



We are passionate to see God's Kingdom come in power to touch people's lives and shape our society.

Zoom in Eden!

From the first week of Lockdown our small church, Upper Eden Baptist Church decided to use Zoom as a means of meeting together for worship and for fellowship. There were inevitably some technical issues but within a few weeks all our regular attenders were able to connect to the service including members who were in their 80s and 90s. We encouraged speakers to keep their talks to about 15 minutes and we included a variety of new, creative on-line resources which provided us with fresh opportunities to reflect, learn and pray. We quickly discovered that trying to sing together was almost impossible with our voices all being slightly out of sync, but we did find that we were able to enjoy listening to or singing alongside well produced worship songs with the option of being muted or unmuted.

Our usual Sunday service attendance was normally around 20 people but within a few weeks we found that we were being joined

by new people. We had advertised the service on our Facebook page and used the notice board and local paper to promote the fact that 'The building is closed but the church is open'. It was though mainly through word of mouth and existing church connections that new people were joining us with numbers rising to around 30 by June. We encouraged other people to take part in the service including sharing a brief talk, reading scripture and leading in prayer. What was most obvious was the real sense of fellowship we were enjoying. Most of those attending would log in 10-15 minutes before the service and start sharing news and asking after one another. Everyone would stick around afterwards for at least 30 minutes as, one by one or bubble by bubble, we went around the fellowship asking how people were and how their week had been.

So, what have we learnt as we have met week by week? Perhaps most obviously, we have been reminded that the church is about people and not a building. We have really enjoyed having new people in our fellowship each week. I have always appreciated the reputation our church has had for being welcoming but these are not just visitors. These are people who we are truly getting to know and are now being embraced within our church family. We are thinking about the community outside the church exploring how we can support the neighbouring school and we are now developing a telephone befriending ministry for isolated and lonely people in our community. Our prayer is that God will work through us, even during this challenging time, as we reimagine what it means to be a church in this community in Cumbria.

Ashley Liston

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Pandemic Observations

As we head into the autumn and still live with considerable restriction upon our individual and community life, I sense there is a weariness in the nation as well as in the faces of many I see in on-line meetings on my laptop screen. We would love to be in a different scenario, with a vaccine and the virus relegated to a minor inconvenience on the margins – but that's not where we're at, or are likely to be for a while yet. So how do we continue to navigate the pandemic and keep sane? Here are a few reflections:

Continue to reflect

I would encourage us all not to yearn for a return to 'church as it used to be'. That isn't going to happen for some time, if at all. And as the 'old way' of being church was frequently ineffective missionally, I would be bold to suggest we shouldn't seek to return to a way of church life which is often irrelevant for many in our communities and fails to touch them. So please take this time to reflect around what God is doing, what you're learning, what's hard, what's good, where are the opportunities and what do you



miss. These will help you to navigate a path towards a new way of being church in this Covid world and (we hope!) post-Covid world. A church that is less minister-centred, less building-oriented and Sunday worship-focussed; more participative, more flexible, more spread out, more small-scale, more 'out there' in our streets and social networks. There are several reflection / action tools which can help us to reflect on what God is doing and what we are learning, such as the one used in Re:imagine: Listening to what God is saying gLooking at where we see God at work gLiving in a new way as a result gLearning from this experience. Please continue to take time to reflect on these times and what's going on, and let this be an ongoing spiritual and leadership discipline in your church.

Be mission-focussed

One of my observations is that much of what the church has put its energy into during lock-down, as we have gone on-line, is still primarily focussed upon ourselves, our own congregations. Our worship services are now viewed by visitors if they are posted on YouTube or Facebook, but most of these are still primarily aimed at Christians and are not sharing the faith clearly and using language and forms which make them accessible to visitors. I would encourage you to allow God's mission to shape the way you do church online and in the flesh. Again, now that buildings are reopening, we are focussing our energy on Covid-safe Sunday worship. This is valuable, but I would want to ask: what are we doing for visitors? How many of us have considered

opening for prayer stations, or for offering prayer and a listening ear for those in need? Let's remember church buildings are for God's use, not primarily ours. Ask the question: 'How does God want the church building to be used for his purposes at this time?'

Keep Disciplined

Many of us have had time and space to spend in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading and other good practices during the lock-down. Can I encourage you to keep practising these as a priority. Prayer for example will reap all kinds of personal benefits, such as better mental health – in addition to the mystery and wonder of engaging with the eternal God! Also, keep getting out into nature with a daily walk; take time to be still; lament if you need to pour out your pain to God; practice regular thanksgiving for all the good that we still have. And try to continue to live life at a slower pace, because hurry and busyness are the enemy of God's shalom.

Can I close by saying that as John takes his sabbatical time this autumn, I am stepping in to cover much of his role and am available to help should you or your church need advice, input, a listening ear, pastoral support or an outside perspective. Do not hesitate to get in touch if I can be of assistance.

Grace and peace be with you,

Paul Revill

Northern Baptist Association

From the Home Mission Desk



2020 has been a funny old year, what with the Covid virus and anything else you care to add. BUT Serving you as NBA Home Mission Coordinator has continued to be a real privilege and I would like to thank you all for your support.

The NBA is looked on Nationally, and quite rightly, as a beacon of hope in our Baptist family, not least because we are so generous in our continued giving to “The Family Purse”. So keep sending your donations direct to the Home Mission bank account by regular SO or by Cheque direct to me, but made out to “**The NBA Home Mission**”.

Pioneer Ambassador

I have been asked by the Baptist Together’s Pioneering Ambassadors to take part in a Pioneering Roundtable as an advocate of pioneers in the north of England.

Pioneering is one of BUGB four priorities. There is an acceptance that pioneering is a vital addition to the missional work the church has done over the last few hundred years. It’s another arrow in the quiver – so to speak. Pioneering isn’t a repackaging of other ways of doing mission – and it certainly shouldn’t be seen as a negation of the great work that is already being done by many churches. However, it is misunder-

Coming, as we do to the end of the year I would like to encourage every church to budget specifically for Next Year 2021 in the matter of Home Mission Giving. It would be great if we all sought to Budget at least 5% of our income to HM OR to seek to give at least £55 per Member of our churches, in so doing we will never struggle to reach any targets set, which is a very modest £110,000 for this year. If you give through the Bank please encourage your treasurer to consider uprating your donation, at least in line with inflation [say 3% per year]

Please pray for the churches who are struggling and need our help around the country. We also need to Tell people in our churches the Stories from churches that have received Grants and gifts from Home Mission and the transformation that we can see it making you will be able to view various videos on the NBA website.

We also give support to the Hub Tutor and have at least 9 of our churches receiving support, totalling over £40,000 to help with Mission.

Please share stories, and encour-

stood and can easily be seen as a quirky new way of talking about the types of mission we’ve already been doing. So, one thing I would like to advocate for is a better understanding of what the word means.

Firstly, pioneers have the spirit to break new ground in new territories. They often have a sense of place and will want to work in a particular area with a particular people. That may be geographical, it may be because they share a particular interest. So far, so good. We may have already been part of or seen church plants like this, but a key distinctive of Pioneers is HOW they do this.

age your fellowship to Pray for the work of Home Mission as part of your Worship service on the First Sunday every November which is Home Mission Sunday.[you are of course at liberty to use them at other times in the year]

To assist you all in your focus on Home Mission I am still here and willing to come and encourage your church in its understanding and giving to Home Mission, so don’t delay get me into your diaries. As we are unable to meet at present I could do a short video for you to play as you worship, again just ask.

I continue to look forward to serving you.

Yours in Christ,

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<http://www.thenba.org.uk/home-mission>



They listen, they move in and soak up the scenery, the ambience, the culture. Get to know the people, the geography, the language – and, most importantly, they listen.

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Pioneer Ambassador (continued)

We call this missional listening. Pioneers don't come with answers they come with questions. This type of listening takes a long time. You need to hang out and find the right people to talk to, to make connections.

When the listening is done, they... ask more questions. Where is God working in this place? Who's He working with and through? Where can I join in? How can I help? How can I connect this person and that person to help things along? And

this sets Pioneering apart from church planting. What may emerge will be very distinctive to the place it's in, it may be a church, it may be social enterprise, it may be something very different – but at its heart will be the Gospel of Jesus for that place or group.

All this takes time, and the end result may not be clear at the start of the process. The pioneers in your church may not be coming with fully formed ideas and projects. They may well be itching to move into an

area. Already dipping their toes into the communities, they live in. Joining choirs, hanging out in the cafes and pubs.

One thing we can all do us to learn their language and begin to spot their traits.

And that's something I will be helping the NBA to do over the next few months.

John Cooper

Resilience for change!

Just before Covid hit, we called someone to be a halftime Youth Outreach worker... this work has been hamstrung for now, but concerning our in-house youth group, she writes that our young people have been incredibly resilient, adaptable and inspirational as they have faced disruption and disappointments during this season. Over the last 8 months we have run Bible studies, socials, murder mystery nights, a prom evening, weekly challenges and family games nights all via Zoom. Over the last couple of months, the YP (and team) have become increasingly tired of Zoom and therefore more difficult to stay in touch with. However, we have a new programme of youth work planned which we hope will engage, bring fresh enthusiasm and encourage the Young people and their parents into a continued walk with Jesus.

We thank the Lord for a large Children's Ministry. We have several groups meeting on a Sunday with about 40-50 children (0-11s) attending each week. We also enjoy putting together Holiday clubs, Weekends Away and events (e.g. Duggie Dug Dug) as part of our outreach into the local community. Our Girls and Boys Brigades run during the week and a busy Toddlers group

with about 45 families on the register. Due to COVID and the restrictions in place, we are currently doing most of our ministry online, including 'live' Toddlers singing, Sunday Kids Service@4pm, and regular Zooms with children in Girls Brigade, Boys Brigade and on Sunday mornings.

Despite not meeting on Sundays yet, we now have a number of rooms being used every week, with the Police training for 40 or so of Cleveland's finest going well every week in the auditorium. The building is getting some TLC care of our caretaker and some volunteers, and we are hoping to invite each class in our local primary school class to come in and decorate a Christmas tree on the stage. We are aiming to start live-streaming services from our auditorium at the beginning of November, and hope to open our doors to those who would like to attend. However we anticipate that most of our church family will prefer to continue to worship the Lord by participating online, either live, or by watching online later, or to watching the weekly DVDs we send out to a couple of dozen people.

One passage of scripture that we have come back to often in recent months has been Acts 2:42-47. Ex-



STOCKTON
BAPTIST
CHURCH

citingly, it seems as though the Holy Spirit has led a large number of other churches and networks up and down the country to this same passage! (we wonder what He's up to!) For us at SBC, this passage has guided our thinking, or re-thinking, on how we 'do' church. There is a recognition that we have got to try something! Anything! So why not start by looking back at the period in church history where the Lord added to their number *daily* those who were being saved. Reflection on this passage has helped us think creatively about how we establish Acts 2 types of missional communities across our town. So far, this looks like a running group that meets monthly on a Sunday morning. And a community house on a challenging street in central Stockton.

We'd appreciate the prayers of the NBA family as we face the same challenges as many of our churches, having a high proportion of over-70s, several ministries 'on hold' because of the virus, and the constant choice between change and closure... may the Lord give us courage! Thank you!

Andrew Waugh

From the moderator

I imagine that all of us are familiar with this image of Sycamore Gap because it is part of our Region's heritage. A critical intersection of Hadrian's Wall and an opening for people to travel north and south without hindrance or difficulty.

We are entering such a critical intersection in our life together as an Association when we need to fill the gap created by John Claydon's retirement. At the 7th November assembly we will hopefully have taken together a specific step towards our future.

Our current Vision statement says "We are passionate to see God's Kingdom come in power to touch people's lives and shape our society."



To fulfil this the Association leadership are looking for partnership involvement from us all to make a transition from the past to the future. Our heartfelt search is for someone to come and lead, to guide us through this period. It will require a strategic thinker who is relational, flexible and responsive. They will need to be creative and imaginative. Able to encourage the releasing and empowering of your gifts among us. We are all a part of this not just the few so please pray how you might play your part in the NBA future. Consider offering your gifts to the wider community of the Association. Is there some skill in administration, IT, safeguarding, or passionate prayer leadership that you could offer

What is God saying to you, the churches and individuals, about how to be effective in mission and where pioneering is required in our region? Would you release your minister a day a week to help us? Would the ministers or leaders be willing to offer time to the Association to make this transition work?

I was very taken this week with Lectio 365 devotional prayer time on Tuesday 13th October. The title was 'Bring your r Bling'. We were en-



couraged to explore the wonder of God inspiring creativity as a response to God's call to build Him a place to dwell among the people in Exodus 25-1:8. Let's make the prayer of that day ours for this season in the Association:

"God, what can I give You today? How can I give my resources, my wealth, my creative gifts, my time and work as worship? (Pause and pray).

'Lord How am I part of your plan to provide?' 'Lord thank you that You are the Potter and I am like clay in Your hands. Shape me, fill me again with Your Holy Spirit and help me to glorify You with my creativity every day'. (Italics abbreviated from Lectio 365)

Every blessing during these strange times.

Tony Ruddle

Meet the new treasurer

As I sit here wondering how to start this article, my mind casts back to when I was speaking to John Claydon about what was expected of the NBA Treasurer. He definitely didn't mention writing articles! But actually, it's really nice to be asked to contribute to 'Around the NBA' and introduce myself.

I was born in Billingham, home of the International Folklore Festival and ICI and started attending the BBC around the age of 7 – Billingham Baptist Church that is, not the TV people. I came to faith and was

baptised in my late teens and started quietly serving the church as best I could.

I found out that I was an accountant in my 20s and as soon as the church found out too, they asked me to be Treasurer. I served on the Leadership Team for about 12 years until work commitments meant I had to step down. I still help out where I can, preparing the accounts and gift aid, and also turn my hand to taking a few services.



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Meet the new treasurer (continued)

I've served previously with the NBA as a Council member and chairing the resource group. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, seeing how the NBA supports our myriad of different churches across the north, responding to individual issues and helping them move forward. And, as John approached me recently about the treasurer role I felt that it was an area that I could serve God and the association in.

Part of this came from an unusual source, my employer. I work for the Department for Education in their finance division where I'm at the

heart of how academies submit their data to the DfE so that we can produce a single set of accounts covering all 9,000 academies. The DfE actively encourage volunteering, and coincidentally the legal structure of an academy trust is the same as the NBA, so I can lift and shift my experience from one into helping the other.

Like many people, my job has changed a lot over the last few months. I see a lot less of the East Coast mainline to London and a lot more of my front room, and I do

wonder what the new normal will look like. In the meantime my wife Julia and I will try and make the best of things and enjoy time with our wider family, including our three-year old niece Megan, who appears to enjoy keeping Unki G right. I'm looking forward to helping the association move forwards and always happy to try and help churches too. Please do reach out if I can be helpful. I'd even consider doing the odd service!

Gavin Monument

Life on the inside

Although our Prisoners are in lockdown God is not! He has brought many people together to support and help get those in Prison through the long hours locked behind their doors. As Chaplains we have found different ways to walk alongside those who are seeking a relationship with God. We cannot have a Sunday service anymore so in Low Newton the Chaplains video a service which is then played every Sunday for all prisoners. In Deerbolt we visit over 70 lads each week with a message or a Mass sheet and have one to one fellowship with them. We have found time to walk alongside those who need us and support them through bereavements and other struggles they may have. The Holy Spirit is at work in our Prisons changing lives daily and helping us Chaplains to keep up and be available through lots of prayer and listening!

I asked prisoners in Deerbolt and Low Newton to share how they thought God was working through lockdown.

God has done a lot for prisoners over the period of covid, if covid

never came about prisoners would be argument prone. But God has given us the ability of understanding and hope and with these simple abilities we have adapted to the circumstances. God gives us the strength to face our problems head on and we are grateful for this because if he did not give us strength we would give up and let the problems win! I say a prayer every now and then to thank God and ask for His advice and in doing this, when I pray I feel good amid prayer and post prayer, destroying any doubt in my mind that God loves and forgives us and most of all He is real!! (Deerbolt)

My first time in prison; unable to comprehend the gravity of what I was about to experience. After one month in prison the lockdown hit. Every positive experience I had hoped would have come from this time in my life disappeared overnight. It left me and a locked door for 23 hours a day, but I was not alone God had me the emptiness was so strong, but it didn't last long. He started to fill me the Spirit was strong. I tried to think specifically what God has done for me. Its not



one thing it is the multiple things he's done over the months until this time. He's my love in this life and the saviour of my soul. Jesus the saviour for all ! (Low Newton)

Just when we thought we were starting to come out of some restrictions we are seeing more cases of covid and our Prisoners are still restricted to 23 hours alone behind their doors but we will continue to bring the love of Jesus to all those who need us with the Holy Spirit guiding us.

I would ask you all to keep the prisoners and staff in all our prisons in your prayers as we continue to seek God each day.

Thanks and God Bless!

*Mel Nixon
Chaplain at HMPYOI Low Newton
and HMPYOI Deerbolt.*

Northern Baptist College Hub @ Cranmer Hall

The new college year has brought new students, new ways of learning, new friendships and new experiences!

We have four continuing students; all of whom are Ministers in training, and three new students:

Catherine Tate (Skipton BC) completed her MA studies this summer and continues to be part of the Cranmer Hub for a further 2 years of ministerial formation.

Continuing Students

Rachel Holland (Portrack BC) will complete her MA dissertation in 2021 in her 3rd and final year as a Minister in Training.

Fiona Preston (Headland BC, Hartlepool) is now in the 2nd year of the part-time certificate and has transferred to the Baptist Track as Minister in Training at Headland Baptist Church.

Barbara Revill (currently Stocksfield BC) has completed the one year certificate over 2 years and has transferring to the MA programme this term. Barbara has also transferred to the Baptist Track and is in consultation at the moment regarding a placement church.

New Students: we have two new students who are also Ministers in Training and one student who is studying on the Free Church Track only.

Aileen Innes (Heaton BC) started the Baptist Track and the MA programme at Cranmer in September and is continuing her role at Heaton Baptist Church as Minister in Training.

Peter Webster (Marsden Rd BC) started the BA at Cranmer in September and also joined the Baptist Track as Minister in Training of Marsden Rd BC.

Dan Brown (Heaton Baptist Church). Dan has recently moved to the North east in order to study at Cranmer on the Free Church Track, he has joined the Baptist Discipleship Group and will be undertaking a placement with HBC.

Heather Farrow has completed ministerial formation and has decided to continue MA studies through Luther King House in Manchester.

It has been a pleasure to welcome the new Director of the Free Church Track, Ian Galloway who has started



the year off really well in really trying circumstances and we look forward to continuing and developing the fruitful relationship with Ian in his new role and with Cranmer Hall.

The Discipleship Group is just beginning and all students and staff are getting used to virtual learning, tutorials and Discipleship groups online (aren't we all). Once again we are encouraged by the excellent group of students and the way in which all have adapted to the environment we find ourselves in. Prayer for all of the students, their families and churches is appreciated at what is a difficult time but also a really fruitful time for theological learning and engagement.

*Revd Linda Donaldson
NBC Hub Tutor*

NBA and 37 Million?

Yes, 37 million, that is the number of views the NBA YouTube channel has now reached. There are 41,000 subscribers and views have come from all around the world including the Philippines, India, Canada, USA and Kenya.

We give glory to God and are grateful to Ian Britton for all his vision and work in enabling so much of this to happen. Eleven years ago we uploaded our first videos including Amazing Grace recorded by a combined gathering from our churches called the Big Sing. We have many

requests for the use of the songs on the channel including one recently from Alaska. We have 41,000 subscribers and have uploaded 91 videos including hymns and songs for use in worship, services, short talks and webinars. The hymn To God be the glory has now reached 6.1 million views.

Eleven years ago it seemed a good way of providing a few hymns and songs for congregations to use. Now we are seeing greater potential with a greater variety of content and need to develop that further.

Each church could have a YouTube channel and with small beginnings grow to make a contribution to God's mission locally and globally.

Within the NBA we are committed to exploring digital mission, not for more views and subscribers, but for the glory of God, the extension of His Kingdom and the growth of His Church.

John Claydon



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Make a Date

5th Nov	NBA Prayer Gathering led by Paul Revill: via Zoom Meeting ID: 885 3868 9867; Passcode: 032598
7th Nov	NBA Autumn Assembly with Andy Byers: via Zoom Meeting ID: 820 9690 3315 Passcode: 508761
9th Nov	NBA Big Life Webinar with Peter Dunn. Please book via Paul Revill
11th Nov	NBA Retired Ministers Zoom gathering
16th Nov	NBA Ministers Fellowship Zoom gathering
3rd Dec	NBA Prayer Gathering led by Roy Searle: via Zoom Meeting ID: 885 3868 9867; Passcode: 032598
8th Dec	NBA Council
7th Jan	NBA Prayer Gathering
25th Jan	NBA Churches and Charity Registration evening.

NBA Web site:
www.thenba.org.uk



The justice of it!

We sometimes see something obviously wrong and unfair and may be tempted to cry out, 'the injustice of it!', but what is the justice we seek? The profile of the Black Lives Matter Movement has highlighted specific injustice and energised many to protest and to work for justice. In turn this has also identified a range of justice issues including race, gender, environmental, age, education and life chances to name a few. Behind the feeling of injustice is the sense of pain which sometimes goes back generations.

Micah 6:8 reminds us that the Lord requires us to 'act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' Whilst we strive for justice and seek to understand what it means I suspect that we will be hindered unless we 'love mercy and walk humbly' with our God.

There many types of justice and understandings of what justice is, so surely we start with walking humbly before God which will enable us to seek His will and align ourselves with it. To love mercy will lead us to seek the benefit of others, to look beyond our own pain and vulnera-

bility and seek their flourishing. In turn this would lead us to act justly. The pursuit of justice does not begin with protest or even with lament, although it may include both. It begins with being humble before God and loving mercy. Then we might act justly!

John Claydon

Prayer Pointers

- For health, healing, comfort and strength for those affected by the Covid Pandemic
- For wisdom and clarity in the future appointment of a new Regional Minister
- For our government and the EU in the final stages of Brexit negotiations
- For creativity, sensitivity and wisdom in finding ways to celebrate Christmas and share the good news of Immanuel: God with us.

