtB team.

Recorded presentations of two Christian Values stories were prepared for when schools were reopened from the beginning of March and a 'live' simplified story telling is planned for the end of May.

Lunch Club

While the team has been unable to provide 'service as usual', we have been keeping in touch with our 'customers' by mail and phone from the beginning of the pandemic. They received the church Christmas card and get the newsletter every month – either delivered, mailed or by email. And in August were able to enjoy outdoor afternoon tea in the chapel grounds. This proved to be one of the highlights of the summer for those who attended.

Stop Press: We are hoping to restart Luncheon Club on 30th June. Please contact Alison 490380 or Liz 490828 if you would like to attend. Things will be a little different – you will be more spaced out and there will be a booking system. More details to follow.

From the Church Meeting

Sonya led us in a reflection from Matthew 5 13-16: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the earth..." and invited us to reflect on how we might be salt and light.

There were no new candidates for the diaconate, which leaves only four deacons. If you feel you may be called to serve, please speak to Sonya.

We are now able to look forward to opening up and planning some events. It is important to prioritise the community. We will review each ministry we're involved with as well as planning one off events for the church and the community. Services will alternate between church and Zoom until the end of June.

For our Prayers

Ali and Jason Pook, Freddie and Nelly
Geoff Treasure
Jane Fairfax
Leah and Simon Van Looy,
Jack and Max
Mike Hutchings
Residents and staff of our care homes

We are aware of friends in difficult circumstances with respect to medical concerns. Those having to travel for consultation, those awaiting treatment, others frustrated by disruption of 'normal' service due to the pandemic. We pray for comfort for the families and their loved ones affected, as well as for their health care team and whatever support we may be able to offer.



Please pray for Paddy, who is mourning her sister, Anne, who has died after a long illness.

Also Gerald and Heather Venn and family, following the death of Gerald's father Eric who died on 14th May, having been determined to reach his 90th birthday that day.

David House

Was born and brought up in Stoke St Gregory and served it for most of his adult life. He was on the PCC at St Gregory's and served as churchwarden, he was a parish councillor for many years and was also an independent district councillor, a time consuming task especially in times of difficulty such as flooding. He had a wealth of knowledge about this village, its people and the land and was always a source of wisdom and advice.

He was part of two major projects in the village: building the new village hall and buying and converting the Royal Oak into the Heart of the Village shop.

He was also chairman of the Somerset NFU in the 1980s.

He will be remembered for his smile, kind and gentle, even when he disagreed with you. He was an example of public service and will be much missed. We pray for Jean, Peter, Val and Jan and the family.

Thank you...

Keeping the grounds in good order is so much appreciated by those who tend graves of their loved ones, casual visitors, all of our church family and the wider community.

We thank Steve Pimm, our groundsman, who mows and clips though all seasons. Our thanks too to Saturday (or any other day) volunteers who have been tackling specific jobs around the premises. At this time of the year we particularly wish to express our gratitude to Dan Patten for cutting the boundary hedges of the carpark - a community service of which we are appreciative beneficiaries.

BMS Birthday Scheme

Our love and best wishes are with Gillian Akerman as she celebrates her birthday on the 16th.

Go on line for the latest health stories to discover the difference our gifts can make.

Access to the Covid-19 vaccine is one of the biggest issues facing the world today. BMS is part of The People's Vaccine Alliance – a campaign for the intellectual property waivers on Covid-19 vaccines – waiving the patents means vaccines can be manufactured across the world.



Thank God for the BMS Birthday Scheme.

Pray that those with a birthday this month have a great day!

Pray for them to be inspired to pray for and support God's medical work through BMS.

(From June BMS Prayer Guide).

Quiet Church

Takes place every other Monday from 10.00am until 1.00pm when the church is open for quiet prayer and there is an opportunity to drop in and talk to someone if you feel the need.

It has been suggested that we could serve coffee and biscuits outside and invite people to come and share this very special space.

June Calendar

6th June	10.30	Restore 2: Remember	in building or outside with communion
13th June	10.30	Restore 3: Rejoice	on Zoom
14th June	10.00am – 1.00pm 7.30	Quiet Church Deacons Meeting	
20th June	10.30	Restore 4: Refresh	in building or outside
26th June	10.00 2.30	Working party Strawberry Tea and thanksgiving display.	
27th June	10.30	Restore 5: Recover	in building
28th June	10.00am – 1.00pm	Quiet Church	

Strawberry Tea

Saturday 26th June at 2.30pm

In the grounds of the
Baptist Church
together with a

Thanksgiving Display

If you have been busy during
lockdown, painting, reading
gardening, making sourdough

...

Please bring something that
represents your skills.
Contact Anne Coate or
Liz Hembrow

Songs of Praise on the Field



Sunday 18th July.

If you have a favourite
hymn let Sonya or one
of the Deacons know
as soon as possible.