

WEEKLY NEWS

18 December



PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR CHRISTMAS

With just one week to go, how prepared are you?

Presents all brought and wrapped?

Turkey ordered?

Cards written and sent?

Heart MOT completed?

Hang on... Heart MOT?! What on earth is that, I hear you say. And what's it got to do with my Christmas preparations?

In a nutshell, it's about asking ourselves whether our focus has shifted too far onto the 'doing' of Christmas preparation, at the expense of engaging in any spiritual preparation?

In his book *Do Nothing Christmas Is Coming*, Stephen Cottrell writes: "Christmas is one of the most joyful times of the year. It is also one of the most stressful. It is laden with expectations. It is often overtaken with grief... It might be the season of good will, but it feels like the last straw on an already overburdened camel."

The season of Advent, as separate to Christmas, is all about waiting and preparing for the coming messiah. But often our preparations are consumed by practicalities, and the space for Jesus is left at a minimum.

It's why I invite you to carry out your own 'heart MOT'.

For those of you with a car, you'll know your annual MOT is meant to check that all the key parts of the car are working, and that it's safe to drive.

If you've only got 3 wheels and the brakes don't work, you know it's going to fail the test and you won't be able to drive it legally. Change is required!

At the same time, car MOTs will also flag up 'advisories'. These are things which aren't performing as well as they should, but are not serious enough to require an immediate change.

Claire's car flagged up a minor issue with its exhaust at its MOT in August. It turns out it wasn't quite as minor as we were told, because the exhaust box fell off last weekend. Not the sort of early Christmas present we were after...

A heart MOT is about taking time to metaphorically get out of the driving seat and take a look at our lives.

Are we reaching Christmas low on fuel, with deflated tyres and a faulty clutch, so we can't seem to change gear?

In reflecting upon the coming of Jesus to the world, is God flagging up some spiritual advisories which are worth noting?

The good news about Christmas is that God enters into the mess of the world, and the messiness of our lives.

Like a good mechanic, God rolls up his sleeves and is willing to get oil on his overalls, grease on his hands, and has the right tools to mend whatever is broken.

The famous prophetic words of Isaiah 9 promise a messiah who will be a 'Wonderful Counsellor', a 'Mighty God', an 'Everlasting Father' and the 'Prince of Peace'.

Jesus fulfils each of these titles, and perhaps by taking the time to reflect upon them over the coming week, we might not only get a diagnostic report for our heart MOT, but see how God might carry out the repairs we need.

As this will be the last Weekly News of 2024, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for all your encouragement and fellowship in my first full year as Minister at NBC.

It's been a busy year, with lots of change and lots of activity. I remain thankful for the many ways in which God is at work, especially through the dozens of committed volunteers who serve faithfully across the church, and I am excited about what the Lord will do in 2025 and beyond.

On behalf of myself, Claire, Mia and Coco, we wish you a peaceful and joyful Christmas, and a happy and hopeful 2025.

Peter

CHURCH NEWS

BUILDING WORK UPDATE

The walls have now been plastered in both the toilets and store room. A suspended ceiling has been installed in the toilets, and basins and hand dryers are soon to follow. A secure cupboard area has been created to house the boiler in the store room.

Following our meeting with the colour consultant last week, paint tester pots have been ordered.

As usual, if you have questions, please email nbcbuildings@newburybaptistchurch.org

MICHAEL BRYANT THANKSGIVING SERVICE

The Thanksgiving Service for Michael Bryant (Angie's Dad), will be on Friday 3rd January, 1pm, at Thatcham Baptist Church, Wheelers Green Way, RG19 4YF.

Refreshments will be in the church following the service.

CAP MONEY

Are you interested in improving your budgeting skills and getting tips to make your money go further?

Then join David Clark and Helen Andrews as they deliver the CAP Money coaching sessions next month.

These are free to attend and will run from 7-9pm on Wednesday 8th and Wednesday 22nd January.

If you are interested in attending or would like to attend but cannot make those dates, then please email davidclark@capuk.org or helena@newburybaptistchurch.org or speak to one of us after church one Sunday.

OPERATIONS MANAGER UPDATE

Our new Operations Manager, Emma, will start at NBC on Tuesday 7th January.

She will be working for 20 hours per week, split evenly between Monday-Thursday from 9am-2.30pm.

If you are in church, do pop in and say hello so she can start getting to know us all.



JOINT BREAKFAST WITH THE MAHON FAMILY

We are pleased to welcome the Mahon family, our BMS link partners in Peru, to NBC on Saturday 11th January.

They will be joining us for a special joint breakfast to share stories of the work they have been doing.

A simple breakfast of pastries and drinks will be provided in the Foyer, and we will then sit together in the Church.

It starts at 9am.

Donations are invited, which will be gifted to the Mahon family. To book a place please click [here](#)

WEEKLY NEWS CHRISTMAS BREAK

Thank you for taking the time to read the Weekly News this year. We will now take a break until Wednesday 8th January.

If you have anything you'd like to include - whether that's a news item, an event, or something for prayer, please let us know by contacting the Church Office.



CHRISTMAS AT NBC!

Only 1 more Sunday until Christmas!

There's plenty going on at NBC in the coming week, so whether you join us in person or online, we look forward to worshipping together during this special time of year.

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER: AM

There will **NOT** be a regular morning service this Sunday.

Instead, we will have some all-age craft activities and a prayer space from 10am, while others are invited to take chocolates and flyers into the town centre to invite people to our carol service etc.

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER: CAROL SERVICE, 6:30PM

Instead of our morning service on the 22nd, we will be holding our carol service at 6:30pm.

This is the perfect opportunity to invite family and friends who do not usually attend church, to a service with lots of familiar carols and a retelling of the Christmas story, followed by mince pies and drinks.

It will also be livestreamed.

CHRISTINGLE 24TH DECEMBER, 4PM

Our Christmas Eve Christingle service takes place at 4pm.

This is another opportunity to invite friends, especially families, for a shorter interactive service.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 10AM

We meet together at 10am on Christmas Day to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

It is a lovely way to centre ourselves upon God and be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas.

This is a short, fun-filled service, and children are invited to bring a small unopened present to unwrap during the service.

SUNDAY 29TH DECEMBER, 10AM

Jonathan Edwards will lead us for the final service of 2024, and you are invited to share a short testimony of what God has been doing in your life.

We will worship together, reflect on the year that has passed, and look ahead to 2025.

If you would like to contribute please email Jonathan: JonathanE@newburybaptistchurch.org



prayer space



PEOPLE & PLACES FOR PRAYER

Please continue to pray for the following people in our church family who are in particular need of our prayers and support:

- **Angie B**
- **Shirley B**
- **Joy & Brian C**
- **Barbara M**
- **Jonathan E**
- **Syria and the political changes taking place.**
- **Israel, Gaza, and the ongoing war as Christmas approaches in the land of Jesus' birth.**

ADVENT WEEK 3 PRAYER

The following is an Advent prayer by Henri Nouwen:

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.

ARTHUR & REETA UPDATE

"Arthur & Reeta" are our missionary partners working in a politically sensitive part of the world. A recent planned short trip to Reeta's home country has been extended, due to difficulties in the country where they are serving. It is uncertain when they will be able to return.

They write: "As Christmas approaches and we reflect on the year gone by, we are so grateful for your friendship, prayers, and support. It means so much to know you're standing with us. When we visited you earlier this year, we shared the song "Way Back Home" with you. We're excited to share a new song, "Stable Beginnings" ([listen here](#)), which reflects on the humble and hope-filled origins of the greatest story ever told—Jesus' birth in a stable. It's a reminder of God's plan to bring hope and redemption through the most unexpected of circumstances.

Wishing you a Christmas filled with joy, peace, and the hope that Jesus brings. Thank you for walking with us – we couldn't do this without you!

Advent God, as we count down the days until Christmas, we recognise that this special time of year looks very different to Christians across the world. We pray for Arthur and Reeta, and thank you for your continued guidance and protection, in what is often an intense and uncertain place to live. We pray for their team and the communities they serve; that they might be beacons of light, radiating the hope and peace of Jesus.

As we reflect upon the humble surroundings of Jesus' birth, we pray for all those Christians living in poverty, who have been displaced from their homes, and those who live in fear due to their faith. Strengthen them with courage this Christmas time, please Lord.

May the world see past all the materialism, and catch a glimpse of you this Christmas. Come Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

UPDATE FROM THE MAHON FAMILY

Depending on when you read this, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. As we left Trujillo, many sisters and brothers prayed for us, patted us on the back and expressed their desire to see us again very soon.

We helped our mission team from Trujillo Baptist Seminary to prepare for their second trip this year to teach the Awahun community in Kuyumatak. Dave wrote some teaching material about the ministry of the church in the community and the power of personal testimony. The team are pictured below. Their names (from left to right) are Emil, Yuniled, Horacio, Jenny and Nilton.

Please pray for the team to stay healthy during their time away, and that the Holy Spirit will enable them to be effective in their teaching, evangelism and ministry among the wonderful Pastors, women and children.

In our final week before travelling to England, we visited Chiclayo again, both taught at Emmanuel Church and stayed with Pastor Fernando and his young family.



This is our fifth Home Assignment. It's good to be back again! Seeing family and friends again is such a delight, though the cold is always a shock to the system, as it requires a determined mindset to swing those legs over and leave the warm and comfy duvet in the chilly mornings. Nevertheless, we press on with a smile in the strength that God always provides.

Our son Jonathan's baptism this month is a significant milestone for which we are so thankful. Our faithful God has drawn another one even closer to His heart. This is amazing.

Looking back over the year, we are grateful for the many mercies we have been shown by our gracious God. We have good health, the ministry of BMS continues to move forward in small steps with an even greater emphasis on strengthening

what our Peruvian sisters and brothers are doing, and we look forward to a favourable year ahead.

We recently secured some funding for a missions fair organised by our Seminary for the region of La Libertad which will take place in a few weeks' time. At that time, many churches will gather to play sports together, share food, pray and raise money for missions trips to share the good news of Jesus and teach the bible.

The Peruvian Baptist Convention has also recently sent a couple, Francesco and Lili Quispe, to Sao Paulo Brazil to plant a church there among a diaspora group. Would you pray for them as they start off? For favour with the people, good health, stamina, perseverance and good fruit.

We are planning for 4 weekends of training to take place in 2025 at the Nauta Integral Mission Training Centre, with all of them to be supported by local funding and teachers.



Pastor Pepe Flores (pictured in the middle with Dave and a visiting missionary from France called Michael) from the Baptist Convention has also proposed a water filtration project that has the potential to financially support local and national mission. We pray this great idea will develop into a strong pillar for kingdom work here.

The pastors in Loreto are still in need of great prayer support and visits to encourage them in their service to the Lord as they are often pessimistic about their ministry.

'No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.' Philippians 3:13-14, NLT.

May 2025 be a year filled with grace and mercy for you and yours. Thank you for being our backbone!

Love from Phoebe, Ruth, Jonathan, Michele and Dave Mahon