

<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.
- Audio CDs of the services are available upon request.

Bible Study

- *Takes place on Tuesdays 1pm.*
- Please use the front entrance on Cockton Hill Road, but if you are physically unable to enter that way, you may use the side entrance on Westfield Rd.
- We will be using the Sanctuary and will be socially distanced.
- Please wear a face covering, unless you have an exemption and sanitise your hands, on entering.
- The only toilet to be used, is the one by the front doors.
- No refreshments will be served, so please bring anything you need, for your own use only.
- No Church Bibles or Hymn books will be available, so please bring your own.
- ***Sorry to give so many rules, but it is so we all keep safe. Very much looking forward to seeing each one of you - John Gaines***

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:

- ***Conway Grove***
- ***Byron Avenue***
- ***Granville Road***
- ***Arthur Terrace***
- ***Richmond Avenue***
- ***Morpeth Grove***

Please also continue to pray for:

- ***A successful transition to the ending of lockdowns***
- ***The Northern Baptist Association***

Please give thanks for the organisations and people who contribute food, clothing and books for us to distribute to others:

- ***FareShare (via Asda)***
- ***Feeding Families***
- ***The Auckland Project***
- ***Local Donations***

Psalm 118 v6

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Franco Delano Roosevelt was the President of USA during the dark times of the Great Depression.

One of his most repeated quotes of that time is: *"The only thing to fear is fear itself."*

Under his Presidency, over time, America, came through the Depression, but at the cost of great bankruptcies and many personal tragedies and hardships.

What most people didn't realise was that the President himself had experienced dark times during his younger years where fear had paralysed him.

He was born into privilege, educated in Europe and also at Harvard and Columbia Law School.

But, at the age of 39 he was stricken by polio and left with severe disabilities.

During his long convalescence he developed a fear of fire and was always worried that his disabilities would prevent his escaping from a house fire.

Nevertheless, over a long period, he overcame the fear, regained the use of his hands, and learned to walk again, albeit with the aid of leg braces.

He entered the political arena, became Governor of New York and eventually President of USA, and guided the nation to victory in WW2.

In his memoirs he recalls how, when he turned to God for help, courage and guidance, he received them.

When we are afraid in our life, we can stand on the promise contained in words from Psalm 118:

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

(adapted from UCB - Word for Today, 15/03/2021)

John 20: v24-29 (NIV) – Jesus Appears To Thomas
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Now Thomas (also known as Didymus, meaning Twin *), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So, the other disciples told him, *“We have seen the Lord!”*

But he said to them, *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, *“Peace be with you!”*

Then he said to Thomas, *“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

Thomas said to him, *“My Lord and my God!”*

Then Jesus told him, *“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

The New Testament list all Twelve apostles four times — Matthew 10:2–4, Mark 3:14–19, Luke 6:13–16, and Acts 1:13–16.

While there are some variations in the order in which the apostles appear and even the names they went by, Thomas is listed in all of them. He’s also clearly one of the Twelve in the Gospel of John, though John never explicitly lists them all.

This means Thomas was one of the people who was closest to Jesus, and that he spent about three years living with him, witnessing his miracles, and hearing his teachings. He saw numerous demonstrations of Jesus’ power—including his power to raise people from the dead—and he heard Jesus predict his resurrection, but he still didn’t believe Jesus was resurrected until he saw for himself.

The Bible doesn’t tell us whether or not Thomas physically touches Jesus’ wounds. Interestingly, some traditions hold that Thomas did touch them, which has historically supported the idea of using physical rituals and pilgrimages to bolster faith, while other traditions generally hold that Thomas did not touch them, which has been used to reinforce the idea that faith alone is enough for people to be saved.

John is the only one who records Thomas’ special encounter with Jesus, which appears to mirror the encounter Jesus had with the others in John 20:19–23.

For some unknown reason, Thomas wasn't there with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them the first time, and Thomas refuses to believe his friends, so Jesus decides to meet them again when Thomas is also present.

Since the Gospel of John makes Thomas the scapegoat for doubt, it's easy to forget that he other apostles doubted the resurrection, too.

Christians often treat his scepticism as a weakness, but it's important to remember that Jesus welcomed Thomas' scepticism and challenged his doubts with evidence of his resurrection.

Thomas has become a famous symbol for doubt, but if we're to learn anything from him, it should be this: our doubts may lead us to a deeper, richer faith.

Jesus specifically says, "*blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (John 20:29), but he also doesn't ask all of us to blindly put our faith in him.

Instead, we're invited to investigate the truth of the resurrection, and explore the way, the truth, and the life.

While the Bible tells us little about him, Thomas' cautious approach to believing in the resurrection laid the foundation for evidence-based faith and for the Protestant teaching of sola fide, or faith alone.

And even though he lived 2,000 years ago, Thomas also serves as a foil for Christians today—those who have not seen and yet have believed.

** (There is no known record as to who Thomas' twin is).*

Dates For The Diary

Thursday 6th May 2021 - Local Government Elections

Election of councillors to DCC

Election of councillors to BA Town Council

Election of Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham police area

- **BA Baptist Church building is to be a Polling Station on that day, therefore only election officials, people who are going there to vote and myself as designated person, are allowed by law into the Church. Strictly, no admittance for any other purpose or reason.**
- **The Polling Station entrance is through the side door on Westfield Road and the exit is via the Garden door.**

John Gaines

Friday 23rd April at 7pm - Evening Celebration

DEFEATING THE DRAGONS: OBSTACLES TO MISSION

Speaker Alan Donaldson

(former General Director of Baptist Union of Scotland)

Saturday 24th at 10am - OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Including the appointment of
the Transitional Strategic Leader (Regional Minister)
Annual General Meeting

Saturday 24th Evening - A Youth Event organised by

Paul Revill and Dan Holland (of Portrack Baptist Church)

Sunday 25th - Streamed morning service from Stockton Baptist Church

Details on joining instructions will be sent nearer the time.

We look forward to you joining us.

Elaine Webster (NBA Admin Support)

NBA Prayers

- Pray for our family of Baptist churches in the North.
- Pray for encouragement for your church to think of our wider mission in the North.
- Pray for insight that your gifts might be used within our wider family.
- Pray for support and assent for the events and initiatives organised by the Association.

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.

Closing Prayer

‘Father, I still struggle with some doubts, just like Thomas did.
Thank You for accepting me in my struggles, and not ignoring my questions.
Thomas finally reached the place where he could say,
“My Lord and my God.”
Thank You for being patient with me as I strive to reach that place as well.’
Help us to get through our doubts.
Help us to face them honestly, acknowledging them,
bringing them to You through Jesus,
and growing spiritually as a result of them.

Amen

(Adapted from UCB Word for Today 08/04/2021)

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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