

**MORPETH METHODIST
CHURCH AND
CENTRE FOR THE
COMMUNITY**



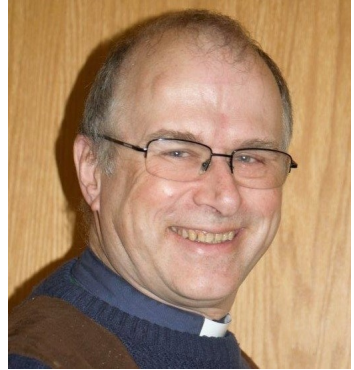
**GENERAL CHURCH MEETING
22ND MAY 2022**

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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends

It is strange to think that our last Annual General Church Meeting was in 2019. As I look back at that time, it seems to belong to a kinder, more innocent age. We now find ourselves in an entirely different place. Both



society and Morpeth Methodist Church have changed beyond measure.

At our General Church Meeting we will be contemplating a very different future where we can mourn our losses but also celebrate and be thankful for all that remains. This collection of reports will relate some of the challenges, but also the joys and successes of the past year.

Through it all there is an acknowledgment that the future will be challenging and that we will need to find new ways of working within the life of Morpeth Methodist Church, as we seek to model the grace and welcome of Christ to the people of Morpeth.

So, as you read these reports remember that they represent an enormous amount of work from dedicated, committed

individuals. Pray for the work that these reports represent and the people behind them. Be thankful for the joys and successes and pray for the challenges that some of these reports represent. Morpeth Methodist Church is not what it was but is being reshaped for a very different future. Every blessing,

Antony Oakley

Baptism Secretary

We have had two baptisms since the Church re-opened for worship post Covid.

29 Aug 2021. Quinn Hardy Popple

25 Dec 2021. Finn Leonard Christensen

Both services were joyful occasions and all were made welcome by Antony and members of the church family who were there.

Margaret Moulton



Centre Manager

The last few years have been very stressful with having to work from home during lockdown and not having set times but working around the needs of the Church and its members. We had to furlough Carol, Barry and Doug and then unfortunately we had to terminate Carol and Barry's contract as furlough was coming to an end.

It has been a learning curve having to learn how to use new resources such as Zoom, but they have been a very effective tool for those who wanted to catch up with friends and for meetings.

Our weekly notices have now changed and we are now using Mailchimp to keep everyone informed who has access to a computer and a paper copy is being created weekly for those who need one.

I took the opportunity during lockdown to give our coffee lounge a revamp, with new curtains and upholstered chairs and the money and labour was provided by myself and my husband as a thank you to the church.

We have had to adapt and change over the last few years introducing new Covid-19 policies, procedures and risk assessments to keep everyone as safe and reduce anxieties. We are no longer using these policies but they enabled us to open up for Worship and Groups who wished to return. Initially it was only myself opening up and cleaning the building around groups and finally I was given permission for Doug to return and eventually Carol on a temporary contact.

As restrictions are no longer in place, we have seen a rise in the groups returning. Some groups have either finished or moved to alternative premises but new groups have replaced these and our hall is being used on a daily basis by lots of groups and for children's parties and some days the

building is buzzing with people of all ages.

For the first time in 4 years, letting cost have had to rise due to an increase in our overheads but the groups have been very understanding.

The building has been my biggest challenge, with everything being nearly 20 years old. We have had issues with our lift, heating system, alarm system, emergency lights and roof but now these have been resolved and I am hopeful that we will be issue free for the remainder of the year.

Unfortunately, the Centre Management Group has lost members, so is no longer meeting and I am hopeful that Revd Antony's message for members will be successful, so that I can again have a support network in place.

Without the volunteers who have stepped forward to support me, I would not have been able to have run the Centre and I would like to thank them for all their support.

Darleen Turner

Communion Steward

It seemed a special breakthrough when we resumed our Communion Services using wafers, including gluten free, then later taking wine in our individual cups.

Currently around 45 people are participating during the Sunday monthly service. On Tuesday mornings we have up to 16 on a regular basis.

I wish to thank Margaret and Lorna for kindly stepping in while I was away.

Pat Kennedy

Creche and Junior Church

The Junior Church is a happy bunch of children! We meet term-time only and during this time we follow the Roots booklets. We have access to the online resources and there is a vast array of activities to choose from for whatever mood the children are in. We meet regularly with St George's URC Junior Church and together there are approximately 15 children attending. Although we are a small group we strive to make Junior Church enjoyable for the children who vary between the ages of 4 and 13. We re-

cently participated together in a St George's Day play at St George's Church and great fun was had by all.

Susan Edwards

Drop in Lunches

We have three staff helping at the lunch each week. The number of customers ranges from 12-18. Some have been coming since the lunches started in 2006. About half of the customers may belong to MMC, the other half are customers who feel at home at MMC on a Tuesday lunchtime. One lady said that coming to this lunch 'gets you out' and gives you the opportunity to chat with your friends. I am particularly aware of the number who thank us as they leave. I think that all of them missed us greatly when we had to close due to lockdown.

The customers are offered soup, sandwiches, cake and tea or coffee. If they have everything, the cost is £5.50, but they can have as much or as little as they like. One lady has just cake and a cup of tea.

Of the helpers, seven are from MMC, but that is not enough to cover a rota. Five other people, not connected

with the church, are regular helpers.

I think the customers enjoy coming to eat out in a pleasant room, with a friendly atmosphere.

Janet Brough

Finance Group

“The last 2 years have been financially challenging for individuals and organisations alike, Morpeth Methodist Church included. With the sudden closure of places of worship and the Centre for the Community in March 2020, the church’s total income was dramatically reduced. Most of our outgoings still remained, however, and for a period of time the financial outlook appeared very bleak.

Many individuals continued to give generously during the whole of this time, and when asked to consider whether offerings might be increased, towards the end of 2021, the response was an incredibly generous one. To this extent we are now able to cover our regular Area and Connexional commitments, and as more organisations return to meeting within our building, the position is certainly an improved one. Challenges and pressures still remain, of course, with

rising prices over coming months having a negative impact on the overall position. We will remain vigilant and cautious where necessary, as a result.

During this time both our Treasurer, Neil Robinson, and Chair, Malcolm Kennedy, have worked tirelessly to ensure things stayed on as even a keel as possible. I pay tribute to Malcolm who has now stood down as Chair after many years of faithful and insightful service. Neil is also coming towards the end of his term of office and I would ask for your prayers and support as we seek his successor.

We are committed, as a church, to the spreading of the Gospel message within our local community, and beyond. This commitment carries with it personal and financial costs, and, as a Finance Committee, we will continue to prayerfully consider how we act as stewards of the finances with which we are entrusted in this work and mission”

Flower Group

Thank you to all who have donated to the flower funds for this year.

We have very few arrangers but they are all willing to do

their best and manage to achieve miracles on tight budgets. Some of the congregation may have been missed when giving out the flowers but communication is quite tricky. Maureen Robson works tirelessly on her phone . Extra people who give out the flowers and new arrangers would be great fully received. I would like a replacement too if possible .

Linda Gibson

Future Faith Future Church

Future Faith Future Church is not a meeting or a committee, it described the journey that Morpeth Methodist Church is engaged on as the Church family seeks to discern the path that God is calling us to follow.



This is not a process whereby a few individuals are pushing the road down a certain path, but it is about us as a Church family discovering what is on God’s heart for us at Morpeth Methodist Church.

We, as a church, are engaged on a journey, and in common with many of the journeys described in the Bible, it is slow, unpredictable, and tortuous - think the people of Israel's 40 year journey through the wilderness.

The FFFC group exists to facilitate our journey of discovery, and now that most Covid restrictions have been lifted, the group will be helping us to dream dreams and see visions (Joel 2:28). We all have a part to play in the future of our church family, and it may be that you sense God is already nudging you about the future of MMC, in which case, we would love to hear from you. At the back of the church, by the book racks, is a FFFC suggestion box, and any ideas however outlandish they may appear would be most welcome.

Antony Oakley

General Data Protection Regulations Officer

There have been many changes to Data Protection over the years and we now have to have a nominated person in Church. We have had to adapt our policies and procedures to ensure that we are not in breach of GDPR.

Leadership and Steward Group

The Leadership Group meets monthly reviewing the work of the Church.

Our emphasis this year is on the Church's outreach including pastoral matters and children and young people. We start the meeting with an introduction from one of the Church groups or those meeting at the Church, followed by discussion as to how we can support them.

So far we have discussed our work with children and young people, Tuesday lunches and Women's Meeting Point. At our next meeting we are meeting representatives from AA. The service stewards are part of the work of the Leadership Group. At our meetings we discuss our worship and Church festivals.

A service steward does not need to be a member of the group and we are asking for volunteers to manage the service, who do not need to attend group meetings.

Memory Cafe

The Cafe started in 2016 with the aim of providing a meeting place in the Church coffee lounge, where those with dementia and their carers could feel relaxed and accepted and given a non- judgemental listening ear by the

volunteers. The cafe meets on the first and third Thursday of the month from 10.30 - 12.00

Following a slow start attendances increased rapidly as more people became aware of the Cafe by word of mouth, posters and leaflets in doctors surgeries. Then lockdown happened in March 2020. Prior to lockdown we had 27 regular attendees (those with dementia and their carers), but when we reopened in September 2021 the numbers dropped dramatically as some had gone into Care Homes, were confined to their own homes, or had sadly passed away.

There is still a reluctance to attend meetings, particularly amongst the older generation and those with disabilities, but attendances are gradually increasing.

We are very grateful to our faithful helpers, three of whom are from our church, one from another church and three who saw a need and wanted to help. In addition St George's provide two helpers at every meeting, on a rota, to assist us

David Brough

Men's Breakfast

Men's Breakfast have met on the third Saturday of every month, except for a break in July and August, and lockdown, for the last 26 years. We start our meeting at 7.30 am with a sumptuous breakfast consisting of fruit juice, cereals, cooked food (the record so far is 13 items on the plate), toast and as much coffee or tea as you can drink. The food is prepared by a rota of four of our own members, with the help of an assistant.

Breakfast over, we commence the second part of our meeting with brief devotions led by Rev Antony, followed by our speaker and we look to finish by 9.15 am at the latest. We have a wide variety of speakers and from the £5 charged for the meal, are able to give a donation to speakers representing charities. After paying for the food and donations, any surplus is given to church funds.

At the end of September every year we enjoy a weekend away and last year 18 members stayed at Rydal Hall in the Lake District. At each meeting we have an average attendance of 25-30, with 40 'on the books', of which 25% are not members of our church. All male (sorry ladies) members of

the congregation and their friends are invited to come along.

David Brough

Messy Church

Over the last 12 months, the Messy Church team have organised Messy Church events across the Christian calendar and focussed on the major festivals.



The returning to *in person* Messy Church has overall been successful. The team includes the Rev Antony Oakley and the Rev Julian Sanders. Messy church takes place at both the MMC and St Georges alternating with each delivery.

Looking towards the next year the team would like to increase the frequency of messy church.

Strengths

Messy Church offers an additional worship platform, mainly aimed at children, it gives the flexibility to offer an all age, creative worship dynamic.

Weaknesses

Messy church is very labour intensive, it requires a committed and large pool of volunteers. All volunteers need DBS checks and safeguarding training.

Opportunities

Messy Church would like to grow with its families and children as well as in the wider life of the church as well as in the spiritual journey of its volunteers and worship leaders. It offers a unique opportunity for families of all sizes and presentations to take part in a non-threatening environment in worship, fellowship, craft work and sharing a meal. Opportunities to offer all age messy church is a key aspect to the development of messy in the future.

Threats

Challenges of time, space, volunteer numbers and maintaining and nurturing the team. Engagement of exiting congregations to experience the additional worship experience. Continuing to be relevant to the communities who come along. Formal training of messy church for its worship leaders and volunteers is needed.

Jane Greaves

Pastoral Group

At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, many of you will recall the setting up of the 'Phone friends' scheme which set out to keep people in touch with each other, even though we were physically separated. Jackie Laidlaw was instrumental in setting the scheme up and ensuring its success. I am grateful to her and all the volunteers who faithfully stayed in touch with people. I know that in a few cases several new friendships have developed as a result.

Prior to the pandemic, the three people heading up the pastoral work were Lorrie Bronsema, Arlette Irving and Viv Scott. Both Lorrie and Arlette have now stepped down from this position, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for all their work and care for others.

We are now seeking to reconstitute a pastoral team, as you will have seen in the recent church notices, and it is hoped that at our next Church Council Meeting in June we will be setting up a new pastoral team to take this work forward; along with someone who would be able to coordinate this work. At the forefront of the new team's thinking is that caring for each other is not the work of just a few designat-

ed individuals, but something that everyone at MMC participates in – demonstrating love and care for each other.

Antony Oakley

Prayer Labyrinths – Prayer Stations

Pam Oakley

Vivian Scott

Wendy Garvey

Prayer Stations or a Prayer Labyrinth are designed for individuals to have a quiet personal time for prayer and meditation, using the senses. They enable an individual to better understand themselves and their faith journey with God, in a creative way.

MMC have now had three of these prayer stations; one since lockdown; covering the themes of

Harvest

Christmas

Easter

The Harvest and Christmas ones covered a weekend, the

Easter one was able to stay in the Centenary room for a whole week. This gave people a chance to use it on a Tuesday as well as on the Sunday. It was available for four hours daily, from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. The latest one we had eighteen people come in and use it for an average of over an hour each. Positive feedback has been received.

A Churches mission should be based on prayer, if we focus on prayer then things should start to fall into place. We can all have good ideas, but what use are they if they are not Gods ideas? We should be guided by the Holy Spirit, not asking His permission as an afterthought.

Again, if you would like to help with these, please see Pam Oakley.

Prayer for those who wish it...

As an extension to the prayer Stations / labyrinths we are planning to open the Millennium Room for prayer after a Sunday Morning service – offering prayer on a one-to-one basis, praying over concerns of any sort, sometimes it's helpful to just to have some-one listen.

If anyone is available and would like to be involved with this, again please see Pam Oakley for more information.

Safeguarding

All DBSs are currently up to date and when a person's DBS is up for renewal, then an email reminder is sent. DBSs haven't been taking long to come through.

Safeguarding has become a priority with the Methodist Church and we are working hard to ensure that our members are up to date with their training requirements. Some members and staff have completed both online training and face to face training over the last few months. District and Regional Safeguarding are working hard to provide more courses locally.

If anyone has a Safeguarding Issue they should contact myself or Revd Antony Oakley. All information provided is confidential.

Darleen Turner

6th Morpeth Scout Group

Highlights and Challenges of the past year.



Covid continued to affect our “Scouting” until restrictions were relaxed to allow face to face meetings. We continued to run meetings either virtually or out of doors while trying to restrict indoor meetings and activities.

May 2021 was supposed to be the County Marra camp but again had to be postponed and moved to a “virtual” camp. However this moved the camp onto a world wide stage with lots of Scouts joining in with activities at home and abroad with an overnight camp in the garden or den at home.

In **June** we arranged an archery session at Abbeyfields School and invited Stannington Scouts to join us.

July was our first fundraiser for a couple of years providing drinks and cakes for Whalton Manor and their charity open garden day.

September we took to the water at Druridge Bay County

Park for canoeing and paddle boarding along with land based activities ending with a campfire and meal.

November and it was our first Remembrance Parade for 2 years joining Morpeth residents in remembering the fallen.

December and we took part in the Toy service and we went bowling at Cramlington.

January 22 was our annual visit to the outdoor skating rink at the Life Centre and to the Morpeth Pantomime. At the end of January it was the UK Scout census with capitation fees to pay.

February we entered the District Talent competition held at the Church and won both the Beaver and Cub competitions.

March was our big fundraiser for Ukraine with our new total now over £3700.

April and it was church parade and the District St Georges Day Parade. In addition to the above we had our regular meetings, badge work, cycling, clip and climb, county climbing competition, camp fire cooking and cooking.

Challenges continue to be leader recruitment and parent support. If we had the leaders and a healthy executive committee we could really move the group on. Our means of fundraising with bag packs and garden teas are no longer available so we need some new fundraising ideas. Highlights - we have just reopened our Wednesday Cubs.

An indication of the number of people involved (Are you looking for more volunteers or helpers?)

We currently have 15 uniformed leaders, 3 non uniformed members and around 61 children. Our Thursday Beaver Colony is doing very well and hopefully we might be able to restart another Beaver colony in September. We have room for more children in all our sections with limited space in our Thursday Beaver colony. We can always do with more volunteers.

If money is involved: A broad outline of your main source of income, together with your main items of expenditure, and if appropriate, details of any deficit or surplus.

Once again we must thank the Methodist Church for their continued support. Without the costs associated with hir-
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ing a hall and storage our subscriptions would have to be raised. As reported our past fundraising activities are no longer available so going forward new money raising ideas are required.

Some of your aspirations and plans for the next year.

We have a camp planned for June at Pigdon camp site and an activity day at Druridge Bay Country Park in early October. We will continue to try and build up our numbers to pre-covid levels over the next year.

A named contact who can respond to questions or queries.

Graham Langston, Group Scout Leader.

graham.langston@northumberlandscouts.org.uk.

Social Events

Unfortunately because of the Covid 19 epidemic, all social activities arranged by Morpeth Methodist Church ceased.

The group is small but, I think, willing to get going again.

David Brough has organised a concert in October featuring the East Coast Swing Band. They presented a concert in the church organised by themselves and it was much enjoyed.

I am hoping to start the occasional Saturday get together

with bacon sandwiches soon.

We are always looking for ideas which would make good social events and those willing to help organise them.

Hoping for a successful, sociable future.

Vivien Scott

Humbugs Toddler Group

Humbugs toddlers group resumed following the Covid Pandemic after the February half term break.

Initially, numbers were low due to the continued high Covid numbers, but we have seen a return after the Easter break of up to 20 children accompanied by their parents/carers.

Humbugs toddlers is a session for 0-4years old children, and their parents/ carers run in school term time. The session runs on Tuesday 9.30- 11.30 am. in the Main Hall downstairs with a £2 suggested donation.

The first hour is free play with a snack served at 10.30am with fresh fruit and healthy snacks. Parents are able to sit and chat with tea or coffee whilst their children sit at the table to eat.

At 11.00 we have circle time with nursery rhymes and puppets; Humbug the badger, Cyril the Squirrel and Ollie Owl. We have had very positive verbal feedback about our sessions and generous hospitality. We held a special party for mums/carers on Mother's day and the toddlers helped to make cards to take home. At Easter toddlers had a special party with chocolate Easter nests for a treat and parents/carers had Easter cupcakes.

Clive and I are very grateful to Darleen and Doug for their continued support of the group and for setting up the tables and chairs to enable us to put out the toddlers equipment and toys ready for the session. We are also grateful for the support from Viv Scott and Marilyn Smith for volunteering and providing cover for the sessions.

We hope that we will soon be able to purchase some soft play mats to extend the climbing equipment space in the hall due to a kind donation by a previous church member.

As you can imagine a good time is had by all!

Louise Kemp

Humbug Toddlers group leader.

Women's Meeting Point

During lockdown we had zoom meetings every two weeks and various calls were made to keep in touch with ladies.

In October last year we met for coffee, numbers were down. It was felt that we would meet monthly (1st Monday in month at 7.30pm) in church and have local speakers known to us. Numbers at our meetings have averaged between 8-14. We are hesitant to get outside speakers because of small numbers and have been grateful to some of our own members leading the meetings.

Our subscription is £2 per meeting but as we don't meet as often our funds are limited although we have given to 'All We Can', Ukraine Appeal, and did a Reverse Advent Calendar for Wansbeck Food Bank. We have our AGM in June when we will discuss our way forward. We welcome any ladies who wish to join us

Catherine Harbour and Jean Gaunt

Worship Group—Local Arrangements (L.A's)

Pam Oakley

Vivian Scott

Wendy Garvey

We have been meeting on a regular basis to look at and to arrange worship for when MMC has an L.A – usually monthly but occasionally twice.

After a lot of prayer individually and at our meetings together we decided that a way forward was to invite different speakers into church to look at the way 'Faith' impacts people's daily work (eg - a mentor who teaches science) as well as voluntary work (Street Pastors etc) . Testimonies have also been used, this is something we would like to use more of. These worship sessions have overall been appreciated – by verbal and sometimes emails that have been sent to us.

We are constantly re-evaluating the way the LA's can bring a new dimension to worship, always on the lookout for new speakers and keeping our ears to the ground. Looking at new ways to be 'Church' – facilitating 'All Age Worship' as much as possible.

L.A's will most probably be on the increase in the foreseeable future due to shortage of Ministers and Local Preachers, we would appreciate any ideas you as a Church may have as worship is something that should involve us all.

Copies of the service plan, weekly notices, The Vine and information on Church groups is available at Church reception. If none are displayed, please ask a member of staff who will print one out for you. If you wish to be added to our notices email directory, please let us know.

Mission Statement

Our aim is:

“TO MAKE CHRIST VISIBLE IN THE WORLD”

We seek to do this by:

- * Celebrating Christ
- * Growing in his love
- * Praying and acting for him
- * Being a centre acting as a resource for the wider community

