

## ***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](mailto:johnclaydon@thenba.org.uk)
- Paul Revill [paulrevill@thenba.org.uk](mailto:paulrevill@thenba.org.uk) or
- Elaine Webster [elainewebster@thenba.org.uk](mailto: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:*

- ***Bell Street***
- ***Clevedon Avenue***
- ***Bishop Auckland General Hospital***
- ***Percy Street***
- ***Woodhouse Lane***

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. We must not forget those people who have recently lost loved ones too, from other causes and who are going through the grief and stresses which are made even harder to bear by the present circumstances.

**Northern Baptist Association - Prayers for Great Asby Church**

Great Asby is a small village on the Settle to Carlisle railway with the station long closed. It is the westernmost church in the NBA and sent members to Upper Eden when the church in Kirkby Stephen was in danger of closing. The ties remain and I have led worship regularly over the years.

*Rev Tony Taylor*

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For years I was troubled by the statement in Isaiah 53: 5 stating that "by his stripes we are healed".

Having watched Rose Wayland, my mother-in-Christ die of a painful brain tumour, it was not until I studied the original Hebrew text that I understood this passage clearly.

The word "rapa" which we translate as "healing" means so much more. It conveys a sense of freshness, restoration, fertility, physical and spiritual healing plus wholesomeness.

With our finite minds, we have a limited understanding of all that God provides for us.

Whilst we are concerned for our physical healing, God sees a far greater picture.

He will not be satisfied until our broken mental, physical, spiritual and emotional beings are completely healed and we are transformed into the image of Christ.

At times He may choose to provide physical healing. On other occasions He plans something far greater and deeper than we can imagine.

It is not then, that our expectations of God are too great, but that our grasp of all He offers is too limited.

Whilst God is not the author of our sufferings, He does use them for our ultimate benefit.

What the enemy intends for our destruction, God uses for our good. Whilst Rose Wayland was on her sickbed I asked if she was really pleased with God. I will never forget the look of joy on her face as gazing heavenward she stated, 'Oh yes!'

Clearly God used her suffering to draw her into a far deeper relationship and understanding of God's love than I have yet to experience.

**We Thank God:**

- For the leaders of Gt. Asby Baptist Church to whom God has entrusted the task of steering the church through these difficult times.
- For the faithful witness of Gt. Asby Baptist Church over many years.
- For His faithfulness to this church since it was first founded.

**Please Pray:**

- That God will inspire the leaders of Gt. Asby Baptist Church as they seek to serve His people in these challenging circumstances.
- That Gt. Asby Baptist Church will be able to reach out into the local community at this time.
- That God will enlarge the vision of Gt. Asby Baptist Church and provide its members with much-needed encouragement.

(Prayers and text supplied by Roger M Daniel: NBA Coordinator)

## Online Prayer

- Northern Baptist Association  
Service 14<sup>th</sup> June <https://youtu.be/Kcee1x7HtX0>
- 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

The speaker’s topic was “Racial Tension” yet he remained calm and collected.

Standing on stage before a large audience, he spoke boldly – but with grace, humility, kindness and even humour.

Soon the tense audience visibly relaxed, laughing along with the speaker.

about the dilemmas they all faced: how to resolve their cauldron hot issues, but at the same time to cool down their feelings and words.

How to tackle an incendiary topic with sweet grace.

In Proverbs 16v9, King Solomon advised this same approach for all of us: “Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones”.

He went on to say: “The hearts of the wise make... their lips provide instruction” (Proverbs16v23).

Why would a powerful king like Solomon devote time to addressing how we speak?

Because words can destroy.

During Solomon’s time, kings relied on messengers for information about their nations, and calm and reliable messengers were highly valued.

They used prudent words and reasoned tongues, not over-reacting or speaking harshly, no matter what the issue was.

We all can benefit by gracing our opinions and thoughts with godly and prudent sweetness.

In Solomon’s words, “To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue” (Proverbs16v1).

Our holy God, when we speak on hard topics, soften our hearts and words with Your sweet Spirit.

(Adapted from Our Daily Bread, Tue 26th May 2020)

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**A letter from Rev John Claydon, NBA Regional Pastoral Minister:**  
**A new future for our buildings!**

As we build for the future it is important to give our buildings a new future.

There are times when you sit at a red traffic light and intuitively feel that the lights should change, but then you realise that it is a four-way system serving roadworks at a junction and the change seems to take forever.

Some of us may now be feeling that the lights and signs should be changing to allow us to return to our church buildings.

There does seem to be a dim flickering green indicating that we can think about using our church buildings for individual private prayer and funerals with appropriate social distancing, but no congregational worship as yet.

We seem to have something of an ambivalent relationship with our buildings sometimes seeing them as a restriction and constraint on who we are as God's people; a sign of an apparently outmoded attractional model, even an idolatrous distraction.

When the lockdown started, many were quick to point out that although the church buildings were closed the church was open, that the church was a truly dispersed community, and certainly church has been expressed creatively and meaningfully in many different ways.

Now we are given a sign of hope that we can access our buildings and, for some there is a feeling not being able to wait.

It must be said that, as yet (9th June), nothing definite has been said about the restarting of corporate worship within our buildings.

Any use of our buildings for personal private prayer must be undertaken with care for social distancing, good hygiene, the safety of all and for a good witness and example to our communities.

The practicalities must be carefully thought through.

This continuing wait for a fuller use of our building provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how we see our buildings, even to being able to reflect on a theology of buildings.

Are they so positive or so negative as some recent on-line comments might have suggested?

Whether it is a grand, ornate historic cathedral that seems to evoke a sense of otherness, a village chapel with its quaintness, peace and tranquillity, or a fairly utilitarian building used for the worship of God and the fellowship and witness of His people the church building is basically a tool for the Kingdom.

Tools only work well when properly understood and used in the right way.

So too it is with our buildings, they can limit and redefine our thinking and practice or they can be seen as signs of the Kingdom that speak of God's presence, and although that presence is obviously not limited to the building, and a sign of His mission, yet mission is more than what we do in a building.

The building can be a place of welcome, hospitality and an expression of God's love for the world.

Whatever the architecture and décor, if God is encountered there then it is a 'sacred place', but God, who is Lord of all and everywhere present, can be encountered anywhere.

It is just that there are some places where He seems easier to find.

So, as we ponder a return to using our buildings it is worth asking a few questions:

- How is our building a sign of God's Kingdom in this place?
- What does its presence and appearance say to the surrounding community?
- How are people made to feel welcome within the building and its grounds?
- How is the community enabled to see it as a natural place of welcome and gathering?
- What changes need to happen to enrich our worship of God and growth in faith? How can it be changed and re-arranged to enable good fellowship?

When the times does come to use our buildings again there will be an initial phase of adhering to good and strict clear guidance and not taking any shortcuts and risking the well-being of others.

This will require a cautious approach following good guidelines.

(Please check the Baptist Together (BU) website for updates and information where new information is added as it becomes available).

It is almost certain that when corporate worship within our buildings is permitted there will be restrictions around social distancing and stringent guidance about cleaning.

It is highly likely that some members will need to shield themselves for longer with the consequence that congregations could initially be smaller.

Whilst this will feel strange it will also provide ample opportunity to consider new expressions of worship and engaging together in God's Word.

We will also need to think about how we include by our use of such things as Facebook Live and recordings, those who cannot be present.

This interim phase provides a clear opportunity to experiment and to develop for the future.

We must concentrate on making sure we are safe, but we also must be careful not to allow energy for creativity to be sapped away.

We need to see developments as taking place over time as we change and not everything has to be done at once.

Jesus said he would 'build his church', yet it is clear that he was not talking about bricks and mortar, but of disciples focused on Him.

Peter reminds us that we, as believers, are 'being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices ...'

Our buildings are signs of God's Kingdom, an indication that He is at work amongst His people, but also tools for His people to use in their service of Him.

Let us hold them in the right perspective with our focus always on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and His Kingdom purposes!

God bless you in your service of Him!

***Yours in Christ.***

***John C***