

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 will be in place from the 2nd of December and face-to-face services are restricted during these measures.
- 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:

- Paul Revill paulrevill@thenba.org.uk or
- Elaine Webster elainewebster@thenba.org.uk

Prayers

Please keep in your prayers all local churches in Bishop Auckland area and especially our Northern Baptist Association, and the work they are continuing to do to help the local people cope with the problems caused by Coronavirus and Covid -19, and continue to do the Lord's work in our towns and communities.

As the Anti Covid restrictions and various support schemes, all of which are in a state of flux and constantly changing, we must remember those who will be affected by the onset of major job losses soon across our economy. Many people are only just hanging on financially now, commonly being reliant on food banks to feed their families and who are going to be faced with more hard times. Remember them and "look out" for them

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***

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 – Bishop Auckland and North Durham Hospitals***

Please pray for all those living, working and playing in the following communities:

- **Ediscum Garth**
- **Langley Grove**
- **Bamburgh Avenue**
- **Warwick Road**
- **Walmer Grove**
- **Escomb Road**

Thoughts

1 Thessalonians NIV: "Encourage one another and build each other up."

We, each and every one of us, have the power to build each other up.

We all have the power to support and build up others, or to discourage and put down others.

Many of the messages that we hear nowadays are of the discouraging kind: You're not smart enough; you're not slim enough; you're too thick; you're not GOOD enough."

The Bible, in Proverbs 18 v21 (NIV), says *"The tongue has the power of life and death and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Around the world nowadays, where people are often degraded or have scorn poured on them, we can provide a counterbalance to negativity.

We have the power to encourage and build up others by saying to them:

"You matter to me. Your life counts and has purpose. God loves you, and you're incredibly valuable to him."

Your words may be the only encouraging thing that some people hear in days.

The put downs are often targeted at some of the friends we are making and meeting each Wednesday at BABC.

We don't want to make them feel like targets, but we can become the voice of God's grace in their lives – **helping them with encouraging words!**

(Romans 14 v 19 KJV) : Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building.

There is an example of this in **Luke 13**, where Jesus heals a woman who's been unable to stand up straight for 18 years.

When the synagogue leaders questioned his act of healing her on the Sabbath, Jesus replied that he was freeing a "a daughter of Abraham" from the bonds of Satan.

He didn't describe her as an elderly crippled woman, but as an honoured child of the Jewish nation.

But, more importantly, he places her desperate need – that is her spiritual and physical condition – in priority over the routines of the day.

Just imagine what a blessing and what an encouragement it must have been for her to hear those words!

Jesus healed her physically - **but he also built her up.**

She was a beloved daughter of Abraham, worthy of notice and significant enough to help immediately and not just at the designated times.

In Romans 15 vs1 and 2 (NIV) we are charged to be encouragers and “builders up”: -

¹ We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up.

We can all lift someone's spirit, or perhaps lighten their gloom, and lift them up.

We can all look for the best in someone and their potential and do our best to bring it out.

Paul's companion, Jose, a Cypriot Levite, became more known by his nickname of Barnabas, which literally meant “*son of encouragement.*”

Barnabas was known not for just offering a few words of encouragement or comfort, but for standing beside people in their trials. He was not emotionally detached from them but joined with them in their troubles.

It is altogether fitting that the first we hear of this man is his selling a parcel of land so the money could be distributed among people in need.

People are valuable to God, and if they are valuable to God, then they, indeed, should be valuable to us.

An encourager brings out the best in others!!

In order to become an encourager to others we may need to adjust our prejudices and assessments of others and accept the fact that they are more valuable to God than to our judgements of them.

(abridged from part of “Better together” by Rick Warren)

One of the cardinal rules of writing is to have a good beginning. One that feels like an unexpected crash of thunder – and then you'll have the reader's attention immediately!

Make it loud and powerful enough and the reader will read on with the thunderclap ringing in their ears.

The Gospel of John has a memorable beginning!

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind (John 1 vs 1-4)."

You may wonder who this mysterious Word is.

Why does John link him to God and the beginning of all things?

For this you need to go back to the opening lines of Genesis 1:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the world was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

Also, in John 1 v 9 we are again told that -

"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world".

John 8 v12: Jesus again spoke to them, saying: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

The light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall never put it out!

And now as the season of Advent is with us again, we light a candle to represent the everlasting light of Hope, the light of Jesus!



***Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you
Hope of a life spent with you***

Special Requests

We have been asked by a lady who contacted our fellowship, to pray for her.

She very recently has been diagnosed with Bowel Cancer and is facing difficult treatment and a major operation.

We don't need to know her name, as she is known to God.

Please mention her and lift her in your prayers.

NBA

Just a gentle reminder from NBA that Rev Dr John Claydon is taking his long booked and well-earned Sabbatical break to study and to recharge his batteries.

We are asked to respect his time away and for a short while, please do not to try contact him He will be back!

Keep him in prayers and ask that he returns even more invigorated and fortified and refreshed and blessed.

Thank you.

NBA Praying Together – 29th November 2020

This week, as part of our fellowship of prayer, we ask you to pray for:

The Pioneer Roundtable

The National Pioneer Roundtable advocates meet every few months to connect and discuss the pioneering work which is going on in our different areas.

Please pray for the pioneers working in a variety of situations through the north:

In this time of disruption pray for God's Spirit to inspire them with the imagination to 'Sing a new song in a strange land'.

Pray for those within our churches who have a pioneering gift. That we may be able to spot them and release them.

Pray for those who are in tent-making or bi-vocational roles who may be struggling with finances during the lockdowns.

Pray that God will raise up pioneers across the UK to meet the Baptist Together focus for Pioneering.

How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land (Psalm 137:4)

NBA Home Mission Update

Just a gentle reminder from NBA that Rev Dr John Claydon is taking his long booked and well-earned Sabbatical break to study and to recharge his batteries.

Dear friends,

In May I wrote to you asking for your help in giving to Home Mission as we had seen a 25% fall in giving in April. I want to thank you for your response which has enabled us, at the end of October, to be 1.5% below the level of giving during the same period in 2019.

Your giving has enabled our work as Baptists Together to continue through ongoing grants to churches and projects, funding your Association so that it can continue to provide support to you and your minister, if you have one. It has also enabled the Specialists Teams to be funded and this has been seen particularly through the large volume of advice provided to help you through the Coronavirus as the government has updated guidance frequently, as well as ongoing support.

This year has been a difficult one and I am aware that some of our churches have struggled, particularly where you have in the past benefitted from income from the letting of your church premises.

I am pleased that we have been able to help with extra grants to those churches where their cash resources would have run out and also given help through the Baptist Union Corporation to those churches with loans which would have struggled to maintain repayments. However may I ask you to thank your many members who have maintained their giving through the times of lockdown and closure which has enabled many of you to continue to meet all your church's financial commitments.

One bright area this year has been pensions. The pension deficit continues to fall and we are beginning to see the day when the scheme will be fully funded. The valuation as at the end

of last year resulted in a deficit of £18m to which a further £10m was added to cover the uncertainties of the Coronavirus and longer-term changes to inflation measures.

As I write the deficit stands at £13m, very slightly ahead of the original plan pre the extra £10m. The improving position enabled us to request the Pension Trustees to agree to a reduction in deficit contributions for this half year worth about £750 to each church paying deficit contributions.

The contributions will need to revert to the normal rates from January 2021 as this is in accordance with the valuation submitted to the Pension Regulator and cannot be changed without the Regulator's agreement.

Whilst many of you give regularly through the year to Home Mission there are some of you who give in a single amount at the year end, or have extra funds to send in, perhaps part of the savings from the cut in pension contributions.

Now that the Christmas holidays start to disrupt normal services, I ask that you send in your final Home Mission giving by 18 December 2020.

Looking Forward - As we look to 2021, we are all hoping to a return to more normal conditions, particularly now preliminary results from the vaccine developments has been so good. However, things will be different from the past.

As Baptists Together we have adopted the following priorities. I would encourage you to think how these areas will be reflected in your budgets for 2021 onwards. Some may need limited finance in your context whilst others may need a significant financial commitment.

- **Ministry** - We are now putting additional emphasis on Continuing Ministerial Development which may need you setting aside extra budget to support your minister.
- **Developing Leadership** - in all its forms, together with a focus on equipping the whole body of Christ. Are you bringing younger people through to leadership positions in your church? What training are you providing?
- **Children Young People and Families** - a key area where we need to develop and nurture work in an area where sadly a good number of our churches have seen this diminish
- **Emerging Adults** - a similar but separate focus on Emerging Adults aged 18-35 – a group who are largely missing from our churches.
- **Digital Revolution** – the lockdown has driven us to much increased use of technology to stay connected. Some churches have seen people connecting who would otherwise not be in church. You may need some extra investment to enable your church to sustain online ministry longer term.

- **Justice** – in response to “Black Lives Matter” we realise that even more needs to be done across all areas of justice. How are you reaching out to all parts of your community?
- **Hope** - I trust you will also be able to at least maintain your Home Mission giving in 2021.

In Romans 12 v 4 + 5 we read: *“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

It is as one body with different members we have been able to support each other through this difficult year.

In finishing I would like to pass on special thanks to Treasurers for the work you do, particularly during this year when the role has been that much harder.

Whether you choose to meet selected members of your family or stay isolated at Christmas I pray you may experience our Lord’s love coming down at Christmas.

Every blessing in Christ

John Levick (Treasurer)

Advent Week 1 – Kindle A Flame

*Kindle a flame within our hearts
let your light shine through
let your light shine through.*

*Kindle a flame within our hearts
let your justice shine through
let your justice shine through*

*Kindle a flame within our hearts
let your hope shine through
let your hope shine through*

*Kindle a flame within our hearts
let your love shine through
let your love shine through.*

*Kindle a flame within our hearts
let your peace shine through
let your peace shine through.*

Author: Philip Garside

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

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