

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

NBA Online Retreat Event

NBA are holding a **Zoom Online Prayer Retreat** on Saturday 6th June 2020 starting at 9:30am and running until 12:30pm. If you would like to take part then book your place by emailing Paul Revill at paulrevill@thenba.org.uk Your email booking verification will contain the links and access details needed to attend the Online Retreat.

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, food and medicines***
- ***All those in positions of leadership, research, development, industrial organisations and new productions, at this traumatic time***

This week We are asked by NBA to pray for our Baptist Hospital Chaplains at this time of great challenge and for our NHS as they support staff and patients 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***

Please pray especially for all those living and working in:

- ***Butterwick Hospice BA***
- ***Auckland Park Hospital***
- ***Sandringham Care Home***
- ***BA General Hospital***
- ***Church View Nursing Home***

Pray for those who mourn and have lost loved ones to Covid-19, 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

The Difference between Christian Hope and Worldly Hope

Perhaps you remember the popular series of films in the 1980s /90s, “Back to the Future”. The films may have been fiction, but they portrayed the uplifting overcoming of lots of adversities and promising a happy utopian future. Certainly not the dystopian collapse of certainties that we have at present. They demonstrated hope for the future.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED HOPE? Hope may be defined as, “to wish for something with the expectation of its fulfilment.”

Everybody needs hope. Hope helps to sustain us when life hurts and tries us. This is true for both Christians and unbelievers. Functionally, Christian hope and worldly hope are the same in that they both denote a positive expectation. Other than that, Christian hope and worldly hope are worlds apart. When unbelievers express hope, they do not necessarily have a basis for their hope. They may just be hoping for the best. At best, the hope of the world is rooted in a fallible thing or person.

The basis of Christian hope is revealed in Hebrews 11:1. It says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for” (KJV). In other words, faith is what underlies the Christian hope.

Think about a tall building. One of the most vital aspects of its construction is something you cannot see but it is still there. That is the foundation on which the building is built, and the taller the building is, the deeper the foundation must be. Also, the stronger the underlying foundation is, the more difficult it is for the forces of nature to bring that building down.

Similarly, our hope is powered by our faith because our faith in God is what underlies our hope. The deeper our and stronger our faith is, then the more difficult it is for our hope to be overthrown and give way to despair.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE lies in the fact that hope sustains us during times of difficulty. Even Christians are subject to adversity. One of the worst things you can do when life becomes tough is to lose hope. If, on the other hand, you hold fast to your hope you can endure anything.

WE FORTIFY CHRISTIAN HOPE by realising that faith and hope go hand in hand and that faith is the substance of things hoped for. That means we can fortify our hope by building up our faith in God. The stronger our faith is, the harder it will be for us to lose hope amidst our trials.

A person who has deep faith in God is a person who is expectant with hope. No matter how gloomy his situation in life is, that person can have a positive expectation of the outcome. We know that as long as God is on our side life is never hopeless. God knows how to make all things work together for our good.

God can do “far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). But though life for Christians is never hopeless, it can seem that way at times. Trials can cause you to become weary in your mind. During hardships, life’s demonic assaults can be at work trying to cause you to abandon your hope in God.

However, the devil cannot take your hope from you. But through his attacks and deception, he can cause you to abandon your hope in God – if you let him. That is why we need to constantly fortify our hope.

How do we do that? By cultivating our faith in God which underpins our hope. The best way to do that is by faithfully studying the Bible because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The stronger your faith in God is, the more immovable your hope will be. Hope is priceless in helping to sustain you when the going gets tough.

As the psalmist wrote in Psalm 27v13: “I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”

(Copyright © 2019 by Frank King. All rights reserved)

Online Prayer

- Northern Baptist Association
Service 24th May <https://youtu.be/l8Qgj3kUjjs>
- Influence Church <http://www.influencechurch.co.uk>
Services streamed each Sunday at 11.00am and 5.00pm

FareShare Food Scheme

John and Vanessa at Bishop Auckland Methodist Church continue their sterling efforts in collecting the vast amount of FareShare food kindly donated by local suppliers. They are currently taking the food to Woodhouse Close Food Bank to ensure the most efficient route of distribution. The food bank is open every weekday from 10.00am until 12.00pm.

The food is being received and distributed to those who need it most and includes a wide variety of products across numerous categories from basics to occasional treats.

Church Garden

We owe a great big word of “THANK YOU” to one of the good friends of Bishop Auckland Baptist Church , who continues single handed in the upkeep and development of our church garden, and he is still creating contacts with passers-by! (at a safe distance of course). The blog is now on the front page of our website.

Thoughts

Stand With The World on Solidarity Sunday - 31st May 2020

On Sunday 31 May, UK Baptists will be coming together for Solidarity Sunday, a day set aside to hold up in prayer the people who are most vulnerable in the Coronavirus crisis, as well as those who are responding across the world.

Solidarity Sunday falls at Pentecost, a wonderful opportunity to remember that we have a God whose living hope is for peoples of all languages and nations.

Churches up and down the UK are facing challenges and changes, but Solidarity Sunday is about reminding ourselves and each other that there is so much good we can do when we come together through giving and through prayer.

We praise God for our churches and congregations across the UK, many of whom are struggling during these uncertain times. Please pray for strength and peace in the hearts of UK Christians, pray for all the Baptist churches who have been meeting remotely, ask the Lord to bless all those working behind the scenes to make these services possible and pray for future opportunities for the Baptist family to enjoy meeting together.

Full details of Solidarity Sunday can be found online at www.bmsworldmission.org

Ascension Day - Thursday 21st May 2020

Many Christians continue to celebrate Ascension Thursday, recalling that day, forty days after his resurrection from the dead, when Jesus was taken up into heaven.

According to one of the Bible accounts, just after he had gone up out of their sight, his disciples stand around staring up at the sky, almost as if they were frozen with indecision.

“What comes next?” seems to be the question they are silently pondering as they gaze upwards.

That question, “What comes next?” has been on the minds of many of us recently as well.

For weeks we have been talking about the exit-strategy from lockdown: what it will look like, how long it will take and what will become our new normal afterwards?

Nearly every aspect of our lives has changed - our relationships, our careers, our priorities - and as we go back, we have the opportunity to ask ourselves: ‘what do I want to go back to?’

The question, then, does not simply concern the practicalities of daily living - it is an invitation to reflect on the type of life we want to lead and to address questions about the type of world we want to live in and our approach towards inequality, the environment and injustice.

Of course, those are big questions, but I think Ascension Thursday is a day for daring to ask the big questions and facing them straight on.

After he had gone up into heaven, Jesus’ disciples could have so easily returned to their former ways of life, but they took a risk and embraced something new and today we are facing something similar as we ponder our own future’s post-lockdown. Like the disciples, we ask: what’s next?

Heavenly Father, you teach us to let go of all that holds us back so that we can receive from you your new blessings. Gift us with the grace to dare to imagine how our lives might be and your power to make it a reality. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen

(Father Christopher Hancock, Broadcast on BBC Radio 4, Prayer for Today, Thurs 21/05/2020)

Spring Bank Holiday – Monday 25th May 2020

Please note that Monday, 25th May is a Bank Holiday. May you be able to enjoy it and receive blessings amongst the present troubles and uncertainties. God be with you all.