

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.
- Zoom Video Services will be held once a month, please contact us to be added to the mailing list.
- 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 contacts 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 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

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

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:

- ***Balmoral Grove***
- ***Berkley Grove***
- ***Lumley Grove***
- ***Carlisle Grove***
- ***Barnard Avenue***
- ***Newlands Avenue***

Please remember too all those at:

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

We invite you this week to pray for:

Beacon Lough Baptist Church, Gateshead

Like many churches Beacon Lough has had to adapt over the last year. It has been hard to be away from our building as much of our outreach is conducted from there.

We are Grateful to the Lord for providing us with personnel who are 'tech savvy' so that we have been able to develop an online service weekly and via the telephone so that those without the internet can access the Sunday service.

Our spiritual focus has been sharpened by the opportunities working online brings, many have been encountered, from all over, who are attending on a regular basis.

The fellowship has been great in encouraging each other via telephone calls, and when restrictions have allowed, walking with each other and doorstep visiting folks.

In addition, some are shopping for others and helping at the foodbank.

Particularly inspiring is the fact that a large percentage of our membership is over 70, proving the point that age is not a bar to service.

We are also hosting a WhatsApp group, which has been a great source for prayer fuel, and so many answers to prayer have spurred us on.

Regular prayer, fellowship and bible study meetings are also functioning well on Zoom.

A particular prayer focus is that we will remain relevant, so that when the pandemic eases we will be in a position to enable folk to pick up the threads of their lives in a new normal.

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."*

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 Claydon

Broken Promises and Plans

Do you remember the times before this pernicious and malevolent time of Covid, and lockdowns and tiers, and face masks, when we used to love planning to meet up with families, friends, colleagues, and our besties?

We'd arrange to meet up at Gran's for her Birthday party or go out for a family meal.

We'd plan holidays together and excursions out to Whitby or the Metro Centre and so on.

We'd plan to go to a cinema to see the latest block buster movie, go for a bike ride, a shopping trip for retail therapy, a walk in the park to feed the ducks etc.

We are a social and gregarious species by nature.

I know we get on each other's nerves sometimes and, now and again, argue and fall out, but basically, we love being with other people in our families and clubs and getting together with mates and muckers.

That's what we do! We love making plans and arrangements and promises.

Or did do!

But then, even before these dire and dreadful, times, we didn't always keep to our plans and promises.

Every now and then we can't avoid it as life has a habit of getting in the way, or, from time to time we're just not reliable.

We have always let people down or they have let us down for some reason or another.

But, whatever the circumstances and situations, even in the best of times, the only promises that we can always and truly rely on are the plans and promises of God!

When God makes a promise, then it is always kept!

Jeremiah 29:11-13 NIV: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

So, keep looking and listening to God's words. (Ed)

2 Corinthians 7 v 10 NIV: “Godly sorrow produces REPENTANCE leading to salvation not to be regretted.”

In Scripture, the word “repentance” means to “turn away from sin”, from doing wrong.

By confessing your sin, you acknowledge what you have done; by repenting, you turn away from it; cease from doing it.

When we let sin into our lives (and we all do it!), it violates the very core of who we are.

And that will cause you godly sorrow, leading, directing you towards repentance, and turning away from sin.

Don’t settle for saying, “This is a bad habit that I can’t break, but God will forgive me.”

Yes, God will forgive you, but God doesn’t want you to settle for a cycle of sin, repentance, forgiveness and then going on repeating the same sin.

God wants you to be determined and effective in His service.

God is calling you to a higher level, to be more diligent when it comes to changing your behaviour and turning away from sin and consciously not repeating it.

It’s hard, but by asking God for help, you can do it!

Saint Mungo’s Day

No doubt you missed it!

I would have too if it weren’t for a good friend, Glasgow Gavin, who is associated with BABC.

Saint Mungo is the Patron Saint of Glasgow and also known as Kentigern and who is believed to have been born and brought up in Culross in Fife, though he had many connections with the Welsh St David.

Mungo is believed to have began his Christian Ministry at aged 25 around the year 540.

He established himself in Glasgow living a simple life beside a tributary known as the Molendinar and there, Mungo set up his Church which is the site of Glasgow Cathedral.

Glasgow Cathedral and it is also the burial place for Saint Mungo. His Feast Day is 13th January.

The Glasgow coat of arms shows the life and legend of St Mungo.

- The arms include ‘the tree that never grew’ relating to St Mungo tending a fire in St Serf’s Monastery . He was meant to keep the fire going, but he fell asleep and some lads who were envious of Mungo’s favoured position with St Serf, put out the fire while he slept. When Mungo woke he broke off branches from a frozen hazel tree and by praying over them and lit the fire again, the hazel branches were transformed in to a fully grown tree.
- The ‘bird that never flew’ is about a robin that had been tamed by St Serf and it had been accidentally killed. Mungo prayed over the robin and brought it back to life.
- The ‘fish that never swam’ is about a ring which a King gave to his wife Langoureth who gave it to her lover a knight who wore it and when the King noticed this took it from him when he was sleeping and threw it into the River Clyde. The King then demanded to see the ring from Langeoreth and she confessed this to Mungo who sent a monk to fish the river and found the lost ring inside the fish.
- The bell is attributed to a bell that was reputedly given to Mungo by the Pope on one of Mungo’s trips to Rome and was the first bell to hang in the fledgling church.

Given how far in the past St Mungo lived his life, the stories and legends of his time can vary. Most people remember the symbols depicting his relationship with Glasgow by the following short poem:

*There’s the tree that never grew, There’s the bird that never flew,
There’s the fish that never swam, There’s the bell that never rang.*

Taking the symbols one by one, each refers to a legend during St Mungo’s life in Glasgow or his education before he came to found the monastery.

No doubt, you are wondering... “all very interesting, but what’s the point?”

The point is that there are many high-profile charities now associated with St Mungo’s.

St Mungo’s outreach teams go out each night to meet people who are homeless and to help them off the streets.

With 17 outreach teams they are one of the largest providers of outreach services in England.

Each night they offer a bed and support to more than 3,150 people across the south and southwest.

They believe that people can – and do – recover from the issues that cause homelessness.

They work to prevent homelessness and support people at every step of their recovery from homelessness.

Briefly, the services provided include Community Work, Outreach Teams, Providing Accommodation, Assisting to Finding Medical Help, Offender Services, Recovery College, Employment and Employment Support, and a Clearing House helping to get Accommodation for Rough Sleepers.

This is just a short summary, but if you're looking for a worthwhile charity to support, then this is well worth looking up!

020 3856 6000 or email info@mungos.org

(They'll reply to your email within two working days.)

Martin Luther King Day

Prayers to mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 18th)

O God, we thank you for the lives of great saints and prophets in the past, who have revealed to us that we can stand up amid the problems and difficulties and trials of life and not give in.

We thank you for our fore parents, who've given us something in the midst of the darkness of exploitation and oppression, to keep going.

Grant that we will go on with the proper faith and the proper determination of will, so that we will be able to make a creative contribution to this world.

In the name and spirit of Jesus we pray.

God, we thank you for the inspiration of Jesus.

Grant that we will love you with all our hearts, souls, and minds, and love our neighbours as we love ourselves, even our enemy neighbours.

And we ask you, God, in these days of emotional tension, when the problems of the world are gigantic in extent and chaotic in detail, to be with us in our going out and our coming in, in our rising up and in our lying down, in our moments of joy and in our moments of sorrow, until the day when there shall be no sunset and no dawn.

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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