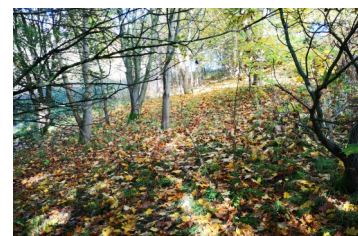


around
the
NBA

Spring 2021

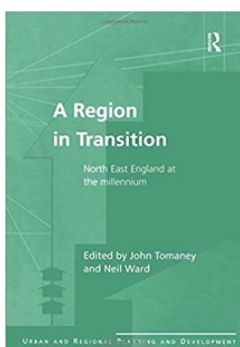
We are passionate to see God's Kingdom come in power to touch people's lives and shape our society.



'A Region in transition!'

Twenty years ago I bought a small, but expensive book about the north east called 'A Region in transition: North East England at the Millennium'. Its ten chapters examine the transitions that were taking place in our area in industry, economics, culture, politics and the environment. I bought the book because I had just been appointed as a Regional Minister and wanted to have a greater understanding of our area. We were about to undergo our own transition in the Baptist family as the number of Associations were reduced from 29 to 13 all with Regional Ministers to take responsibilities in mission, pastoral oversight and strategic leadership. We adopted new structures which brought fresh flexibility enabling us to offer hands on support to churches, leadership across the Association and stimulate and encourage mission.

It has been a great privilege to serve God in this Association and there have been many blessings along the way, although I confess that there have also been a few challenges as well. I have been blessed to have developed many friendships across the Association and beyond and we have all been blessed to have had such good and encouraging people serve within the Association team and in other roles in the Association. To all I am enormously grateful and thank God for each one of them – too many to name here.



I was still only 46 when I started and still with some ginger hair. Looking back, as is usually the case, these years seem to have gone by so quickly. The paid staff team and key volunteers have changed several times each bringing different gifts,

experience and insights and all bringing a significant focus upon mission ranging from training in evangelism and Church Planting to emphasising Purpose Driven Church to Re:Imagine and much more, and added to this we have had the ability to appoint a couple of Youth



Specialists, to engage with the other Northern Associations in appointing a Northern Pioneer Co-ordinator and to partner with Northern College in establishing training for Baptist Ministers at Cranmer Hall in Durham. We have also been greatly blessed by many volunteers who have given their time and expertise in many ways including safeguarding, mission, finance, and a range of training.

What we did in 2002 looks and feels quite different to what we do in 2021. We have all changed and the world has changed; but it was ever thus. Yet, recognising the Spirit as one of renewal and creativity we must be ready for the continuing change to come in anticipation of the Reformation's motto and challenge of being reformed and always reforming.

We all move into a new chapter and yet the author remains the same; Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Trusting in Him and walking in step with the Spirit we encounter the new things that God has for us with confidence, anticipation and trust.

John Claydon

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Children's Ministry at Stockton Baptist Church

Stockton Baptist Church Children's Pastor, Lydia Gurney, was interviewed recently by Tim Keith (GEM Locals Missions Facilitator working with Stockton Baptist Church) about children's work during the pandemic.

What changes has lockdown made to the Children's Ministry at Stockton Baptist Church?

Before Covid, children's groups were in person, now we're busy online.

I put together a pre-recorded Kid's Service every Sunday and we run a Children's Chat Time on zoom before the Sunday Service. Brigades have moved to zoom. I do a 'live' singing time every Wednesday (for Toddlers) and recently, we set up a weekly Children's Life Group on zoom and have 15 children attending.

We ran a Parenting for Faith course. Our regular film nights for children have gone down well and also activity packs that we deliver. To keep in touch with families we have set up a Families WhatsApp group.



How has this changed the way you do and understand your job?

I have an excellent team of volunteers and my role was always more as a coordinator and encourager. Since we have moved online this



has changed and I have become more hands on. Many volunteers are Key workers within NHS and education and one of my priorities was to ensure there was no pressure on anyone to be involved, I was able to offer cover to help with much needed downtime etc. or when technology became a barrier. My link with parents has grown; when we were meeting in person the contact would be during drop off/pick up times. Now, communication with parents is vital especially when wanting children to meet on zoom. Praying for families is important and this contact helps me to know how to pray for them.

I'm reminded of the amount of time children spend with their parents/carers compared to the amount of time they spend in a church group. Communicating and encouraging parents to share their faith with their children has become a higher priority to me.

My job description, as Children's Pastor, included working with children, encouraging teams, group work and running holiday clubs. Now, I feel the 'pastor' side is coming out more--- encouraging parents to teach their children faith and providing resources to be able to do that. Sharing our Christian faith with

our children should be ongoing, everyday not just a Sunday activity. My own devotional and prayer time with God has increased during this time.

How will the end of lockdown change things going forward?

Outreach into schools and starting Little Fish Toddlers again would be great. Toddlers don't communicate online, and I know parents miss each other.

I'm looking forward to a mix of online and face to face meetings with children and using skills learnt during lockdown (video making, zooming etc.). Encouraging team as we move out of lockdown, avoiding pressure and taking feelings into account is important. It will be a gradual process with many changes, prayer and trust in God is how we will move forward.



From the Home Mission Desk

Once again we are so grateful for the generosity of our churches which has enabled us to send a total of £101,161.43p to support Home Mission through our Baptist Union. Churches should have, by now, received their Home Mission Giving Certificate for 2020, and are encouraged to displaying it prominently.

The NBA Church's Blessed Generosity has enabled others to be blessed by what they receive in the form of Grants for Ministry and Mission in addition to the amount that comes back into our Association to enable our churches to be served by our 2 Regional Ministers and the Regional Tutor.

We are all blessed by our giving to others, but it is worth noting that we in the NBA as a whole receive back a generous blessing of what we have given.

Our Target for this year, 2021, will be £105,000 and I would like to urge all our churches to consider a modest increase on their 2020 contributions. Nationally, the 13 Associations did not meet the target requested. However, the NBA has yet again performed well in



difficult financial circumstances lying 2nd again overall at the end of 2020. Over the past 14 years we have been 1st 7 times, 2nd 5 times, 3rd and 4th once each, therefore consistently at the top of the National Per Capita givers.

Home Mission is the Baptist family purse which enables Baptist churches and individuals to reach their mission potential and demonstrate the love of God to their communities.

There is an excitement around new missional opportunities in the NBA. Home Mission Grants

(although reducing year on year) will enable work that has the potential to be transformational in local communities to see fruit for their labours.

Our faithful God sees how our giving is invested in people and communities and making a difference all around the North East of England.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all our Fellowships for their continued sacrificial support of their Home Mission Fund, which expresses our common vision of UK Baptists.

Every Blessing to you all, I will endeavour to continue to serve you as best I can, and if you need me to come and encourage you with regard to Home Mission, I am always happy to do so, by ZOOM or any other means

<http://www.thenba.org.uk/home-mission>
http://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220874/Home_Mission_Resources.aspx

Rev. Ray Richardson

Call to Prayer

Over the period from Lent and into Easter we invited all of our churches to give time to listening to God, to one another and to what's happening in the wider world in order to gain a deeper understanding of what God is saying to us and where he is leading us individually, and collectively.

It's been good to receive feedback from a number of people, and especially to be able to post some recorded interviews or reflections on our YouTube channel and Facebook page – all worth a watch if you've not already seen them. Thanks to all who have contributed

feedback already. If you've not given any feedback to the NBA team and feel God has given you something to share with our wider Baptist family, please do get in touch with one of us and share what you feel God has been communicating to you and to your church.

At the moment we're in the phase of gathering responses, so it's a little early to summarise in detail what God is saying to us. But some themes are starting to emerge.

Firstly, the theme of growing our communities. Gathering those who have been separated into isolation

through the last year of restrictions, listening to them and caring for those whose mental health has suffered over the past year. Gathering together doesn't just mean Sunday worship, but gathering as a wider community in lots of different ways. We will still have to operate in a 'hybrid' manner in order to connect with our whole church community; involving 'in person', online and connecting by phone or other means.

Continued on page 4

Call to Prayer (cont)

It will take time for our communities to grow – they will be different from before as we will have lost some folk and gained others; they will be different people from a year ago – some will be carrying pain of what has been lost over the past year. This growth will take time and should not be rushed. And part of growing communities is also the missional call to help grow health and wellbeing within our wider communities, which will have suffered and lost much over the past year.

This is the time for church to stand firmly at the heart of community life as a channel for healing and blessing, to see all of God's *shalom* flowing into our communities.

Secondly, a strong theme of rebuilding in a fresh way. We have received images of a cracked and broken building collapsing and something new being built in its place, with new materials. Or of a sumptuous medieval banquet being replaced by a feast with a modern menu – more ingredients, dishes

and culinary styles than before. Many of us have expressed a desire that church looks different after Covid than it did before. But it feels as though God is challenging us to be more radical, more adventurous, more dependent upon him than we might naturally choose to be. To step into a world of new adventure where there is no established map, but a faithful and reliable guide. Are we willing to live with less centralised structures; less minister-dependent; less Sunday-oriented; continuing to feed and nurture the 'scattered' as well as the 'gathered'?

Finally, this is the season of spring, where green shoots of new life are emerging from the ground. We will also start to see the 'green shoots' of what God has been doing over the past year in many hidden and unseen ways. People in churches with newly-energised faith. Folk in our communities being drawn to seek God. Small initiatives such as prayer groups, neighbourhood networks, relationships established

through acts of caring and meeting needs during the lockdowns. Let's give these green shoots the space and encouragement to continue to grow. Let's resource and support those involved to follow these openings for mission and witness and not swamp them with demands to return to 'official' church activities and ministries instead.

As God continues to speak through our *Call to Prayer*, we will spend more time in weighing and discernment and then give more detailed feedback to all of our churches over the coming weeks - offering support and resources to help you in your response in following Christ in your unique setting. May we continue to listen attentively, to be bold, to take risks and to experiment, and set our sails to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Revill

Regional Minister—Mission Enabler

The Resilience of being a FILIPINO !!

As the world continues to pick up from the impact of the coronavirus disease, we now recognise that everyone's lives have changed, one way or the other.

These changes are obviously seen in the way we Filipinos meet and do our activities. What used to be vibrant and happy meetings have now become so quiet and people feel a distance to one another.

However, as life is likened to a stage show or a movie, the show must go despite the difficult times.

While many people have viewed the situation as hopeless and gloomy, we Filipinos still see a silver lining and strive hard to move forward, with the hope of a better tomorrow.



THE FILIPINO
INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
EST. 2013

The pandemic has brought many challenges and I personally had a hard time adjusting. But, if we look around, there are many opportunities to share our faith amid the crises that people are dealing with.

It is hard for us Filipinos as one big happy family not seeing each other every Sunday and during special occasions. However, many beautiful things have come out of the pandemic - we had more time for God and more time to spend bonding

with our families. The pandemic made us realise the importance of our faith. Our church has had more time in our bible study and prayer meetings, which happen every day via zoom. We have even had more time to do household chores and care for our houses!!

Continued on page 5

The Resilience of being a FILIPINO (cont)

Trying to balance our priorities was crucial during lockdown. The best way for us Filipinos to keep our sanity was to accept that things change and to realise that only God knows what will happen next. Although we have had to acknowledge negative feelings, it was also important that people increased their positive emotions too.

Not every day is a sunny day, and we must learn to deal with it!

Do not be hard on ourselves; do not overindulge on negative feelings; lift your spirit in the presence of the Lord and feel free to reach out to friends. There are so many ways to do that even without seeing each other in person. Do not ever feel you are alone.

Yes, we may have been confined to the four corners of our homes, but it never stopped us connecting with our fellow Filipinos and with our

families back home in the Philippines. Regardless of how difficult the situation is, Filipinos have the ability to cope and even learn from tough situations.

Noah Arco
The Filipino International Church

Northern Baptist Association

Moderator's Musings April 2021

This time last year I wrote my first Moderator's Musings as lockdown began with the hope that this experience would be like a wilderness experience and not much more than 40 days of reflection and learning new ways of the Spirit's guidance.

The disciples of Jesus were in lockdown after Good Friday, some escaped to the countryside, others visited His tomb, most hid out of fear in the Upper Room. Breaking news was the tomb was empty, Mary had encountered Jesus, breathless those from Emmaus bursts into the room telling of breaking bread with Him. Then Jesus came and spoke Peace, into the room, into their hearts, into their future. Breathing upon them the Holy Spirit with these words "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Hope and mission were reborn.

Now as we approach the end of being cooped up we have the presence of Jesus fresh in our minds after celebrating Easter's resurrection. We will be liberated into His future. We cannot return to normal – but to a new day and way for Mis-

sion and ministry. This is the constant desire of our Lord not just for a pandemic for every generation is different and ours will never be the same again.

As we come to the NBA Assembly, we are doing things differently – not all in one day – but as several opportunities for worship and learning, making a significant decision for a new Transitional Strategic Leader, Regional Minister, a youth event and the gathering of us all together on one live stream on Sunday 25th April.

We leave the past behind thankful for all that we found, were gifted and received but we move on, we change, we hear afresh "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you". Only with the breath of Jesus Spirit flowing through us.... Be open, be ready, be active and if God shares or shows you something share it with us all.

I remember watching Arthur Ashe, the first black tennis player to be selected for the US Davis cup team winning his way to the Wimbledon title in July 1975 while holding our 5 month old first son in my arms. Well it was a different way of being

able to sit on the sofa and enjoy sport. Ashe later wrote: **"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."** This is the challenge of the new way for us as an Association remembering another of his quotes **"Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome."**

Come let us journey together in our mission with the refreshing hope of Jesus breathed upon us.

Tony Ruddie, Moderator



A Time for Everything

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3

Now that is what I call a long sentence! I love the Book of Ecclesiastes. There is nothing else quite like it in the Bible and it is full of wisdom for our times. We are going through a time of great contrasts which seem to oppose and contradict each other, and yet somehow, they go together.

Like the writer, I can't explain this, but nevertheless, this is the way it is: *There is a time to plant and a time to uproot.*

As I come to the end of my 20 years as a pastor, this passage helps me hold together my contrasting experiences and emotions as Janet and I uproot ourselves from North Yorkshire and plant ourselves back in Scotland. We don't know exactly what the future holds, but that's ok, because God does, and we trust He knows what He is doing.

I believe the same is true for the NBA. You may not be going anywhere geographically, but there is no escaping the fact that the spiritual landscape has changed, and God by His Holy Spirit is uprooting the church from her old ways and planting a new crop so that we can continue to bear fruit for His Kingdom in our times. God has always done this so don't be afraid of it.

As I leave my simple advice is this: Don't resist what the Spirit is doing.



Instead embrace it and get involved wherever you see the Spirit at work, because *God has made everything beautiful in its time. Eccl 3:11*

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work together with you all. May the Lord bless & keep you.

*With love & faith
Glen & Janet Cormack
New Life Baptist Church
Northallerton*

Meet your new BMS rep....

Hi, I am Penny Hyde, and I am your new BMS rep on the NBA Council.

Well, who am I?

I am just like you really, a member of our Baptist family. At present I am a member at West View Baptist Church in Hartlepool, where my husband Tim is the part time minister. We have now been here for the last 10 years, before that we were in St. Helens on Merseyside. We came back to the North East to be nearer my relatives, who live in Stockton.

So alongside being a minister's wife, I am also a full time GP in a large practice in Hartlepool. The last year has been full of change in medicine as you can imagine. I would never have imagined that we would close our surgery doors to patients and also the doors of our church.

This time last year I was in Chad at Guinebor 2 hospital, as I was volunteering for three months as a doctor there with the team. What an amazing place



to live and work, in the Sahal dessert. (If you haven't already seen the Operation Chad DVD please check it out - to see what is being achieved there). The hospital is well respected and provides medical, surgical, maternity and child-care facilities in a country where there are few doctors. The team was boosted last year with the addition of another Doctor, a nutrition specialist, a music therapist and a general manager (and their children) and hopefully when the airport restrictions are lifted two new nurses will be joining them too.

As you can tell, I am passionate about the work of our mission workers, and we need to support what they are doing to bring the love of God around the world. We cannot all go to another country, but we can all support what is being done in our Baptist world. In the coming months I hope to contact some of the churches in the NBA and encourage you to join up with a link mission worker, so your church can support a specific worker in what they are doing. Please be considering getting in touch with BMS if you do not already support a mission worker.

Last request - please support the BMS campaign with the Baptist World Alliance to support free and fair covid vaccination across the world visit www.covidfreeworld.org.uk

Looking forward to working together with you all.

Penny

Caring for 'the strangers in our land' in lockdown -

Westgate Baptist Church in Newcastle

God has always had a heart for the displaced and expected His people to "love them as you love yourself". Over the last year we have observed the impact of social isolation on our wellbeing during periods of imposed restrictions and lockdown, but for asylum seekers this has compounded their existing sense of disorientation and loss of family, culture, homeland, and employment whilst adding to the complexities and stress of navigating our asylum process. It has therefore become even more important to maintain vital connections with those we know to bring comfort and let them know they are not alone. Social media has provided a helpful way to make calls, video calls (where a few can chat together) and to send simply worded texts to those locally here, in deportation centres and to those asylum seekers and refugees we know through a church connection in Germany.

Practically, we have continued to offer shower and washing facilities

at church where necessary and through a generous government grant to the Drop In, funding became available for two part time advice workers and the weekly distribution of various types of care packages. When permissible, the Drop In has run a limited 'advice only' service in the garden and building but a substantial amount of support has been offered remotely. For those classed as vulnerable, we have been able to meet in person to provide help and care when necessary, including accompanying them to medical appointments. In partnership with Action Housing, we provide a home and support for up to 3 destitute asylum seekers so when two guys from our fellowship were made homeless just as the first lockdown occurred, we were able to quickly provide a home. The asylum process although impacted by lockdown, has not stopped; we have continued to write support letters, contact solicitors, attend immigration hearings (remotely and in person) and to write to our MP advocating

for a review of our asylum system whilst raising concerns for the welfare of individuals in our fellowship.

Church activities online have made some feel their sadness and loss more keenly. Using worship songs, Bible readings and encouraging prayer in our own languages has therefore become increasingly important in fostering a sense of inclusion and being 'journeying companions' together. We have also encouraged individuals to join WhatsApp group chats so that prayer requests, encouragements, scriptures, and requests for help, can all be sent and received quickly; with the benefit of translation facilities online this has all helped sharing fellowship enormously. Truly the insights, encouragement and care has been mutually given and received. It is all about connection and mutual expressions of care.

*Shelagh Garry
Westgate Baptist Church*

Welcome and Thank You

We have been enormously blessed to have had Lynn Fletcher as our Safeguarding Officer. Lynn has served in an honorary capacity since 2012 and has brought grace, wisdom and a huge amount of knowledge and experience. We express our great appreciation to her as she retires from this role in the summer.

A number of our ministers have either retired recently or will soon be doing so and so we say thank you to and seek God's blessing in the next chapter of life for Ian Wren (retired from Lakeside in Sunderland at the end of 2020), Ronnie Wynd (Retiring from Durham City), Glen Cormack (retiring from New Life, Northallerton) and Andrew Waugh (retiring from Stockton Baptist Church),

We also thank Cornelius Harding for his service as our NBA Company Secretary for the past year.

We express our sorrow and condolences to Tony Taylor on the loss of his wife Rosemary and to Roy Merrin on the loss of his wife Marilyn. Marilyn would be known to many of us as she had served the Baptist Union and our Association on our Councils and served in ministry with Roy at Jarrow for many years. She regularly engaged in the life of the Association until very recently, doing so with grace and sensitivity.

We are delighted to welcome those who have taken on new ministry and other positions over the past months: Barbara Revill has taken up a Minister in Training placement at North Shields, Phil Dixon returned to

the NBA to become the minister at Oxford Road in Hartlepool and Craig Downes has accepted a call to the ministry at Stockton Baptist Church. We are grateful to Mike Cross (of Lakeside in Sunderland) for taking on the role of Prayer Co-ordinator, to John Watson (of Morpeth) for becoming our Independent Examiner, and to Mark Heaton (of the NWBA) becoming our NBA Company Secretary.

Please pray for all our friends in the new things God has for them.

John Claydon

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Northern Baptist Hub Tutor at Cranmer Hall
Rev. Linda Donaldson
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Make a Date

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 6th May | NBA Prayer Gathering led by John & Paul: via Zoom
Meeting ID: 885 3868 9867; Passcode: 032598 |
| 10th May | NBA Ministers Fellowship Zoom gathering |
| 13th-16th May | Baptist Assembly. For more details see:
www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/604497/Baptist_Assembly_Online.aspx |
| 27th May | Raising Leaders: how do we identify, encourage and equip leaders? Ian Galloway (Director of the Free Church Track, Cranmer Hall) |
| 14th May | NBA Ministers Fellowship Zoom gathering |
| 12th July | NBA Ministers Fellowship Zoom gathering |
| 6th Nov | NBA Autumn Assembly |



NBA Web site:
www.thenba.org.uk

Attentive: around and within

‘What is in your hand?’ said God to Moses as God prepared to show His power and ready Moses to return to Egypt. It was a simple question, but it was calling Moses to a particular attentiveness. We become familiar with so many things and take them for granted and can fail to be attentive to the situation or task as we would wish. We can be attentive through all of our senses and through that intuition that is born of experience. As we listen, see and feel, we gain attentiveness to the situation which leads to comprehension and then potential action.

Our attentiveness to the Spirit is enhanced by being still before God, but it is more than that. We may sense what God is stirring within us, but we also sense what God is up to by observing what he has done and is doing, by what He is saying through the actions and words of His people (present and past) and even in the movements of wider society. To help us become more attentive to the Spirit we must read the Scriptures as they reveal the heart and mind of God and His purposes for humanity. Allowing God’s Word to dwell in us increases our attentiveness and with it the wisdom to understand what God is saying and how we might best respond. Not every inclination, hope and desire is of God, and we need to

be ready to acknowledge that to be the case. However, when the Spirit speaks we need to be those who hear with understanding and act with faith.

John Claydon

Prayer Pointers

- For the end of the Pandemic: strength for those who suffer, comfort for those who grieve, resilience for all and patience with one another and we emerge from lockdowns and restrictions
- For the appointment of the Transitional Strategic Leader (Regional Minister)
- For churches and ministers as we seek to work out how we best engage together as the lockdown restrictions are lifted
- For all engaged in Council elections in England in May and all who serve us in politics.

