

<i>Weekly Prayers, News and Thoughts</i>

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

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:

- **Walmer Terrace**
- **Tivoli Street**
- **May Street**
- **The Copses**
- **East Parade**
- **Ladysmith Street**

Please remember too all those at:

- **Butterwick Hospice**
- **BA General Hospital**
- **Newgate Shopping Centre**
- **BA Market Square & Town Hall**

NBA Prayer Requests

We ask you this week to pray for:

Prison Chaplains

We ask you to pray this week for Prison Chaplains in our communities and particularly for Reverend Mel Nixon, our Chaplain at HMP Low Newton.

Give thanks to God for the work of our chaplaincy team in Low Newton and for going before us in all we do for Him.

Pray for my ministry to continue in prisons as I put my trust in God for continued financial support.

Pray for all prison Chaplains and especially for those in our local prisons. Pray for all prisoners and their families, especially those in Low Newton."

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."

Hamslerley Baptist Church

Hamsterley Baptist Church have been holding a socially distanced Sunday Service, once a month.

Due to the current situation with new strains of Covid, they have now, reluctantly, decided not to hold any more, until further notice.

Please continue to support the fellowship of Hamsterley in your prayers.

Thoughts on Robbie Burns

January marks the birthday of Robbie Burns, 1759, and many people love to celebrate and reflect on his many attributes and qualities which have immortalised him and his poetry in many countries.

Two centuries since his death have not lessened the relevance of his “love poems” or his stirring lines on behalf of democracy.

However, Burns had a hard life as a farm labourer, always on the edge of poverty and made worse by his frequent liaisons.

These earned him the ire of many fathers reaching a climax with him fleeing to the West Indies.

However, before he fled he had published his first book of poems and on hearing of its success back home, quickly returned to Scotland and to his acceptance with the literary classes of the day.

The “Burns Night” annual celebration on the 25th January has its own “liturgy”.

The haggis is ceremoniously preceded by a piper and laid on the top table.

Then the “Selkirk Grace” is said:

*“Some hae meat and canna eat, and some wad eat that want it,
but we hae meat and we can eat, and sae the Lord be thankit.”*

(The Selkirk Arms Hotel dates back from 1777 and is known to have had Robert Burns as a lodger on several occasions around 1794, although there are conflicting stories as to the origin of The Selkirk Grace, many believe that it was at this very hotel that Burns penned the famous grace prior to attending at a dinner hosted by the Earl of Selkirk).

Before the actual meal, his poem, "Address to the Haggis," is then read in a broad Scots dialect and is mostly indecipherable to the average Sassenach but is in praise of both the Haggis and Scotland.

After the meal there are various toasts culminating in the "immortal memory".

This is a sort of secular sermon extolling the poetry of Burn's and the evening eventually concludes with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne".

Despite his reputation for frequent dalliances, Robbie Burns was quite religious and Christian in many of his views, and a poem of his that shows this is

"The Cotter's Saturday Night" which includes the verse:

*"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."*

Or, as St Paul put it in Ephesians Chapter 3 verses 17-19. (NIV),

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God".

[Based on an item by George Morrison (Grace Bible Fellowships)]

Blue Monday

Blue Monday is the name given to the third Monday of January invented by a now defunct UK travel company, Sky Travel, supposedly the most depressing day of the year, and it is based on an invented and tongue in cheek, formula, using many factors, including: weather conditions, debt level (the difference between debt accumulated and our ability to pay), the time since Christmas, the time since failing our new year's resolutions, low motivational levels and feeling of a need to take action.

$$\frac{[W + D - d]T^Q}{MN_a}$$

(Weather=W, debt=d, time since Christmas=T, time since failing our new year's resolutions=Q, low motivational levels=M and the feeling of a need to take action=Na. 'D' is not defined in the release, nor are units.)

Over 15 years after this justifiably forgotten press release, the Blue Monday myth still trends on social media every year.

Thanks to this, the PR industry uses Blue Monday as a chance to push wellbeing, fitness, or other self-improvement and happiness boosting products.

However, Stephen Buckley, head of information at mental health charity Mind, told the Independent that Blue Monday campaigns often trivialise what can be a serious, debilitating and potentially life-threatening condition: *"By suggesting anyone and everyone can feel depressed in a single day, we risk belittling the experiences of those living with a serious illness,"* he said.

But there are still positives to come out of Blue Monday as it represents a chance to tackle some of the stigma surrounding depression and raise awareness of its symptoms.

It raises awareness of mental health issues and often it moves employers to offer help and incentives.

It represents a chance to tackle some of the stigma surrounding depression and raise awareness of its symptoms.

Isabella Goldie, Director at the Mental Health Foundation, said *"What we can take from Blue Monday is that we all have mental health and that there are steps we can take all year round to protect it."*

Samaritans wants to turn the third Monday of January into the more positive "Brew Monday", encouraging people to make a cup of tea and have a chat on the phone or online with those they care about.

The Great British Bake-Off finalist and also a Samaritans volunteer, Laura Adlington, said it is about *"making sure that people are alright, not just on that day but every day"*.

Blue Monday has become one of those 'zombie' ideas that everyone knows is meaningless, but which still gets headlines.

It's used to sell everything from holidays to head massages, all in the name of making us feel better about ourselves.

But is there a Biblical approach to the Blue Monday phenomenon?

The Bible is full not just of great stories and profound spiritual teaching, but also of practical wisdom.

There's even a type of book, 'Wisdom' literature, which gives sound, down-to-earth advice about how to live happily and purposefully.

Examples of Wisdom literature are Ecclesiastes, Job and Proverbs – and in an age when life coaches, self-help gurus and de-clutterers of every description, can make large amounts of money telling us how to sort our lives out, it's surely worth reading the Bible for some clues to happiness.

What we find are straightforward injunctions to do the right thing, avoid temptation, be moderate and humble in our expectations and to put God first.

These are a world away from the celebrity-driven, me-first gospel of personal fulfilment that is so common today.

Instead of the individualism and the competitiveness that we tend to celebrate, the emphasis is on responsibility to others.

So here are some verses from Proverbs that might help us live better.

1. Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act (Proverbs 3: 27).
2. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom, Though it cost you all you have, get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).
3. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a bandit, and want like an armed man (Proverbs 6:10-11).
4. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness (Proverbs 8:7).

5. The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin (Proverbs 10:8).
6. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed (Proverbs 11:25).
7. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia and Christian Today .com)

2 Timothy 4 v 17: *"But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength".*

Paul seemed to need a coat when he wrote to Timothy, "Bring me the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas."

Held as a prisoner in a cold Roman prison, Paul needed warmth, but also companionship.

"No one came to my support, but everyone deserted me", he lamented, when he faced a Roman judge. (2 Timothy 4 v16).

His words surely penetrate our hearts with his great pain of depression.

Yet, in the final words of Paul's last recorded letter - his closing words after his amazing ministry – he moves from self-pity to praise:

"But the Lord stood at my side," (v17), and his words rally our hearts as he declared, *"(God) gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death."* (v17).

If you're facing a crisis, lacking even the right clothes for warmth, or supportive friends, remember God.

God is faithful to revive, provide, and deliver.

Why? - For his glory and for our purpose in His kingdom.

(From Our Daily Bread 15/04/2020)

During his acceptance speech president Jo Biden talked about mending a fractured / broken U.S.A. society. He quoted Psalm 30 v5:

*"For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favour lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning."*

I hope that he was meaning:

"As we go through life, we encounter many occasions of difficulty and pain that are often a product of our sinful actions, careless attitudes, a foolish indifference towards God or others, or a rejection of God. As a result, we go through a period of chastisement by God that comes from His love towards us. However, it is a short-lived and a relatively momentary suffering that we receive from Him, and it is for our benefit and guidance which is beyond any comparison with the peace that comes when we learn to follow his guidance. Our weeping pain may last through the night, but our joy comes with the morning. May we develop an attitude of continuous prayerful praise - for God is faithful to fulfil all His promises to us."

Heavenly Father, may we praise and thank You for Your loving-kindness and long-suffering towards Your children.

Thank You that no matter what difficulty and pain we may go through in this life, weeping will be replaced with laughter and pain with joy,

In Jesus name

Amen.

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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