

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church
December 2020
News



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From Sonya



I wonder what you are waiting for this Advent? Maybe you are waiting for decorations, presents, carols and celebrations; or maybe like me you are waiting for the opportunity to meet with loved ones safely. In the midst of all this, Advent invites us to listen for a deeper whisper, echoing down through history, radiating across the world: “A king is coming.”

Our world longs for wise and just leadership, which works for the good of all people and all creation. The people of Israel waited hundreds of years for the king whose just and good reign over the world would last forever. The good news is that in Jesus, the new king that the world has been waiting for has already come. The unexpected, upside-down Kingdom of Jesus has burst into our world, this Kingdom where Jesus said that: the first are last, the poor are blessed, outcasts are welcomed, light shines from darkness, life comes out of death, and victory comes through sacrifice. We see glimpses of the reality of this Kingdom now, but one day we will see this Kingdom come in all its fullness when Jesus returns.

So, I encourage you to invite Jesus right into the centre of your Advent season this year. Our challenge is to make this prayer, “Come Lord Jesus,” the centre of our Advent, as we learn what it means to live with expectation and hope for the coming Kingdom of God in our world.

Blessings to you all at this time,

Sonya

We wish all our friends and readers
a happy and peaceful
Christmas.



From the Deacons

Much of our November meeting was taken up with pastoral concerns. We rejoiced at some good news but were saddened to hear of people losing their jobs. Redundancy affects not just our financial security but has an emotional impact as well, on our sense of dignity and self-worth. We were pleased that someone has applied to become a church member and, subject to the agreement of the church meeting, hope to welcome them into membership at a communion service on 13th December.

We discussed our Christmas preparations. Thank you to Anne Coate for setting up an advent wreath in church, nativity scene

and the prayer stations, with words devised by Ian. All these will be in place for private prayer during December and also for the Willow Set service on 10th December. The children will hold their nativity service as usual but the parents will not be able to attend. Instead they will be able to watch online.

Sonya has ordered booklets for the advent course and these are available at a cost of £4.50. If you would like to join in the course, please let Sonya know, she has a couple of spare booklets. Payment can be made online by bank transfer. Please reference your payment "Advent".

The Christingle Service will be by Zoom. A Christingle kit, consisting of an orange, candle, ribbon, cocktail sticks and jelly babies, will be available so that children can make their own Christingles at home. (Will the jelly babies make it onto the cocktail sticks?!) However, the service on Christmas Day will take place in the church as this service is not usually so crowded. We must emphasise that all these arrangements will only take place if the government guidelines permit

it. At the time of writing we have no way of knowing what we will be allowed to do.

We will collect donations and food for the Taunton Foodbank. Please check their website to see what they need as it varies from week to week. Last week it was porridge, this week it is hot chocolate and meat pies! Go to <https://taunton.foodbank.org.uk/> and follow the links to "donate food".

Church Meeting

on 30th November
at 7.30pm by Zoom.



The young conifer in front of the church died during the hot summer. A replacement has been found and we have asked Paddy to plant it. This will be done on 5th December, if you are around that morning, do come and join us. It will then be decorated for Christmas.

Finance

October	Receipts	2575
	Payments	<u>4192</u>
	Deficit	-1617

Our payments in October included £1108 for Council Tax.

Alice: “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

The Cheshire Cat: “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

Alice: “I don’t much care where.”

The Cheshire Cat: “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go”.

Vision

The vision statement of this church is to worship God, support and encourage one another, and to reach out into the wider community.

This was in the church’s profile when we called Sonya. So she asked the deacons: when we break it down, what does this statement mean? Is there anything missing from it which should be there? Is there anything that should be changed to make our vision statement clearer?



We will be looking at this is greater depth over the next few months. Do you have any thoughts about it? Are we living up to the vision we set? You could contrast it with the vision statement on our website: “We are a small, loving part of God’s family. We worship Him and work with Him to extend His kingdom in this beautiful area of rural Somerset”.

Do you have a vision and if so, what is it? We would be interested to hear from you.

Why is it important? Without a shared vision we are all heading in different directions with no clear purpose. In any organisation, people

who are not engaged with what they do, with no clear idea of the goal tend to be more dissatisfied and less enthusiastic about what they do. The same applies to churches.

Carl Smethurst preached on Home Mission at our service on Sunday 22nd November. His theme was “The sent and sending God – called to be a missionary community”. Are there areas where God has called us to go but we haven’t got there yet? “Go!” is a theme repeated throughout scripture. The reasons may not be clear but we may be called to go to new places, new people or new relationships. Challenging ourselves and our mindsets is not easy but as we have been blessed so we are called to go out and be a blessing to the people around us.

This idea of mission might form part of our vision for the future. If you missed Carl’s sermon you can view it again. Sonya has the link and the password. It’s well worth watching.



Advent Course

This course is a series of daily readings and prayers that can be used individually and as a basis for group discussion.

The group will meet on Wednesdays at 7.30pm on Zoom starting on 25th November. People will need to let Sonya know if they would like to join so that she can send them the link. She will have a couple of spare Advent personal devotion books if people would like one but have forgotten to order one.

Open Church

Mondays 10am-1pm

There will be special sessions during December with prayer stations focussed on Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. Anne Coate is setting up a crib scene which people will be able to look at and reflect on.



For our Prayers

Amanda and Stuart Saunders,
Georgina and Luke, Amelia,
Freddie and Olivia
Kathleen Staple
Tony Williams
Alison White
The South West Baptist
Association



We pray for all in the work place in these challenging difficult times: public service, private sector, small business, the self-employed. In many situations, it is not 'business as usual', working from home, away from colleagues, coping with Covid protocols, fatigue....

Yet with the second lockdown, we have friends who have lost their jobs. We pray for the wellbeing of the individuals and families affected, that opportunities may open up, as well as for young people not yet on the job ladder.

Some good news too. One recently retrenched friend is back in the workplace, and Jenny Katte is now employed, excited to be working with young people who face choices and decisions after fulltime schooling.

Our love and prayers continue for friends and family who are coping with ongoing health concerns, some exacerbated by isolation or loneliness due to the pandemic, for their comfort and wellbeing: Ron and Freda, the Nicholas family, Anne M and her family, David and Judith and others known to us. We give thanks for their medical teams. We are pleased that Sonya's Dad, Ivan is doing well following his major op, as is Kathleen Staple after eye surgery.

Our condolences are with Kaye and Alan Chedzoy, following the death of Kaye's daughter Lesley. Our love and thoughts are also with Lesley's children, Callum, Chris and Troy, whose father died two years ago. They have now made their home with Kaye and Alan.

More good news

Congratulations to Anne Jackson on the occasion of a milestone birthday recently – not quite as she'd planned, she says, yet she had a

lovely day and wishes to thank all who sent greetings .We hope she will still be able to celebrate with her family post-Covid.

From Tony and Gill ...

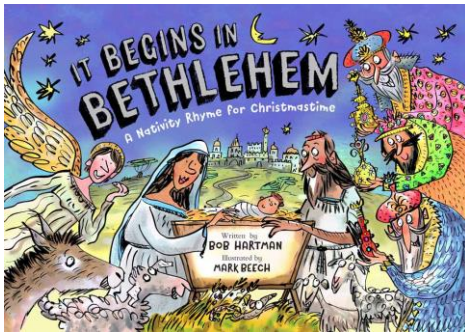
Stephanie and Noor's first baby, our second grandson, our fifth grandchild. His name is Yoseph Derrick Moustafa Anthony Hayba following traditional naming in the Egyptian family. He was born Wednesday, 18 November 2020 at 0930 in the morning (which is also my father's birthday). Everyone is doing great.

BMS Birthday Scheme

We wish Julia Spotswood 'happy birthday' on 15th December. On that day the BMS asks us to pray for their work in Bangladesh where many children are getting the chance of an education for the first time.

If you save used postage stamps, please give them to Alison W who will forward them to BMS.

Open the Book



The Open the Book team are rehearsing for a virtual recorded performance to send to the primary schools in Stoke St Gregory and North Curry. We are going to start with the Christmas story and then hope to record more stories from January until we are able to attend in person again. The new

headmistress at Stoke, Dawn Baker, has also asked Sonya to send a video of a talk for an assembly to show to the children.

The Messy Church team are also meeting to plan what we can offer to the families who come to Messy Church – either a 'Messy Church in a bag' or an online Messy Church. We will let you know when we have got further with the plans.

The Village Shop

The render has been removed from the outside and the old bricks sandblasted. The shop has been fitted out and will be open on Monday! The volunteers have been working very hard and the inside has been transformed. As well as groceries, newspapers, and all the other goodies you could buy before, they will be serving coffee, which I'm told is going to be very good; take away only to start with. Please try and support the shop as much as you can.



The plaque on the new pavilion was unveiled on Remembrance Sunday by Graham Glead, chairman of the Parish Council. He laid a wreath on behalf of the village. It is sad that more of us could not be there to take part in the service. Hopefully next year the village will be able to unite on the playing field.

6th	Worship in the Waiting: Advent 2 Active Patience	Zoom
13th	Worship in the Waiting: Advent 3 Hope-filled Expectation	Church building
20th	Worship in the Waiting: Advent 4 Awe-struck Anticipation	Church building
20th	6.30pm Traditional Carol service	Zoom
24th	6pm Christingle service	Zoom
25th	10am Christmas Day service	Church building
27th	No service	

Our verse for 2020

Colossians 2:6-7 "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness."