

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 are due for government revision from the 16th of December and we shall continue to observe safety measures accordingly.
- Bible Study continues to be suspended and Wednesdays are currently restricted to the production of takeaway food as 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:

- **BA Bus Station**
- **Cockton Hill Road**
- **Lindsay Street**
- **Hutchinson Street**
- **Durham Street**
- **Hazel Grove**

Please also remember The Fellowship at Hamsterley Baptist Church

Thoughts

A Reflection on Joy

As we continue our march towards Christmas the theme of this third Sunday in Advent is JOY.

2021 for many has been far from a joyful year, the virus has limited our activities as a church and personally too. There have been climate disasters in many parts of the world, both natural and man-made. Many have suffered personal tragedies or difficulties.

Yet here we are looking forward joyfully.

This week has seen the start of the vaccine roll out, so we can look forward to a gradual relaxation of lockdown - a new normal will emerge.

The psalmist recalls the joy of a nation restored - we too can look to a nation being restored, to new ways of being church and of welcoming people back into our midst.

Let us indeed look forwards, not backwards and do so with joy in our hearts.

Tony

A Reflection on Christ's Love

John Lennon's views on Christianity first came into focus when he made his 1966 proclamation that the Beatles were "bigger than Jesus."

John Lennon was never everybody's cup of tea, and even he said that he wasn't a very pleasant person.

However, in 1977, John Lennon became deeply moved by NBC's broadcast of the movie "Jesus of Nazareth" and told his friends that he had become a born-again Christian.

A week after seeing the film, Lennon returned to church on Easter Sunday with his wife Yoko and son, Sean, in tow.

Perhaps that doesn't change our perception about John Lennon at the end of his life, but it does shed some light on what helped to develop his view of Christianity in the first place.

It wasn't confusion about theology or the nature of God, it wasn't the pull of a conflicting lifestyle.

According to Lennon, it was Christians who made him not want to be a part of the church.

Many unbelievers (and believers for that matter) could say that some Christians can be "hypocrites" and "uptight" and may even be responsible for turning people away from church.

But that shouldn't be a discouragement to us, rather, it should be an encouragement to prove them wrong.

No one is perfect and we can't undo the actions of others (even when they are well-intentioned fellow believers), but we can change people's perspectives by being the change.

Reading between the lines of scripture, it shows that Jesus was pretty good at that, even His own disciples couldn't figure out what He was going to do next.

Whether it was healing on the Sabbath (a major taboo in religious circles), dining with sinners or preaching messages of love and forgiveness, Christ often didn't please the religious establishment of His day.

But Jesus wasn't out to ruffle feathers and just change people's minds - He was out to change hearts.

Christ wanted people to see that God desired a personal relationship and wanted His church to reflect His passion for loving others.

Though God is perfect, we (Christians who make up the church) are often victims of our own imperfection.

But, as the apostle John noted, a key to becoming effective in reaching the lost is this prayer: "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30, NIV).

So, whether it's an artist looking for answers like John Lennon in the early '70s, an "uptight" fellow Christian who is focused more on church rules than Christ's love, or just an unbelieving neighbour who may have had their own bad experience with church, showing the real message of Christ (and a genuine picture of His Body, the church), a little bit of truth can go a long way.

(CBN The Christian Broadcasting Network Dec 2020)

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.
- Please say prayers for a lady who used to be a member of our BABC fellowship a few years ago. Again, we have been asked that we don't mention her name, and again she is loved and cared for by God. Her husband died in August and prayers of support and comfort are asked for her.

Auckland Trust News

Nominate someone special to be featured in our advent mural.

This advent, we're working with two local artists to celebrate Bishop Auckland residents who have been lights of hope during what has been a difficult year for so many.

The faces of those selected will be illustrated in a mural being created in the windows of No.42 in the Market Place, with each face illuminated as though a candle is lighting their face.

If you know someone who has gone above and beyond this year, please check they would be happy to be featured and if so, send a short description of why you think they should be recognised to: jilly.johnston@aucklandproject.org

If they're selected, we'll need you to contact them and ask that they share a photo of themselves with us.

Children can be nominated as long as permission is given by their parents or guardians.

Illustrations will be added to the mural in the run up to Christmas.

Historic England support

We're extremely grateful to have been granted £212,000 from Historic England towards essential repairs of historic features in the outside spaces surrounding Auckland Castle, collectively known as the Castle Curtilage.

The grant will focus on where urgent work is needed to fix historic walls, railings and steps, and the work will be carried out by specialist contractors and craftspeople.

The Castle Curtilage project includes the restoration of several historic features, including the Bowling Green and Bishop's Steps providing access to the Walled Garden, as well as the creation of a number of new gardens and areas not previously open to the public.

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 – 13th December 2020

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

South Bank Baptist Church in Middlesbrough

For thanks and praise:

- We praise and thank God for the way that so many in our church have served and blessed our community in the Name of Jesus in these difficult times.
- We praise and thank God for the growth in faith and trust that many have experienced, especially among newer Christians.
- We praise and thank God for those faithful members who have not been able to attend anything in person but have constantly and consistently prayed for our church and our community throughout this time.

For prayer:

- Leadership elections will take place early in the New Year.
- We ask for wisdom and guidance, we ask for courage and faith, we ask for vision and understanding.
- We ask for God to give us clear direction as to whether a possible new project is from Him or not.
- We ask for God to move mature Christians into our community.

For so long, South Bank has been seen as a place people move away from, but we see God restoring and renewing it in front of our eyes and we ask for Him to do even more.

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"

Budget, Save, Spend – CAP Money Course

A free course to help you manage your money better and learn how to budget, save and spend well.

- The January course will be held on Zoom.
- Future courses, we hope, will be person to person.
- For more details either ask Tony or Marion, or phone Vanessa on 01388 603142.

Bishop FM Live Carol Service

- A live Carol service will be broadcast by 105.9 BishopFM Radio just on after the 11.00am news on Sunday 20th December. It will feature Greetings and Bible Readings by local members of the Clergy from churches in the Bishop Auckland area.
- It will also be available on the Methodist Church's Youtube Channel on the same morning. (https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCC_duanwurAoKYcmPeSWTug)
- Again, on Christmas morning, at 11.00 am we hope BishopFM and YouTube will have another service featuring the Bishop of Durham and the Mayor of Bishop Auckland

An Advent Prayer

Father God, your servant John the Baptist came with a challenging message; calling for repentance and lives to be transformed.

Those who heard were filled with expectation, waiting for Messiah, and yet ultimately failing to notice his arrival in that humble stable.

This Advent season, may we be filled with expectation, as we celebrate the greatest gift of all; your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

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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