

## Ministers Report

The United Reformed Church has been involved in a review of the life of the church over the past 12 months as it considers the effect of overall declining membership and new challenges that face the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It has been interesting to consider some of the very positive things about the URC that have come out of this process (some of these can be found at [www.urb.org.uk/church-life-review-group](http://www.urb.org.uk/church-life-review-group) ). However, a lot of work still needs to be done to streamline the way we work, and are organised, to allow us to be nimble enough to negotiate the path ahead.

St George's over the past 12 months has continued to thrive, maintain steady numbers at morning worship, and engaged with the community in many ways through events and regular groups that meet on the premises. It is sad to hear of the Coffee Club coming to an end after many years of bringing joy, and a range of interesting subjects, to those who have gathered together. However many of the groups within the church continue to provide fellowship - sometimes welcoming new faces, sometimes adapting to fewer people attending – and thanks to the dedication of those leading the groups continue to be a valuable point of contact for many who live alone.

Our holiday clubs now have a regular group of children who attend, and last year we had a morning in the Easter Holiday, five mornings during the summer, and a morning during the October half term. We give thanks to the support from the Synod's Children's Work Advisor (Hannah Middleton) who has helped to organise and lead these sessions.

Our Advent Courses and Lent Courses are an opportunity for people to come together to discuss our faith, and we have shared with the Methodist Church in running these events. In September we also began "Conversations about..." which run fortnightly on Wednesday evenings and continue to be an informal way to come together and discuss matters of faith and life.

We continue to meet ecumenically at the Prayer meetings held on the alternate Wednesdays to pray for ourselves, the world and our communities.

My thanks go to all those who have organised, ran, supported and attended the worship, discussions, socials, sports and coffee mornings throughout the year. In a time when others are considering the future shape of the church – the regular coming together in worship and fellowship will continue to be at the heart of what the church is about – and I thank the Lord for all those who have been inspired to be involved here at St George's.

With every blessing,

**Julian**

## Worship on Wednesday Annual Report 2024/25

Our WOW services continue to grow in popularity and not just with St. George's folk. We have people who regularly attend other Churches and, in some cases, none. So many of our Wednesday Worshippers are very committed to attending services that they apologise when they can't attend any particular Wednesday.

I believe that the variety of different themes and topics are one of the things that attract people, that and the different people who take the services. We go from strength to strength and for that I thank all those who volunteer to lead WOW services. Our minister Julian, Carol Dixon, Margery Tate (when health allows), Morag Stead, Suzanne and Andrew Hamnett. Extra thanks are due to Andrew who is our regular pianist and whose input is invaluable. Our thanks also to Christine Hawkins who turns up early every Wednesday to start setting up for teas and coffees, Christine goes the extra mile by learning which drink individuals prefer and exactly how they like it.

Thanks to all service leaders, helpers and to our regular congregations.

**Sue Rutherford    WOW Organiser 29/03/25**

## **Church Secretary's Report for 2024**

As of 31st December 2024 the Annual Return to the URC head office and Northern Synod showed our membership to be 109.

We were delighted to welcome six new members in 2024, namely Janet Hall, Diane Vannan, Barbara and Eric Waller, and Linda and Brian Clouston.

We had 1 baptism, that of Hannah Wilkinson.

A memorial service was held for Jim Miller, who had been an elder in our church for many years and supported our church in many ways. At the end of the year we also held a remembrance service for Michael Oxley, husband of one of our non-serving elders.

We have an average congregation of 65 at our main services including twelve regular attenders who are not church members.

Junior Church has 6 children who attend regularly, one in the 0-4 category and 5 in the 11-17 categories.

Holiday Clubs have become a more regular part of our church life this year. We had an Easter holiday club followed by a week-long Summer holiday club and a Light Party in October. Numbers registering to attend increased from 14 to 18 over the three sessions.

There are 93 children and young people 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. Some of them have also started to come to our Sunday services on an ad hoc basis.

The number of serving Elders is currently 11, including the church secretary.

**Morag Stead**

Church Secretary

## **Managers' Annual Report 2024**

As always, the managers have been busy dealing with the myriad problems posed by an old and complex building, as well as by a never decreasing tsunami of new legal requirements. We are immensely grateful to Ken Anderson for helping to steer us through the thickets of the Health and Safety issues that confront us: currently we are trying to steer our way through the need to ensure that the ladder in the church tower that allows access to the clock is safe: all ladders need to be inspected annually and it has emerged that this particular ladder has actually not been inspected since its installation by Castle Morpeth more than 15 years ago. Ken's attempts to establish the ownership of the ladder has become a saga in itself, and he and I have spent a not inconsiderable time on this quest. At the moment the County Council, which inherited much of the maintenance costs of the clock from Castle Morpeth, are fighting a stout rearguard action to avoid admitting any responsibility about anything connected with the clock. We are also grateful to Ken for ensuring that the safety certificate log is kept up to date.

This is no sinecure: an inspection of the log reveals a plethora of items, all of which need to be inspected and approved on at least an annual basis; some, such as PAT testing are well understood; but I wonder how many are aware of the need for an annual inspection of the lightning conductor on the tower?

We have also been looking carefully at issues of responsibility for personal safety in the church; many groups use the church for meetings and activities and the onus has to be on these groups to use it safely, since it is not possible for the managers to oversee all their activities ourselves. This means that groups whose activities may lead to accident or injury must ensure that they have a separate personal accident and indemnity insurance policy in place that has been agreed with the church.

Amongst hardy perennials in the building is the lift, which has been showing distinct signs of age and dysfunctionality in recent months. The latest long-running fault was traced to a double fault in the control electronics, but it is unlikely that there will not be another visit from Stannah fairly soon.

The church roof is another source of concern: there are clearly long-standing issues with the tiling on the roof, and two recent storms have both led to further loss of some of the tiles. The issue here is that any roofing operation requires scaffolding, and this leads not only to considerable expense but also to our having to wait whilst the roofers can access some of the limited stock of scaffolding locally available.

The building generates an endless supply of small jobs that need to be carried out. We are very grateful to Andy and Sarah for looking after minor plumbing faults, and indeed to our patient plumber, Steven Brady who has been invaluable. I would also want to thank Gordon Slack, who has done a sterling job with the electrical system, as well as liaising on a regular basis with Press Electricals. Gordon has also established a liaison with a locksmith whom we are now able to call in when safety and security critical locks need attention. We are also grateful that Neil Robson, the previous Property Manager, has been on hand to offer advice and help. He was recently able to source a positively antediluvian lamp that illuminated the organ pedals.

On a more positive note, since we are now responsible as a church for our manse, the Minister has been able to call in decorators and handymen to tackle faults without a large delay, and I am pleased to report that the manse is now looking considerably better, and that a recent loss of tiling from the manse roof was tackled very quickly.

The church exists as a building to act as an outreach to the community at large, as well as a witness to our faith. The events that take place in the church do not organise themselves and we are, as always grateful to those who take on the often onerous role of ensuring that the church can accommodate these events, and I would particularly like to thank Gillian Irvine, who has, to our great regret, decided to step down as Events Convenor; we shall greatly miss her: trying to replace her will be really very difficult.

Members of the congregation who have experience in organising events are urged to let the Minister know if they have a wish to join us: I can guarantee a variegated experience. In the meantime, we look forward to a new venture for the church: the Greater Morpeth Development Trust upcoming Morpeth Book Festival. As always, finally, the managers would like to thank all of those who carry out the innumerable tasks associated with the running of the church; without this help we could not manage at all.

### **Church Lettings for 2024**

Total lettings income for 2024 was £5,499 (2024: £4,184), including uninvoiced amounts from a Lunchtime Concert of £45, church members' private use of the Drysdale Room, £40, the Guides, £60, for the Christingle Service, and from the Ceilidh Band, £96.

Takings are £1,315 up on last year. Alnwick Allstars Choir has paid £1,107, making them our largest contributor and the Cobwebs Orchestra rejoined us in September from KEVI. On the other hand the Lateral Art classes have ceased after the shop moved to Bridge Street. They may come back as he doesn't have much space for classes in his new premises.

In addition to the above, we continue to provide space for Ronke's Exercise Class, Lisa's Zumba Class and Helga Smyth's Yoga Class.

In August, Newcastle Diocesan Mothers' Union spent part of a day in the Sanctuary and were very complimentary about the setting for a religious gathering and about our facilities generally.

Greater Morpeth Development Association are going to use the Sanctuary for 2 days in March to host part of the Morpeth Book Festival. This has necessitated the Community Players presenting their play a week later in March 2025.

**Andy Cleverley**  
Lettings Officer

## JUNIOR CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Our Juniors - OUR FAMOUS 5 are growing up! When the children returned after the Christmas Break we gathered as usual in the Drysdale Room - there was a lot of laughter and the lessons often turned into discussions with many opinions on various topics. We were joined by two little boys occasionally Isaac and Dylan, so the crayons, sticky tape and stories returned and we began to prepare for Mothers Day. I must admit I was aware that some of our bigger children were becoming involved in hobbies which sadly for Junior Church often happened on a Sunday - for Daniel it has always been football - Emily dancing - and lately Heidi running, so our numbers varied week to week but onwards we went and when Mothers Day came round somehow we had managed to make enough floral cards to pass out. I was aware that our days all together were few and far between so a plan was made - and after the children handed out the cards the tables turned and there was a gift for them. Julian presented each child with a 'Youth Bible' - it was something I really wanted them to have - so that wherever their path in life took them they would have their very own Bible. There was certainly much amazement and joy when we all went up together to the Drysdale Room for our lesson. Isaac and Dylan were given Bible adventure stories and for Brian the Usborne Bible in Pictures so it was a good day for all.

Over the year we manned stalls at church functions: - "Name the Doll, "Guess the number of Sweeties in the Jar and Julie ran a Tombola stall. We carried on with our lessons the numbers of children very varied and before we knew it summer approached and on our last Sunday before the holidays we were all together as one big group - All our leaders and a very merry band of children fairly skipped down the aisle after the blessing at the end of the second hymn - we were off to Grand Cafe Lollo where we had reserved tables to enjoy ice cream and any drink they wanted. It was one of those days when everyone was happy and it was so good to be all together.

After summer it was evident to me that we were struggling to be a group at all but still each week we came prepared and whenever the children turned up we always had something planned to do. The call came from MMC regarding our shared Nativity and I was more than a little concerned. Susan the JC leader at MMC had picked out a play suitable for the older children and I am very proud to say that when the children heard what was planned -everyone of our Famous 5 turned out to a man and even Brian was there as a little adorable shepherd and so as usual it was a great success - Noah excelling with his wonderful acting skills. I received a donation to give the children - a Christmas Treat. I thought long and hard about this one knowing that it could indeed be the last for this little group. Each child was given a Christmas decoration - a Nordic Light that glowed with a star and a message saying their gift was specially selected for them hoping that the little star when lit would remind them of the many Nativity Plays performed together and all the fun over the years we had shared. Brian got a board book about the Nativity and Isaac and Dylan received colouring books to enjoy.

So that was our year - the path ahead is different - I know Daniel and Emily will appear at church and I have told Heidi and Molly to just let me know and I will bring them. It is understood that if they attend they will probably prefer to stay in church, so it is all change. Noah comes now and again and he has plans in the air for great things. The Famous 5 are moving on - We wait and see about Isaac and Dylan and of course Brian ..... I finish with a Thank you to all the leaders you have been just great.

Let me tell you what our young people have done:-

Daniel is the Football Star (We always ask how many goals he has scored)

Emily is a First Rate Dancer - I REALLY mean that. She practices many nights a week and there are performances when she dances the Principal Part and now cheer-leading - I know she came second in her very first competition and there were 40 taking part!! And for this she travels far and wide.

Heidi can run. She has been selected for the North East Team at this years Inter-Counties Cross Country at Nottingham. She runs with Morpeth Harriers and she does the Park Run nearly every Saturday and has been first lady home more than once.

Noah is an actor and a computer whiz - I expect he is good at many more things and we will soon know more about that.

Molly is a budding artist and I love her.....!

**Barbara Pringle**

## SOCIAL CONVENOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

### Lunchtime Concerts

At the beginning of this year Ken and I reluctantly decided that it was time for us to relinquish responsibility for the extremely popular Lunchtime Concerts and occasional evening events which for 17 years had played to capacity audiences.

These concerts attracted performers from primary school choirs and young talented musicians to members of English National Opera and British Orchestras including Royal Northern Sinfonia plus international folk musicians. Many of the performers were friends of ours and had kindly performed at much reduced rates enabling us to keep ticket prices to a minimum whilst providing an excellent community service.

Health, age, responsibility for organisation and the increasing difficulty of sourcing and financing artists plus the unavailability of young musicians were many of the reasons that we felt this step was necessary. We were unable to find anyone to take over this huge role so decided to end on a high note rather than gradually fade into obscurity thereby disappointing our wonderful band of loyal supporters.

Thank you to everyone who has attended and those who have worked so hard to make the Lunchtime Concerts such a success over the long period they have been in existence. These wonderful events could not have happened without your enthusiasm and reliability. We appreciate all you have done and helped to achieve. It has been a hard and heartfelt decision but we feel it is the right one.

### Other events during 2024

**January** Managers' Coffee Morning + Hundred Club together raised £1145-15

**In February** KEVI High School hired the Sanctuary for a fund raising concert which, after expenses, raised £333 for their music department

**May Plant Sale** organised this year by a small committee raised the amazing sum of £2458. This will be the final Plant Sale of this magnitude although offers to organise a similar event would be much appreciated.

**In March** Blyth Bede Academy gave a one off Lunchtime Concert which raised £100 for their music department and £132 hire fee and shared profits for St George's Church

**A Strawberry Afternoon in July** raised £1036. Graeme Danby and Valerie Reid from English National Opera enchanted the audience with a light programme of music by Flanders and Swann, Eric Boswell and Tom Lehrer. After artist's fees and refreshment expenses of £380, St George's benefited by £656

**October Charity Card Sale** organised on an annual basis by Andy Cleverly. Refreshments and cards raised £314

During 2023 hand made cards raised £318

and takings for buy or borrow books and jigsaws amounted to £236

Please keep donating paperback books, cards and jigsaws.

All organisations work extremely hard to provide activities for our members and friends and also the community at large. This report concerns the areas in which I have been particularly involved. The efforts of many others will be mentioned in other sections of this annual report.

**Gillian Irvine**

## **Co-ordinator's report for St George's Church Coffee Club 2024**

We meet in the church hall which has proved to be a successful venue. Our current membership number is 27 and we are always pleased to welcome guests to our meetings.

We held our AGM in January which was a very cold and icy day.

In February Freda Thompson, who has given talks to the club before, gave an interesting talk with slides about Charles Dickens and his life. Although his books were fiction the stories and characters were based on real people and the prevailing living conditions at that time – the great poverty, illiteracy and the terrible living conditions.

In March Barry Mead made a welcome return to the Coffee Club. This time his talk with slides was entitled "Cresswell Curiosities" and was about the restoration of Cresswell's Pele Tower and walled garden. The restoration of the tower began in 2014 and was opened to the public in 2021. The restoration of the garden began in 2019 with the ground, having to be cleared completely. It is well worth a visit.

In April our meeting was something different. Instead of a talk we had a dance demonstration of the "Lindy Hop" by Steve and Sue and then some audience participation in the Lambeth Walk, the Valeta and a barn dance.

In May we held a Domino Drive followed by Afternoon Tea, courtesy of Morrisons and Marks and Spencer as our "social event". We had the dominoes, instructions and score sheets from our previous domino drives. Andy Cleverley very kindly acted as the caller.

In September Group 2 arranged a harvest themed afternoon with a quiz and a prize for the most inventive Mr Potato head (materials supplied). The afternoon finished with a cream tea.

In October Chris Tipple gave a talk entitled "Turner on the Tyne". J M W Turner was an extremely talented artist and during his lifetime produced 19,000 paintings and sketches. Several of his works feature well known north-east landmarks.

In November Geoff Hughes made a return visit with a talk entitled "Songs and Stories of Christmas". He shared the origins of some Christmas traditions and our carols. It was a very enjoyable afternoon with audience participation.

Our Christmas Coffee morning in conjunction with St George's Flower Committee was held on Saturday 14th December. This was well attended and £940 was raised. Thanks to everyone involved in this fund-raising event.

At our recent AGM it was agreed to give £1200 to church funds and £100 each to the Wansbeck Valley Food Bank, Contact and Barnabus Safe and Sound.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported our events and meetings. A huge thank you to Linda Glascott, our treasurer and Vivien Bennett, Patricia Gatherum and Penny Oxley the group leaders who organise the speakers and meetings.

**Sarah Cleverley Co-ordinator February 2025**

## **St George's Knitter Natter Coffee Group.**

Another year has rushed by, knitting needles and crochet hooks have not slowed and definitely not paused. Our group remains as friendly and welcoming as ever, they are generous with their time and wool. St. George's members and friends also pass on wool to us.

This year we have knitted:

For Hospitals: Premature baby blankets, cardigans and hats, canula covers, hearts and twiddle muffs for both young and old to relieve anxiety.

For Residential homes: We have donated 33 lap blankets, as Christmas presents for residents without relatives or regular visitors.

For a Nursery: dolly blankets and food for their play kitchen.

For Church coffee mornings: adult waistcoats, hats scarves and gloves, cushions, baby cardigans and children's jumpers, also phone cases, Christmas decorations, bumble bees, dressed dolls and key rings.

For Needy families: children's pram blankets, jumpers and cardigans, single bed blankets and dressed dolls.

Finally to use up small balls of wool: Angels, bumble bees, poppies and Easter Chicks.

We have also enjoyed Christmas and Summer lunches and a pancake lunch.

Thankyou for you support ladies for another great year of friendship and knitting for charities.

***Joan Cooper, Coordinator***

## **BOWLING AT ST GEORGE'S IN 2024**

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 22 members with an average attendance of 14 people per week who come for gentle bowling and good fellowship. We lost 3 members who retired during the year.

We would love to see some new members.

By increasing our subscriptions and reducing our historic bank balance, the Club has been able to donate £1000 to St George's at the end of 2024.

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

***Andy Cleverley***

## **Table Tennis Report**

We have had another year of friendly fun each Saturday morning playing Table Tennis and drinking coffee (debatable which is more important!)

There are an average of 12 players and I must thank them all for their loyalty to the club and willing help setting-up and dismantling the 2 tables.

A special thankyou to Keith Elliott who keeps our equipment tip- top and stocked up.

If anyone is interested in trying it out you are very welcome to join us anytime between 10- 12 on Saturdays

***Christine Richardson.***

## **Tuesday and Thursday Badminton Report for 2025**

From Allen Oakes

Tuesday and Thursday morning Badminton has continued during 2024-25. 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 welcome more players, whatever experience or ability, or even if you have never played before, but feel you would like to learn. 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, would be interested in joining us, please contact either myself or Sarah Cleverley.

My contact details are

Allen Oakes,

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

Telephone: 01670-518608 (answer phone available)

## **Wednesday Morning Badminton Club**

The club now has eleven members with numbers varying each week from 6 to 9 players. So that players are not sitting out for too long we play a shorter game to 15 points rather than 21. 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 2024 the combined groups gave £1886 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 (February 2025)**

## **Morpeth Country Dance Club Annual Report for 2024**

The Morpeth Country Dance Club meets at **St George's URC** with St George's United Reformed Church Ceilidh band aka SGURC!

### **The Morpeth Country Dance Club meets 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 are usually about 25 dancers and about 12 in the band and 4 callers come up with a wide variety of dances from the well known traditional ones like Dashing White Sergeant to some completely new and quirky ones! We all pay £2.50 to take part and bring our own refreshments! The takings usually go to St Georges so we have contributed about £500 over the year. Some folk come faithfully every meeting but many others dip in and out and are just as welcome.

A special event in October with more expensive tickets and a bar raised £430 for Christian aid.

The SGURC band has had several trips out this year, visiting St Hilda's Jesmond to play a ceilidh for 'Walking with' asylum seeker support-based in Wallsend helping them raise several hundred to support people placed in North Tyneside. Already this year we have played in a brewery in the Ouseburn to help the 'Say No to Hassockfield' campaign (a place where women seeking asylum are held), which was a big adventure playing under fairy lights while people danced on cobbles! We have also been out to play for ceilidhs at Longhirst village hall for the U3A and Mitford village hall for village halls week- who gave us £160 between them for our efforts to give to Christian Aid. We do not play for big events that's for commercial bands, but we are happy to play for small occasions in little halls either to support their cause or for a donation to Christian aid. 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 at Bavington, and carols at Low Hauxley Methodist chapel.

It is wonderful that people give their time, and travel costs, freely to play for these events but they are a lot of fun!

**More dancers and players 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. The players vary from highly skilled performers to adult beginners- on all sorts of instruments. We practice for an hour together before each dance, and have music for C,Bb Eb and bass instruments. It is not a big commitment and lots of fun. Our music is not amplified so much easier on the ears than many dance events!

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

And contact Shirley **Forster (text 07749525269 shirlsgurc@gmail.com)** if you are interested. We remind people of each meeting a few days before.

Our Next dates are Sat **12th April, Sat 10th May, Sat 14th June and we are going to put on a special afternoon ceilidh on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April as part of Morpeth Gathering**

**Shirley Forster**

## **St. George's Community Players Annual Report 2024/25**

2024 saw the Community Players having some concerns about the future. We knew that we needed to find people to help with stage building as our current stage manager has had health problems and we were acutely aware that we needed to look to the future. We started to think about planning an all members meeting to try to get more ideas of how we move forward. This meeting will eventually take place 31<sup>st</sup> March, however many of our fears already are being solved. We have some new members who have already proved very capable and willing to every involved. One of these new members, Ian Shaw, is not looking to take to the stage as an actor but actually wants to be involved in stage and set building. That was an answer to prayer. We have also been joined by Dave Coghill who has taken small parts in the last two productions and has proved to be a marvellous webmaster and media whizz, produced great posters and flyers and sending updates about productions to social media sites, he has improved our publicity immensely. Karl Bovenizer joined in November 2024 and was given the job of prompting. In March 2025 Karl took the stage as one of the stars in Quartet. He has had a lot of experience prior to coming to the Players and it definitely shows. Perhaps the future of the Players is starting to look better.

Our Productions in 2024 were, in March, Alan Bennett's Talking Heads. We performed three of these monologue Bed Among the Lentils, A Chip in the Sugar and Lady of Letters. This was performed 'in the round' so needed minimal set dressing. Our audiences responded very well to this different type of presentation. Something we could well do again. November saw us make our fourth foray into the chaotic world of the Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Town's Women's Guild Dramatic Society. This time the presentation was Chase Me Up Farndale Avenue, S'il Vu Plais! As usual for these plays it was sheer farce, well received by audiences. In July we presented a Murder Mystery, The Allotment Plot, as a Patrons' EVENING, we also took this the following night to Hepscott W. I. Audiences do enjoy these smaller productions especially as it allows them to play Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot.

This year, 2025 we have had one Patrons' evening already. 1<sup>st</sup> February we hosted Chris Woods talking about his book Death in the Theatre, a well researched book telling the true stories of many tragic deaths over the years that have occurred in theatres all over the country. This event was really interesting and much appreciated by our Patrons.

As I complete this report the Players have just finished their March production, Quartet by Ronald Harwood. Due to falling figures at Saturday night performances we had decided to trial a matinee on Saturday but no evening show. The turn out exceeded all expectations: we had a really good house on the afternoon, following on from a full house on Friday night. The Saturday matinee trial is planned for two years which means we are one down and three to go. If today is going to be copied over the next two years then it looks as though we may continue with two evenings and one matinee for each production, we must wait and see. Finishing at 4.20 pm has meant that we could get the stage down, everything put away, have the aftershow party then wash up all before 8pm. The main thing is that the Players are continuing and it appears that is what people want.

***Sue Rutherford***

## **SGURC Church Orchestra Report 2025**

Our church orchestra or "The elastic band" has had another busy year and grown in strength. We have had two more new players on cello and clarinet to join us and said goodbye sadly to Dermot our viola player. Dermot Killingley moved to Cheshire in June to be near family members. We had a jolly, pooled lunch party upstairs in the hall after the service in May where we shared memories of his involvement at St. George's not only as viola player but participant in a number of Socials. His first visit to Morpeth was in 2002 when he produced the Northumbrian Passion Play written by his wife Siew -Yue, which involved a St. George's cast with music written by Roderick Oakes and performed by Siew-Yue on flute. (Both were members of Newcastle University Wind Band).

We have played for services usually on the last Sunday of the month, apart from August, accompanied by either Ken Irvine or Andrew Hamnett on piano.

We can now have up to 3 flautists, recorder, 3 violins, 2 cellos, 3 clarinets, trombone, bassoon, and tuba. Our 15 players come from friends of St. George's, Morpeth Methodist Church, St. Robert's, Cobweb Orchestra and Society of Recorder Players.

Our players have this year also participated in our Christmas Social and The World Day of Prayer at St Robert's RC Church.

Shirley Forster recruited players to play with others for a service in June at Bavington and in December for a carol service at Hauxley.

On a lovely June Sunday at Bavington 12 players came from far and wide, so many that holding the service outside in the evening was the best option! A very warm, hospitable welcome is always assured both at Bavington and Hauxley.

We are a friendly flexible group and welcome any players who are interested. We rehearse at 9.30am before the service at 10.30am Please contact me if interested.

***Christine Oakes (Orchestra Coordinator)***

## **4th Morpeth Brownies Annual Report for 2024**

Spring Term. We had 21 Brownies, seven of which were new members. We finished the Know myself theme and started the next theme, "Have Adventures" during the term the Brownies completed 4 skills builders. This was a busy period of non-programme activities, for Chinese New Year the girls made paper dragons and we had a selection of Chinese foods for them to try. They pulled some interesting faces but they all enjoyed the fortune cookies.

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 coasters with Hamma beads which are very small and fiddly but the girls made a good job of the coasters and some with their own designs.

Last meeting before Easter the Brownies decorated Easter bonnets with flowers, ribbons and chicks and then we had an egg hunt. Hopefully there were not too many found later in the hall.

Summer Term. Our number of Brownies increased to 23. The last skills builder was completed and we went on to the Unit Meeting Activities (UMA). In between the programme activities we had St George's day when we talked about St George and then rolled out some cookie dough into funny shaped squares and once they were cooked and cooled the girls decorated them with white icing and red "shoelaces".

May Day was celebrated by decorating plastic bags shaped like cones and filling them with sweets. Not all the sweets made it to the cones! In order to celebrate the Olympics we discussed the games and the girls made posters of different sporting events which were displayed on the notice board. The following week we had the 4th Morpeth Brownies Olympic games with everyone receiving a medal. The last meeting of the term we had planned to go to the beach, unfortunately the weather was atrocious so we had a "beach party" in the hall. During the term there was a weekend outing to the cinema to see the Disney film 'Inside out 2' which highlighted mental health issues that some girls may experience.

Autumn Term. We welcomed four new Brownies and asked all the girls to help us set some ground rules for the unit meetings. These are now on the notice board to remind everyone each week. The theme this term is 'Skills for my Future' and over the term we completed 5 skills builders and a UMA. On Bonfire night the girls made Bonfire biscuits although most were eaten before they left.

The following week 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 1st December some of the Brownies from our unit joined members from other units of the Northumberland division for a day at Alnwick Gardens. It was a magical day with time in the garden, visiting Lillidorei and in the late afternoon walking along the Christmas light trail.

May I take this opportunity to once again thank the event organising team for all their hard work to make it a memorable day for everyone.

The following Sunday some of the Brownies went to see the Moana 2 film and enjoyed themselves but I am still in awe of their ability to sing along word perfect to the songs of a film only recently released.

We had a craft evening when the girls painted stones as Christmas presents for their parents. The term finished with the traditional Christingle service, once again a wonderful way to end the term and to remind everyone of the true meaning of Christmas. After the service the Brownies who joined us at the beginning of the term made their promise in front of the Christmas tree. Thank you for allowing us to use the hall. It is a good large space for the Brownies to carry out the Brownie programme activities, crafts and the use of the kitchen as they love cooking.

***Susan Fairgrieve  
Brown Owl  
4th Morpeth Brownies***