

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church
December 2022
News



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From Sonya

When I began to think about what I should write about in the newsletter this month, the word Immanuel was brought to mind. In his gospel account, after Matthew explains how Jesus the Messiah came to be born, he says this, “All of this occurred to fulfil the Lord’s message through His prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” (Matthew 1:22-23)



Jesus came as a baby and lived His life as a human being on earth in order to come and be ‘God with us.’ At the end of His life here on earth, Jesus died and won the victory over sin and death and separation from God. Then He rose again to sit at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. This made it possible for the Holy Spirit to be sent into this world from the Father, through Jesus. This means that God still wants to come and be with us today.

In this time of continued uncertainty and with the feeling of lurching from one crisis to another, we need to be reminded that God still wants to come and be with us in it all, to walk with us through whatever we are struggling with. Why not take some time today and invite God to come and be with you by His Holy Spirit? You never know what God might do if you do!

May you all experience God’s love, peace and joy this Christmas!

Blessings, Sonya

You crown the year with a bountiful harvest; even the hard pathways overflow with abundance. *Psalm 65:11 (NLT)*

From the Deacons

The deacons met at the beginning of November and following a time of devotions and pastoral matters, we discussed the usual topics of looking after the church buildings and grounds, and the ever-increasing running costs. We talked about the forthcoming services and activities and discussed which issues needed to be brought to the next Church Meeting.

The deacons were also able to “meet” via Zoom to share a time of prayer together. This is a relatively new initiative, but it was good to spend time together giving thanks and praying for those known to us who were in need of God’s blessing.

The Church Meeting was held on 20th November after the morning service, and members who attended were able to discuss items on the agenda and have their say on church matters.



The recent talk given by Mike Davidson on “Taunton Under Siege” was well attended & enjoyed. It was good to see not only church members, but also many friends & local people from the surrounding community. A splendid supper was provided before the talk, including a delicious array of desserts provided by church members. A wonderful total of £558 profit was raised, gratefully received proceeds going to the Baptist Church. Thank you to Mike and all those who contributed!

Our community



Our **multi-Award Winning** village Hub, The Royal Oak, in Stoke St Gregory, is looking for more volunteers to build on its recent achievements.

Our Community owned hub plays an important role at the heart of our local community. The hub includes the Village Shop, Café and Pub and hosts a visiting Post Office service. The HOTV management committee, who are all volunteers, is aware that it now needs to recruit more volunteers to meet increased demands for its services.

So please take the first step and contact John Davison johndavison52@gmail.com or 07836 327926, for all enquiries about volunteering at our community hub. **We look forward to welcoming you to our winning team.**

Several members of our church already volunteer in the shop so you may like to ask one of them what it's like if you're interested in getting involved...!



The Village Larder

Help is available for anyone living in the village who may be struggling with their grocery bills on top of rising fuel or mortgage/rent costs. Discreet “larder boxes” will be on offer, inside St Gregory’s Church. Anyone in need can go in and see if there is anything in there that they could use to help feed their household. The church will be open on a daily basis, and anyone should feel free to go in and need not think they are being watched or judged.

All are invited to place extra items of food shopping (be it purchased from the Village Shop or other outlets) in a box at the Village Shop or take it directly to the Parish Church. Both perishable and non-perishable foods can be donated since there will be a fridge available to store fresh fruit and veg etc.

Past and Present

Chris Pitman recently emailed, asking if we could add someone to our newsletter email list. He then went on to give a wonderful recount of his friendship with Malcolm and Sheila Potter that was inadvertently rekindled a few years ago.

Rev Malcolm was the minister at Stoke back in 1969 (his first church after college) and he and his wife, Sheila, played a very big part in Chris's early church days. Malcolm was by all accounts a real character – a ginger haired, bearded guitar player who clearly made a huge impact on Chris, his brothers, sister and other family and friends during a charismatic period at the church.

Chris managed to get in touch with the Potters 6 or so years ago, having recognised their name within a church email mailing. They are now living in the Middlesborough area and Chris has visited them 3 times since making contact, and most recently a week ago. They had just downsized and were settling in well. Chris has said that Malcolm and Sheila would like to send their love and best wishes to everyone that knew and knows them, but also to everyone within the Church and community. It would be good to keep them both in our prayers, and as Malcolm celebrates his 80th birthday next year, give thanks for their unwavering faith and trust in the Lord over the years.

Hopefully the Potters will continue to feel a part of our special fellowship at SSG Baptist Church despite the miles that separate us and will enjoy a connection via future newsletters.

I'm so grateful to Chris for getting in touch. Please let me know if you have any fond memories of other people who were once part of the church but with whom you have now lost touch. It would be wonderful to hear more about our rich history of people who have made an impact during their time in Stoke.

Christmas is always coming...

Christmas is always coming and there's nothing we can do to stop it. We know it's coming because the lights are already up, the trees are in, and because three doors of the advent calendar have been opened. We know it's coming because the prophets of anxiety are predicting a difficult time for the shoppers and retailers of our over-stretched, debt-ridden land. We feel the imminence of Christmas in the mincemeat

sensations of excitement and dread; of wishing it would never end and wanting it over with now. Of the need to be at home – with family and friends – and the desire to escape it all and get as far away as possible. As the Grinch in Dr Seuss' story says: *'Christmas! It's practically here!' ...Then he growled with his fingers nervously drumming, 'I must find a way to keep Christmas from coming!'*

Advent means the arrival – or coming – of an important person or thing. Yet break it down into its component words: 'ad' and 'vent' and it looks alarmingly like something to do with advertising and windows – it sounds like a big commercial wind. Which of course it is, has been, and probably always will be. Which is why Grinch-like, seasonal rants about the commercial aspect of Christmas will do nothing to change it.

Priests asking us not to throw out the baby with the bath salts should save their breath. If they want us to question anything at Christmas it should be the baby: Do we need the baby? Do we want the baby? What is the baby for? It's easy to see that Christmas 'doesn't come from a store'...easy to guess 'it means a little bit more'...the question for us all is: What?

Isaiah, a prophet who lived before Christ, framed our need in this way: 'O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.' There was an ache for a saviour long before one appeared. As to what this saviour is for, Isaiah put it in these startling terms: 'For those living in darkness, a light has come,' and later 'he will be pierced for our transgressions and by his wounds we are healed.'

For Isaiah it took 600 years and a thousand advent calendar windows before the double doors opened on the baby in the manger he predicted would be 'the saviour of the world.' That's a kind of patience – a kind of expectation and waiting – that's hard to grasp. In theory, for us, the waiting is over. The baby – whether we like it or not – is here – Immanuel or God with us. As the Grinch discovered, we can't stop Christmas from coming, 'Somehow or other, it came just the same!' The challenge for us this advent is finding the space to think about why it came at all in the first place.

An extract from the book "Godbothering" by Rhidian Brook. First written & broadcast 3.12.2007.

Rhidian is a regular contributor to Radio 4's Thought for the Day and is currently living in Jerusalem with his wife Nicola, as Writer in Residence at St George's College, as well as running pilgrimages to The Holy Land with Lightline Pilgrimages. I know they would both appreciate your prayers to find their place in their new surroundings, and to have eyes to see what is needed.

For our Prayers

Graham and Valerie Board
Amanda and Stuart Saunders, Georgie & Luke,
Amelia, Freddie & Olivia
Kathleen Staple
Alison White
Kathy and Mike Davidson



We lift in prayer all those who might find this time of year challenging. Also Anne J, Joan, Paddy, Sonya, SSG Primary School, and Malcolm and Sheila Potter.

Please pray for people to make themselves known and step forward to take on the essential roles of Secretary and Treasurer for the church.

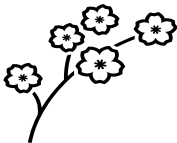
BMS Birthday Scheme



We celebrate the birthday this month of Julia Spotswod on 15th.

We thank her for supporting the scheme and wish her a joyful day.

December Flowers



4th Alison Katte
11th Kathy Davison
18th Christmas Flowers
25th Christmas Flowers
1st January No service

A heartfelt thank you to Alison White for putting together the flower rota each month, ensuring our church always has beautiful flowers each Sunday ready to be given to someone in our community after the service.

December 2022 Calendar

Day	Time	Event
Thurs 1st	9.30am– 11.30am	TWiGs in the Schoolroom
	7.30pm	Deacons' meeting
Sun 4th	10.30pm	FAMILY SERVICE with COMMUNION. Advent 2: Prophecies of Messiah. Isaiah 9: 1-7
Weds 7th	10.00am	Christingle for SSG Primary School at the Baptist Chapel
	7.30pm	Homegroup
Thurs 8th	9.30am- 11.30am	TWiGs in the Schoolroom
Fri 9th		Willow Set Pre-school Nativity at the Baptist Chapel
Sun 11th	10.30am	Advent 3: MESSY CHURCH starting with breakfast at 10am
Weds 14th	12 noon	Luncheon Club in the Schoolroom
	7.30pm	Homegroup
Thurs 15th	9.30am- 11.30am	TWiGs in the Schoolroom
	6.00pm	Carols in The Square
Sun 18th	10.30am	FAMILY SERVICE. Advent 4: Prophecies of Messiah
	6.30pm	Traditional Carols by Candlelight Service
Sat 24th	6.00pm	Christingle Service at the Baptist Chapel
Sun 25th	10.00am	CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY SERVICE