

<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:

- ***Barnard Avenue***
- ***Newlands Avenue***
- ***Walmer Terrace***
- ***Tivoli Street***
- ***May Street***
- ***The Copses***

Please also continue to pray for:

- ***Sandringham Nursing Home***
- ***Lady Eden Nursing Home***
- ***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***

Thinking of a Pilgrimage?

I was scratching my head trying to think of something to write worth reading for this week's copy of our magazine when the idea of Northern Saints came into my mind.

So, I logged on to Google for background info on our local Saints and I came across dozens of them. Crowds of them including Cuthbert, Aidan, Hilda, Oswald, Bede and so on. Far too many for this missive. In fact, more saints than football clubs!

However, this led me thinking about this region's Northern Saints Trails, which I had become aware of during my lockdown strolls along our local pathways and bridleways, which then led me to thinking about Pilgrim Paths and Pilgrimages. (I don't normally do this much thinking) and wondering why people in our modern impious times decide to set off on Pilgrimages.

So, here are a few more thoughts on why go on a Pilgrimage:

1. You're young and want an adventure.
2. You're old and want to reflect on your life.
3. You've had a divorce, or are suffering a traumatic time in life, or are grieving a loss.
4. You want to draw closer to God.
5. You're pretty sure there is no God, but there's a tiny sliver of doubt.
6. You think a pilgrimage sounds better than therapy.
7. You want to make new friends.
8. You want to be alone.
9. You've got itchy feet.
10. You're human.

In short: there are many reasons to go on a pilgrimage.

In fact, you've probably already been on a pilgrimage once or twice in your life not realising it, perhaps when you visited the town where you grew up and you walked its streets with a full heart, seeing everything through the lens of memory. Or when you took a trip with a friend facing something big and cruel, like a serious cancer diagnosis, and along with the fun was the knowledge of a powerful undertow just beneath the surface, making every stop for ice cream and view of a sunset bittersweet.

Such trips are pilgrimages because they touch the heart and soul. There's nothing wrong with an ordinary vacation, for sometimes what we most need to do is chill out on a beach with a mystery novel and a gin and tonic. But there are other times - which tend to come after losses and at transition points like graduations, decade birthdays, and retirements - when the road calls to us in a different way. Even if we think we're not religious, even if we're sceptical of any kind of spirituality, there seems to be something in our DNA that draws us to wayfaring.

I suspect it's part of what first drew our ancestors out of the trees on the savannas of Africa and eventually even to Co. Durham.

The sacred enters our lives through the tiniest of openings. A call to pilgrimage may come disguised as a door that's shut in your face: the job ends, the lover leaves, the friendship dissolves into bitterness. Or the call may come through the comment of a stranger at a bus stop, or in a headline you happen to read at a checkout counter. You tell yourself you're foolish for listening to that inner urging, and yet you pack your bags and set out.

- *What places beckon to you?*
- *What dream do you want to fulfil?*
- *What task does your soul seem to have in store for you?*

Listen deeply to the small whisper inside of you, the one that will guide you where you need to go.

Those on pilgrimage enter a subliminal state, their identities becoming fluid amid myriad possibilities. That threshold between worlds is sacred ground. Read and reflect before you set out on your trip, preparing your mind and soul for the journey ahead. While you're traveling, intertwine your steps with prayer. Be mindful of each moment. Practice the discipline of gratitude. Look for the grace that can shine through in even the most seemingly mundane of circumstances.

When you return, your re-entry may not be easy. The journey may have changed you in ways that those at home will find hard to understand.

Nevertheless, pilgrims are meant to share their new-found wisdom and insights with others. And perhaps more than anything, they are meant to realise that our entire life is designed to be a pilgrimage, a seeking after the divine in moments both ordinary and extraordinary.

- *Psalms 25:4: Shew me thy ways O LORD; teach me thy paths.*
- *Proverbs 4:26: Ponder the path of thy feet and let all thy ways be established.*
- *Deuteronomy 5:33: Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.*

(<https://www.macsadventure.com › pilgrim-trails>)

We hope you enjoyed the Bank Holiday day off and had a good rest!

Or were you too busy catching up despite being locked down for months, or even perhaps retired?

When we feel consumed by the myriad pressures of life, we often struggle to effectively engage with others.

*You pass a colleague in the hallway and who asks, "How are you?"
You respond with something like, "busy, but getting there!"*

A few more questions are answered, but you're mostly thinking about the tasks you have to finish before you head home.

*You get home and are asked "how are you?"
And you respond with, "overwhelmed, but feeling fine!"*

Then they begin to tell you about their day, but you're mostly thinking about how can relax and recharge before the night ends.

In your mind, you're focused on whatever's next, instead of being focused on the person before you.

Why? Because you're too busy. You strive to live an active, "plugged in" lifestyle, but it often leaves you feeling exhausted and overwhelmed.

Have you been here before?

Maybe your family schedule is overloaded with commitments - trips to football practice with the kids, after-work get togethers, trips with your in-laws - and you can't seem to step away from the chaos.

Maybe your job requires you to work more hours than you're comfortable working, but you have a mortgage and a car loan that won't pay themselves. Maybe you have a relatively free lifestyle but spend most of your time staring at your phone, tablet, laptop or TV.

You feel you're resting, but always feel restless.

Regardless of your specific circumstance, you feel worn out. And you desperately need a day off, where you can grab a book, sit on the porch and relax.

If you're feeling weak and weary today, try to meditate on the peace and rest God offers in his Word.

These three Bible verses will get you started:

1. Jeremiah 31:25-26 (GNTD)

I will refresh those who are weary and will satisfy with food everyone who is weak from hunger. So then, people will say, 'I went to sleep and woke up refreshed.'

2. Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

3. Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

NBA Prayers

We are asked this week to pray for: Stockton Baptist Church

We give thanks that since our present Senior Minister is retiring this year, the Lord has led us onto a new one!

The 'handover' will take place in the Autumn.

We Pray:

- for the incoming chap as he moves to a new house with his family, adapts to a different church culture, and adapts to a different local culture.

- that this next chapter in this church's life would see more people being saved and disciplined than ever before. The sobering fact is that this church's membership numbers are still largely based on a revival from 40 years ago, and without all our people leading others to Jesus, the numbers will plummet in the next ten to fifteen years.

We Give Thanks:

- that our youth group has held together during lockdown, with all of the teenagers remaining in touch and participating (despite a lot of 'screen fatigue') plus, our Children's' work is sending more children 'up' to the youth work soon, increasing the group by another 20%.

Please pray that the Lord would inspire more adults to volunteer into the youth work - the existing ones are seriously overstretched - and that, as the various groups eventually return to meeting in the church building, that space would be found - it's a big auditorium with a very small number of 'other' rooms.

Thank you!

Mike Cross
NBA Prayer Co-ordinator

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."*

NBA Regional Minister Appointment
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Dear Friends

It is my joy and delight to announce today the appointment of the Rev Hayley Young as our Transitional Strategic Leader (Regional Minister).

This decision was taken at our Assembly last Saturday with overwhelming support by those present and is more publicly made known today.

Hayley comes with gifts that fit her for this role and will compliment those of Paul Revill as they share in leading our Association.

In between her interview and our Assembly, Hayley was also elected to be President of Baptists Together for 2022-2023.

This enables both local and national strategic influence to work together.

We believe this juxtaposition of appointments has resonance with the word that Lynn Green gave to the minister's conference last year. (a portion of this is this is at the end of this email.)

Hayley comes to us from the South Wales Baptist Association, and we appreciate that for them and Rumney Baptist Church her departure will have mixed emotions. We pray that they will find much blessing in their new future in God's plan.

You can find out more about Hayley by going to the NBA's home page <http://www.thenba.org.uk> and watching her short videos.

Please pray for Hayley and our team as we make all the necessary arrangements and in developing deeper relationships with each other and yourselves.

It is our intention to purchase a home for Hayley to live in and we ask that you consider as churches, individually or have any suggestions to help us raise the finance for this.

The possibilities are a one-time gift, a pledge over time, an interest free loan, or one with very low interest for an extended period. Perhaps even transferring some investment form elsewhere to help the NBA at this time.

But please ensure that in doing this you do not divert any money from the giving towards Home Mission.

Yours with thanks to God for His provision so far.

(Rev. Anthony Ruddle, NBA Moderator)

A portion of Lynn Green's word:

"...God knows that you (the NBA) are small, you are the smallest association we have.

God knows that you are on the margins.

*I want to prophesy this over you: the new stuff that God wants to do across Baptists
Together is going to start in and through the NBA.*

*He has anointed you to listen attentively, and to be bold and to take risks and to experiment,
because you haven't got very much to lose, and you're small and you can.*

And we need you to do this.

You are going to show us and you are going to lead us into new ways.

*You are going to show us what's possible when we set our sails to catch the wind of the
Spirit, and you are going to be the first fruits of the new thing that God wants to do in terms
of renewing our movement.*

So don't think of yourselves as insignificant or overlooked.

That's not what God is saying over you.

Don't think of yourselves as at the mercy of secularism or decline.

Today, God is appointing you to embody and enact something prophetic in our movement.

*And I want to say to you today: Have courage and let the wind of the Spirit take you and be
bold in these days."*

Fellowship Prayer Requests

We have been asked to pray for two people of our fellowship circle who have both had a fall:

- *John, who had a dizzy spell, and a fall in his home yesterday, and was shaken up.*
- *Ruth, who fell down the stairs, this morning, and has been taken to hospital, with a
query fractured ankle.*

*Later, in her own words, she said" I have been n hospital all morning, was going to do some
washing, missed the bottom step and broke ankle. Called the ambulance, had morphine and
gas and air, had X-ray and have actually broken my foot, bone near little toe on side in 4 places
as well as chipping ankle bone.*

I have a moon shoe, crutches and codeine for the pain."

Please pray for them both as they recover

John Claydon

Prayer for Hope and Strength

Almighty God,

You reach into the darkness with hope,
truth and light.

Stretch out your strong hand and hold and
rescue those who have suffered.

Let your almighty love move mountains,
cross seas, and breathe life into the darkest places.

Light that redeems.
Light that restores.
Light that heals.
Light that protects.
Light that saves.

There is nothing higher, stronger or greater
than your love.

We trust in you.

Amen

(Prayer courtesy www.lords-prayer-words.com)

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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