

## The Care at the Church's Core

At some point, we all come up against the raging storms of life. Whether it is grief, illness, unemployment, divorce or loneliness, everyone will face a season of challenge. People sometimes travel this path alone, without anyone to support them. According to the World Health Organisation, social isolation and loneliness are increasingly recognised as public health issues across all ages in society. Distance, life transitions and not having enough time, are reasons given for growing apart from others. In addition, 51% of British people say they find it difficult to make any new friends.

Pastoral care is the church's response to the suffering people experience. Throughout scripture, we read of meaningful relationships and the outworking of pastoral care. Psalm 23 reveals how David experienced God as his shepherd, ministering to his multidimensional needs. In the Gospels, Jesus engaged in a variety of pastoral care: on one occasion he spoke Martha's name twice, to lovingly address her domestic worries, and on another, reached out his hand to touch the untouchable leper.

For how many of us, has a timely conversation or the offer of practical help lightened a particular burden? In 1997, on the eve of major surgery, I remember a caring, church member praying with me over the phone and how much more positive I felt afterwards. The fact that I remember this prayer almost thirty years on, says quite a lot.

Within NBC, pastoral care takes many forms and is carried out by a myriad of people, often quietly and unseen. There is also a Pastoral Care Support Team which meets bimonthly, when we share pastoral updates, identify appropriate support and pray for individuals and situations. This gender balanced team has considerable ministerial, diaconate and small group leadership experience.

Outside of meetings, pastoral care is a continuous ministry, expressed via hospital visits, home communion for the housebound, café catch ups, phone calls, cards and the distribution of flowers. The team works alongside small groups and friendship networks, to spot potential gaps in the provision of pastoral care, especially among those on the fringes of church life.

In Galatians 6:2 Paul exhorts us to "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." This is a call for all of us to actively support our fellow believers by sharing the weight of life's hardships, ultimately fulfilling the commandment to love one another.



by Ingrid Rankin  
Pastoral Care Support Team

### Coming Up @ NBC

#### Church Member's Meeting

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February  
following the 10am service

#### First Thursday

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March  
12 noon

[BOOK HERE](#)

# NOTICES



## Church Meeting

The papers for the next church meeting are available in the members area of the website. It's being held this Sunday, Feb 22nd following the service and we hope all church members are able to come and take part in these important discussions about our mission.

## Welcome Lunch

If you're new to NBC you've hopefully received an invitation to our next "Welcome Lunch". If you haven't, and you'd like to come along, please speak to Emma in the church office or sign up online [here](#) before 1<sup>st</sup> March. If you are a church member and would like to help on the day, please contact Judith & Kelvin.

## Theo's Half Marathon for CALM

Theo will be running a half marathon in March, raising money for CALM - (Campaign Against Living Miserably) a mental health charity. If you're able to support his fundraising efforts please donate via his Justgiving page [here](#). Theo would like to thank everyone for being such a supportive church family he has raised nearly £1000 already following his recent presentation.

## World Day of Prayer

The annual World Day of Prayer Service is being held at St Joseph's Church, 105 London Rd, Newbury RG14 1JP, on Friday March 6th at 11am. The theme for this year's service is: 'I Will Give You Rest, Come' written by Christian women from Nigeria. All are welcome!

## Save the Date!

We're looking forward to Rowena and Ian's wedding, which will be on [Saturday](#) 2nd May at 2.00pm. They'd love the church family to join them for the wedding service, so please do put the date in your diary. A small reception will follow in the Church Hall by invitation for close family and friends.

## Street Pastors

Street Pastors are a group of local Christians who offer support, practical help and a visible ministry to those who are out in Newbury late at night. They use NBC as a base each Saturday evening. Whilst a team goes out into town, some people stay and cover them in prayer. They are looking for more people to become "Prayer Pastors" who will be willing to pray at church from 10pm until around 1am about once every 5 weeks. Please speak to Debi or Eve if you'd like to know more.

## Lightning Squad - help needed

We're blessed to have lots of children at NBC, along with a great team of leaders who plan and run our groups. We're looking for a few extra people who might be willing to be an occasional extra pair of hands on a Sunday morning. If you're able to help support Lightning Squad from time to time, we'd be really grateful. Everything is planned by the leaders — it's simply a case of helping out on the day. If you think this might be something you could offer, please have a chat with Chris C.

## 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](mailto:office@newburybaptistchurch.org)

# PRAYERS



## Prayers and Reflection for Ash Wednesday

Today marks the first day of Lent, often called 'Ash Wednesday'. It mirrors the 40 days which Jesus spent fasting in the desert. In some church traditions ashes are used by the priest to mark the shape of the cross on the foreheads of their congregation. The ashes remind us that Lent is a time for self-reflection, repentance, and humility before God. As we begin this season, how will you make time to humbly come before God and re-centre yourself upon Jesus?

Below is a reading and a suggested prayer to help us begin this Lenten journey.

### Psalm 90:1-12

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.*

*Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

*You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals." A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning: In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered.*

*We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

### Ash Wednesday Prayer

Lord God, we are not good at this. We are not good at stopping. We are not good at silence, or at sitting with the truth of what we are without reaching for something to make us feel better.

So today we stop.

We are dust. Not as a poetic phrase to be admired, but as a plain fact to be received.

We are finite, fragile, and dependent — and we have spent considerable energy pretending otherwise.

Forgive us for the lives we have half-lived, for the love we have rationed, for the repentance we have deferred until a more convenient moment.

Forgive us for making peace with smallness — in ourselves, in our faith, in our witness — when you have called us to something larger.

In this season, strip away what is performance. Let what remains be real.

Teach us to number our days not so that we become morbid, but so that we become wise — wise enough to know that we are held, wise enough to know that we are loved, and wise enough to know that this is where we begin, not where we end.

We come to you in the name of the one who entered our dust and did not flinch, who faced our death and defeated it, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.