

**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 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](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)

<b>Prayers</b>
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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:*

- **Northumberland Ave**
- **Brancepeth Grove**
- **Westfield Road**
- **Blair Grove**
- **Cockton Hill Road**

Please also continue to pray for:

- **A successful transition to the ending of lockdowns**
- **The people who have received food through our Community Food Share**

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**

**“The Response Was Truly Overwhelming”**

An NHS nurse who is a Baptist church member has spoken of her appreciation after six artists have painted her portrait during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Kit Torres, a member of the Filipino International Church who has worked as a nurse for the Northumbria NHS Trust for 16 years, entered the *#portraitsforNHSheroes* initiative recently.

*#portraitsforNHSheroes* is the brainchild of Oxford-based artist Tom Croft, who offered to paint a free portrait of the first NHS worker to contact him and encouraged other artists to do the same.

It quickly snowballed with hundreds of artists all over the UK offering their talents as a way of thanking all keyworkers for their service at this time.

*Behind the mask  
A warrior breathes  
Fighting to save lives  
Amidst the fears*

*“Oh Lord give us strength  
To face each ordeal  
We may be worn out  
But with your grace,  
Let triumph be revealed”*

Kit was stunned when the submission resulted in six artists painting her portrait. They were a mixture of styles, including oil paintings, charcoal and pencil sketches.

“The response was truly overwhelming” Kit said.

“Six artists! They sent messages thanking me for all my effort and how they truly appreciate the services that all keyworkers provide especially during this pandemic. It is such an honour.”

“As a Christian and a nurse by profession, this has made me realise how blessed I am, that I can somehow share my services to humanity in the best way that I possibly can.”

During the pandemic Kit has been assigned to the Orthopaedics trauma unit, dealing mainly with emergency cases.

The patients she deals with are all admitted via A&E, so anyone of them could be Covid 19 positive.

She said her faith in God has strengthened her and been strengthened during this time.

“It may be frightening knowing that we are always on the verge of contracting the virus as we are highly exposed. Our body’s response will either be fight or flight, but I have always been ready to meet my creator. It may sound daunting but deep in my heart, it is true...I am ready! Hence, I work with all my heart knowing that God is with me.”

“He knows my destiny and while I have the strength to keep going and to help the people in need, I will do it.”

She adds, “Of course I fear for my children for they are still young. I have a son and a daughter aged 13 and 8 respectively but I believe that the Lord’s plan is always perfect and that He never fails to provide. As it says in Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

“I stand on God’s promises and with that, I have nothing to fear.”

In 2013 The Filipino International Church became the first Filipino church accredited by the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It is also a member of the NBA.

Its roots can be traced to changes in NHS recruitment - it originally began to form in the first decade of the millennium, when the NHS recruited trained personnel from overseas, including the Philippines.

Like many others at this time, the congregation is gathering on Zoom for its weekly Sunday service. There is also Bible study every day.

“We may not be physically interacting, but the fellowship is there, encouraging one another as most of us are nurses and health care workers in the hospital,” says Kit.

“I hope this pandemic will end soon. I pray that somehow everything will go back to normal and this Covid 19 will just be a part of our history.”

*(Baptist Times 05/05/21 -[The chosen portraits were all displayed in the Baptist Times]*

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***Jeremiah 29:11 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.*

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**St George's Day – 23<sup>rd</sup> April**

Despite being adopted as the patron saint of England, St George wasn't actually English and most likely never stepped foot in the country.

Born around AD 280, in what is now known as Cappadocia, Turkey, George was a Christian who became a soldier in the Roman army, later progressing to the role of a personal guard for the Emperor Diocletian.

The emperor was one of the leaders of the Great Persecution of Christians, where churches were destroyed, scriptures were burned, and followers of the religion were prohibited from joining the army and assembling for worship.

But his personal guard George, protested the persecution, and remained dedicated to his Christian faith, consequently facing imprisonment and torture.

He was later beheaded in Palestine on April 23, AD 303, so becoming a martyr.

His head was taken to, and stored, in the church dedicated to him in Rome, and the rest of his body was buried in Lod, Israel,

The account of his strength, courage and loyalty to his faith soon spread around Europe, and it even inspired his wife, who apparently became Christian, and also faced execution.

Fighting a dragon and saving a princess

As well as his army background and dedication to his faith, St George is famous for fighting a dragon, which commonly symbolised the Devil during the Middle Ages.

Legend suggests St George fought a dragon and saved a princess in the town of Silene - although this is most likely a myth.

According to legend, the only well in Silene was guarded by a dragon and each day, residents had to make human sacrifices in order to access the water.

A princess was the next person to be sacrificed and on the day she was due to be killed, St George bravely fought the dragon to save her.

After St George successfully killed the dragon, the people of Silene were finally granted free access to the well, and in gratitude, they turned to Christianity.

### St George the patron saint of England

Even though St George probably never stepped foot on English soil, he officially became the patron saint of England around 1348, after King Edward III established the Order of the Garter in his name.

From the 14th Century, St George was regarded as a special protector of the English and following England's victory at Agincourt in 1415, Archbishop Chichele raised the celebration of St George to a Double Feast.

Shakespeare made sure St George was never forgotten, concluding the Henry V, Act III, speech with "Cry God for Harry, England and St George".

St George's Cross, which is England's flag and now forms part of the Union Jack, is the symbol displayed on April 23rd. Dating back to the year of 1188, crosses were first used by King Henry II of England and King Philip II of France for their crusade symbols.

Despite England adopting a white cross at first, they later switched to a red cross, which was used as part of the uniforms of English soldiers in several battles.

Edward I eventually made this symbol a national emblem during his reign.

Today, St George's cross is used frequently at football, rugby and cricket games, with fans wearing scarves, painting their faces and flying flags to show their support for England.

Unlike some patron saint days, St George's Day isn't a bank holiday, meaning transport, schools and businesses operate as normal every year.

*(From an article by Hannah Daly, The Telegraph, 21st April 2021)*

### Reclaiming St George as a 'national symbol of inclusivity rather than a symbol of hatred

The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) has joined a number of faith groups and campaigners in asking for St George to be representative of all English peoples.

To coincide with St George's Day (23rd April), a coalition of English faith groups and campaigners has released a statement calling for the patron Saint of England to be reclaimed from "the extreme Right", and those who use him "to promote racism and extremism".

Instead, St George "needs to take his rightful place as a national symbol of inclusivity rather than a symbol of hatred", says the statement.

The statement points out that St George actually lived before the birth of Islam and should not be associated with any hatred of Muslims.

He is respected by many people in the Middle East because of his origins there.

The campaign calls on “people of goodwill” to stand up against “the hijacking of a national hero by those who promote Islamophobia, antisemitism and other forms of discrimination”; to oppose the modern “dragons” of hatred and intolerance, and to say “As the diverse people of England, we are comfortable with difference, and each other. St George's Day is a time for highlighting harmony and peaceful national pride.”

BUGB and the London Baptist Association are among the signatories, alongside the Christian Muslim Forum, the Islamic Society of Britain and the Muslim Council of Britain.

<b>Dates For The Diary</b>
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**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> 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)

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**Saturday 24th at 10am - OUR LIFE TOGETHER**

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

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**Saturday 24th Evening - A Youth Event organised by**  
Paul Revill and Dan Holland (of Portrack Baptist Church)

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**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)

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**Prayers of Intercession**

*By: Sion Baptist Church, Newchurch Road, Higher Cloughfold, Rossendale BB4 7TL*

Lord, Our Father, you are faithful and good.

We thank you for your promises to your people – to give us hope and a future. We thank you for the assurance of the Holy Spirit, telling us that you have come to us in Jesus Christ with the free gifts of forgiveness and life. Whisper your grace to us.

Forgive us the weakness of our faith – for our pessimism – after all that you have said and done and continue to do for us...

- *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek God's will in all you do, and he will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*
- *The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." (Psalm 32:8)*

Lord, Our Father help us (Your children) to trust and obey your Word – to seek your way forward for our lives and your church -

Lord help those who will be under medical care this week & those facing isolation or surgery.

Grant them peace and protection & the faith to remain 'in the day'. Grant skill to the hands of those who heal...

- *The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. (Isaiah 40:28-31)*

Lord you have a special love for the powerless – grant your special strength to those who are weak... speak to your own people in war-torn lands your Word...

- *“Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name—you are mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.*

For all those who live in fear, worry and confinement may they hear and trust in this truth...

- *For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5a)*

These are our prayers – Through Christ Jesus

Amen.

<b>How Often Should I Pray?</b>
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God doesn't need us to pray to him!

After all, God is God, and surely, God can manage without us!

But one of the Bible's greatest truths is that God not only exists, but He actually wants to have a personal relationship with us.

And prayer is one of the ways He's given us to strengthen that relationship.

In other words, don't look on prayer as a burden or obligation; instead, look on it as a privilege.

*Just imagine:* The God who created the whole universe wants to welcome you into His presence — and that is exactly what happens when we pray!

If Jesus felt the need to pray, how much more should we?

*Remember:* Prayer is possible because God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to tear down the barrier that exists between us and God — a barrier caused by our sin.

Because of Christ's death and resurrection for us, the Bible says, *“we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand”* (Romans 5:2).

*Make sure* of your commitment to Jesus Christ.

*Then thank Him* that He loves you so much that He wants you to talk with Him through your prayers at any time.

*Set aside time to pray every day* — but in addition, learn to pray throughout the day, thanking God for the good things He brings into your life.

*Pray* also when you (and others you know) are facing problems or decisions, for you need His help.

*The Bible says: "In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).*

*Father, Thank You for Your love, that no matter where I am—in whatever situation— You are there, loving me.*

*(2021 Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)*

## **A prayer for St George's Day**

*God of hosts,  
who so kindled the flame of love  
in the heart of your servant George  
that he bore witness to the risen Lord  
by his life and by his death:  
give us that same faith and power of love  
that we who rejoice in his triumphs  
may come to share with him the fullness of the resurrection;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever,  
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**

<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>

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