

Summer
July – September 2017



The Vine

The Quarterly Magazine of
Stoke Green Baptist Church
Ipswich - IP2 8RE

'The Church on The Green'

www.stokegreenbaptist.org.uk

Our Mission Statement

To know and love God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
to make Him known and to love and serve all people



Times of Refreshing

As a young Christian I remember finding Paul's description in Ephesians 6 of the battle that we face and the need to strap on the armour of God difficult to comprehend. Today all around us is the evidence of the war that the World, the Devil and the Flesh wage against us. Persecution of the Church around the world and particularly in the Middle East is heart-breaking. But worse still is to see here in "Post-Christian Britain" how the Christian values that were once the basis of our society are being steadily outlawed from public life. Our Members of Parliament are being pilloried and denounced for any evangelical views they may have, and in certain media it is even suggested that they should thereby be deemed unsuitable for public office. The battle to mute the Biblical voice in the nation is intense and we need to continue praying, as many across the country have been doing: "Your will be done, Lord, Your Kingdom come".

As I write this Jan and I are looking forward to going on Holiday. "Holiday?" I hear you cry, "I thought you were retired." And yes, we are and very blessed to be in this beautiful Suffolk village where God has put us. But a change of environment, pace and a "time of refreshing" can be one of God's most precious gifts, and an essential one for soldiers at the spiritual battlefield.

In Acts 3:19 Peter warned the people to "Repent then and turn to God, that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send Christ." Three promises to those who will repent: i) A clean sheet ii) renewed life iii) Hope for a seat in Heaven. To gain all of this is surely the greatest offer in History, but the doorway to this promise is repentance. As you know it means a U-Turn; turning away from our ways, turning towards Christ and following His ways. This action has been the stumbling for many, for it requires humility and the willingness to accept that you are wrong and need to ask for forgiveness. I confess, sometimes I have struggled to say sorry, much less admit that I was wrong even to my loved ones. My pride riles against such humility. Yet my refusal to be reconciled causes more wounding of the relationships I hold so dear.

If Christ will forgive me, why do I hold out? What Paul calls my "flesh-life" declares war against my new "Spirit-life". If I will humble myself and pray, God will forgive even this sinner. Then can I know the freedom of the burdens of my own sin, and in that discover again the joy of the healing that comes from being reconciled to Christ. In that moment come those "times of refreshing" restoring my soul. Just as the battle-weary need the refreshing of our souls so also do we need refreshing for our tired bodies.

All this then brings us back to holidays. As we fly off for ours Jan and I hope and pray you will find time to holiday soon, but if it isn't possible for you this year, then do not pass up the opportunity to seek "times of refreshing" with the Lord.

God bless and keep you

Jon

Prayer Focus



I wonder if I'm the only person who finds intercessory prayer difficult. How do we intercede for people in our family or in the church or our friends who are sick or going through a difficult time, or struggling with their faith? How do we pray for situations in our country, the terrorist attacks in Manchester or London, the devastating destruction by fire of the Grenfell Tower block in Kensington?

How do we intercede for the desperate needs of our world?

I don't know about you, but I struggle to find the right words. Often my prayers seem to reach no higher than the ceiling. And yet I believe that God asks those of us who love Him and trust Him, to pray for others in faith that he will hear and answer our prayers. I don't just believe it, I know it to be true, because I've often been on the receiving end of peoples' prayers, and have experienced the incredible blessing it has given.

Just three thoughts that have helped me in my struggle with intercessory prayer.

Firstly, we have to be in God's presence ourselves before we can bring other people or situations to Him. True intercession is never yelling at a distant God in a mood of desperation. It is a child sitting on his beloved father's knee confident that his prayer will be heard.

Secondly, we have to remember that all prayer has an essential limitation. It must be 'in His name', which isn't a magic formula to be added at the end – it really means praying the kind of prayer that Jesus could add His signature to – that carries the stamp of His character on it. We need to continually live so close to the Father that we know His heart and can pray what is in His heart for that person, that situation. It is closeness to Jesus that is the secret of intercessory prayer. Close to His heart we can easily, gladly, put the need or situation into His hands and trust Him with it.

And lastly, I'm learning not to worry too much about finding the right words. I love Romans 8: vv 26&27 "In the same way, the spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; The Spirit Himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of His people and in accordance with His will". God is able to cover our weak, human praying with his wise loving purposes for those for whom we intercede.

So keep praying – prayer opens the door for the spirit to work in power.

"If you ask me for anything in my name I will do it". John 14:14

Christine



In The Spotlight Haven In Romania

Excellency Diploma for the founder of 'The Silvia Day Centre' for children with special needs.

Reproduced from an original article by Monica-Coralia Tifrea published in the local Peatra Neamt press

On Tuesday May 30th the founder of the 'Silvia' Day Centre for children with special needs, received from the Town Hall of Piatra-Neamt an Excellency Diploma, as a sign of community gratitude for the activities and projects implemented through the foundation 'Haven in Romania'.



This occurred on the occasion of a recent visit by Mrs. Sylvia Brown and a team from the U.K. to Piatra Neamt, during which a meeting took place at The 'Silvia' Day Centre, with the parents of the children who are currently attending the centre's activities, along with parents of the children who were past beneficiaries.

The Day Centre for children with special needs, has been running for the last 13 years in Piatra Neamt. Their activity started back in 2004 and they have held a license to provide social services since 2007. In order to prevent the abandonment, institutionalisation or separation of children with special needs from their parents, the 'Silvia' Centre offers services that support both the child and the entire family.

During the programme from Monday to Friday between 8:00 to 16:00 daily, the children receive care, therapy, rehabilitation and education, recreational and social activities, development of independent life skills, counselling and school guidance. Also, the centre offers counselling and education for parents or legal guardians of the children with special needs. The financial support of the 'Silvia' Day Centre is provided by the 'Haven in Romania' foundation based in Great Britain, as well as donations from around the country and from abroad.

How it all began....

Sylvia and Dennis Brown came to Piatra Neamt for the first time in 1991, with an humanitarian transport. They were so moved by the situation in our country that they decided to come back the following year having meanwhile started the UK charity 'Haven in Romania', through which aid was gathered and the needs of people and institutions from Neamt County made known. Thus began the relationship with the former orphanage on Castani Street, Elena Doamna, and the Special School, where play equipment was bought and the space sanitized and painted.

Families with children from Piatra Neamt, Bicz, Stefan cel Mare, Damuc, along with single-parent families, and the elderly, were helped with food, clothes and money. From 1998 to 2005, a group of children with special needs from Elena Doamna and later from the Special School and Sancta Maria, who were integrated in state kindergartens, were sponsored with money for a hot meal and playground equipment. In this way friendships that have lasted over time were first created.

Cont. overleaf.....

With the experience gained in these years, in 2002, they decided to start the 'Haven-Hope of the Elders' Foundation in Piatra Neamt, to raise the standard of living for elderly people with difficult financial situations by providing home care. The selected clients, over 100 in number, came from Piatra Neamt, Garcina and the villages of Cuiejdi and Almas. The services provided were: basic care, along with mobility and walking aids and provision of simple medication and hygiene materials.

The founding members decided to expand the foundation's work and change the name to 'Haven – Hope for All'. In this way, in 2004, the Silvia" Day Centre came into being to cater for children with special needs and to provide support for their parents. The child care, rehabilitation and recovery activity is supported by qualified staff, who benefit from the help of UK specialists that come to Romania twice a year. The centre works with children between 4 and 16 years of age. The centre staff realise the central place that the parents have in the life of a child or young person, and that is why they actively involve parents in the life of the centre. Staff and parents meet regularly to discuss progress and set new targets for the children and young people.

From 2004 to the present day, 71 children have attended the day centre, many of them moving on to attend state schools or special schools.

Another project, the 'Denis' Day Centre, was also started in 2009. This is a seniors' club which provides continuity of 'care for the elderly'.

The purpose of this centre is to improve life for the elderly and lonely, and to provide an appropriate framework in which they can socialise with others of similar age, to stimulate them physically and intellectually, and to provide spiritual support. The number of people attending the centre is about 45. They serve cakes, tea, and hot soup at lunchtime. Participants also take part in games, table contests, exercises, and are given answers to important spiritual questions. Because friendships are made, the day centre participants prefer to celebrate their birthdays and other important events of their lives at the centre.

All of these things would not have been possible without the precious and kind heart of the Brown family.

In 2005, on his birthday, Mr. Dennis Brown sadly passed away after a long struggle with illness, and at this point it was thought that the work might cease, but God gave strength to Sylvia to continue, and today, at 78 years old, after 26 years of community service, Sylvia, a simple retiree, with no special material resources at her disposal, continues to extend the hand of love to Romanians in Neamt through the 'Haven in Romania' foundation.

Interregnum Update

Our Church profile document has been completed and was approved at the May Church meeting. Along with profiles from other churches who are seeking a new minister, and Ministers seeking a new church, our profile document will be looked at in detail and considered by the regional selection committee who will then send Michael a list of several appropriately selected minister's profiles for the deacon's to consider and pray about. This will happen sometime around the beginning of July. The deacons will then invite any potentially suitable candidates to come for an initial meeting so we can all learn more about each other and explore whether to move things forward to the next more formal stage. Please pray that the deacons will know God's will as they consider the list of prospective candidates for the future ministry here at Stoke Green.

A Tribute to Revd. Norman Leslie Harris - Minister of Stoke Green 1962 – 1986.

Norman Harris was called to serve at Stoke Green in 1962 having previously been in ministry at two previous churches over a period of 11 years.

Mr Harris, as he liked to be known, was a hard working, faithful and caring minister of Stoke Green who served the needs of people, initially on Maidenhall estate and old Stoke, but when in the 70's, the new Stoke Park estate was built, his ministry grew to cover the families who were moving into the many new homes that were being built at that time. During his fruitful ministry the church saw large growth and many people professed faith through baptism and became church members. The Sunday schools and brigades were both attended by well over 100 youngsters at times and due to this expanding work amongst young and old alike, the large hall, built during his time, became a necessity. He is still remembered with much affection by many on the estates and in membership now, who recall his faithful ministry, challenging preaching and his unstinting pastoral care to any and all who called on him for both practical help and spiritual guidance. In 1986 he retired from ministry and moved back to Bedford.

Norman was called home to be with his Lord on the 11th May 2017 aged 90 years.

On the 2nd June eleven members from Stoke Green travelled to 'Bunyan Meeting' in Bedford to join in a fittingly simple but meaningful service of thanksgiving for his life. As a tribute to Norman and to his ministry at Stoke Green I have reproduced below, his letter to us as a church on the occasion of his induction at Stoke Green which, I think you'll agree, is still so relevant today.

Dear Friend

Eleven years ago, when I left Spurgeon's college to commence work in the Christian Ministry, I knew by what older friends had told me that the ministry would be an education in itself. It has been my privilege to serve 6 years in Cambridgeshire and 5 years in Hertfordshire and both pastorates have taught me much about the Christian Faith.

I am more than ever convinced that the Christian Faith is relevant and has something to say to a modern age. Put this to the test – Pick up today's newspaper and read its daily portion of personal and national news. I am sure that you can see that something is wrong! We live in an age where men have power to send rockets into orbit but where men and women on this earth are lacking power to live their best! The Christian gospel has a word to say here: It is in the Christian Church that we learn about another power – The Power of God which can help us in our daily living.

In the eleven years of my ministry, by the grace of God, I have helped certain people to see the relevance of the Gospel and to know the joy of personal faith. It is my prayer that, in this new ministry, God will use me to exercise a ministry of helpfulness and encouragement. A Christian minister is commissioned to help the sick and the dying, the perplexed and the bereaved, the sinful and the lonely – to share in the joys of his people and to lead them in worship. I invite you to share in my induction, but more than that, I invite you to share in my new ministry at Stoke Green baptist church. God Bless you always.

Your friend and minister

Norman Harris



Future Messy Dates For Your Diary

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 16th Sept '17 | Messy BBQ |
| 25th Nov '17 | Messy Christmas |

Messy Update

The May Messy Church was based round the parable of the Unforgiving servant and the craft activities, celebration and take home activity gave us a chance to think about the importance of saying sorry and forgiving. This led to some interesting conversations.

At the time of writing the July Messy Church has been planned to take the form of a fun day with a mixture of craft activities and games. Another parable is the basis for this day, the story of the Lost Son. At our planning meeting we thought about how this session would help us all grow in Christ. For a change the Celebration was to be held at the start of the morning, made possible as the meal is a picnic, and most of the activities are planned to reinforce the theme.

Next Messy Church is September 16th when we hope to have a BBQ.

Hope to see you there!

Brenda

2017
Update

To date we have 125 filled boxes and there is postage available for 34.



This has been a brilliant effort so far and many thanks to everyone who has helped.

We have an unusual problem this year in that we have a great number of wrapped but empty boxes.

In order to fill them we particularly need games and toys, toothpaste, flannels, crayons, and notebooks.

We also need knitted hats, scarves, and it's always great to receive knitted toys too.

Please note this year's final date for contributions of items or money, and for all individual boxes is

Sunday 1st October

Thank you,

Laine

**Bits
and
Bobs**

Next Edition

The deadline for submission of items for the Autumn edition of the Vine is

Sunday 17th September.

I'll aim for distribution on the first Sunday in October, but please don't wait for the deadline, as it makes the job so much easier for me if I don't have to do it all in the final week!

Thanks *Steve*

BIRTHDAY SCHEME

*Do something wonderful on your birthday.
Share the gift of life.*

Members with birthdays this quarter:

July

6th

Peter Battiste

13th

Di Baker

August

29th

George Baker

If you'd like to join or find out more about the scheme please speak to Joyce Bennett.