



**Sharing the love  
of Jesus**

# **Sandbach Baptist Church Newsletter**

**Sunday 7 September 2025**

## **Message from the Leadership**

Well September has arrived and with it, a new chapter for SBC. We have enjoyed a very steady sixteen years under Alistair's pastorship and he leaves us in a strong position to go forward. It was enormously sad to say goodbye to him and the family at the weekend, and we will miss him dearly but we wish him every blessing for his retirement, and we look forward to new and exciting times both for him, Eunice and Susie, and also for our fellowship. Change is never easy but it is an opportunity for us to seek afresh what is God's vision for us. May we do that in unity and love and anticipation.

Thank you to everyone who made the party on Saturday such a lovely occasion. Special thanks to Susie and Stu for hosting, and to Lynn for co-ordinating the refreshments, and to everyone who helped out in so many ways, and who came along to support the day so that we could celebrate together.

We are now going to be seeking a Moderator from the North Western Baptist Association (NWBA), and that person will guide us during the interregnum when we are without a pastor, and will help us with the process of finding a new pastor. This will be an ongoing process of reflection and consultation but we have been advised that it can take around two years, and possibly more. So in the meantime the leadership in conjunction with the whole fellowship will be picking up the responsibilities carried out by the pastor and supporting each other as we continue in our walk with God. (See notes further down regarding Sunday sermons and newsletter).

*A reminder that the Leadership Team are: Bernie Williams (Elder); George Hill (Secretary); Ian Parsons (Treasurer); Andrea Jones (Safeguarding); Heather Carter; Chris Nash; and Susie Warburton*

## **Reflection from Hilary Forbes**

When Jesus asked Peter who he thought Jesus was, Peter replied "you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Jesus declared, "Upon this rock, I will build my church". Thereafter renaming Peter as "Rocky" ("Cephas" meaning stone or rock). Matthew 16:15-18).

This is perhaps the best place to begin as we reflect, consider and plan ahead. To root ourselves firmly in our thinking and praying, to this one great truth, of who Jesus is. SBC is in a strong position because it is built on this truth, and because Alistair has encouraged, guided, led, preached and been such a tremendous example of living this truth in serving the church as pastor.

As we spend time reflecting, praying and asking for the wisdom of the Lord for future decisions, let us consider how we might continue to encourage one another and bless the different relationships SBC has both locally, nationally and internationally.

## Our Service this coming Sunday 7 September 2025

Our service on Sunday 7 September will be at 10:30am at Sandbach Primary Academy (SPA). Bernie Williams will be leading the service and Alasdair Ness from Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) will be preaching (subject to him being on the ground!)

Tea and coffee will be served after the service.

## Our Activities for the week beginning Sunday 7 September 2025

**Monday:** Welcome Bap 10:00am-12:00 Noon at Oasis  
Lunch with Ian Higginbotham 1.00pm at Oasis

**Tuesday:** Tots and Co 9:30am-11:30am at Oasis  
Encounter with God 7:00pm-8:00pm at Oasis

**Wednesday:** Ladies Fellowship 10:30am-12:00 Noon at Oasis  
Wednesday Group 7:30-9.00pm at Oasis

**Thursday:** No House Group this week

**Friday:** Energize Juniors Small Group 6.15pm-7.45pm at Oasis

**Saturday:** Morning Prayer Gathering 8:30am-9:15am at Oasis

If you would like to join any of the midweek groups, please contact Bernie and he will put you in touch with the group leader.

## A Refrain for the Week

'I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart' Psalm 40:8 (NLT)

Today I choose to rejoice in God's faithfulness no matter what storms rage around me. May the Lord imprint His loving guidance on my heart so that I may follow His will for my day and for my life. Amen.

## For Information:

You may already be aware of this, but Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now available on WhatsApp and has access to all chats.

Any group chat administrators would therefore be advised to enable the *Enhanced Privacy* option. Without this enabled, AI can open group messages, view phone numbers, and even retrieve personal information from your phone, including private chats. It's very easy to do:

1. Open the group chat.
  2. Tap the chat name at the top.
  3. Scroll down the page and enable the *Advanced Chat Privacy* option.
- You'll need to do this for each chat you are involved in.

### **From George Hill: Visiting Speaker Sunday 7 September - Missionary Aviation Fellowship**

This Sunday 7 September, we would love to see a good attendance to greet our first visiting speaker from Missional Aviation Fellowship (MAF), a cause many of you have donated to. Alasdair Ness is a working airline pilot who works in his spare time for MAF. MAF is the world's largest humanitarian air operator, flying medical supplies, doctors, and nurses to places no one else can reach. Their planes are the only way many people living in remote jungles, deserts, and mountains have access to life-giving necessities and the love of Christ.

### **From Chris Nash: Ian Higginbotham's visit to Sandbach on Monday 8 September**

Just a reminder to those who knew Ian and Val Higginbotham:

This September, it will be 12 months since Val went to be with the Lord. Ian is making September a month of pilgrimage to meet up with people and visit places that were very special to them and he is coming to Sandbach (to Oasis) on Monday 8 September. We will have lunch from around 1:00pm when those who knew Ian and Val can share together and remember Val. It will be a happy time with laughter and celebration. I believe I have already invited everyone who knew them, but if I have missed anyone, please do let me know. Thank you.

### **From George Hill: Picnic and Walk at Tittesworth Reservoir near Leek Sunday 14 September**

On Sunday 14 September, we will be leaving after church for a picnic and optional walk(s) at Tittesworth Reservoir in Staffordshire, postcode ST13 8SW. The drive is 18 miles, so offers of lifts would be welcomed. (And please don't go to Rudyard Lake by mistake!). We will aim to gather around 1:30pm to relax in company (bring butties, possibly a chair and blanket).

The three adjacent car parks are about £3 for 2 hours or £5 for the day. (You may have to look for us depending on where there are spaces!). The Visitor Centre has full facilities including an excellent restaurant open until 5:00pm and there is a fine playground. Binoculars for birdwatching will be handy. Paths are good and wheelchair friendly. Please help support walks for different abilities.

**DIRECTIONS** - Follow ST13 8SW, or ask George for details of a short route, or else:

- Go through Congleton town centre, follow the A54 (signposted Buxton) for 4 miles to the Bosley A523 traffic lights, at which turn right onto A523 towards Leek. (NB - speed cameras).
- In 3.5 miles, where the main road bends right, turn uphill slightly left at the Royal Oak pub. In a quarter of a mile at a crossroads turn left for Meerbrook.
- In one mile turn left and immediately right; then right again following Meerbrook signs. In two miles, continue through Meerbrook village then across the reservoir dam. Turn right into Visitor Centre.

Please email George Hill or phone or text him if you are planning to come or if the weather is very poor. This is an informal event at personal risk. Under-18s must be supervised.

### **From Andrea Jones: Safeguarding Policy**

In response to some recommendations from the NWBA and to allow us to better meet the needs of some of our groups, the Leadership have made a few small changes to the Safeguarding Policy, and these will be explained at the next church meeting. The changes do affect two of our standard forms - *Form 1 the*

*Worker Agreement Form* and *Form 9 The Parental Consent Form* - so please note that the versions in the Safeguarding Folders (at the School and Oasis) are not the latest ones, but will be replaced shortly. In the meantime please contact me if you need one urgently and I can email it to you

### **From George Hill: Advance warning of next Church Meeting 29 September**

On Monday 29 September there will be an Ordinary Church Meeting at Oasis at 7.30pm. The formal Notice for it will be sent out next week. Please note in your diary and attend if you can, to hear an update on all matters concerning the interregnum.

### **From the Leadership Team: Newsletter**

Andrea Jones has picked up the co-ordination and production of the church newsletter following Alistair's retirement. Please send any items for the newsletter to Andrea by 9.00am Thursday. ... And if you are interested in writing any short reflections for the newsletter, please do let Andrea know as we are happy for as many people as want to, to be involved.

### **From the Leadership Team: Sunday Sermons**

While we are without a minister, we will be having occasional visiting speakers to preach on Sunday mornings. For other Sundays, several members of the congregation have very kindly volunteered to take turns at preaching. (The monthly All Age Services will be continued by a different volunteer team).

The theme on which Alistair has been preaching until now has been the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. There is one of these left, 'I am the Vine', and at some point this message will be presented by one of us. Apart from this, since we feel a theme is important, we have agreed that for the first months of the interregnum, our in-house preachers will preach on different 'Significant Characters from the Old Testament'. Then we will move on in the New Year to a series of New Testament messages in the period up to Easter. We hope and pray this will form a balanced and acceptable diet of spiritual nutrition for us all. Prayer for all those taking part will be warmly appreciated and more volunteers are very welcome.

### **From Alistair, Eunice and Susie: Thank you all so much!**

Just to say a huge thank you to all of you for such an amazing weekend. Susie and Stu were wonderful hosts and looked after us all so well on Saturday. Thank you too to the 'creative directors' for all their hard work to make everything so lovely and personal for us- especially all the reds and blues and everything related to Crystal Palace! The cake was awesome [and tasted great too!] and was a fitting tribute to such a fantastic team! Ezra, our grandson, did say that Crystal Palace seemed to be mentioned an awful lot! He also asked why Mary's poem said I was 40 when I wasn't! Clearly, he needs further education! And of course more seriously we are so grateful and totally overwhelmed at the incredibly generous gift and for all the love we've been shown, not just over the weekend but throughout the last 15 years. Thank you too for all the cards and gifts we've received- we are so grateful. And thanks very much to George for leading the service so graciously and sensitively on Sunday and to everyone who shared so kindly. It was all very humbling! The music and singing was awesome too!

We met with the Housing Organisation and contractor at the new house on Monday morning. They have been working incredibly hard to complete things and are bending over backwards to try and fit all the adaptations for Susie. There have been a number of problems to try and resolve to sort everything out. The vast majority of the work has now been completed and they are optimistic that the remaining work, which is relatively minor, should be finished before too long. We're hoping to be able to move in towards the end of September.

Thank you again for everything. We continue to pray for you all as we know you do for us.

God bless - Alistair, Eunice and Susie

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### **Alistair's Retirement Poem by Mary King**

Alistair, how could you? This really isn't on.  
Retiring at 40! That just has to be a con!  
Most people work 'til 60, some a whole lot more.  
So how come, at only 40, you're heading for the door?

*And now to be more serious*

For sixteen long years, you've given your best  
And we, as a church have truly been blessed.  
Your preaching and teaching are second to none  
And you care for your flock, without missing one.

In sickness and health, you care for us all  
Always there with a prayer, you don't let us fall.  
We really appreciate all you have done  
For us as a church, and each separate one.

You will be sorely missed, but not a stranger, we hope.  
Enjoy your retirement, just think of the scope!  
Will it be gardening, DIY or a hobby?  
Whatever you choose, we pray you'll be happy.

We mustn't forget your family, too.  
For Eunice and Susie, who support you all through.  
Also, the fur-babies, who amuse us each day,  
With all of their antics, as they eat, rest and play.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Stewart family.  
We will miss you and we love you all.

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#### **Church Contact:**

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#### **Church Website:**

[www.sandbach-baptist.org.uk](http://www.sandbach-baptist.org.uk)

If you have any items for inclusion in the Newsletter please pass these to Andrea Jones at [andrea.jones200@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.jones200@gmail.com) by 9am on Thursdays.