

Weekly Prayers, News and Thoughts

Welcome to our condensed Newsletter. We are publishing this in digital format to help keep us up to date with each other during the Corona Virus chaos.

As you know many of our events, services, facilities and meetings are still postponed in order to reduce our contact with each other. The clear and strong advice is that we do not meet for worship or other meetings to ensure appropriate social distancing and protection for those who need it most.

Church is all about relationship: with God, with one another and with the wider community as we demonstrate that our relationship to God and seek to draw others into it, those relationships can still be nurtured, but in other ways. A kindness of heart and spirit can bring light into everyone's life, be it a kind word or a simple gesture, a telephone call, an email, an instant message, social media... there are so many ways... seek to share your light with those in need - but do so safely.

Clearly, we should pray. Pray for those who mourn and have lost loved ones to Corona Virus, for those who have the illness, for those caring and supporting those who are ill, for those exploring the possibilities of vaccines and for the effectiveness of national strategies and personal practices in overcoming the pandemic.

For help and support. please feel free to contact:

- John Claydon johnclaydon@thenba.org.uk
- Paul Revill paulrevill@thenba.org.uk or
- Elaine Webster elainewebster@thenba.org.uk

Prayers

Please continue to pray, either by yourself, or collectively, using one of the many online and social media channels for:

- ***Members & friends of our Fellowship***
- ***People, families & neighbours within your own circle experiencing difficulties***
- ***Those who work for our benefit and welfare in frontline jobs, putting themselves and their families in vulnerable and frequently life-threatening situations***
- ***Supermarket staff and other supply industries***
- ***Carers in Care Homes and Nursing Homes and Sheltered Housing and Hostels***
- ***Carers who look after members of their own families***
- ***Postal Workers and other delivery people who bring us our mail and parcels***

We are asked by NBA to pray for our Baptist Hospital Chaplains at this time of great challenge for our NHS, as they support staff and patients and who also carry anxieties of their own:

- ***Rev Robert Muir - Wansbeck Hospital, Ashington***
- ***Rev Jim Wright - Lead chaplain at North Tees Hospital, Stockton***
- ***Rev Rodney Breckon - James Cook Hospital***
- ***Rev Graeme Harrison - Lead chaplain, Northumbria Healthcare Trust***
- ***Rev Liz Edwards - North Tyneside hospital***
- ***Rev Dave Etherington - North Durham University Hospital + BAGH***
- ***We also have numerous volunteer Chaplains including Paul Chapple (Morpeth BC) at St George's Park Hospital and Rev Bill Eugster at the RVI in Newcastle***

May God use them and their colleagues from other traditions, to be carriers of the light and peace of Christ to staff and patients, protecting and upholding them, strengthening them each day for the challenges they face.

This week please pray especially for all those living and working in:

- ***Sandringham Nursing Home***
- ***Church View Nursing Homes***
- ***Lady Eden House***
- ***Prescott Way***
- ***Short Street***
- ***Arundel Close***
- ***Belvoir Grove***

Please pray also for those:

- *Who mourn and have lost loved ones to the Corona Virus*
- *Who have the illness*
- *Those caring and supporting those who are ill*
- *Those exploring the possibilities of vaccines and for the effectiveness of national strategies and personal practices in overcoming the pandemic*

Amen

Online Church Services

- Northern Baptist Association
Service 19th April: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7-KlrW_hh4
- Influence Church <http://www.influencechurch.co.uk>
Services streamed each Sunday at 11.00am and 5.00pm

Thoughts

Keeping in touch - In this present crisis we are warned about the perils of handshakes, pecks on the cheek, cuddling the grandchildren and so on, all of which are part of our customs and are perfectly natural.

In New Testament times also, physical contact was considered normal and there are several examples when Jesus touched others or was touched by others. Some of these events are recorded in the Bible and miracles happened or realisations burst forth.

There's the account of "Doubting Thomas" (John 20 v27 / Mark 10 v16) where Jesus blessed the children and then Jairus' daughter (Mark 5 v23) and also the account of the woman touching the garment of Jesus (Mark 5 v27).

Obviously, like it or not, it is best that we follow the advice we are given and avoid as much as possible, close physical contact and touching others.

However, the benefits of modern technology allow us to “touch” others in different ways.

A simple phone call or even a letter are often a great uplift to isolated, sometimes lonely, friends and family and a simple text message or e mail can be a great fillip to many of those cut off.

Even though some older people may not have access to social media platforms, a lot still have CD players or DVD players; many of us can record messages and copy photos etc which could be posted to them.

Certainly, there are now many technologies available too which allow for messaging and video calls - these are now taken for granted by younger generations, but many not so young are now able to receive welcome greetings and smiles via tech to relieve their feelings of abandonment and separation.

These contacts are real treats to lots of acutely cut off people and they are truly touched.

There are features such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype and Teams which are used nowadays by all ages that can help us to keep in touch.

Private Facebook groups can be established where families, small groups and churches can be setup and indeed many have been using them before the present pandemic took hold.

Social distancing means that the natural physical contact we express in fellowship and in care for others must generally be avoided, but, it doesn't mean that we can't continue to **reach out, keep in touch and so touch others in the real sense of the word.**

Psalm 4:1

***Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.***

In this verse the cry for help may seem to be very demanding. However, it is also really the cry of desperation. Have you been there? Many of us have surely have and we regularly know about people who are there now.

But, read how this Psalm ends! - What is the secret to surviving a long agony?

Three things are important:

- 1 - Honesty in our prayer life with God
- 2 - Confidence that God hears and cares, even when our prayers groan with pain and frustration
- 3 - Genuine praise for God included in our prayers even when things seem bleak

It's not a magical formula, but it is a Spirit-inspired one - Read Psalm 4 to the end!

O God, please hear my cry for relief, as well as the relief of those I love, from their agony, burdens, and suffering. Almighty God, the only true Healer of disease and Mender of broken hearts, please hear the cry today of those who are in extreme desperate situations. May your will be done in every one of their lives with tenderness, grace, and a sense of your presence. Please answer in amazing and miraculous ways so that we may not only be relieved, but so that you may be glorified as well. Lord, please be near me, and help me see your answer to my prayers. Forever yours in the name of Jesus. Amen.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

(An item adapted from UCB Word for Today 26/11/2019)

If you're feeling overwhelmed today, take a minute to pray:

“Lord it feels as if an unbearable massive weight is on my shoulders and I know it isn't your will. Teach me to cast my worries and cares on You, knowing that You have promised to take care of me (1 Peter 5 v7). Teach me to be still and know that You are my God. (Psalm 46 v10). Thank You for being my refuge; a very present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46 v 1). Pray for those who are feeling overwhelmed and ready to give up on their faith.”