

St. Georges United Reformed Church Ministers Report

Many churches have faced a difficult year and report on a fall in numbers attending, difficulty finding financial resources to continue, and key roles within churches not being filled due to lack of volunteers. This has sadly meant that we continue to see churches closing. However I am encouraged by the hard work and commitment of the members at St Georges, and the array of reports from various groups that meet in the church are testament to the hard work that has gone on. Our numbers have remained steady, we continue to welcome new faces, and we are finding new and creative ways to reach out to our community and share with them something of the love of God.

This year we have been introduced to 'George,' one of the puppets that has certainly brought a new dimension to Sunday mornings! We are working on ways in which this puppet ministry can be developed and are in conversation with One Way UK to run a puppet workshop for anyone who might be interested in getting involved. The numbers attending our holiday club in the summer was disappointing, and we are saddened that Hannah Middleton, the Synod Children's Work Advisor, has been seriously ill and unlikely to be with us this year. This means we may have to reconsider what we offer in terms of a holiday club over the summer.

We have enjoyed new events, such as the Summer Fete, along with now regular calendar dates such as the Strawberry Tea, Christmas Social, Managers Coffee morning and Christmas Coffee morning to name just a few. The church is always busy during the week, with a host of groups using the premises, and this is always encouraging. Our midweek worship, discussion groups and prayer groups continue to grow, and have proven an informal way of introducing newcomers to the life of the church. Our ecumenical events have strengthened this year, and I meet regularly with the other ministers in the town, to work together on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Good Friday service, Thy Kingdom Come, The Nativity Trail and the Community Carol Service in the market place and I continue to take assemblies once a month at All Saints school.

The monthly coffee mornings with 'Morpeth for Ukraine' continue, and we continue to support the Beehouse orphanage in Rivne, Ukraine. It is hard to put into words the generosity of those who have supported these over the past 12 months, but it has made a tremendous difference to the lives of many of our Ukrainian friends who have been grateful for our support.

As we look back over the past year, we do so with deep gratitude for the faithfulness, generosity, and quiet resilience that continue to shape the life of St George's. So much of what we do happens because people offer their time, their gifts, and their care—often unseen, always appreciated. Thank you for the countless ways you help this church to be a place of welcome, worship, and hope.

The year ahead will bring its own opportunities and challenges, as every year does. Yet we move forward with confidence that God is already at work among us, inviting us to listen, to imagine, and to respond. Together with our friends at Great Bavington, Widdrington and the wider URC family, we continue to seek how best to serve our community, deepen our discipleship, and share Christ's love.

May we step into the coming months with open hearts, willing hands, and a renewed sense of shared purpose. And may we trust that the God who has led us this far will continue to guide, inspire, and sustain us in all that lies ahead.

St George's Church, Morpeth – Annual Report

Introduction

This year at St George's has been another year which has been marked by the resilience, collaboration, and commitment of those who continue to serve the church in various roles and who continue to support the church in their financial giving. We all together address the challenges we face to maintain this building and create a welcoming environment for all.

Finance

The church received a significant donation for the Lift Fund and £15,741 from the sale of the old Manse, which has been allocated to an Emergency Fund. However, we face an annual decrease in income of £12,600 due to increased Synod payments and the loss of several fundraising streams. We thank David Calcraft for his continuing role as Treasurer and he has provided regular reports on the church accounts. As we make preparations for David to step down from this role later this year, we thank Andy Cleverley and Linda Glascott who have taken on some of this work.

Property and Maintenance

Major repairs included mending the church roof, fixing the lift, and addressing heating issues in the disabled toilet. The Hostess Trolley and organ have also been repaired. Ongoing projects include manse redecoration and re-hanging the door on the disabled toilet. Thanks to Gordon Slack who has stepped in to help out with many of the property issues, and for all who coordinated the efforts to ensure our facilities remain safe and functional.

Health, Safety, and Safeguarding

Health and safety policies were reviewed and updated, with regular inspections of the lift, fire alarm, and lightning conductor. Safeguarding training has been prioritised, with Elders attending courses to ensure best practices are maintained. Our thanks to those who have taken on these vital responsibilities and to Ken Anderson for his help with Health and Safety issues.

Social and Community Events

The year saw successful events such as the KEVI Concert, Morpeth Book Festival, Strawberry Event, and various coffee mornings. The formation of a new Social Committee has invigorated our calendar and a special thanks to those who have organised and supported these events which have not only helped to raise funds but have been crucial in fostering fellowship and outreach.

Lettings

Lettings income has increased, with new groups such as the "Hope and Light" dependency support group and art classes joining our community. The church continues to be a hub for local activities, thanks to the Andy Cleverley for accommodating all our groups.

Housekeeping and Stewarding

Improvements in housekeeping, including a pay rise for our cleaner and new stewards joining the team, have kept our church welcoming and well-maintained. Joan Cooper has stepped down from her role as a manager and we thank her for her years of service. Susan Sanderson has taken over, and joined Sarah Cleverley in this, and our gratitude goes to all involved in these essential tasks.

Conclusion

We remember with sadness the untimely passing of Andrew Hamnett, whose contributions as Clerk and friend are deeply missed. Our thoughts remain with his family. We also thank all Managers, Elders and volunteers for their dedication, flexibility, and care throughout the year. Your efforts sustain the life and mission of St George's Church.

As we face financial and practical challenges, our community's spirit and commitment remain strong. We have seen many new faces attending events through the year and we look forward to another year of service, fellowship, and faith.

St George's URC Morpeth Church Secretary's Report for 2025

As of 31st December 2025, the Annual Return to the URC head office and Northern Synod showed our membership to be 104.

This year we welcomed three new members, namely Janet Robertson, Shirley Wilkinson and Trish McGougan.

In August we had one baptism, that of Zara Amelia Barclay.

In January we held a service of remembrance for Robin Cooper who had worked tirelessly in support of this church as both a manager and an elder for many years. We also record the deaths of Margaret Johnson, another long serving member, Isabel Pringle, Pat Hills and Eileen Clark. In May Andrew Hamnett died after a short illness. We give thanks for his support as manager and organist over many years.

We have an average congregation of 65 at our Sunday services including 14 regular attenders who are not church members. Our monthly Sunday evening services are attended by ten to twelve on a regular basis.

Our Worship on Wednesday lunchtime service (WOW) has a regular attendance of twelve to fifteen people.

Our fortnightly Churches Together prayer meetings and Conversations About meetings are attended by 8-12 people on a regular basis.

Our Junior church is much depleted with only one child in the 0-4 category attending regularly.

There are 109 children and young people associated with the life of this church across all age groups in the uniformed organisations, comprising Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers.

Our affiliation with the Air Cadets continues to thrive and approximately 40 of them attend the Community Carol Service and the Air Cadet Service each year.

We held two Holiday clubs in 2025 which were not well attended, although enjoyed by all who did participate. Hannah Middleton who helps us with the planning, has been seriously ill so subsequent planned events were cancelled.

The number of serving Elders is currently 10, including the church secretary.

Morag Stead

Worship on Wednesday Report 2025- 2026

In life we are faced with many situations of Hellos and Goodbyes.

2025 saw WOW say goodbye to our dear friend Andrew Hamnett. Andrew had played piano for us ever since WOW changed from once a month to every week. He was always in Church on Wednesdays practicing the organ and happily agreed to play for us. He and Suzanne have sometimes taken our Wednesday service, always very interesting and thought provoking. We have missed Andrew so much, in particular I have missed his willingness and his unflappability when I have presented him with something other than a regular hymn and coping with me when he asked which tune I wanted and I would just grin at him because I really didn't know which one was which! God bless you Andrew, gone to glory.

They do say when one door closes another opens. We needed someone to play piano for us on Wednesdays. Julian usually played for us when Andrew was unavailable for whatever reason. While Andrew was ill Morag came forward to play for us. So that was two people. Not long after Andrews's death, Diane Vannen, a regular on Sunday and a member of the Church Orchestra thought she'd just call in to one of these WOW services, just to see what it's like. Well, Diane is a super pianist so now we have three people to ask to play for us.

We are still attracting a decent number of regular attendees at WOW which is always very heartening. This year we have been lucky that 2 people who have taken services in the past have come forward to lead our worship. Great thanks to Ron Forster and Stuart Brock and also to Christine Hawkins who has now given her first WOW service and it was well delivered and received.

Sue Rutherford. WOW Service Organiser.

CHURCH LETTINGS REPORT

Lettings Income for 2025 was £6455.50 less £162.00 = £6293.50 (For 2024 it was £5499.)

Unfortunately, the Alnwick Allstars Choir has moved out of the church to Morpeth Golf Club because the pillars were causing them problems now that the choir is so big. This means a drop in our income for 2026 of £1296.

Our clients are Ronke's Exercise Class, Lisa's Zumba Class, Helga's Yoga Class, the Cobwebs Orchestra and the Northeast Life Art Project. The Narcotics Anonymous Group meet on Fridays at a special reduced rate given because of their work in society.

Andy Cleverley

Churches Together Christian Aid Group

Laurence Benkhaleb-House and Shirley Forster are our representatives on the Churches Together Christian Aid Group. This brings together the URC, St Roberts, Morpeth Methodist Church, the Baptists, and St James', St Mary's, and St Aidan's C of E churches to plan and organise events to raise funds to Christian Aid. Having planned various events, we do our best to encourage members and friends from all the churches to join in the activities and help us raise money, and we are so delighted with the enthusiastic response from St George's to our many invitations to help.

In Christian Aid week many folk helped delivering envelopes, and although it is getting harder to raise money this way, and is much more successful in some streets than others. We tried using St Georges as a 'post box' for contributions and a small number of envelopes were returned here.

Together with envelope collections in church services this raised £3079.

Our sponsored walk '70k on May' led by Ron and Shirley was joined by Julian and Karin and folk from other churches on different days, and visited 'far out' members of churches including our own Mary Kelly and Janet Brown raised £1359. What sponsored event will there be this year??

We held a very successful preloved toy sale at St Georges last Spring which raised £635, and hope to repeat this later this year.

We put on a showing of the Tinderbox film at St James' Church. This exploring the history of Palestine and Israel from the perspectives of both peoples and helped us understand more about the depth of historical injustice, and felt by both and how it leads to such difficulty building peace although that is the deep desire of many people. People donated £150 at this event

We help a street collection in September with members of many churches rattling cans around the town. Fewer people carry cash so this is harder than it used to be, though we are trying to use donation by phone and getting some response, especially from younger folk! £677 was raised

Our Country Dance in October morphed into the 'Christian Aid Ceilidh' and drew in many more participants and raised £388 (with St George's effectively donating the hall rent!)

Shirley is a 'Christian Aid' Speaker and has led a few services and talks about Christian Aid over the year, from meeting with our Guides, to speaking a Mothers Union Group in Durham. Please ask her, or suggest to her, if you know of groups that would like a someone to speak, lead worship or do a workshop about Christian Aid. We are endeavouring to persuade schools to invite us along too.

About half the money raised by Christian Aid goes to long term projects to help the poorest and most left out people in the world. They can use small amounts of help to develop local projects in farming, employment, healthcare, education to make a huge difference to their lives. Last year's campaign featured farmer Aurelia from Guatemala who said 'Climate change is killing our crops'. While many people in the world have become richer and more healthy, educated and comfortable – many others like Aurelia are left out, hungry, thirsty, living in dreadful conditions and struggling for recognition and help, even from their own governments. This year Christian Aid week May 10-16 will focus on Kenya.

The other half of donations to Christian Aid top up the emergency 'pot' so that when floods, or earthquakes like Myanmar strike, immediate help can be given from the disasters fund which coordinates help with other major charities through the Disasters emergency Committee (DEC). When events like this are in the news the public are usually very generous and give willingly to the appeals.

People needing long term help are rarely in the headlines, and it is more challenging to raise money for these projects so during Christian Aid week focuses on this long-term help.

We really appreciate all the money and time St Georges folk put into supporting Christian Aid during this last year and over many many years and at many events. Perhaps the greatest support you give is much less visible however - and that is the folk who make donations in their wills and funeral collections and those who make a monthly donation to Christian Aid by direct debit. We don't know who you are but this is the most significant way to give as it enables Christian Aid to plan ahead.

JUNIOR CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a strange quiet sort of year. Our Juniors have moved on, - Emily Molly Heidi and Noah have all progressed to King Edwards V1 school joining Daniel and they are now no longer children.....suddenly they have become Young People. We do not get to see them much in church these days there are so many new opportunities opening up for them which inevitably involve Sundays. Daniel is still very much our Footballer, Emily our principal Dancer and Cheerleader, Heidi is our Runner getting faster month by month. Noah put out a plea for help with his Puppet idea and we soon learnt how confidently he had written scripts and the voices he had command of were very interesting and amusing. Molly is making new friends at school and seems to enjoy the new lifestyle.

Brian had now reached school age and it was time to introduce him to Junior Church - at first I joined Teresa in the Drysdale Room with the toys. We moved on very slowly to introducing him to the lovely Bible Stories with a simple prayer to finish and Brian seems to thoroughly enjoy saying the last Amen. We continue with this plan now with Janet helping and bringing along some wonderfully sticky crafts and together we try to make Junior Church fun for Brian - sometimes difficult because he is just the only one. I am so very grateful for all the Junior Church leaders who encourage us along the way. Christmas approached and it was the turn of St. Georges to produce the Nativity Play. I thought it was going to be difficult with only one child, but Julian found us a lovely script and when we saw the parts needed Emily, Daniel and Molly stepped in with promises to help. It felt so good for me to have Molly at my side in church for a few Sundays. Our Methodist Friends arrived and it was such a lovely atmosphere to see the children back together again. They arrived in number and brought fun laughter and costumes to fit everyone. We managed to find time for a few rehearsals and on the "big" morning our little play came together, it did feel as though a little miracle occurred and once again, we brought the Christmas Story to life in St. Georges Church.

Barbara Pringle

Our team hasn't got a name yet!!

The social convenor role is currently 'vacant'. When Gillian Irvine stepped down last year no one felt able to take over her huge contribution to church life! However, May Kelly, Stephanie Robson, and Shirley Forster volunteered to become a team that would organise fund raising social events, and though we haven't got a name yet and aren't listed on the service sheet we have been busy arranging a variety of dos, roping in others to help, and making the most of the skills and ideas and hard work of a great many people. We have tried to work around activities already in the calendar (supporting events already organised by Gillian and Julian and others). St George's and its friends have come along to all these events and raised a fair amount of money! We aimed to make sure an event happens roughly once a month because we acknowledge that St Georges needs this income to supplement regular giving. We have tried to create a variety of ways to have fun, hoping that if one activity does not appeal to you and your friends another one will! We didn't want anyone to feel obliged to come along, but we hope everyone would find something they fancy coming to! We felt the more folk we involve from the wider circle of St George's friends the better it is both in raising funds and making more friends! |

Have we succeeded in these aims? What could we have done better? |

This is what has happened over the past year – |

May 9th-Beetle Drive -evening |

June 13th Quiz Night evening |

June 28th Strawberry Tea and Grainger Singers concert |

August 9th Summer fete with lunches, stalls and entertainment |

September 27th Domino Drive afternoon |

October 18th Christmas Card Sale morning |

November 29th Starburst Christmas event Afternoon tea and home-grown entertainment |

December 13th Christmas Coffee morning and hand-crafted floral decorations |

January 17th Managers Coffee morning - overbought Christmas gifts |

February 14th Valentine/Pancake event |

All the dos have included some kind of refreshment and some kind of raffle. All have made some money for St George's. |

Did you come? What did you like best? Do you have any ideas about what you would like to come to? Would you like to help put an event on? |

We hope to offer a similar variety of events over the next year. |

These dates are already planned, and more are in the pipeline |

St Georges Club night with a quiz and bingo Sat April 25th 7.00pm |

Morpeth All-Stars - concert songs and singalongs from the 50s,60s 70s Sat May 23rd 2.00pm |

Strawberry Tea and Grainger Singers concert Sat 4th July 2.00pm |

Summer fete with lunches stalls and entertainment Sat August 15th 11-3.00pm |

November 28th Christmas Afternoon event |

Thank you for your support, Mary Steph and Shirley

St George's Church Coffee Club

At the Coffee Club's AGM on 21st January 2025 it was decided, with much sadness that the meeting in May would be the last meeting of the club.

Although the club was not struggling it was becoming more difficult to arrange and support the meetings and it was felt it would be better to close with the May meeting.

The club was formed in 1966 and the first meeting was on Wednesday 14th September in the Drysdale Room and the first talk was on "The Care of Carpets".

Over the years there have been numerous talks, outings, meals out and fundraising events. Too many to list! One of our most popular events was a Domino Drive with a meal. The last of these was held on Saturday 22nd February 2020 with 98 players. This turned out to be the last social event in church, for some time, as the COVID pandemic with all its restrictions changed the world.

The club has contributed to the life of the church in many ways over its 59-year history. As well as monetary donations there have been practical gifts such as the dishwasher in the hall kitchen. As a church organisation the club has also given donations to local charities.

At our February meeting Brian Hannaford gave an entertaining talk about his time in education starting in Glasgow and ending at Dame Allan's.

In March Lisa Mordue gave a talk about Carers Northumberland which is a non-profit organisation which supports unpaid carers in Northumberland.

At our last meeting held in church Marie Dooley gave a fascinating presentation entitled "What Did the Normans do for Northumberland.

Our last Coffee Club's meeting in May was a social gathering.

Twenty-four members met for afternoon tea at Gran Caffe Lollo Rosso. This included three of the original members – Jean Elliott, Pam Mackenzie and Norma McMorran. Photos of previous meetings were shared with much name remembering and a lot of chatting!

At the AGM in January 2025, it was agreed to give £1200 to church funds and £100 each to Contact, Wansbeck Valley Food Bank and Barnabus Safe and Sound. The remaining balance in the account of £238.22 was transferred to church funds in May. The records of the club from its inception in 1966 to its closure in May 2025 will be stored in church. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in and supported the Coffee Club over the years.

Sarah Cleverley Co-ordinator January 2026

ST. GEORGE'S KNITTER NATTER GROUP

What can I say without repeating myself, we are a group of avid natterers and some listeners. We knit and crochet for charity and enjoy each other's company, we average about 16 members each week but are quite happy if folks want to just call in for a cup of coffee/ tea. During the year we have made a large amount of toys clothes and blankets. We support the premature baby units at the RVI and Cramlington Hospitals all year round, making tiny cardigans and blankets. At Christmas we gave Lap blankets to our local care homes. We also made some for St. Mary's Church Stanington to keep the congregation warm. We have been very busy with knitting for families in Ukraine to add to the boxes sent out by our Morpeth for Ukraine group. Hats of all sizes, often to match jumpers, scarves and mittens. The patterns and colours are beautiful. One pair of mittens was made as glove puppets, a lovely idea. Everyone enjoys knitting our Heavenly host of Angels, it's lovely to see them pop up on face book. Thank you to everyone who has donated wool, it is greatly appreciated, particularly the double knitting wool. We meet in the Drysdale room every Wednesday 2- 4pm

Joan Cooper Coordinator. Tel. 07847236455.

BOWLING AT ST GEORGE'S IN 2025

I am glad to report that Carpet Bowls still takes place at St George's every Wednesday afternoon in the Hall between 2.00 and 4.00 from early September until the end of April. We currently have 21 members with an average attendance of 13 people per week who come for gentle bowling and good fellowship. We lost 3 members during the year.

We are very sorry to have to report the death of Pat Hills during the year. Pat together with her late husband Chris were stalwarts of both the Afternoon Bowls and the former Evening Club.

We would love to see some new members.

The Club has been able to donate £900 to St George's at the end of 2025.

If you are interested in playing, please contact ***Andy Cleverley, Tel. 01670 515257***

TABLE TENNIS REPORT

We have all enjoyed another year of playing table tennis on a Saturday morning. Our members invariably range between 10-12 players which does give us a chance to rest between games. We have two tables, which in turn gives us more time to chat! I want to say a huge thankyou to all the faithful Table Tennisers who turn up each week and make playing this game such fun! We are no better at remembering our scores but we do remain extremely competitive! The coffee breaks maybe last longer than they ought to but the companionship and friendship that is shared is heartwarming. If you feel inclined to try it out, please just turn up at 10am and we shall be so pleased to welcome you.

Christine Richardson

WEDNESDAY MORNING BADMINTON

The club now has eleven members with numbers varying each week from 6 to 9 players and on 3rd December everyone came!

We may not be as agile as the other badminton group but we do get plenty of exercise!

We commence at 9.30 and play until about 11 then go to a local coffee shop for refreshments – usually The Chantry Tea Rooms. The cost per session is £2.50 and the yearly subscription remains at £5, or £10 if you play on Tuesday and Thursday as well. In 2025 the combined groups gave £1692.50 to church funds.

New members are always welcome and even if you have never played badminton before or it is a number of years since you last played come and join us at 9.30am on a Wednesday morning in the church hall and afterwards for coffee.

Sarah Cleverley (January 2026)

TUESDAY AND THURSDAY MORNING BADMINTON

Report for 2026

– from Allen Oakes

Tuesday and Thursday morning Badminton has continued during 2025-26. The sessions run from 10:00am to 12:00 noon officially, but can be shorter depending on numbers present. At present we have 9 - 10 regular members. We work on the following principles

- a. Having enjoyment playing together
- b. Getting and keeping fit
- c. Having pleasant social contact

Annual membership costs £10 and each session costs £2.50. The money mainly goes to the Church to help defray expenses such as heating and lighting, but can also be used to purchase equipment e.g. Shuttles, when needed.

We need and will welcome more players, whatever your experience or ability. You can play at any or all of the sessions, including the Wednesday morning session run by Sarah Cleverley. All members come when they can and are always welcome. I send out an email once a week requesting members to indicate whether they can play or not on either the Tuesday and/or Thursday. The responses I get allow me to determine whether a session goes ahead or is cancelled due to lack of support.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining us, please contact either myself or Sarah Cleverley. My contact details are

Allen Oakes,

Email: allen@oakesa.co.uk (preferred contact system)

Telephone: 01670-518608 (answerphone available)

Morpeth Country Dance Club and SGURC Band!

Annual report 2025

The Morpeth Country Dance Club

We think the country dance club must be close to 20 years old now - can anyone remember the days of Jared and Margaret leading dances to cassette tapes?

We still meet once a month from 7.30 to 9.30 on the second Saturday of each month in the upstairs hall, to dance, chat and listen to our live band SGURC. Dancers and players of all ages and abilities come along, with the 'active retired' in the majority. There's usually about 25 dancers and about 12 in the band – and 4 or more callers come up with a wide variety of dances between them from the well-known traditional ones like Dashing White Sergeant to some completely new and quirky ones- imitating knights jousting or smuggling contraband! This year a couple more people joined the calling team.

We all pay £2.50 to take part and bring our own drinks! and we have started having a short break and sharing a chat over shared snacks half way through. The 'takings' usually go to St Georges so we have contributed about **£600** over the year. Some folk come faithfully every meeting but many others dip in and out or come once in a blue moon and they are just as welcome. Very few of our folk are St Georges members these days. Can we encourage you to come and join in? However, it is a great way to welcome people into our building and the wider St Georges family.

A special event in October, organised together with the Morpeth Churches Christian Aid Group with more expensive tickets raised **£388 for Christian aid**. Our dancers gave another £70 to CA in Christian Aid week. **More dancers would be ever so welcome**. If you enjoy going for a walk, or take part in gentle keep fit, you will be able to join in the dances easily. You do not need to bring a partner. We all dance with each other. The callers show people what to do. No special skills are needed. Our music is not amplified so much easier on the ears than many dance events!

The SGURC band (Named from St Georges United Reformed Church!!) overlaps with the Church orchestra in activities and membership - and developed out of the church orchestra perhaps 19 years ago to play for the Country Dance Club.! It has seen many changes of line up but some folk have been playing with us the whole time. The players vary from highly skilled performers to adult beginners- on all sorts of instruments. Anyone willing to join in is welcome. We practice for an hour together before each dance, or 'do' and have music for C, Bb Eb and bass instruments. It is not a big commitment and lots of fun. There's a mailing list of about twenty and about half of us will turn up for any given do. Like the Country Dance club this group welcomes a variety of people into our building, some players travel from as far away as Elsdon and Durham to join in, Like the dancers they also pay their £2,50 to join in the session!

These wonderful people also give their time, and travel costs to take the St Georges spirit and enthusiasm out to other places where we play – We do not play for big events - that's for commercial bands - but we are happy to play for small occasions in little halls and churches - either to support their cause or for a donation to Christian aid. This past year has included Ceilidhs at Mitford, Longhirst and Elsdon Village Halls, who thanked us by making donations to **Christian aid, totaling £260**.

SGURC band players also join with church orchestra players to make up groups to play for special events like the World Day of Prayer service, and special services - midsummer and harvest at Bavington, and in St Georges for the summer fete and the Christmas entertainment. Over the summer we meet for some informal playing sessions in the Horsley room - and make another small contribution to St George's funds!

See us in action on our Facebook page - search for '**Morpeth Country Dance Club.**'

And contact **Shirley Forster (text 07749525269, shirsgurc@gmail.com)** if you are interested in dancing, or playing, or inviting us to play We remind people of each meeting by email a few days before so please ask to be added to the list.

Our Next dates are Sat **18th April, Sat 19th May, Sat 13th June 2026**.

Shirley Forster

Church Orchestra Report 2026

Our Church Orchestra or The Elastic Band has had another busy year.

We play regularly on the 4th Sunday (or sometimes on the 5th Sunday) of the month with some exceptions during the year for special events.

We also provided the core of the band to provide music for the World Day of Prayer in 2025 held at Morpeth Methodist Church.

We have had a regular group of approximately 6 to 13 players each month usually accompanied by Ken Irvine on the piano from a list of about 17 possible players.

We meet to practice an hour before the service at 9.30 to accompany the hymns and to provide music at both the start and the end of the service. The music is usually provided in 4 parts e.g. Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass with transpositions available for instruments in Bb, Eb, and F.

We are fortunate to have a wide range of instruments played by both St. George's members and friends from Morpeth Methodist Church, St. Robert's RC. We have friends coming to play from Newcastle and the borders of Durham as well as friends from the Morpeth area. Contacts have also been made through the Cobweb Orchestra and Society of Recorder Players.

This year we have had players of recorder, flutes, clarinets, saxophones, violins, cellos, trombone, tuba, and bassoon. We have also been joined by guitars for the Christmas social.

Shirley Forster has organised players for services at Bavington URC and other social events as well as the Ceilidh band.

Our friendly SGI-JRC band always welcomes more players on Sunday mornings with a reasonable ability to sight read music, blend and with a sense of humour!

Christine Oakes (Orchestra Coordinator)

St. George's Community Players Annual Report 2025/2026

The Community Players have continued to entertain their audiences with two 3 performance productions and one patrons evening per year.

Our March 2025 presentation being 'Quartet' by Ronald Harwood. Many people will remember the film, directed by Dustin Hoffman and starring Maggie Smith, Pauline Collins, Tom Courtenay and Billy Connolly. Our production was directed by Sharon Saint Lamont and starred Bridget Rowbottom, Janet Robinson, Alan Bullock and Karl Bovenizer and was much enjoyed and appreciated by our audiences.

November 2025 saw a slight departure from the usual play format. We produced 'Murder in the Studio' by Agatha Christie. This was a collection of three radio plays which we delivered just as they would have been performed in the studio originally. It was directed by Lena Walsh and had a cast of 10 actors and a Foley artist. The actors stayed on stage the whole time even if they weren't in the play currently showing. This production was a big success with a lot of praise going to Kev the Foley artist for all the sound and special effects which were amazing to hear and see. Definitely the hardest working member of the cast.

At the time of writing this report we have just completed our March 2026 production, 'The Unfriend' by Stephen Moffat. This production provided several firsts, or debuts. This was Suzi Hutton's directorial debut and she did a wonderful job. There were three first-time-with-us performers Charlotte Ridley, played Elsa Jean Krakowski, is an experienced actor but this was her first time with St. George's Community Players. Nicole Burrow and Tom Sharp made their debuts with us playing siblings Rosie and Alex Lindel. Despite being only 15 years old they are both very experienced stage actors. 'The Unfriend' is basically a very funny play however I and some others on the committee did have some reservations about the choice language on stage. Despite trying to make some alterations we were overruled and the play went ahead which is why we had to add a warning about strong language to all advertising. Although a lot of people said they didn't mind the language too much I have spoken to others who said that some words used made them uncomfortable. That is not how we want our audiences to feel. I can't see us staging a play with as much bad language as this one in the near future.

While we have welcomed three new performers, we have had to say a couple of good byes recently. A former member, Eileen Clarke died earlier this year. Eileen wrote, directed and acted with us for many years. She is sadly missed.

We have had the same critic for the Morpeth Herald for many years, Brian Bennet. This year Brian has decided to retire from his stage critic job and some of his sports reporting duties. We wish Brian and his wife Janet a happy retirement. We will see them again as they are now patrons.

The Community Players are still here and still ploughing through all the changes life throws out.

Sue Rutherford. Chairman

4th Morpeth Brownies Annual Report for 2025

Spring Term.

We started the year with 22 Brownies, including three new Brownies from Rainbows. The theme this term was 'Skills for my future'. Whilst completing activities within the theme the Brownies enjoyed non-programme activities, for Chinese New Year the girls made lanterns, pasting tissue paper onto jars and lighting them up with LED T lights. During the term the Brownies had worked on Promise activities and the three new Brownies made their Promise before we broke for half term. Pancake day, as always, was a favorite even though several stated that they had already eaten lots of pancakes they all managed to eat the ones we cooked. For Mothers day the Brownies made heart shaped hangings with beads on wire shaped like hearts. The last meeting before Easter the Brownies had an egg hunt. Hopefully there were not too many eggs found later in the hall. Two Brownies gained their Theme award badges and Bronze Awards.

Summer Term.

Sadly, two of our Brownies left but one girl, new to Girlguiding, joined us. In between the programme activities for the 'Know myself' theme the Brownies enjoyed an evening based around Japanese Activities. The Brownies were more adept than some leaders at using chopsticks to eat sweets. Making Sushi was interesting, quite a few brownies didn't like the simple vegetables we used. Over the May Bank Holiday weekend four Brownies and two leaders attended the 'Northumbria camp' which was an amalgamation of the Boy Scouts and Girlguiding. Despite the weather and having to queue for some of the activities the Brownies had a wonderful time even though they were up during the night singing and dancing in their tent! If only the Leaders had as much energy. The Father's Day activity was painting wooden squares with a design of their own to make a coaster. The last meeting of the term we had planned to go to the beach, unfortunately, yet again the weather was atrocious so we had a "beach party" in the hall.

Autumn Term.

Sadly, one girl left the unit but we welcomed 4 new Brownies to bring us up to the limit of 24 for our unit. During the term we finished the 'Know myself' theme and started 'Express myself.' Although as ever there were many other activities. During our last meeting before half term 5 of our Brownies made their promise. On Bonfire night the girls made Bonfire biscuits although most were eaten before they left. Six Brownies joined two leaders for the Remembrance Day parade. Our unit joined together with other Brownie units from the district for the Pudsey disco where there was a lot of noise and not a lot of dancing. On the 6th December 12 of our Brownies and two leaders enjoyed a trip to the Odeon Cinema to see Zootropolis 2. On the 7th December some of the Brownies from our unit joined members from other units in the Northumberland division for a day at Alnwick Gardens. Whilst the rain held off until early afternoon, enabling the girls to have great fun in Lilidorei and to walk around the garden, the rain pelted down and we had to retreat to the Pavillion for a couple of hours until the Christmas lights came on. We then braved the rain to admire the lights and try to avoid the puddles. Instead of our usual meeting on the 9th December we joined other units in the church for the traditional Christingle service. After the service three Brownies made their promise in front of the Christmas tree. It made for some lovely photos for the Brownies to have as a memento. Many apologies for the poor attendance at the Harvest Festival and Toy Service. We do talk to the Brownies about the services and send email reminders to the parents. Unfortunately, many of the Brownies have other activities at the weekend such as dancing and drama, football and gymnastics. We really appreciate the use of the hall, we are very lucky to have such a good venue. The Brownies love having the space to enjoy games, to carry out the Brownie programme activities, crafts and the use of the kitchen. All the girls love crafts and baking. Thank You.

Susan Fairgrieve, Brown Owl 4th Morpeth Brownies