

Christmas 2020



A different Christmas?

There is much speculation that Christmas is likely to be very different this year. I read that UK governments will endeavour to make things as normal as possible... but it will depend on the level of coronavirus infections. So, will families be able to get together as usual? Will parties be legal? Will church buildings be open for services? And if church buildings are open for services, will it be permissible to sing Christmas Carols? So many unanswered questions.

And even if all these things are allowed, Christmas will still be very different for many families ... there will be that empty chair. There have been many deaths this year, not only from coronavirus, but also as a result of delayed treatment for stroke victims, heart attack patients, and cancer sufferers etc.

Yes, for a variety of reasons, Christmas will be very different for many people this year. *Or will it?* When it is said that Christmas may be very different this year, what is really meant is that the *celebration* of Christmas may be very different. For many people that will be a huge disappointment. Nevertheless, Christmas itself does not change, does it? For Christmas is the description given to the day when a baby boy was born in Bethlehem, laid in a manger as there was no room in the inn, and given the name Jesus. Christmas celebrates the occasion when the Son of God became incarnate, took on human flesh, and identified himself with the human race, so that ultimately he could be our Saviour.

Hundreds of years earlier, Isaiah prophesied “The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel, which means “God with us”. Isaiah 7:14. Whatever the circumstances that may surround Christmas this year, Christmas and its message remain gloriously the same: God is with us. Or as in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. By his Spirit he continues to dwell among us, and with us.

There is an old story of a father who wanted to impress on his little son that God did not exist. In that household there was little reference to Christmas, no carols, no Bible stories and so on. When the youngster asked why, his dad got a piece of paper and wrote GOD IS NOWHERE. He told

his son to read it out. The boy was still learning to read, so he slowly spelled out the words his dad showed him. "G O D = GOD, IS, N O W = NOW, H E R E = HERE. Daddy, it says GOD IS NOW HERE. So why don't we have Christmas?" That is not what daddy wanted to hear!

But it is what we need to hear, isn't it? God is now here. So, whatever circumstances may surround your Christmas this year, may the message of Christmas, and the promise of Christmas, and the reality of Christmas, still bring you some comfort and help. God remains with us in our joy and sorrow, in our pain and grief, in our loneliness and darkness. God is now here! May you experience his presence and the peace he brings.

This is a photograph of my mother on her 100th Birthday last year. She died in November 2020, just three weeks short of reaching her 101 years old. She had lived with my sister in Mansfield, Australia for the past 12 years. She was converted as a young woman in Lincoln, and served the Lord for many years.

The photograph also shows Pam's and my children – Catherine who had flown in from New Zealand for the celebration and Paul who had driven up with his family from Melbourne.

My Mother's chair will be empty this Christmas, so I write my article with personal experience of recent family bereavement.

A blessed Christmas to you all

Mike Weldon





*Loving
Father,*

help us remember
the **birth of Jesus**
that we may share in

the *song of the angels*,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and the *worship of the wise men*.

Close the door of hate and

open the door of love all over the

world. Let kindness come with every gift and
good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from
evil by the *blessing which Christ brings*, and teach us

to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be *Thy children*, and the Christmas
evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,

forgiving and forgiven,

for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

1. On what date does St Stephen's Day fall?
2. Can you name Santa's eight reindeer, Rudolph not included.
3. What is figgy pudding?
4. Who invented Christmas crackers?
5. Who was credited for bringing Christmas trees to UK?
6. Who wrote a Child's Christmas in Wales?
7. Which monarch made the first broadcasted Christmas message to the UK and Commonwealth?
8. This Christmas message was actually written by a famous author. Who?
9. Did Edward VIII ever broadcast a Christmas message?
10. In the song twelve days of Christmas how many lords were leaping?
11. What date is Epiphany or twelve night?
12. Who tried to steal Christmas?
13. In the Twelve days of Christmas what gift was received on the 12th day?
14. Name the actor who played Buddy in the film 'Elf'.
15. Queen Elizabeth 2nd has only missed one broadcast since 1952, What year and why?
16. What film did the song "White Christmas" come from?
17. What fruit features largely in the Christingle service?
18. How many ghosts visited Scrooge?
- 19 The Queen's Christmas broadcast is at 3 pm Christmas Day. Why?
- 20 What country donates the Christmas tree annually in Trafalgar Square?

Answers on Page 16.

Thank you, Margaret, for digging deep!!

Before we go shopping, we have to put things into the right perspective.

Sizing things up

Bodies we know become bigger,
Growing in stature and height,
And sometimes they keep on expanding
Resulting in clothes getting tight.

Heads too can keep on swelling
Becoming quite pompous and vain.
Filled with their own self importance
And so – in a nutshell – a pain.

And nails, they grow on for a lifetime
Simply can't get them to quit,
While turbulent tresses keep flowing
Though some are perverse and might quit!

But if it should come to a contest
To find out the biggest and best
There's really no doubting the outcome,
The HEART would beat all the rest.

Nails can be polished and painted,
Hair can be coloured and curled,
And brains filled out with a thousand facts
But a HEART can encompass the world.

Thank you Wendy

*Give a gift
from the*



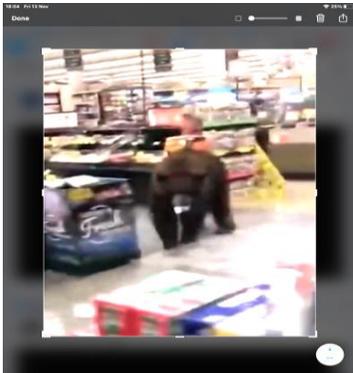
this Christmas

Lets go shopping

Don't know about you but I haven't been shopping for ages. Not real shopping. I can identify with this poor man. He is saying, "Until now I never understood why you get so excited when someone walked past the window."

I am ashamed to say that having benefitted massively from on-line shopping the order has now a certain 'sameness'.

It would be good to buy something that was not on the supermarket shelf. It has nothing to do with the lack of choice just the thrill of shopping – off piste!!



A lot of the enjoyment rests on the person who takes you shopping. Someone has to help carry the bags. It had better not be a moaner. The "Do you really need that?" "You've already got three of those"

How much longer are you going to be?"

What you need is a big strong male who will cheerfully carry anything and make sure that you have enough room to shop. Want his telephone number?

This hefty bear frequents the local supermarket in Tahoe – where Aled goes. He

is fine so long as you don't get between him and the crisp packets (notice plural)!

Some people fear the worst of course. He is fine

No Nativity this year? because:

The Three Wise Men face a travel ban

The shepherds have been furloughed

The Inn Keeper has shut under tier 3 regulations and has a slump in bookings.

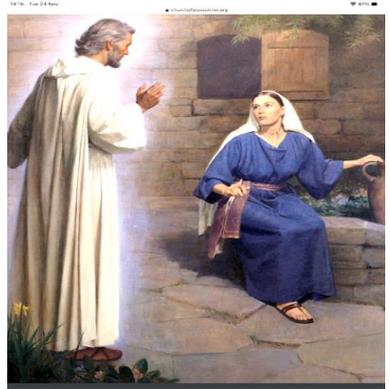
Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with the reindeer.

As for Rudolph with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test.

When God calls, I get excited. I have to go down to earth. What will it be this time. I've parted seas, sent fire down ...

"You must go to a village called Nazareth".
"Never heard of it! I know where Jerusalem is - you can't miss that".

"Gabriel! I said, Nazareth. Find a young girl, she is called Mary. She is going to have a son, My son, she must name Him Jesus".
Gabriel must have looked totally bewildered. Our Jesus going to earth as a baby? Living in the little village of Nazareth, in a little house with a father who had a little business.



Gabriel scratched his head - He didn't do 'little'. Furthermore, in his opinion, humans were little people. They had never seen the grandeur of the heavens. They had little minds and they had tested God's patience for years.

He kept scratching his head. Suddenly he realised that God was speaking, "Gabriel, did you hear what I said, - say, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High'. Say it in that order,- 'Do not be afraid, Mary...' you have a habit of frightening everyone... and stop scratching your head!"

Gabriel always obeyed orders. He found Nazareth (eventually!) He was worried that Mary would run away before he had finished. Gabriel would tell us "To my utter amazement Mary sat there and only asked one, very obvious question".

"How will this be since I am a virgin?" And without taking a breath she spoke with joy and utter acceptance "I am the Lord's servant, May it be unto me as you have said."

God hadn't given me any more words, which was just as well for I was overcome. I left her – and tried to stop scratching my head.

I wasn't surprised to have to make a return journey. God sent me to reassure Joseph, the man Mary was to marry. God warned me, "He's going to be in for a shock". And he was. Joseph asked so many questions, his and the ones that Mary hadn't asked. I felt so sorry for him. I could see him



pacing up and down, his little shop was a comfort but customers were scathing.

Yes, he was incredulous and angry. Had Mary got it wrong. It could have been a bad dream ... but it wasn't. She had believed it with all the wonder of innocent acceptance and love. "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour." Those were words that she would repeat over and over again.

Joseph had started to scratch his head and possibly his beard until it hurt.

Then God steps in. "Gabriel, go back and say the same words again, in the same order but say that Jesus will be known as Immanuel - it means, 'God with us' – just to allay any confusion."

Gabriel followed the order and it worked. Mary and Joseph were together. The little carpenter's shop became their home and their haven of Peace.; Until Caesar Augustus called a census..

They had to travel because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. Mary's son would be born in Bethlehem – 70 miles away. In another little town, Gabriel was beside himself and had picked up his old habit of scratching his head.



FAMILY NEWS

Happy Birthday to **BMS Birthday Scheme Members - December**

4 th	Caryl Lewis	16 th	Rhianon Henderson
20 th	Enid James	29 th	Lexie Jones

January

1 st	Noreen Parsons	5 th	Pam Jones
6 th	Christine Davies	22 nd	John Francis
27 th	David Ware	29 th	Rosalyn Hog

November will be a month that will go down in the history of Hope as a month of deep sadness following the devastating passing of our Pastor, Rev (Colonel) Robbie Hall. I cannot tell you how clearly I hear his voice telling all of us –

“All God’s promises are true. Heaven is ‘home’ and our Lord has prepared beyond my or anyone’s imagining. Hope Church (he always called us that – the two words were inseparable in his mind) – now continue the work set out before you”.

December and January will therefore be months when we will sing with angels, “Glory to God, in the highest“, At the angel’s bidding we too will speed to find our Saviour, Christ, the Lord – “wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger” – and tell the whole story to a waiting world.

We assure Helen of our loving, prayerful support. So many friends from near and far have asked her to visit them. It is such a comfort for her to know that so many will forever hold Robbie in high esteem. Hope can but promise you continued loving support.

As I write no decision has been made as yet if we can open the church. Whilst we can accommodate 71 as proved at Robbie’s funeral, that creates an even bigger problem for a Christingle Service as many more would want to attend savouring the normality of meeting up. There is also the safety issue to consider. Having said all this, we will endeavour to use our camera system which enables us to stream services on YouTube. Plans are afoot to make the very best use of what we can do and overthrow the sobering and perpetuating effects of Covid .

There are so many layers to life. Those who are poorly at this time have never been forgotten by us. Prayers are said daily for you Rhiannon. We are so very grateful that you do not have pain. We are mindful that Russell needs our prayerful support too. It is good that you are able to take a run in the car.

We continue to be amazed that Rev. Mike Weldon endures the aftermaths of treatments necessary and gets good weeks. To read his words and share his faith is a constant blessing to each of us. Our love reaches out to you and to Pam as you remember your Mum and thank her for her faithful example.

We are sad to hear that Richard Girdlestone has passed away peacefully after such a brave battle against his illness. We send Sue and the family our prayers and comfort alongside our sympathy and love.

Clarice has suffered so much and has had to take course after course of antibiotics. Not being able to attend church since last February has been a 'cross' to bear. I link in all of you who have been in isolation for so long with the prayers we send to Clarice. Being indoors is hard enough when you have to shield but being in pain as well is more than a challenge.

We think of Dorothy Fear, Brinley George, Brenda Cadogan, Marion and Ken Roberts, Hilary and Don, Edward and Anita. and Geoff Hopkin.

It has been good to see Madeleine Drew getting out a bit more but still suffering and playing a very long waiting game on the NHS list. I also met Judith Jakob who is a little better and coming to terms with the sadness and ill health that has plagued her.

Please believe me when I say that we have more time to pray for you all. Covid has made us all truly aware of just how much we miss being together.

Many words are being used but the best by far from me is a big thank you to you all for helping to make the Funeral Service of Robbie a time when we honoured all of his life and his ministry. I felt the need to write more than just a few sentences. How could I possibly capture his unique ministry – in a half page of family news. - hence the enclosed. How we wished he had been with us for many years to come – such was his drive, his skills, his faith and love. Rest in peace and rise in glory, Robbie.

You will notice that Helen and the family have been comforted by us all. To know that both Robbie and Helen were happy here amongst us is now reflected in their joint decision to ask for monies in lieu of gratitude for all

that everyone received from their ministry in its totality (some for many years previous) be sent to for the ongoing work within Hope and the community which Robbie started. Our Treasurer, Mr. Paul Evans gives us the following information:-

Donations may be made payable:

1. By cheque payable to Hope Baptist Church or
2. By electronic transfer using
sort code 20-12-25 and account number 60483206

The postal address is The Treasurer, Hope Baptist Church,
Station Hill, Bridgend CF31 1EA.

With our heartfelt gratitude.

Part of Robbie's legacy to Hope and to the community is the availability of a room to be used by The Food Bank for the distribution of food for many in need in these unprecedented times. Hope reaches out in prayer and practical assistance to many organizations. We are a busy church.

The work in preparation for The Food Bank is well in hand. We will be benefiting in many ways. It was something Robbie believed in - we follow suit. The tiled area downstairs is to have new tiles and a carpet. The crèche walls have been plastered and painted. A huge improvement. There will be new tables and chairs – all paid for by the Food Bank. What an opportunity for us to open our doors to the community. The whole area will be looking all spruced up – not quite so tired. We in turn will respond with prayers and help man the café with tea and biscuits. More anon.

It is a delight to thank Rosalyn and Philip Hogg for the work they did in collecting monies for The Bible Society. They were able to send over £330 on our behalf. We missed the cakes but we are so glad that Rosalyn has been selling her paintings. She has such talent, - they are varied in subject too. Please give her a ring on 01656 656342. She will be only too pleased to help you.

They say that it never rains but it pours. That was certainly true in the home of Lynne and Phil Chamberlain of late. Phil had to make sure that the camera worked in readiness for the funeral. Many thanks to Sally and Steve for aligning things up. He was also pivotal in the work of Operation Christmas Child collecting all boxes – see below. A pretty busy time for you both?! That is an understatement.

Lynne and Phil write

We would like to thank everyone for their generous donations of boxes, both actual and online, fillers and money. For those who gave us money or sent it to the Hope account, we have packed online boxes on your behalf.

We would like to thank John and Delyth, Ron and Pat for being available to receive boxes when Hope was open as a drop off location, to Paul for accepting the monetary donations and writing the thank you letters, Seung-Ho and Yun-Hee for their patience during the storage and to Hope Church for the use of the premises.

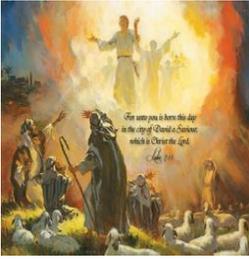
Due to your generosity, many of the neediest children, who have nothing, will receive a shoebox to show that someone cares about them and in turn learn about the love of Jesus.

Thank you!
Lynne and Phil x



From us To you with our
love





Gabriel here again...I have been given more orders. To my horror Mary and Joseph are in Bethlehem, in a stable. How on that earth did that happen? Jesus, now a baby, has been born and he's lying in a manger - a trough more like! The straw is clean, it smells 'earthy' and it's warm. Joseph is beaming, he just manages to stop himself scratching his beard. Mary is at total peace – her smile, her voice, the way she looks at Jesus. I see the Glory of God in her in this moment”.

“Gabriel, one last thing. Get the heavenly host together and tell them to sing, ‘Glory to God in the highest - and on earth peace to men on whom his glory rests’ – they’ve been practising it for years and don’t forget to start with

‘Be not afraid, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all people’...Mary and Joseph need reassurance, they need company, what parents don’t want to share the birth of their first born...”

“I’ll go to Jerusalem straight away” ...

“NO! the angels will announce it to the shepherds that are on the hills and mind you tell them the exact place to find the baby, - My Son. Gabriel you’re doing it again..scratching your head” “I know it gets on your nerves. Anybody else coming? Do I need to tell anybody else whilst I’m down there?” “No. You have been busy - you have been obedient and you have almost stopped scratching your head. You might as well know....

There are wise men travelling from the East. I put a star in the heavens and they found it. The star is guiding them on.

Sadly. they will take their eyes off the heavens, they will look down at their scrolls and take the wrong turning when get near to Jerusalem. They will assume that a king - will be born in a palace.

They will find Jesus - when they look and see the star still above the little town Bethlehem. The consequences of their visit to Herod will be dire but My little family will be well. In the fullness of time you will tell Joseph to pack up and take Mary and Jesus - to Egypt. Gabriel, stop scratching your head - it's an annoying habit and totally unnecessary”.



Like so many in and out of the Bible we too waste precious time scratching our heads!

Is it our age making us cautious? But the young scratch their heads too. They ask more questions than they care to have answered.

How many people, having heard Jesus, went home to scratch their heads - with great and solemn deliberation. They just missed the joy of a simple, believing faith. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He came out of pure love, to forgive, to die and to rise again so that we have nothing to fear - not even death itself.

That is the bedrock of our faith, of our lives. You can ask God as many questions as you like so long as you know who He is. So long as you can sit at the foot of his cross and weep out of shame and cry out of love of Him.

Re read the story of that first Christmas, see God in the ordinary. Why do we insist on worshipping the spectacular and debase the ordinary?

Born in the night, Mary's child.
A long way from your home...

Clear shining light, Mary's child
Your faith lights up our way
Light of the world, Mary's child
Dawn on our darkened day

He came in the darkness. It's a bit dark in Hope right now. Sleep for many doesn't come easily. Into that dark place - well - God steps in. His Presence dispels the cold, night air.

We may scratch our heads a little bit longer but there will come a time when God will say to each one of us,

"Stop doing that - it's becoming a futile habit,
Just believe in me - you will do great things in my name".

Rhonwen

16 Around the table, please.

I hope we will all sit at the table to eat! No more Covid happy trays.
Treats are allowed - but make life simple.

How about Apple pancakes for breakfast. You can prepare the mixture or the pancake beforehand!)
- add grated apple and a smidgen of cinnamon (optional) to the mixture.

Now where's the Maple syrup.



Instead of traditional mince pies try mixing half a jar of mincemeat into the milk when making scones. Eat topped with brandy butter and /or cream.

I thought this was an original idea of mine until I looked for an image!

Many of you will know that I mix chopped beetroot, pineapple and chopped red onions in a little vinegar. It was served at Farthings many moons ago.

Answers to Quiz

1. 26th December
2. Dasher, Dancer, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen
3. Plum pudding similar to Christmas pudding.
4. Tom Smith. 5. Prince Albert. 6. Dylan Thomas.
7. George V 1932. 8. Rudyard Kipling
- 9 No - he recorded his abdication message.
- 10.10 11. 6th January 12. The Grinch.
13. 5 gold rings. 14. Will Ferrel
15. 1969 - she was pregnant with Prince Andrew.
16. Holiday Inn 17. An orange.
18. 4 - Ben Marley. Christmas Past, Present and Future
19. 3pm Christmas Day it was the most convenient time for the rest of the Commonwealth.
20. Norway.

A New Year Prayer.

As we come to the close of the old year and the beginning of the new we want to thank you Almighty God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, that you have and continue to give us life. Accept our thanks for the joy of each new sunrise and sunset, and the opportunity to appreciate another day with all the potential for enjoying this wonderful planet that we call home.

Yes there have been joys and jubilation, struggles strains and sadnesses, circumstances beyond our control, times when we may have asked 'why', only to be deafened by the silence of unanswered questions, yet in all of this, whether we have sensed your concerned caring presence or not, we understand that you have been there with your watching brief, your proactive love and justice.

Sometimes you have sent to us or those we are concerned about, someone to walk with us when the road was dark and rough. At other times we have, maybe knowingly or unknowingly, been the channels of your love and concern to those in need. For these we give you our thanks.

As we move into this New Year, we pray that you Jesus The Good shepherd will honour your responsibilities, and not abandon us your sometimes wayward sheep (John 10.11).

We ask that together with the Father, by the Holy Spirit you will continue to make your home with us (John 14.23), and that your presence will not always be a hidden, silent presence.

As we journey into this New Year help us to travel light.

We confess that like Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress we have a tendency to bring to you our sometimes-heavy burdens only to pick them up again as we journey on through life.

Looking back to the year that is ending or ended, and to the situations that may have stolen our peace and our freedom, we ask that you give us the honesty, courage, the desire... to bring them to the Cross of Christ and leave them there.

If this is not wholly possible, we pray we still might find the ability to unencumber our lives so that we may enter this New Year with the freedom that Jesus came to bring to all mankind.

Should we need to go and seek and or offer forgiveness, or be reconciled to another, give us courage and grace to take this road.

At the turn of the year we pray that you will give us a renewed desire to be your lights in our world. Dispelling darkness for those around as

we point them in word and deed to Jesus and his Kingdom. Asking that you help us to understand that we are not called to save the whole world – that is why there is a body of Christ – but to simply be there for those you call us to walk alongside and serve.

To that end help us to recognise and respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, we pray that this New Year will be marked with moments of laughter celebration and joy, as we continue to journey through this life, until you call us home or come again.

For your sure and guiding hand we thank you, Rev Dai Davies.

Success is speaking words of praise'
In cheering other people's ways
In doing the best you can
With every task and every plan.
In silence when your speech would hurt,
Politeness when your neighbour's curt.
It's deafness when the scandal flows,
And sympathy with other's woes,
It's loyalty when the duty calls,
It's courage when disaster falls.
It's patience when the hours are long,
When everything you do seems wrong

Thank you, Eva

***we are giving you
the last word.
Diolch!***



OUR WEEK AT A GLANCE

For more information on any of our activities, please get in touch with the contact shown.

TUESDAY:

Ladies' Prayer Group	9.30am	Mrs R Rowe	(01656) 654881
Tuesday@Hope	11.00am	Mrs M Johnson	(01656) 656346

WEDNESDAY:

"Busy Fingers" Group	2-4 pm	Mrs. H. Hall	(01656) 224015
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THURSDAY:

Baby & Toddler Group	9.30am	Dr D. Ware	(01656) 662948
Prayer Meeting	7.30pm		

SUNDAY:

Sunday'sCool	10.00am
Morning Service	10.30am
Evening Service	6.00pm

WHO TO CONTACT AT HOPE

CHURCH CONTACT:	hopebaptist@hotmail.co.uk	07866 746851
SECRETARY:	Rhonwen Miles	(01656) 654169
TREASURER:	Paul Evans	(01656) 661986
CARETAKER:	Seung Ho & Yun Hee Kang	(01656) 646911
USE OF PREMISES & SAFEGUARDING	Sally George	(01656) 668791
NEWSDESK:	mag4hope@yahoo.com	Rhonwen Miles Pam Jones

HOPE

BAPTIST CHURCH

OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

(Church Meeting 010503)

We will EVANGELISE our community & beyond.

We will encourage people to become more Christ-like through
DISCIPLESHIP.

We are committed to meeting the needs of those inside & outside
our walls through MINISTRY.

We will value FELLOWSHIP, recognising that it is a divine gift to the
church.

We will come before the Lord in obedience to WORSHIP Him.

Hope Baptist Church operates a safeguarding children and
adults at risk policy.

www.hopebridgend.co.uk

[www.facebook.com/Hope-Baptist-Church-Bridgend-
1699576150319699](https://www.facebook.com/Hope-Baptist-Church-Bridgend-1699576150319699)

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Baptist Association

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