

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

- Thankfully only Tier 3 measures are currently in place and we shall continue to observe safety measures and pray that we do not enter the more critical Tier 4 category.
- 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:

- **Northumberland Ave**
- **Brancepeth Grove**
- **Westfield Road**
- **Blair Grove**
- **Brewer Street**
- **Frances Terrace**

Please also remember the following Care Homes:

- **Sandringham Care Home**
- **Church View Nursing Home**
- **Lady Eden Nursing Home**
- **Barrington Lodge Care Home**

Thoughts

The Three Trees

The following is an old story, more intended for children, but deserves an airing now and again, and perhaps now is a good time:

Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the three little trees grew tall.

One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his axe, the first tree fell. The first tree said: "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest. I shall hold wonderful treasure!"

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said: "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his axe, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, nor with treasure. She was coated with saw dust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead, the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail to an ocean, or even a river. Instead, she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?", the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God..."

Many, many days and night passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams, but, one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her new born baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him." her husband whispered.

The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and the sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful." she said. Suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveller and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveller fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely in the strong wind and the heavy rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. Suddenly the second tree knew she was carrying the king of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel. But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

The next time you feel down because you didn't get what you want, sit tight and be happy because God is thinking of something better to give you.

Author Unknown

Matthew 1:18-25 NIV Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about:

His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, *“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet (Isaiah): *“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”* (which means “God with us”).

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

On the 4th Sunday in Advent, we are led to think about, and celebrate at Christmas, the birth of Christ *“Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about”* (Matthew 1:18).

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective.

Matthew 1 vs 8 – 25 is the second movement in this story.

In the preceding verses of the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel, is listed the genealogy of Jesus, tracing his lineage through Abraham to King David.

In the chapter to follow, Matthew tells of the visit from the Magi, the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, and Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem.

(The other stories which we associate with Christmas, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the angel and the shepherds, are found in the Gospel of Luke).

We shouldn't gloss over too quickly the difficult circumstances described in Matthew 18, which shows how Joseph and Mary face these circumstances. We are told a great deal about this lowly, but holy couple, and their faith in God.

Joseph and Mary are betrothed to be married. This is sometimes described as an engagement period, but it is more than that.

Betrothal in the Jewish culture of the time was in fact the first part of the marriage contract.

A breach of this contract was considered adultery and Mary is found to be with child.

If adultery is proven, the punishment might be death.

Joseph has rights under Mosaic Law but chooses to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract, so as to protect Mary.

Then God intervenes!

The message of the angel of the Lord is given to Joseph in his dream and tells us much about the child that Mary bears and his role in God's plan.

The child is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and His name will be Jesus, which in the Hebrew means "Yahweh saves."

He will be the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7 v14: *"Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.'"*

Joseph does as the angel of the Lord directs.

He takes Mary to be his wife and accepts the child in her womb as his own.

Joseph and Mary are both cooperative with God's plan. They are both models for us of what it means to be faithful servants of God

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.

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 – 20th December 2020

As Christmas draws close and the period of waiting and preparation transitions into the celebrations of Jesus' birth, take some time this weekend to consider some of the parallels between waiting in this Advent season and the waiting we've been experiencing under the pandemic restrictions.

The hope of an effective vaccine and an opening up of society once again; and the hope of a saviour to deliver us from sin, shame and death.

As you pray this weekend, here are some further themes to focus upon:

- Pray for all our churches as they celebrate the incarnation, that God will bring fresh revelation and insight into his nature and character in taking on human flesh and blood.
- Pray for our churches as they engage in outreach this weekend with carol services, carol singing, online faith sharing and practical action. As there are fewer alternative distractions this year, may churches become more central in their community life as people celebrate Christmas.
- May we all find ways of living more slowly, more simply, more Christ-focussed lives this Christmas, giving time and space for the Saviour.

In my role as NBA Mission Enabler, please can you support me in prayer...

- As we look to engage in a thoroughgoing review of Association life under a new Strategic Transitional Leader whom we hope to appoint in the Spring, may God bring clarity to how all the other staff roles will relate to this new role, and be guiding us in how we might need to change in order to embrace the new future which God has for us.
- I am working on several projects for 2021: growing a mentoring network of younger and missional leaders across our churches; launching an Association year out discipleship scheme; developing our mission strategy, especially the pioneering and social action aspects; growing in our practice of online mission. Please pray for God to lead and guide in each of these.

With thanks!

Paul Revill

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

Advent Thoughts and Prayers

Normally it would seem unfair to brand an entire year as Annus Horribilis, but in 2020's case, there are few better descriptions.

But we can praise God for Jesus who came to mankind at the darkest and bleakest time of the year and brought the light that will never fade or be overcome by the darkness.

He is the everlasting light of the world and our everlasting hope and will overcome the darkness and will never leave us.

May you all have a Happy and Blessed Christmas and 2021

Jesus Christ

Messiah... Saviour... Alpha... Lion of Judah
Anointed One... Good Shepherd... King of Kings
Lord of Lords... Emmanuel... Redeemer... The Way
Mighty God... The Vine... High Priest
The Rock... Prince of Peace
Living Water... Son of God
Light of the World... Our Hope

The Truth

An Advent Prayer

Father God, prepare our hearts not only for the celebration to come, but also for sharing that Good News with friends, family and work colleagues.

Grant us courage and a real willingness to talk about the love that came down to earth and walked among us.

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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