

Allegiances Amidst Uncertainty

Historic alliances are fracturing. The Trump administration tears up democratic conventions while we watch China emerge as the 'stable' superpower - a sentence that would have seemed absurd five years ago.

Whatever our political affiliations, we typically prefer stability over chaos. But the danger is we equate stability with God, and unintentionally make stability an idol over greater matters such as justice. The bible frequently shows God disrupting stability that's built on injustice, whether it be through the prophets or Jesus overturning tables.

The early Christians knew this better than most, especially those living under the rule of Emperor Nero. Faced with an unpredictable (and dangerous) government, they lacked stable allies. Yet their mission thrived because they didn't cosy up to the empire. They knew their hope was rooted entirely in the Lord, and it was his power they sought.

It reminds me of Philippians 3:20, which says: *"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."* This is a reminder of where our citizenship truly lies. Our primary identity isn't national, it's ecclesial. In other words, we belong first and foremost to God, and God's family. It means whatever world leaders do or say, they cannot threaten the Kingdom where we truly belong.

Re-orientating ourselves around this truth helps us embrace instability, rather than fear it. Where is God speaking to us, challenging our tired assumptions? Are we being enticed towards the worship and cult of "the strongman"? Do we stand our ground in the face of an erosion of truth-telling? Do we have the courage to welcome the refugee when nationalism is demanding exclusion?

Answering these is often costly. Our neighbours at Thatcham Baptist funnelled their resources into supporting those temporarily housed at the asylum hotel near their church - a costly, concrete answer to the question of allegiance. But what about us? What is God demanding of NBC?

These aren't small questions. They're questions which reveal where our true allegiance lies. In answering them, we discover again that our citizenship was never in Westminster, Washington or Beijing. It was always in God's Kingdom.

Let this prompt us to go deeper in our prayer life, daring to ask God for humility to recognise when we've conflated our political preferences with God's will. Asking for wisdom to see as Jesus sees, so we might act as Jesus acts, and be faithful citizens of God.



by Peter Timothy, Minister

Coming Up @ NBC

First Thursday

5th February
12 noon

[BOOK HERE](#)

Men's Breakfast

Saturday 7th February
8am

[BOOK HERE](#)

Ladies' Breakfast

Saturday 14th February
8.30am

NOTICES



Come & Pray - Sundays 9.30am

Join us each week at 9.30am in the Prayer room to dedicate NBC to God in Prayer. We will pray for the upcoming service - for all those involved in its delivery and for God's message to bring light and hope to those who hear it. Please pray in a way that works for you, whether that is in silent reflection or jubilant thanksgiving. All are welcome!

West Berks Foodbank - Churches Collections Manager

West Berks Foodbank are seeking a volunteer (or a small team working together) to take on the important role of liaising with churches and supporting church collections of food. This includes maintaining relationships with local churches, helping to organise collections, sharing foodbank updates and ensuring that donations can be received smoothly and with thanks. If you are interested in this role, please contact Fran Chamings. email:fran@westberks.foodbank.org.uk Tel: 07836500610

Hall Hire

Are you part of an organisation outside church that are looking for a place to meet?

Do you need a space for a birthday party or get-together?

Don't forget that our church and hall are available to hire and have different spaces for different needs - along with parking which is always a problem in town!

Get in touch with Emma in the office if you'd like to know more, or to check availability.

The Gathering

NBC are organising a group to attend "The Gathering" men's camp in June. It's a weekend which combines activities and good company with thoughtful teaching, inspiring testimonies and uplifting worship. A number of men from NBC have attended over the years and always return encouraged. If you've never been and are interested (or think one of your friends/family might like to come along) then either speak to Dave A for more information, or visit our website [here](#)

Contact Us

Want to include something next week?

Have something you'd like the church to pray for?

Email Emma in the Church Office by Wednesday 9am:
office@newburybaptistchurch.org

NBC in Focus...

This month we're highlighting various groups and ministries across the church, and letting you know how you can join in. This week is the turn of First Thursday.



One of our longest-running ministries is our popular monthly lunch and short service *First Thursday*. As its name suggests, it meets on the first Thursday of the month! A short, traditional service takes place in the church at midday, involving a few hymns and a reflection from either Peter, Jonathan or Graham. We then move into the Hall and enjoy a two-course hot meal followed by tea and coffee. It's a brilliant event to invite friends to, as it combines gentle Christian input in a sociable and welcoming environment. You can sign up online or attend, or speak to Steve or Daph.

PRAYERS



Prayers from our Prayer Board

This month we introduced a new prayer board in our service, where we can write prayers and attach them to a board in the church. We have recently had a number of 'thank you' prayers shared, and we have included a selection below for you to be encouraged and join in with a hearty 'amen'!

- Thank you God for making Gordon much better.
- Thank you dear Lord for all your love and care to all my family during this difficult time - an answer to many prayers.
- Thank you God for recovery from a recent health issue and for a lightened and refreshed spirit.
- Thank you that a friend's operation went well and he's on the mend, despite an original bad diagnosis.
- Thank you for a successful hospital appointment for a chronic health condition and for a treatment plan that is working really well so far.
- Lord thank you for the church family and the Pastor, thank you for the youth and children, thank you for the wisdom of others. Thank you for my family. Thank you for the services and the quality of work. Thank you for our neighbours and thank you for your creation. Amen.

The following prayer requests have also been submitted this week:

- Please pray for Vic to be comfortable in his last few days as he receives palliative care, and that his family are all able to agree.
- Dear God, please help us be transformed by your Spirit and help us see your will, and give us boldness to fulfil it. Give us situations where Jesus can change us into his likeness.
- Pray for family and friends who have recently been bereaved.

BMS Prayer Request for Iran

One of our key mission partners are BMS World Mission. They have recently issued a prayer request for Iran from Rev. Mehrdad Sajadi, Persian Ministry Leader. Rev Mehrdad writes: "I am reaching out with deep urgency and a heavy heart to ask for your focused prayers for Iran and the Iranian people. Thank you for standing with us in prayer at this decisive and painful moment. Your intercession matters deeply."

- Pray for God's protection, courage and perseverance for those risking their lives in the streets of Iran.
- Pray for the exposure, weakening and ultimate collapse of this unjust and murderous system and the breaking of fear, lies, and violence.
- Pray for deep comfort, strength and supernatural peace for Iranians in the diaspora carrying unbearable emotional and mental strain.
- Pray for special protection for our students and disciples inside Iran. We are convinced that many of them are standing with the people in these protests and are therefore in extreme danger. Pray for wisdom, protection and endurance.
- Pray for healing and mercy for the wounded. One of our dear friends, Sahar – a Quest Academy student and close friend – has been injured in her hand by live ammunition. Please pray for God's healing power, safe places of refuge and miraculous intervention.
- Pray that God would move powerfully in Iran, strengthen the faithful, awaken consciences and bring justice, freedom and true life to the Persian people.