



Happy New Year

A reflection from NWBA Regional Minister, Phil Jump

This is a greeting that will no doubt be shared in many ways and many places in the coming days. There is of course a degree of routine to it, but in it we also capture something of the hope and re-commitment that a passing year heralds. As we do so, we are likely to also take time to look back on a year past - milestones achieved and aspirations still unfulfilled - events anticipated and unexpected that will come to define it.

One of the images that caught my attention during Advent of 2018 was that of the “knife angel” which is currently being displayed at Liverpool Cathedral. It is a visually stunning piece of public art, but its true impact is revealed through the detail of thousands of knives, carefully crafted to create the form of the angel. The knives themselves have been collected or confiscated by British Police forces; items that could so easily have caused harm and anguish have instead become symbols of hope and good.

But this remains a disturbing presence, for it has been built as a tribute and memorial to those far too many lives that have been destroyed through knife crime - a rising tragedy in our nations. As one contemporary Christian songwriter put it—there is pain in the offering.

As we look to the year ahead, we do so with hope, but also with realism, recognising that within it will lie struggles and challenges for us as individuals and church communities alike.

In 2018, we structured our work as an Association around the theme **Unlocking the Potential**, and this found expression in a number of ways amongst our churches and leaders. The impact of this has been quite significant, so much so that we believe it right to continue with this as our focus in 2019. At its heart is the desire to help every Baptist Christian in our North Western area consider their own calling within the purposes of God, and what potential might be fulfilled if together we are enabled and equipped to realise this.

As I looked at this magnificent piece of public art outside one of our world’s most impressive cathedrals it struck me that it must have begun its existence as an idea in someone’s head - fuelled perhaps by the pain and anguish of those who had lost loved ones through knife crime. Its creators saw the potential, not simply of what could be physically made from a cache of discarded weapons, but also how a message of hope and peace could be wrought from violence and death.

As we look to a New Year, which already harbours a fair degree of pain and uncertainty, what difference might we have the potential to make? What good might we have the potential to achieve? How together can we unleash the potential of our Gospel of hope and reconciliation?

May we all know the inspiration and presence of God as we seek to explore these questions together.

Phil Jump - January 2019



**God of every new beginning;
At the threshold of another year,
We offer ourselves again to you and one another.
Help us to see the potential of the gifts we offer;
The people we are;
Those who share this journey with us,
And the power of the message
That you have entrusted to us to share.
Through Christ our Saviour and companion
AMEN**

