

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.

Wednesdays and lockdown

- Tier 3 measures have now been introduced for the next 4 weeks and face-to-face services are no longer possible over this period.
- We are therefore continuing to suspend both Bible Study and Wednesday Community days, but the production of takeaway food will continue where circumstances allow

Church Services

- We will continue to with the creation of online services which will be available via YouTube and our website.
- Audio CD's of the services are available upon request.

Sharing God's Comfort

- If you know of anyone you feel would benefit from our online offerings please feel free to share our website at www.bishopbaptists.co.uk with others so they too can enjoy our weekly online service (also available on our YouTube Channel), newsletters, blog and other items of prayer and interest.

Spreading God's Love

- 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.

Please feel free to contact the following NBA members for additional help and support:

- 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:

- ***Milton Avenue***
- ***Rutland Avenue***
- ***Morland Street***
- ***Chatsworth Avenue***
- ***Ediscum Garth***
- ***Bamburgh Avenue***
- ***Lady Eden Nursing Home***
- ***Barrington Lodge Care 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. 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.

Covid-19 is not God's Judgement

How we can know God isn't acting now as he acted against Pharaoh?

Is the coronavirus a judgment from God?

Will the world be judged with pestilence?

It's easy to quote the Bible in support of such questions.

In Old Testament times there are examples of diseases inflicted on peoples in supernatural ways.

When God sent boils on Egypt, they broke out instantly "on man and beast" throughout the land.

The pestilence of Revelation will come by one of the "four horsemen of the apocalypse," not a wet market in Wuhan.

However, we are not living in those days.

Everything scientists can tell us about COVID-19 is that the virus evolved from other viruses.

It natural, not supernatural.

God did not cause or command this virus or the pandemic it has created.

Like other natural diseases and disasters, it is a consequence of living in a world populated by people who are failing to look after the world.

Also, Biblical judgments are against specific sins and sinners.

From Pharaoh's obstinacy to Miriam's racial prejudice, to Herod's prideful idolatry, divine judgments of the past and future come to those who refuse God's word and will.

Throughout Scripture and history, God deals with us as gently as he can or as harshly as he must.

No specific sins caused this virus. Nor are those who are afflicted with it more sinful than the rest of us.

God loves the Chinese people just as much as he loves Italians, Koreans, Scandinavians and every other race and nationality.

God loves the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions just as much as he loves the young and the healthy.

One fact this pandemic emphasises, is that we are all part of one race - The Human Race.

And we are all in this together.

While God did not cause this pandemic, neither has he left us to face it alone.

He is with healthcare workers as they risk their lives to care for patients.

He is with grocery workers and delivery drivers as they serve those who can stay safely at home because of their sacrifice.

He is with those who are now unemployed and those who would shelter at home if they had one.

He is with patients who suffer and families who grieve.

As Jesus wept for Lazarus, so he weeps with us and for us.

And God is doing more than hurting with us—he is redeeming this tragedy in amazing ways.

We're seeing an outpouring of unprecedented financial generosity.

We're watching churches and agencies that would never have cooperated a few months ago working together to save lives.

Millions of people around the world are sacrificing their incomes by staying home to protect people they don't know.

In the season of Passover, Jews around the world thank God for their deliverance from Egypt.

During Ramadan, Muslims around the world thank God for the Qur'an.

We Christians observe Good Friday and celebrate Easter as we thank the True and Only God for our Saviour.

Our monotheistic faiths differ in foundational ways, but we share a common belief:

God is with us.

As a song for children tells us: He didn't bring us this far to leave us

*I will never leave you
I will not forsake you
I will always be with you
I will never leave you
I will always be with you
I will not forsake you*

*Look here comes that Pharaoh
marching with his army
where do we go?
We get through the Red sea
wash away that army where they
go*

*Those 3 Hebrew children
thrown into the fire
oh no
They threw in 3 but 4 I see
Come on now who could that be*

*When you call my name
I will lift you up
I am faithful I am true
Rejoice be glad*

*For I have heard you
I'll deliver you!
I'll deliver you!*

(Based on an item by Jim Denison, the founder of the Denison Forum)

NBA Praying Together

This week, as part of our fellowship of prayer, we ask you to pray for Darlington Baptist Church

The church fellowship has been thankful to God for the recent opportunities to physically worship together, in limited numbers.

The Grange Road site (10.30 am Sunday mornings); the Corporation Road site (6.00 pm Sunday evenings) and, again, the Grange Road site at 2.00pm on Wednesday afternoons have been attended by regular attenders and newcomers alike.

We are so grateful to our joint ministers, Vicky & Barry Thompson and the church Elders for planning and presenting worship at these times.

We ask that you join us in thanking God for:

- The appointment of Pete & Dawn Johnstone as leaders of our Basement Project and the tremendous progress which they have already achieved.
- The team of helpers which is supporting Pete & Dawn in the packing and distribution of food parcels and the provision of hot food when the current situation allows.
- For the benefits of electrical technology which is creating opportunities for group meetings as well as individual contact during the pandemic.
- The efforts, already achieved, through which our ministers are combining with other church groups to bring the love and saving grace of Jesus to Darlington.

Please pray with us that:

- The children in our church fellowship will soon be able to, again, meet together.
- Pray for the willing staff members who support 'Rock Solid' – the children's group – that their love for Jesus expressed Sunday by Sunday will always remain with each child.
- During Covid-19 restrictions, God will inspire our ministers to continue in their quest to present the Gospel message through YouTube and Facebook.
- Individual fellowship members will find ways of keeping in regular contact with each other.
- God will guide those in the church, who feel isolated and forgotten, towards a fresh sense of belonging through shared faith and in the knowledge that their lives are cherished and valued by God and those around them.

Ephesians 1:15-16: For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Thoughts

After living for a long time in the beautiful countryside of North Wales close to the seaside, I now live in The North East where evidence of the pits and foundries and forges has now been largely landscaped away.

Hills of black stuff have long been landscaped and we now see fields and hills and playgrounds where previous generations lived out their smoggy industrial lives and livelihoods.

Beautifying a landscape does nothing to wipe out the past and all it represented. Memory of community life and its belonging goes along with the tragedies and losses of industry that was dangerous and costly for many people.

Lives lost and society built are, literally, buried in the seeds that grow the grass on the redeemed hills.

What these lost and broken communities and their landscapes demonstrate, however, is that brokenness can be transformed by beauty.

Ugliness and tragedy need not have the final word.

Time moves on and we transform the landscape in order not to wipe out the past or to devalue previous generations.

Scars bear witness to both the wound and the healing.

New life can come.

This is particularly pertinent now as our way of life seems to be dying, and we now live through a time of Covid uncertainty where we have little or no real idea what the future might hold, or what it might look like for today's younger generation who are at school or university now.

Yet, it is essential, surely, that we hold onto images of hope, of re-creation and a future beauty that will see healing of the scars of the current brutality.

For a personal image on which to hang our hope, we can turn to the encounter of Thomas with the risen Jesus.

Propaganda would have the broken body of the risen Jesus looking beautiful and clean, with all traces of crucifixion horror and suffering removed.

What we get, however, is not some opiate for the people.

Jesus is the same, but different.

Remarkably, he still bears the wound marks of crucifixion in his hands and feet and side.

And Jesus isn't squeamish about inviting Thomas to touch the wounds.

Like the landscaped scars of North East England, our present wounds cannot be romanticised. But we need to recognise that they can be healed.

(based on an item by Bishop Nick Baines)

Online Prayer

- Bishop Auckland Baptist Church Service
<https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/babc-sunday-service/>
- Northern Baptist Association Service
<https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/nba-sunday-service/>
- Influence Church Service (Services streamed Sundays at 11.00am and 5.00pm)
<http://www.influencechurch.co.uk>

Helpful Links

BABC Sunday Service	https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/babc-sunday-service/
BABC Newsletter	https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/newsletter/
BABC Garden Blog	https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/church-garden-blog/
NBA Sunday Service	https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/nba-sunday-service/
BABC Main Website	www.bishopbaptists.co.uk

Please feel free to explore the website and subscribe to [our YouTube channel](#) and those of our contributors to encourage them to continue to provide the valuable content from which we all benefit.

Give Us Hope

*When troubles and tribulations darken our world,
give us light.*

*When despair numbs our souls,
give us hope.*

*When we stumble and fall,
lift us up*

*When doubts assail us,
give us faith.*

*When nothing seems sure,
give us trust.*

*When ideals fade,
give us vision.*

*When we lose our way,
be our guide...*

*...so that we may find serenity in Your presence
and purpose in doing Your will.*

John D. Rayner