



Dear Friends,

January 2019

Goodbye 2018 and Hello 2019

So, we made it...another year over, another year upon us...what is in store for us? Some of us have hopes, plans, dreams at this the beginning of this New Year...But didn't we have some last year..and how did those turn out?

However, it's really hard to start a new year when we ended the old one rather badly, or rather painfully...Sometimes it's the old bad habits that might have caused the short comings, or even the death of a loved one...a broken relationship...changing of church, a new minster, a new situation...or other people who have interfered, hurt us, got in the way and we could do nothing to stop that...

And to address that would take commitment, courage, sacrifice, time and relational dedication ...But we must, we should, we have to. for the good of a new year before us

The Good - the Bad - the Ugly

How do we remember 2018, how do others remember us now that 2019 is about to begin?...Do we have a sense that our life has profoundly touched a heart and changed a life, can we be remembered for any good at all...I really hope so

Or has this year been one most remembered for the pain we have caused, the tears and sadness someone had because of us. Can I only be remembered as a critical and judgmental person, for self centered behaviour, wanting my own way, doing my own thing, blaming others for who I am, for what I have become...I really hope not

It's extremely important to understand that the starting of a new year, a new relationship, a new job, anything that's new or even different, must begin from a fresh perspective, from a clean break, from a good and godly place...or else all we do is go back to where we were and never really know what it could have been like to be where we can be

We cannot live on yesterday's blessings either...We must remember the past blessings to count them as an encouragement for today and faith for tomorrow..But we can't stop there...God has so much to give us...fresh and new promises every morning...Lamentations 3:...And great is your Faithfulness oh Lord

Thru the eyes of Family

Most nights, when the kids are home and certainly when they were young, I would look in on my children - when they were fast asleep - their peaceful faces. I would wonder what they must think of me; were they pleased with me today - this past year; Did I enable them to a higher heights of learning, of development - did I do right by them; Have they become better people because of me...are they proud of me?

What about my wife, is she pleased with me - happy - feeling safer and cared for, loved more deeply - is she proud to be called my wife, my partner my friend, or how much of a disappointment was I to her, how does she see me at the end of another year?

I ask the same of my friends - and I ask the same of you - the church as well;

Roll the Tape On

But to have a hope for a New Year, I must ask God to forgive my past year and make me a person of the future, a person of worth – a person of value - a Jesus person for 2019!!

Can I really make a difference like the baby Jesus did in the hearts of the shepherds and in hearts of the wise men - who then went back to their homes a different route, a different way...the way of Christ? I can only pray so

I believe God does forgive and God does redeem and God does give another opportunity. Some of us might have to live with the consequences of bad decision making... if reconciliation can be made then we do that, if restitution can be done, then we do that too. Thereafter, our New Year becomes one of great promise - of amazing opportunities

Why, because I have another opportunity to both put the past right - to create new beginnings for myself and for others - to invest well in the lives around me, so that they can impact the world they are living in, far more than I can...I must begin with my family, and hope that by doing so, they can truly reflect the love of their father, the love of a husband who longs to see them become all that God had desired and planned for them...

It can be a truly a New Year for all of us - for each of us have the capacity for good...to either empty hell and fill heaven or empty heaven and fill hell

How many of us would even consider that kind of radical obedience if God called us to trust him - to have faith - to obey His calling into 2018....? Would we even be able to hear his voice - his call?

We talk about laying our all on the altar. We know all the right things to say about commitment. And yet when it comes right down to it, it's really tough to be able really to risk things for a future we don't really understand or see. Thomas the doubting disciple had this problem...in walked Jesus and simply said; "blessed are those who believe that which they cannot see...."

Open Seas - Wild Adventures

Jesus simply says come....as he did to Peter - to all of us.. The commitment to follow God into an unknown New Year is a fundamental aspect of what it means to step up beyond just being called...and moving beyond the security of where we are...of just surviving until the end of the year

But if God calls, why is it that so few of us are unable to identify his call in and on our lives? Could it be that we may not be hearing what God is saying... possibly too much going on, too many other demands, too many other voices, too many sacrifices to make...or perhaps, we don't know how to respond... or maybe, just too scared to...or just unable to recognize and identify the call of God. But many have... Imagine what the world would be like if Michelangelo had said, "I don't do ceilings," if Moses had said; "I don't do sea crossings"; If Joseph said; " I will do Potiphers wife"; if Noah had said, "I don't do boats," if David had said, "I don't do Goliaths," if Mary had said, "I don't do virgin births," if Paul had said, "I don't do letters," and if Jesus had said, "I don't do crosses"

Remember Mary - the mother of Jesus - the Christmas of old that enables a Year of the New... The angel's confession to Mary that *"nothing is impossible for God"* finds its deepest meaning in that the impossibility is definitely possible.

Mary's world was forever changed. She was part of the greatest religious revolution the world has ever known. She would have to bear as a mother the rejection by others of her son; his death on the cross; his resurrection from the dead - a joyous event; and the heart breaking ascension of Jesus... but a soon returning King

PRAYER

My hope and prayer is that you --me - us...., want to be a church deeply and desperately desiring an extra-ordinary touch from God...turning us into an extra-ordinary church under God

Yes, the New Year will come with its own challenges and difficulties, but what of the greater opportunities - the amazing possibilities...touching hearts and saving lives for the Kingdom of God because of a church that desires to be awesome in power, relational in love and transforming in ministries... a church fully alive in God - a church fully active in Christ - a church fully empowered by the Holy Spirit...A church but not as we now it - but a church as God has called

Oh that we may seek after all that God has planned for us - why, because;

<i>God matters,</i>	we are devoted to obeying God,
<i>Human life matters,</i>	we are committed to loving people
<i>The world matters,</i>	we are dedicated to making a better world

Now that's what I call heaven touching earth - because; *"What I really lack is to be clear in my mind what I am to do, not what I am to know. The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do is to find the idea for which I can live and die for"* - **Soren Kierkegaard**

And so Church, when the wall seems Unclimable, the ocean Uncrossable, the mountain Immovable, it is then that GOD does the Impossible, so in 2019, may God Bless Us with the Unthinkable for He is the Great I am - now and forever more...

"The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us"
- Acts 1:8

What's on in January? Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 2nd	10.30am	Prayer Fellowship
Thursday 3rd	10.00am 6.30pm 8.00pm	Free Bees Junior Badminton Club Adult Badminton Club
Friday 4th	11.30am 7.30pm	Service at Staplehurst Manor Welcome Team meeting in the Upper Room
Monday 7th	10.00am	Men's walking group
Tuesday 8th	8.30am 7.30pm	Church Office reopens Housegroups at various locations around the village
Wednesday 9th	10.30am 3.30pm 7.00pm 8.00pm	Prayer Fellowship Service at Sobell Lodge Preachers meeting in Upper Room CHURCH MEETING - All Welcome
Thursday 10th	10.00am 6.30pm 8.00pm	Free Bees Junior Badminton Club Adult Badminton Club
Friday 11th	10.00am 7.30pm	Ladies Badminton Club Worship Group Team meeting
Monday 14th	10.00am	Men's walking group
Tuesday 15th	7.30pm	Housegroups at various locations around the village
Wednesday 16th	10.30am 3.30pm 7.30pm	Prayer Fellowship Service at Sobell Lodge Wednesday Housegroup at Filling Station
Thursday 17th	10.00am 6.30pm 8.00pm	Free Bees Junior Badminton Club Adult Badminton Club
Friday 18th	10.00am 11.00am	Ladies Badminton Club Service at Abbotsleigh Nursing Home
Monday 21st	10.00am	Men's walking group
Tuesday 22nd	7.30pm	Housegroups at various locations around the village
Wednesday 23rd	10.30am 3.30pm 8.00pm	Prayer Fellowship Service at Sobell Lodge Housegroup
Thursday 24th	10.00am 6.30pm 8.00pm	Free Bees Junior Badminton Club Adult Badminton Club
Friday 25th	10.00am	Ladies Badminton Club
Monday 28th	10.00am 4.00pm	Men's walking group Service at Iden Manor Nursing Home
Tuesday 29th	7.30pm	Housegroups at various locations around the village
Wednesday 30th	10.30am 3.30pm 8.00pm	Prayer Fellowship Service at Sobell Lodge Housegroup
Thursday 31st	10.00am 6.30pm 8.00pm	Free Bees Junior Badminton Club Adult Badminton Club



Happy New Year

Quarterly Church Meeting 9th January at 8pm

If you are either a member or a regular attendee of SFC then you are welcome to attend our quarterly business meeting on Wednesday 9th January at 8pm. It is planned that this meeting will be an opportunity to explore the way ahead for SFC, so if you are able to, it would be great if as many as possible could attend. Thank you



House groups Meeting Wednesday 23rd January at 8pm

Just a reminder that all are invited to a meeting about house groups on Wednesday 23rd January at 8pm in the Upper Room (unless there are so many of us that we need to move downstairs!)

If you are not in a house group but would like to be, please speak to Dhenis or one of the elders.

Group Meetings

Just a quick reminder that there are a number of activity group meetings this month. If you belong to any of the following it would be greatly appreciated if you make every effort to attend

- Friday 4th January 7:30pm Welcome team Meeting
- Wednesday 9th January 7pm Preachers Meeting
- Friday 11th January 7:30pm Worship Team Meeting

Thank you

Cafe room doors

Please note the two doors have been both fitted with push button closers.

The doors are to be pushed open from the corridor and the mechanism will then hold them open at the appropriate place.

They can be closed by pressing the button that is by the door frame in the corridor, or the one that is by the door frame inside the cafe room.

A big THANK YOU to Adrian and David and Pete for an excellent job in getting this sorted.

Bob

On behalf of the Leadership Team



Welcomer's Rota

6/1: Breda and Don
13/1: Amanda and Gordon
20/1: Peter and Hazel
27/1: Linda and Peter



Copy deadline for February Surface by Thursday 24th January to Kate M

Staplehurst Free Church Leadership Team**Minister: Rev. Dhenis Stafford****Email: dhenis@staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk Mobile 07771 288199****Elders: Terence Hawgood: Steve Parsons:****Deacons: Bob Howse: Maggie Martin: Sophie Hawkes:****Staplehurst Free Church****Church Administrator - Maggie Martin****Email: churchadmin@staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk Office: 01580 893993****www.staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk****Services in January**

Sunday 6th	10.30am	Family Service Theme: Face 2 Face
	6.30pm	Evening Worship, the Word and Communion Theme: Rhythm of Life
Sunday 13th	10.45am	Worship and Communion Theme: A Witnessing Church
	6.30pm	Evening Praise Theme: Alien on Earth
Sunday 20th	10.30am	Worship and the Word Theme: A Life of Worship
	<u>6.00pm</u>	Weald Churches United Service at St Dunstan's, Cranbrook
Sunday 27th	10.30am	Worship and Communion Theme: Accidental Living
	6.30pm	Worship and the Word Theme: Story from Beyond

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Instead of our usual service involving 4 Staplehurst churches during the week of prayer for Christian unity, this year the Churches Together committee have invited 20 churches across the Weald to meet together for a united service. 8 churches have indicated support, with 4 others showing interest. In anticipation of a larger congregation, we have arranged for the service to be held at St. Dunstons, Cranbrook, at 6.00p.m. on Sunday 20th January; the speaker will be the Bishop of Dover, who many of you will have heard preaching at the Remembrance Day service at All Saints.

What a witness this could be to the Weald, Christians of different denominations meeting together to pray and give praise to God, and you can be part of it. Please consider joining with us, Cranbrook is not that far away. If you need help with transport, speak to me, but also consider car sharing if possible.

Peter