

***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.

***Wednesday Community Days***

- Whilst we are not currently holding our indoor events due to Covid and the need to protect everyone's safety, we will continue to provide takeaway food at lunchtime each Wednesday whilst observing the appropriate safeguards.

***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.

***Bible Study***

- We are continuing to suspend face-to-face Bible Study for safety reasons. Electronic solutions are available. Please contact us if you would like to be included.

***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](http://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](mailto:paulrevill@thenba.org.uk) or
- Elaine Webster [elainewebster@thenba.org.uk](mailto:elainewebster@thenba.org.uk)

**New Year's Blessing**

*God bless this New Year in which love overcomes.*

*God is always with us and unfolds great possibilities.*

*May you be Blessed, Strengthened and Lifted by the love and grace of our Lord through the coming months and year.*

**A prayer as the New Year commences**

*God of the ages, my Father in heaven, thank you for being very near at the start on a new year.*

*Please help me to know your will each day.*

*Bring the people into my life who will help me to love you more, serve you effectively, and bless others in meaningful ways.*

*To you be all the honour and glory in what I do, think, and say in the days ahead. In Jesus' name I pray.*

*Amen.*

*Prayer by Phil Ware at: [phil@verseoftheday.com](mailto:phil@verseoftheday.com)*

**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:*

- ***Belvoir Grove***
- ***Arundel Close***
- ***Short Street***
- ***Ferguson Court***
- ***Kenilworth Avenue***
- ***Brough Grove***

Please remember too our NBA Regional Minister/Mission Enabler

- ***Rev Dr John Claydon***

**A letter from Rev John Claydon.**

Dear All,

I apologise for writing to you again so soon, but it seemed appropriate to do so following the statement of our Prime Minister and of the new restrictions.

You will notice that corporate worship is still permitted.

Many, if not most of our churches had throughout the autumn began to meet together in person again.

However, even before the announcement of the new restrictions I was already aware of a few that had stopped meeting in person and opted to worship and meet on-line.

We should appreciate the work done by many in our churches in making our buildings Covid-secure and say a big 'thank you' to them.

However, there is increased risk as the new strain of the virus spreads more easily and it is important to note that while we are permitted to meet in worship it does not mean that we have to do so.

We have discovered other ways of being in touch and engaging in worship and to use those means rather than meeting together is not a loss of faith, nor a going back, but a matter of treading this particular path with care, love, respect and honour.

One of the concerns that has been expressed by other regional church leaders in the area is that whilst we work hard to make our church buildings safe our natural inclination for fellowship and conversation before and after times of worship is actually a risk and also not a good witness.

It is good that we feel secure and ok in our buildings, it is not so good that we are then led into a false sense of security that we let our guard down in the way that we interact together.

It is unfortunate to have to say it, but it seems that the best way of sticking and working together is to stay apart.

We have discovered a variety of ways of engaging in worship, fellowship, mission and discipleship and have many good options, including an old-fashioned letter, card or phone card to those not able to use social media.

It is important to be inclusive of all.

So let us use all the options available to us as we seek God's Kingdom and allow Christ to build His Church through us. God bless you!

*John C*

Thoughts - Epiphany

Epiphany, in the Western church, is celebrated on January 6th, completing the 12 days of Christmas.

Traditionally Epiphany marks the visit of the Magi recorded in Matthew 2:1–12.

(In the Eastern Church, Epiphany is also an observance of the Baptism of Jesus and the revelation of the Trinity.)

The wise men— who were Gentiles from another culture—were people who recognized Jesus’ kingship and bowed before him in worship.

Well before Paul’s teachings in the Epistles or Peter’s vision (Acts 10), this event conveys a truth of great theological significance:

That the gospel is also for the Gentiles and, indeed, for the whole world.

In times before this pernicious and malevolent time of Covid, we decorated our homes and houses, travelled and visited, ate much, opened gifts, and then ate some more.

Then we rang in the New Year with a long list of resolutions and a plate full of mince pies and luscious cakes and drinks.

For a long time now, many people have regarded Epiphany as the time to take down all the decorations and start diets and fitness regimes and even though many people have only heard of Twelfth Night or Epiphany as the deadline for taking down our Christmas decorations, it is actually a highly significant part of Christian history.

**The word epiphany means “manifestation” or “revelation.”**

**So, when Christians talk about Epiphany, we are referring to the three wise men’s (or the Magi’s) revelation that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah that Israel had been waiting for (Matthew 2:1-12).**

On this day, we recognize the wise men’s journey to see, worship, and bring gifts to “the one...born king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2).

The festival commemorating Epiphany is on Jan. 6 and is also sometimes called “Three Kings Day”.

So why does the Epiphany matter?

**Epiphany celebrates the outward and visible expression of the love of Jesus for us.**

Christ's birth was a big deal for the wise men, and it is a big deal for us.

At its essence, Epiphany celebrates Jesus' outward and visible expression of love in leaving His rightful place in heaven to live as a human and become the sacrifice for our sins.

The Magi, aka the wise men, who studied the stars and were considered sinners, represent Jesus' ability to draw all types of people to Him.

**He is the Saviour who came for ALL people,**

**For all mankind, including each one of us.**

So why should we celebrate Epiphany? And if so, how?

Epiphany traditions vary from culture to culture, but it can be helpful to remember and celebrate significant events in Jesus' life, including the Epiphany.

When celebrating any holiday, it is important to keep in mind the reason for, and the heart, behind, the celebrations

**Rather than just acknowledging traditions or rituals because they've always been done, we need to celebrate the meaning of the holiday: Jesus came to earth to save us!**

### Thoughts – Anti-Covid Vaccines

The Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) has warned against people refusing to take a Covid-19 vaccine due to scepticism about the jab.

The warning came after it was announced on Wednesday that the UK has become the first country in the world to approve the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech, paving the way for vaccination to start next week.

Some Christians are suspicious about a vaccine, and believe it's a pathway to government control.

Others think the vaccine is the "mark of the beast," and others think that it will diminish their fertility.

But a Californian megachurch pastor, Greg Laurie, addressed the concerns in a sermon and said, "it is interesting... we should not be looking for the anti-Christ, we should be looking for Jesus Christ."

Steve Fouch, from CMF, told Premier that out of all medical technologies, vaccines have had the biggest positive impact on human health.

“They have eliminated some of the most deadly diseases like smallpox,” he said. “They have brought under control a lot of other major illnesses that were scourges of the human race for many years. And they have improved the life expectancy of people across the world.

So people often hear half-truths and little stories that make them scared about vaccines. But the reality is, they're the biggest lifesaving medical technology, except possibly clean water, that we have ever developed.

“We have to remember that God *enables* science and medicine.”

The Government has secured 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, with 10,000,000 due in the UK by the end of the year.

Patients need two doses, meaning not enough shots have been secured for the entire UK population.

Work has been going on behind the scenes to ensure that NHS staff are now to starting to deliver the “jabs” to the most vulnerable, as well as health and care workers, as a priority.

The NHS Nightingale Hospitals have also been earmarked as sites for mass vaccination clinics - among other uses.

In addition, NHS leaders have said there will be "roving teams" deployed to vaccinate care home residents and workers.

Traditionally vaccines can take years to research and develop, and Fouch said some people are concerned that this vaccine took less than a year.

However, he insisted the safety has not been compromised.

“The way they're doing these trials, because we recognise that we need to get the vaccine quickly, a lot of the safety steps and processes that you would normally go through are happening all at the same time.

So things seem to be happening much quicker than normal, which is interesting, because it shows that when there's the political will and money behind it, we can actually get drugs and medicines through much more quickly than normally happens.

“The same steps have happened. They haven't cut corners on this to get to this point.”

His remarks came as the UK Government was warned against the creation of a vaccine passport for people who have had a Covid-19 vaccine.

New vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi, said that jabs will not be compulsory, but he added that hospitality and entertainment venues might insist on seeing proof that customers have had one.

*Lord thank you for using medical professionals and scientists to develop this vaccine.*

*We pray it will go to all those that need it and it will stop this deadly virus from spreading.*

*Give us wisdom as we decide if we will take the jab.*

Amen.

(Premier Christian News, December 2020)

<b>Thoughts – Someone had a good idea!</b>
--

The shop had 5lb bags of potatoes for sale with the offer, “Buy 1 get 1 free!”

I have a job using one bag before they go off, but with a plan in mind, I grabbed both.

The family in front of me at the till (not to judge by appearances) looked as though they did without a lot of things.

Would you like this bag of potatoes? They’re on offer and I won’t be able to use the free one before they go off.

Whenever you see a b1g1sale, take the offer whether you need it or not.

You can then donate it to someone, or to a food bank, or to someone who you feel might appreciate it.!

(Seen on Facebook)



**Notice from Influence Church**

From: Dan Hoyle<dan@influencechurch.co.uk>

Date: Mon, 4 Jan 2021, 10:52

Re: Influence January Services

Happy New Year to you all.

I hope the Christmas and NY season was well for you all.

I include an update below which was circulated yesterday regarding BA Influence Church's physical services in the month of January:

Throughout January our Sunday services are going to be online only. As many of you will be aware, rising infection rates across the North of England have impacted each of our towns, including several of our Church families and staff. Therefore, to prioritise the safety of our community, we have taken the decision to not return to physical services this month.

We may be around for the breakfast project on Fridays, but not on Sundays.

Many thanks

Dan Hoyle

Campus Pastor | Influence Church

**And Finally**

*The message of Epiphany is that the birth of Jesus was meant to have global implications that the good news was meant for all people.*

***"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.***

***Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through him."***

*Just as the magi came bearing gifts to the Christ Child, so may we offer ourselves to our Lord.*

*Lead us, Lord, to nurture and then share our gifts with the world around us.*

*Through the tasks laid before us today, may the message of your grace  
fall on an ear that needs to hear it.*

*We marvel, gracious Lord, that through this mysterious birth,  
your will for humanity is revealed for all to see.*

*Be with us as we seek to love as you have loved us, to forgive as you have  
forgiven us, and to give as you have given to us.*

*Amen.*

*(Moravian Church Prayer)*

### 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

<b>BABC Sunday Service</b>	<a href="https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/babc-sunday-service/">https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/babc-sunday-service/</a>
<b>BABC Newsletter</b>	<a href="https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/newsletter/">https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/newsletter/</a>
<b>BABC Garden Blog</b>	<a href="https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/church-garden-blog/">https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/church-garden-blog/</a>
<b>NBA Sunday Service</b>	<a href="https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/nba-sunday-service/">https://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk/nba-sunday-service/</a>
<b>BABC Main Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bishopbaptists.co.uk">www.bishopbaptists.co.uk</a>

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.