

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 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, 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:

- ***Dene Hall Drive***
- ***Etherley Lane***
- ***Sandringham Care Home***
- ***Pollards Drive***
- ***Escomb Road***

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

Northern Baptist Association - Prayers for Trinity Sunday 7th June 2020

(Supplied by Headland Baptist Church, Baptist Street, Hartlepool TS24 0QJ)

We serve a multifaceted and infinite God, who we will never fully comprehend with our finite minds. Yet due to our unique, individual personalities we will each grasp one facet of His personality better than another. We can see this clearly in the gospels.

Rather than providing us with an account of Jesus from just one perspective, God gives us four:

1. We see Matthew's understanding of Jesus from a Jewish perspective,
2. Mark's sense of immediacy,
3. Luke's concentration on healing,
4. and John's grasp of His majesty

Had we only been left with one gospel we would have a far poorer understanding of Christ. Thus, when we come together as a corporate body, we reflect a far truer picture of God, than we can ever do individually.

This truth is reflected in our today's NBA prayer requests.

We Thank God:

- for the leaders of Headland Baptist Church to whom God has entrusted the task of steering the church through these difficult times.
- for the members of Headland Baptist Church whom God has individually fashioned to become part of the corporate body.
- for His faithfulness to this church since it was first founded.

Please Pray:

- that God will watch over, protect and inspire the ministry of Headland Baptist Church in these challenging circumstances.
- that we will recognise each member's unique gifts and the part they play in the corporate body of Headland Baptist Church.
- that just as the Holy Spirit spoke through His people to representatives of different nations, in their own language at Pentecost, He will now empower members of Headland Baptist Church in reaching out to the sectors of community to which they are called.

(NBA prayers forwarded to us by Roger Daniel)

Northern Baptist Association – Home Mission Open Letter

Dear Friends,

I hope this open letter finds you in good heart and health and may God's blessing be upon you.

During these unprecedented times that our church buildings have been closed and we have had very few opportunities to encourage each other in the many aspects of being church. Some have been able to innovate and transmit electronically services and encouraging videos etc. as have the NBA each week, for which we are grateful.

As your Home Mission Co-ordinator, I am acutely aware that supporting our Baptist Family around the UK is such an important aspect of being church.

The opportunities to hear stories from our churches that are supported by Home Mission funds are very limited, however these churches still need our continued support, even though what we receive from the BU has been reducing over the recent years.

The main ways we support each other is by Prayer, Grants, and the regular input from our Regional Team.

Your giving helps us to maintain our commitment to supporting eleven local ministries as well as the NBA Team in their ministry and support to all. It is vital as we are unable to physically meet to interact in new and innovative ways as well as the usual telephone and email systems.

These all still need to be paid for and your continued sacrificial giving is of possibly even greater importance at this time, so please continue to give generously as you have been and pray without ceasing for all we are able to accomplish through Home Mission, "our Family Purse"

We all continue to pray for you and trust that it will not be too long before we are able to meet and greet each other, maybe not as before but in a very meaningful way.

When we are able, I would like to come to as many churches in the NBA to offer support and encouragement regarding Home Mission, so please get in touch as soon as you are able.

Every Blessing

Ray

Online Prayer

- Northern Baptist Association
Trinity Service 7th June <https://youtu.be/aPf0GIEdii0>
- Bishop Auckland Baptist Church
Trinity Service 7th June <https://youtu.be/jvwFCU-ST-8>
- 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

COVID-19 and Spiritual Health Check

As I did some soul searching, I realized how much we fear the Covid-19 outbreak. It has changed the way we work, the way we conduct our meetings, and the way we socialize.

It has brought up the best of us and the worse of us.

Some are willing to share their supply of facemasks and hand sanitizers. Others hoard them. Still others charge exorbitant prices for them.

The Covid-19 fear has led many into irrational behaviour of panic buying. I can understand buying up surgical masks, disinfectants and hand sanitizers. But toilet paper?

Just when you thought this weird reaction is only peculiar to Singapore, you read about the snapping up of toilet papers in Japan that cleared the shelves of every shop. After the rapid spike of Covid-19 cases, South Korea and Italy join in the panic rush to buy masks and groceries in drugstores and supermarkets. Pharmacies carried signs saying they've run out of protective masks and hand sanitizers. People are so scared of the corona virus.

To top it all, market survey shows 37 percent of drinkers won't touch Corona Extra beer because of the epidemic fear.

If we do a Covid-19 check, we might easily conclude that we fear the virus more than we fear the Lord.

If only we fear God like we fear Covid-19, which we cannot see but know for sure is real and deadly.

If only we monitor our spiritual temperature regularly like the way we conscientiously do now.

If only we wash our souls as much as we wash our hands and sanitize them whenever we touch something suspiciously unclean.

If only we mask ourselves to prevent the spread of sinful infection in our lives and the lives of others.

If only we avoid visiting and going to known places that contaminate our minds and our bodies.

If only we self-impose isolation just to be in solitude with the Lord.

If only our travel history shows that we have been in the presence of God.

If only we read the Bible like we read the report of Covid-19 day after day.

If only we be just as weary of rumours of false teachings, fake insights circulating in the Internet, WhatsApp, Twitter and FaceBook.

If only we buy up opportune time to fill up our treasure trove of spiritual knowledge, insights and revelation instead of storing up rice, instant noodles and toilet papers. If only we fear the Lord like we fear the virus.

LeCrae said, *"We fear circumstances so much because we fear God so little."*

Jesus made it clear: *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).*

Let's do a spiritual health check and may we learn to fear God more.

Rev Sng Chong Hui

Reverend Sng Chong Hui is a retired Methodist Pastor who, after serving for 38 years in 10 churches, is now currently re-engaged to serve as Pastor at Trinity Methodist Church. (This item is submitted by TT from an item by Our Daily Bread Ministries).

Show up, shut up: Settling into Chaplaincy

Having made my presence and purpose known to the staff nurse on duty, I stepped into bay 6, feeling the same fear in my gut that I felt the first time I entered a room with sick patients and worried relatives, like I'm imposing upon people's suffering.

This particular bay consisted of two people and I struck up a conversation with the patient in bed 1. He sat in his chair, head down, looking at his lap. We chatted about normal everyday things like the weather and hobbies.

He missed his garden and told me how he'd usually be preparing his borders at this time of year. Spring was coming but he didn't anticipate fruit.

He was waiting to find out exactly what was wrong.

All he knew, with his catalogue of suffering and recent hospital visits, was that his life was in serious danger. After half an hour or so, I asked him if he had a faith.

As a hospital Chaplain, new to this post, my job is to provide both religious/spiritual and more general pastoral/conversational care.

I was surprised when he started to cry and said "No".

It felt insensitive to proceed in this direction, so as we returned to ordinary conversation, "God is just as present there after all," I thought.

We chatted some more about hobbies and work and actually had a bit of a laugh.

I offered to pop back tomorrow, and then I approached the neighbouring bed. To be honest, I didn't have high hopes of much of a conversation with this patient. He lay so frail, emaciated. Eyes wide, bulging. A tube stuck out of his neck. I looked hard wondering if he was actually alive. I was soon surprised. He started to speak, and being deaf and so unable to hear himself, he spoke very loudly! "Everyone can hear him, even the ward staff outside!" I thought. I could have asked him to quieten down but he was already warming up.

I stood silently, freed from thoughts of how I might respond, to actually listen. I got his whole-life story: childhood, family, work-life, hobbies, marriage, war, children, disease, suffering, death. He kept forgetting his thread and wandering off into dense digressions before retracing his steps to the meta-narrative.

I didn't mind. I was there for him.

After about 20 minutes I began to notice that even the sad and tragic elements of his story were told through a positive realism. He was thankful even for the pain of life, the heartache and brokenness of it all. I sensed, and not for the first time in a patient, the presence of Christ.

Then, right at the end, he shouted out (bearing in mind he was already virtually shouting): "AND I JUST WANT TO THANK MY GOD FOR THE LIFE I'VE LIVED AND THE MANY BLESSINGS I'VE KNOWN."

I was speechless, obviously and couldn't help but think about the man in the first bed.

Later, as I reflected with my friend, Linda, on this event, I wondered what it means in ministry today to follow a God of presence, who shows up in the flesh (a particularly relevant question during the current pandemic), who listens and watches for the Father's lead, and touches the untouchables.

The preacher who lay in the bed before me was beautifully silent now. He reached out his hand and said, "Father, bless me." And before I could say that I wasn't a catholic priest, his head was bowed. I held his hand anyway and thanked God.

David Etherington, Hospital Chaplain (Copied from "Around The NBA" page 3, May 2020)