

Autumn/Winter
October - December 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



Moderator's Letter

The Clock is ticking.....

As long as I can remember, it seems to have been fashionable and desirable to be busy. The harassed executive image conjures up a person who is both important and irreplaceable to an organisation. "I'd have to check my diary", we say, as if bookings for our time, attention or presence are heavily in demand. As Christians we know we are called to serve, and many give generously and exhaustively of their time here at Stoke Green. Sometimes however, with the best will in the world our desire to serve means we overextend ourselves, not knowing when and how to say no!

The wonder and uniqueness of our Christian faith is that it is not a religion that God calls us to, but a relationship as precious and intimate as a husband and wife, so Scripture testifies. In any relationship one vital ingredient is communication. When a married couple cease to talk to each other and spend time together, their relationship is heading for trouble. Yet many of us will admit privately to being too busy to pray these days. Christian leader and author Bill Hybels says: "If you are too busy to pray, then you're too busy period!"

Of course we know that there is an enemy who is desperate to stop us praying. Have you noticed that as soon as you decide to pray the phone or the doorbell rings? If there's a prayer meeting called, there are always 'good' reasons to send apologies just for this time – see you at the next one! Scripture reminds us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, and in the busy world that we inhabit, without prayer we become very vulnerable, as do our family, our friends, and our Church family.

It is in spending time with God both individually and corporately that we will grow in spiritual maturity; it is in prayer we will discover His will and pleasure, and receive His enabling and direction, then our time will reflect His priorities. I have noticed when I operate on His schedule, somehow the little time I thought I had, is enough; but first I must risk giving up time to pray to discover what His schedule for my life is. A happy marriage is a couple who plan regular time together. A happy believer is one who puts time with God at the top of the agenda.

Let me encourage you to take a risk and spend more time in prayer in the next month. Your investment will prove God's Grace and Love again. But not to put too fine a point on it, your Church and your Country need you praying right now!

With love in Christ

Your Moderator

Jon

Prayer Focus

"If the only prayer you said in your whole life was 'thank you' that would suffice".
Meister Eckhart.

I've been thinking about Paul's words in Colossians 3:5 – three little words that can transform our thinking and our living - "...and be thankful".

There are two ways of saying 'thank you' – with our lips and with our hearts. God, who made us, knows us best, and loves us utterly, knows whether we are offering lip service as we sing his praises or pray our thanks, knows if our thanksgiving is from full hearts that totally acknowledge His goodness and love.

Do you sometimes wonder why God seems to place so much importance on our praise and thanksgiving? I think it's because thanksgiving opens us up to Him. In those moments of being lost "in wonder, love, and praise", our whole attention is centred on the one who has given us that gift we're thanking Him for – for that moment we've stopped looking at ourselves and are open to His infilling presence.

Of course, as Christians we know that the true source of our thankfulness is not any gifts of the Father however good and needful they may be, but the Giver himself, the giver of every good and perfect gift, giving himself on the cross, giving us forgiveness and new life in Him. Every day we must echo the words of a hymn we often sing "Thank you for the cross, thank you for the cross, thank you for the cross my friend."

We are called to be thankful, not just occasionally but constantly. Thankfulness is an attitude of life, the way we live out our moments and our days. Does it seem impossible in a dark world of suffering, uncertainty, grief and loss? Not if we remember that our joy is not in our circumstances but in our Lord, and he never changes. The ever thankful heart is the heart that keeps it's inner eye fixed on Jesus.

May our prayer be simply this, ' Lord give me a truly thankful heart, William Law writes this " If anyone would tell you the surest, shortest way to all happiness, all perfection, he would tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank God for everything. It is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by the thankful spirit, for it heals with a word spoken and turns all that it touches into happiness".

God bless.

Christine



Future Messy Dates For Your Diary

25th Nov '17 - Messy Christmas

27th Jan '18,

24th Mar '18,

19th May '18

30th Jun '18

15th Sept '18

1st Dec '18 - Messy Christmas

Messy Update

Each edition of the Vine has had a Messy Church article about our Messy Church events but as banners spring up all over the country what is Messy Church? Messy church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being church which is particularly suited to families, but welcoming to all. It meets at a time and on a day convenient for local families and is aimed at people who have never belonged to a church before.

Messy Church Values:

- Christ centred
- Creativity
- Hospitality
- Celebration
- All Age

Facts:

Messy Church

- Gets 500,000 people involved each month
- Takes place in more than 30 countries worldwide
- Is found in a variety of Christian denominations
- Is for people of all ages from 0 -100

On 16th September we held our 33rd Messy Church and ended with a Barbecue. The theme of the morning was Hidden treasure, based on the stories Jesus told of the man who found buried treasure in the field and the man who found the pearl of great price and both sold everything to get the treasure and pearl. All our games and crafts helped to reinforce the theme and it is our prayer that Messy Churchers will find Jesus as their greatest treasure.

We are beginning to plan for Messy Christmas on November 25th. Hope to see you there.

Brenda

Church Finance

As I sat behind the drum kit the other week, I realised, as I looked out, that we have several regular worshippers who may not have any idea how our church finances are run. So in this edition of The Vine, I thought it might be helpful for people to hear for the first time, or indeed be refreshed, on how 'money works' in a Baptist church.

Unlike Anglican churches, who get money from their PCC, Baptist churches are totally self-sufficient; we get no money given to us from outside sources. This means that we have to pay for everything; from our Minister's wages to the purchasing of light bulbs!

It means too, that we have to pay for the upkeep of our church buildings and the Manse (the Minister's house – which we have bought). Anything Stoke Green wishes to buy or financially support, has to be paid for through the generosity of our congregation.

And as you all know, from running your own households, there has to be a realistic income in order to pay all the regular bills and have money set aside for building maintenance. In an ideal world saving for future projects and things on a 'wish list' is good practice too.

Just as at home, everything has to be budgeted for here at church and having regular money coming in really helps. There are different ways that the congregation can help with this:

Putting money in the weekly offering bag

This is great if you are in church every week, but does make budgeting a bit more difficult, as none of this money is guaranteed income.

Weekly offering envelopes

This helps with people remembering to give each week, even if they are not able to be at a service. You have your own set of envelopes, one for each week in the year. This can help with the church receiving income regularly.

Standing Order from your bank account to the Stoke Green bank account

This helps greatly with regular income and although some people feel strange not putting anything into the offering bag in church, there are ways to solve that!

The second and third options above can be enhanced even further if you are a tax payer! As any money received by these methods is identifiable as coming from you, if you complete a Gift Aid declaration, the tax man will give us an extra 25% on any money you give! This means that if you give £10.00, the church will actually receive £12.50! It is a really cost-effective way of giving, but only if you pay tax.

I hope this has helped in people understanding a little more why it is so important for Stoke Green to receive prayerfully considered financial support from its congregation. I will be very pleased to speak, in confidence, with anyone who wishes to discuss in further detail how they can support our church financially. You'll find me behind the drum kit after most services!

Thanks

Gary



Members with birthdays this quarter:

Oct 7th Brenda Clark, 15th Millie Baker, 20th Chris Goodson

Nov 5th Joyce Bennett, 20th Mary Jennings, 26th Arthur Moir

Dec 13th Robin Goodson

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

Interregnum Update

In September, having met with another potential candidate for the ministry at SG, neither the deacons or the candidate felt that God was calling them to ministry here at Stoke Green. So we await the next list from the settlement committee when they meet on 19th Oct .

It's good to keep in mind that it's **not** about getting someone into place quickly, but it is **all** about finding the right person for the work and situation here at Stoke Green.

Please keep praying that God will lead us to the person that he has in mind for us, and remember that God's timing is always perfect.

The Vine

Apologies that this edition is a couple of weeks later than planned. This was due to circumstances beyond my control.

When I took on production of the Vine nearly two years ago it was on a temporary basis to test the water and see if there was a continuing need for a magazine type publication, but having recently been struggling to get input, I'm thinking that maybe the time has come to call it a day.

We would of course still retain the weekly notice sheet which could easily be extended to four pages or more when needed to incorporate other items and articles from time to time. This would also help us to be more 'up to the minute' rather than trying to pre-empt events sometimes up to three months in advance.

I would greatly value hearing any thoughts or comments you might have on this subject. This will also be on the agenda for the next Church Meeting on 16th November. Many thanks.

Steve

I've reproduced the following on a separate page for two reasons, firstly because I had the space, and secondly to allow it to be cut out and kept handy for future reference.

Christmas Events and Service Arrangements 2017

Messy Christmas	Sat 25 th Nov 10:00 – 1:00
Nativity Play	Sun 10 th Dec at 10:30 am
Experience Christmas	Mon 11 th , Wed 13 th , Fri 15 th , & Mon 18 th Dec
Morning Worship & Communion	Sun 17 th Dec at 10:30 am
Carols by Candlelight	Sun 17 th Dec at 4:30 pm
Morning Worship	Sun 24 th Dec at 10:30 am
Christmas Morning Celebration	At 10:30 am (45 minutes)
Morning Worship	Sun 31 st Dec at 10:30 am