

MORPETH PATHWAYS

A FORUM FOR CHURCH & COMMUNITY

FREE ISSUE

Christmas edition 2025

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Issue No 12

From the editor

Welcome to the Advent edition of Pathways.

In the Christian calendar Advent is a time of preparation and looking forward to Christmas. For many it is a time of busyness and fraught with lists, things to do, things to buy, things to cook. But for others it can be a time of dread, worrying about how to make ends meet, worrying about who to invite for Christmas lunch, worrying about how to entertain family and visitors over the holiday period, worrying about how to cope without loved friends and family members.

But maybe that feeling of worry is a luxury. Brooke Burgess has written about the Lunch Club run by Stobhill Link at St Aidan's Church; this year they are having a special Christmas Day lunch for people who would otherwise be on their own. So if you know someone who might like to go or if you would like to volunteer on the day, do please get in touch with Brooke Burgess or the Parish Office.

We also have an article from our MP David Smith, whose office is co-ordinating the North Northumberland Christmas appeal. They have the ambitious aim to make sure every child and young person in North Northumberland has a gift to open on Christmas Day. The article explains how you can contribute to the appeal and help it achieve its ambition.

If you are looking for Christmas present ideas, Josh Beasley has an innovative solution. Josh is the grandson of Roy Beasley, whom many of you will remember from his time as a Churchwarden at St Aidan's church here in Morpeth. Josh runs Legacy Film which creates lasting memories of people you know and love. No more regretting, 'If only I had asked them...' Josh will capture the answers on film. Do go and have a look at his website – you'll also recognise Roy in one of the clips!

This edition also has some ideas of things to do over the Christmas period. It contains a list of all the services to be held in the three churches in Morpeth Parish, excluding the many schools' and organisations' Carol Services. Val Pope has taken a light-hearted look at some of the pantomimes on offer around the region. Oh yes,

she has! Sorry! And Cllr Alison Byard has written about the new TrailTales you can follow to learn more about Morpeth and its fascinating history. It's a good way to get some exercise after turkey and Christmas pudding. A key Christmas date is the fundraising concert featuring the Ashington and District Male Voice Choir at St Mary's Church on Saturday 6th December at 3pm. Intriguingly the poster asks you to bring a torch!

You might feel that you want to learn more about Christmas and what it means during Advent. If so, Rev Jeremy Cooper has written the second of his round up of Apps that can help you explore the Bible. The third in the series will be in the next issue of Pathways.

I do hope you enjoy reading these and more of the articles in this month's Pathways and may I wish you all the blessings of Christmas and a happy New Year.

Sally Keith

The logo for 'Morpeth Bridge for all' features the text in a stylized, rounded font. The word 'Morpeth' is in black, 'Bridge' is in red, and 'for all' is in black. Above the letters are four playing card symbols: a black spade, a red diamond, a black club, and a red heart.

WHY NOT LEARN TO PLAY BRIDGE IN 2024/25?

This great game can keep your mind active whilst being social and fun at the same time.

Lessons start September - but you can join any time

For classes contact one of the following teachers:

John Kingcome : 01670 531469

Cyril Meehan : 01670 512 879

Ray Rayner : 01670 730930

Or visit our website for more details

www.Morpethbridge4all.co.uk



Christmas Appeal

The North Northumberland Christmas Appeal is celebrating a strong start to this year's efforts – with nine local businesses and community hubs signed up as drop-off points for gifts.

The Appeal is a community project, coordinated by the office of David Smith MP, and supported by local volunteers; to make sure every child and young person in North Northumberland has a gift to open on Christmas Day.

David Smith, MP for North Northumberland, said: "As a Christian, the run up to December 25th is a time when my faith is both reaffirmed and stretched. I think we all look around, amongst the busyness, and really see in technicolour how tough life can be for some families, for a whole host of reasons. I hope the Appeal can be a positive focus for our communities – some much-needed solidarity as we take pride in looking out for each other."

Anyone who wants to help can go to one of the drop-off points listed below, collect a gift tag with the details for each child or young person, then purchase a gift and return it, unwrapped, to the drop-off point. Local volunteers will then deliver the gifts to the children. The Appeal also has an Amazon gift lift for online shoppers, which can be found on David Smith's website.

At the time of going to press, nine drop-off points have been agreed across the constituency: Glendale Agricultural Society in Wooler, Weavers Court in Alnwick, Hair and Beauty Co in Morpeth, Northern View in Tweedmouth, Seaside Travel in Amble, Wellway Pharmacy in Morpeth and Pegswood, and Morpeth and Hadston Co-op.

David added: "My thanks to all our drop-off points; I look forward to seeing your gift tag displays soon!

"While a gift cannot solve every problem, it is still an important reminder that it doesn't always take a huge gesture to change the

world. Often just knowing you are not forgotten can make all the difference."

To get involved please head to: <https://davidsmithnorth.co.uk/> or email northumberlandchristmas@gmail.com



Photo: David Smith MP with Paul Fiddaman from Karbon Homes, outside Weavers Court in Alnwick – one of this year's drop-off points for gifts.

A promotional graphic for David Auld & Co Solicitors. The left side features a dark blue background with the firm's name 'DAVID AULD & CO SOLICITORS' in large white letters, and 'INCORPORATING JFS LAW' and 'MORPETH · EST 1978' in smaller white text below. The right side has a light blue background. At the top right is a smaller version of the firm's logo. Below it is a list of services: Wills & Probate, Inheritance Tax Planning, Agricultural Property, Commercial Property, Residential Property, and Family Law. Underneath is the text 'The solicitor's firm in the Heart of Northumberland'. Below this are three small portrait photos of the partners: David Lee Bawn TEP (Managing Partner), Steve Frake (Partner), and Jennifer Bell TEP (Partner Non Solicitor). At the bottom right is another version of the firm's logo. At the bottom left, there is a 'Contact Us' section with the address '22 Newgate Street, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1BA', a Facebook icon, and phone numbers 'T: 01670 505844' and 'F: 01670 505848'. At the very bottom, the email address 'enquiry@david-auld.co.uk' is listed.

The Stobhill Link Lunch Club

Good Food, Good Company, Great Community

The Stobhill Link, managed by Northumberland Community Enterprise Limited, is home to one of Morpeth's most valued community gatherings, the Stobhill Link Lunch Club at St Aidan's Church.



What began as a small idea to bring neighbours together over a simple home cooked meal has grown into a much loved weekly event that brightens the lives of local residents. Each week, volunteers transform the church hall into a warm, welcoming space filled with friendly chatter, laughter, music, and the smell of a hearty lunch.

The Lunch Club is especially popular with older people who live alone, offering both a nutritious meal and a sense of belonging. Many regulars say it is the highlight of their week, a chance to see familiar faces, catch up with friends, and feel part of something positive and caring.

But it is more than just lunch. It is about connection, kindness, and community spirit. Volunteers take time to sit and chat with guests, and many friendships have formed that extend well beyond the dining table. The sessions also act as a gentle way to spot anyone who might need extra help or support, linking people with other local services when needed.

The Stobhill Link Lunch Club welcomes everyone, whether you are looking for company, want to meet new people, or simply enjoy a good meal in good company.

All welcome.

For more information or to book a place, please call The Stobhill Link on 01670 519575.

Christmas Day Lunch

Nobody Should Be Alone This Christmas

Building on the success of the weekly Lunch Club, the Stobhill Link team is hosting a special Christmas Day Lunch for anyone who would otherwise be spending the day alone.

Christmas can be a difficult time for many, particularly for those who have lost loved ones or live far from family. The event aims to make sure that no one in the community is left feeling isolated during the festive season.

Guests will enjoy a delicious two-course Christmas meal, with festive music, games, and plenty of cheer. After lunch there will be light entertainment and time to relax in good company. Volunteers will be on hand throughout the day to make sure everyone feels welcome and cared for. Anyone able to volunteer even an hour of their time is welcome to join the team.

The Christmas Day Lunch is free of charge, supported by local donors and volunteers, but spaces are limited and must be booked in advance.

If you or someone you know would like to Volunteer, join in, or if you would like to refer someone who may be alone, please contact The Stobhill Link on 01670 519575.

Come and celebrate Christmas the Stobhill way, with good food, good company, and a true sense of community.

Brooke Burgess

Legacy Film

I've lived in Morpeth all my life. I didn't have a conventional education - I was mostly home schooled - which I loved. I'm Dyslexic, and home schooling gave me opportunities to develop skills and interests alongside conventional subjects, eventually earning my BA (Hons) in Performance Arts from Northumbria University via Gateshead College.

*Josh Beasley,
grandson of
former
churchwarden
Roy, tells us
about his new
venture*

'Legacy Film', came about quite unexpectedly. I was researching events in my family history, and was disappointed to learn that so little is known about my maternal grandfather, who died many years before I was born. If only he had created a Memoir... this was the inspiration for my business!

I knew I'd reached a point in my life when I needed to move forward; I wanted to do something rewarding. I was already doing voluntary work at Northumberland Hospital Radio, producing a weekly news programme using Talking Newspaper recordings. I had skills in both sound and video, and I was used to working with the public. After doing some research, it seemed that producing Memoirs would be an exciting new chapter!

I had everything planned and ready to start, but this was the beginning of 2020 and Covid! Starting my business was impossible then, and for some while after.



Thankfully life is becoming more relaxed and normal, which is why I'm re-launching 'Legacy Film' to include an option of a sound only Memoir, for those who would prefer not to be seen on camera.

When I began 'Legacy Film' my paternal grandfather Roy Beasley, was the obvious choice to begin with. From when I first explained my idea to him, he was very supportive! He had a wonderful time on the day of the recording, recalling his life to me. He said I could use parts of his Memoir on my website as an example, which I have done.

Since then, my grandfather has died, so you can imagine this Memoir is so important to both my family and me, and for future family to learn about him.

When I create a Memoir, it is made in strictest confidence and respect. Anyone thinking about creating a Memoir with me can visit my website legacyfilm.co.uk or give me a ring on: 07563974761



*Everyone has a story to tell of memories unique and true.
It's time to tell your story, and leave a living legacy all about you!*

For some people, writing a memoir is something they would love to do.

Here at Legacy Film, you have the opportunity to record your video memoir for your family, and yourself; reminding you of your life well lived!

If you find the idea of this intriguing, or have any questions, please check out my website and get in touch.

10% Discount Code: Church25

Contact Joshua Beasley via:

E - Mail: legacyfilm@icloud.com Website: legacyfilm.co.uk

Tel: 07563 974 761
(Monday - Friday / 10am - 5pm)





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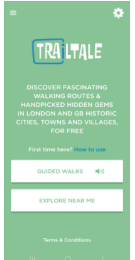


**OWNED BY YOU.
RIGHT BY YOU.**

Trailtale

New 'Trailtale' digital walking trails explore Morpeth's rich history and culture.

Back in July, Morpeth Town Council and Friends of Morpeth Museum (FOMM) unveiled four new Morpeth Heritage Trails; walking routes designed to give residents and visitors the chance to find out all about the town's rich history in a thoroughly modern way – through downloading a free mobile app which is available on <https://trailtale.co.uk/>



Friends of Morpeth Museum had taken the decision to wind up at the end of 2024, and given the continued lack of a museum dedicated to Morpeth's history, members decided to dedicate some of their remaining funds to an 'outdoor museum' in the form of new digital heritage trails.

The four distinct trails, using data provided by former Mayor and Chair of FOMM Nic Best, each offer a unique perspective on Morpeth's heritage. Visitors will learn about the people, places and events that have shaped the community over generations.

The Morpeth trails include live maps, photos and text, but audio versions are available in the app, which also includes trails in many other towns and cities, both locally and nationwide.

Walks are between one and two miles and should take no more than two hours to complete at a comfortable walking pace.

Nic Best said, "These excellent Trails are not only a guide to our beautiful town, but they also serve as a basic introduction to the history of Morpeth, as it can be traced through its buildings." Why not try out the walks and let the Town Council know what you think on info@morpeth-tc.gov.uk? If you have any suggestions or corrections, the Morpeth data can easily be corrected and changed.

Whether you're a lifelong resident or a first-time visitor, the Trailtale Morpeth Heritage Trails offer a unique journey into the past, in the most up-to-date way!

Cllr Alison Byard

St Mary's Lamplight Progress



Historic churches, like many of our heritage buildings, need continuous care. To help us manage and look after our churches, every five years the church architect undertakes what is called a Quinquennial inspection.

These inspections help parishes to understand the range of works needed, provide us with a suggested timescale for their completion and, where possible, an estimated cost.

Our last inspection took place in 2022, and an item flagged up was the upgrading of the lighting and electrical wiring. The church was last re-wired in 1985!

Members of our Fabric committee helped to shape a plan and design for upgrading the lighting and electrics. This will significantly improve the lighting quality and increase the options for using lighting more flexibly to support the different services and activities which take place in St Mary's church.

The project has two parts to it:

- **Rewiring and re-lamping the church** – the work includes the upgrading of the distribution boards (or fuse boxes as I know them) so that they meet current safety standards, and replacing old wiring and light fittings with newer LED lighting, which will not only significantly improve the light quality but also positively impact on the environment and running costs.
- **Repairing plaster work and redecoration** – issues with the integrity of the plaster have been caused by two different issues. Damage to the plaster in a number of areas occurred after a substantial amount of metal was stolen from the church roof a number of years ago leading to water leaking through. There are also issues caused by the use of incorrect materials for past repairs and redecoration.

The costs identified for the project at the start were estimated to be around £50,000, but with just £15,000 in hand we knew that a significant amount of fund raising was needed. And so the Lamplight Project was instigated, led at the time by our then Churchwarden, Dr Andrew Mowat.

Our first fundraising event was a coffee morning held by a church member at her home in September 2022.

Since then, the project has received monies from personal donations, a sponsored event where a member of our church family had her hair shaved off (the hair being gifted to The Little Princesses Trust <https://www.littleprincesses.org.uk/>) and sales of homemade chutney; donations from charities such as the Barbour foundation, the Freemasons of Northumberland and grant funding from bodies such as the Benefact Trust and Historic Churches Trust. With a history and love of music, as a church we have also held a number of fundraising concerts, including:

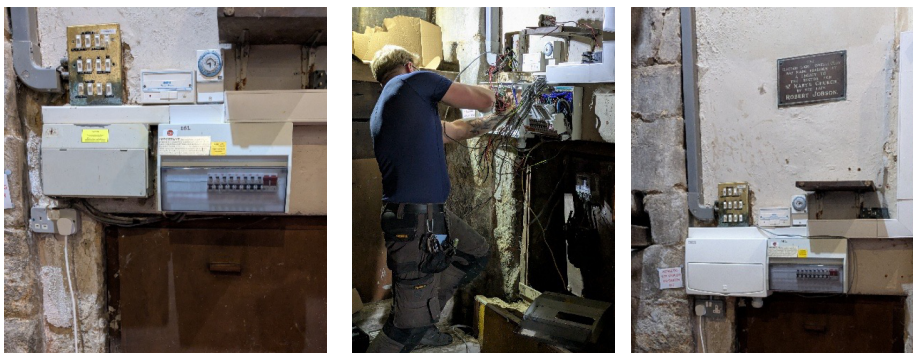
Our first Christmas concert - supported by church family, with entertainment led by our choir members:



Concerts with a guitar duo and the Galliard Recorder Ensemble, both held at St James's church, and our Christmas events featuring Ashington and District Male Voice Choir and members of our church choir, have proved to be very popular and a total joy. And yes, we are getting ready now for our next concert which is on the 6th December 2025 - so make sure you get your tickets early, as they will go fast!!

With the monies obtained to date and with permission from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) who oversee works in our churches, we have begun the first part of the project, the rewiring and re-lamping.

The great news is that we have two new distribution boxes (these show the changes to the one at the back of the church), making our church safer.



And the lights have been upgraded in the chancel - the area at the front of the church nearest the altar, where the choir sit. At the beginning of November, we start the lighting upgrade in the nave - the area where the congregation sits - which we hope to have finished for our concert with the Ashington and District Male Voice choir early December (cash is preferred on the night, and remember there will be the fabulous hamper raffle again), and also for our Christmas services.

It really will be great **to see you** there this year.

Liz Scott-Tatum ,

Churchwarden St Mary the Virgin Church



Would you consider making a donation?
As part of our parish mission, Pathways magazine is produced locally and for donation only. If you are able to afford it, please consider making a donation via this QR code or visit our website www.parihofmorpeth.org.uk to make a donation directly. Thank you so much for your support



Join us for a Christmas Fundraising concert



An afternoon of Christmas music featuring

Ashington and District Male Voice Choir (ADMVC)



and members of
St Mary's church choir
Raffle hampers &
festive refreshments

Please bring a torch



Tickets
£10

Venue : St Mary's Church, Morpeth, NE61 2QF
When: Saturday 6th December 2025 Starts: 3.00pm
Tickets: Available from ADMVC: admvc4tickets@outlook.com
any of our Parish Churches - St Mary's, St James,
St Aidan's or on the door

IT'S PANTO TIME!

There's not long to go until Christmas 2025, the season of spending, drinking and eating far too much; worrying about how big the overdraft will be in January and hoping the festive season will be less expensive than last year. It might cost you a small fortune and New Year 2026 might do the same, because it's PANTO TIME! OH, YES IT IS! This year, ticket prices are eye-watering. By February 2026 you'll be flat broke, but that's fine, because Christmas pantos are fun. Say it out loud. CHRISTMAS PANTOS ARE FUN!

Val Pope takes a look at the pantomimes running over the Christmas season. Oh yes, she does!

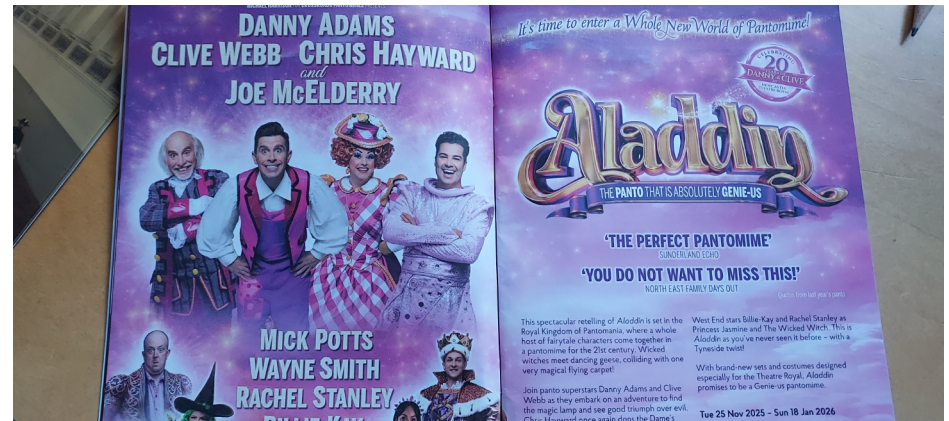
You can book tickets for shows on both sides of the Tyne, starting on the River Wear at Sunderland Empire, with "Sleeping Beauty", featuring BBC's "Call the Midwife" star Laura Main. She's not a nun, a nurse or a devoted wife and mother this time, she's "the spellbinding Fairy Snowfall". WHO KNEW? WOW! Starring with the not-a-nun, is "local legend Miss Rory", as "Rorina the Cleaner", with "hilarious funny man Tom Whalley as the side-splitting Vesta the Jester". I didn't make this up. Trust me, it's true. I haven't a clue who Tom Whalley is, but Miss Rory is the star turn at Boulevards in Newcastle. Check their website. If you already did, you already know all you need to know. OH, YES YOU DO!

If you can't afford Empire tickets, catch "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" at the Customs House, in South Shields, and see a "magical, madcap adventure" with "fabulous Dame Bella, the queen of the big top, and her hapless but lovable sidekick Dennis as they fight to save their beloved circus." There are bears, of course; the ticket prices will probably be cheaper than the eye-watering ones at the Empire and the bar is nice, so it's well worth a punt. Or a pint. SORRY. NOT SORRY.

You'll need to cross the Tyne Bridge or brave the A19 and the Tyne Tunnel to get to the above shows so please don't get lost. If you get very lost, you could end up Consett, where you can catch "The Sleeping Beauty" at the Empire Theatre. It's "The Pantomime of Your

Dreams". It says so on the website. OH YES IT DOES. Starring Dame Fanny Haddock, Charlie Chuckles and Gordon Grunch, this one sounds like a must-see, with pre-show publicity promising "THREE MAJOR DISASTERS!" Don't say you haven't been warned. You might want to pack an emergency tent and some food in the car boot, just in case. Consett is a long way away, but you will have fun. OH, YES YOU WILL. Probably. Just sit quite still and don't look nervous. You'll be fine.

My best advice is to stay on the North side of the river and empty your current account on family tickets for "Aladdin" at the Theatre Royal. It's a "Genie-us of a pantomime", with bangs and flashes, and ticket prices that will make your eyes water. The action takes place in the "Royal Kingdom of Pantomania" where they have dancing geese and flying carpets. If you're wondering where "Pantomania" might be, think BYKER! Having taught theatre studies there for years, I wouldn't be surprised to see wicked witches, flying carpets and luminous dancing geese performing on Byker high street after the final curtain at the Royal. If you see them, just remember not to talk to them; don't smile and walk away from them very slowly. NEVER look them in the eyes, whatever you do. NEVER LOOK THEM IN THE EYES!



The Tyne Theatre on Westgate Road offers less terrifying panto fun with "Cinderella". You'll get two Pantomime-Ugly-Sister-Dames, plus a Nolan sister (Maureen) as the Fairy Godmother, and there's a transformation scene featuring a 'beautiful coach and real horses' which sounds as though there might be scope for ribaldry at some point if the horses misbehave. I hope they're small horses pulling a dinky little barouche – not whopping great Shires hauling the

Deadwood Stage. But then again, the scope for raucous laughter and bawdy double *entendres* is huge if the horses are a decent size and the coach is big. It might be worth booking seats for the whole street for that one. OH, YES, IT WOULD.

The People's Theatre Panto, playing in sunny Jesmond is "The Wizard of Oz" which runs from 13th to the 21st of December. Dorothy apparently "daydreams of a life away from her little farm in Heaton". Unfortunately, she and her trusty little dog Toto are blown away by a twister and end up in the "magical land of OZ". Maybe, given it's a local panto, they get whisked away to "the magical land of ...wait for it...JEZMOZ! That is a terrible pun. Sorry. Glinda The Good sends Dot 'n' Tot off on the yellow brick road, to find The Wizard, and they're chased by the Wicked Witch of the West. There's also a Scarecrow; a Tin Man and a Cowardly Lion and according to the theatre ads, "There's no place like the People's this Christmas!". THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE JESMOZ, EITHER. I'LL SEE MYSELF OUT.

Northern Stage, on the Newcastle University Campus is offering "Beauty and the Beast" from 4th December to 3rd January. According to the publicity, this panto performance promises punters (see what I did there?) the chance to hear a fairytale, told by a real fairy. A REAL FAIRY! Oh yes, we all believe in Fairies, don't we? There's also a stolen rose that spells bad news for Beauty and her "unfortunate dad"; the story is told by two mischievous fairies and families are invited to join the narrators in an "enchantingly wicked retelling" of the tale. Talk about audience engagement! There's also a 'Thoughtsnatcher' machine; a helpful rabbit; a handsome Prince and music is provided by the 'fleas and flies, lice and louses of the Insect Orchestra'. To top it off the show is set in rural France! ZUT, ALORS! C'EST VRAIMENT FORMIDABLE! ACHETE VOS BILLETS IMMEDIATEMENT! Or words to that effect.

There are lots of other pantos in the region but I'm on a strict word count for Pathways magazine. If you want to explore all the shows available and max out your overdraft by January 31st just Google "pantomimes near me Christmas 2025" then arrange an overdraft with your friendly bank manager and get booking.

HAVE FUN AND HAVE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Aids to Reading your Bible: Part 2

Tools and Resources for Deepening Your Spiritual Journey

Introduction

In part one of this three-part series, we looked at using bible meditation apps to help us engage more with scripture. In this article I look at bible reading apps. These provide opportunities for those with a little more time, and the desire, to study scripture in more detail. So I asked members of the Ministry Team and one or two others for recommendations.

Rev Jeremy Cooper continues his look at the tools and resources to help us to read and understand the Bible.

Bible Reading Apps

For those with a little more time who would like a slightly more in depth engagement with scripture or a designated reading plan, all of the following provide similar features which are well worth exploring. These Bible reading apps often include features like multiple translations (so you can choose your preferred bible version), audio bibles, reading plans, note-taking, and devotionals. Below is a list of some of the most popular and highly rated bible reading applications we have come across which are available across different platforms.

A Google search of any of the listed resources will take you to the right place, or go direct to your app store.

1. The Bible App

Using the free app on my phone the front page gives you a verse for the day with some images to help understanding. There is also a 5-minute reflection on the text and a guided prayer time with space to add your own notes. All of which I found quite helpful. You can choose which bible version you want to use, you can read the bible, listen to the bible, make notes and add a prayer amongst many other things. There is a variety of other reading plans which is worth exploring.



2. Bible Gateway

Using the free app on my phone the dashboard gave me access to a verse for the day. You can choose from a wide range of bible versions to read the scripture passages and there are easy to find in-depth commentaries, studies and integrated devotionals. In addition, there are a variety of reading plans on offer as well as a variety of other resources. I found this app not only very useful but easy and intuitive to navigate.



3. Olive Tree Bible App

Using the free app on my phone gives me access to a wide range of Bible versions to read scripture and reading plans. There are robust note-taking and highlighting tools, split-screen comparisons, and access to commentaries, dictionaries, and maps (many of which are free). I bought the accompanying *NIV Study Bible* application and find it very helpful with detailed notes, maps, themes, biblical characters, locations and history, which can be seen alongside the bible passage. I found this app extremely useful and easy to use. It is my go-to resource.



4. Bible in One Year (Now called: *The Bible with Nicky & Pippa Gumbel*)

I use the free app on my phone. It provides a daily bible reading plan which takes you through the whole bible in 365 days. I used the classic version (25 mins) but there is a 'youth' version and an 'Express' version (both about 15 mins). You can read and/or listen to the biblical passage and study. Each day includes passages from a Psalm or Proverbs, the New Testament and the Old Testament along with a daily commentary from Nicky and Pippa Gumbel, former leaders of Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London and pioneers of Alpha. I failed to keep up with the plan to go through the whole bible in a year. I am now going through filling in the gaps! I found it very helpful. You could listen in the car, maybe. I liked the way it is grouped into themes and Nicky always has a useful story to introduce the day's session. Pippa always ends with a very down-to-earth comment. It is ideal for anyone who is looking for a very easy and accessible way to read and understand the bible.



5. Bible Hub

I used the web version. It provides a free extensive library of bible translations and commentaries, audio bibles, search and parallel reading tools, verse of the day, and helpful reading plans. I found this very comprehensive with lots of free resources. It took me a while to find my way around. To get started I chose a bible passage from the drop-down menu right at the top (above the blue ribbon) then I clicked the version I wanted. I chose NIV, then 'Study' and I found the free resources available very useful. It also gave me access to lots of extra information, prayer suggestions and questions to help me apply the word of God to my own life. By scrolling down, I came across a wealth of *Bible Study Tools* including Reading Plans (Rdg Plans). It was well worth spending time trying to find what was on offer.



Conclusion

Whether you are new to the bible or a lifelong reader, modern bible reading apps offer a wealth of opportunities to engage more deeply with scripture, in an exciting and informative way. You can easily access your favourite bible version and/or compare versions. Whether you have 15 minutes or 30 minutes I am sure you will find using one of the above apps a rewarding and transformative journey through the pages of the bible. Enjoy exploring!

Jeremy Cooper, the Parish Ministry Team and others

Sunshine amidst the gloom.

“Pearl of Africa” show us how to triumph.

It was a dark and misty night. The car park nearby was nearly empty. The Methodist church was only half full. Things didn't look good for the “Pearl of Africa” choir concert.

What had gone wrong? Last year - no spaces in the car park a stream of people flowing towards the church an air of excited anticipation.

Answer: the concert had nearly had to be cancelled, because only four of the twenty or so members, plus one adult, had been granted visas! But, brave souls, at the last moment those five folk still came, and my word, did they put on the sunshine!

Only four young people, but dancing down the aisle, singing full voice in their wonderful, bright outfits. Those four youngsters filled the church with their voices, their energy, their joy and their faith.

We were treated to dancing, drumming and lots of songs in at least three of their native languages. And the sole young lady was their spokesman, along with ‘Aunty’ Annet, the head of their secondary school, who spoke so gently of their work, their faith and of their gratitude for the welcome we give them. And then she just joined in with the songs and the drumming.

Forget the gloom. Forget the mist. Remember the sunshine of the “Pearl of Africa” choir. And come, next year!

The Pearl of Africa Choir have been regular visitors to Morpeth. Here is a review of one of their concerts by Janet Hedley.

Morpeth and The Pearl of Africa Children's Choir

Having attended one of the most recent performances of The Pearl of Africa Children's Choir, Janet Hedley asked me to write an article describing the background to the founding of the Molly and Paul Childcare Foundation Schools, from which the choir is formed, and Morpeth's involvement.



As I understand it, Paul Wasswa was born a twin, I think to a disabled mother, and his father died when he was two years old, so when he reached school age he couldn't attend due to lack of money for school fees. Eventually a family who could afford to send their children to school paid Paul to take their children to school. Apparently he waited outside and listened to the lessons, and as there weren't any windows, writing on a banana leaf, (presumably with something like his fingernail or a stick). Some Americans visited and a lady provided for sixty children to be educated – Paul being one of them.

After marrying Molly, Paul was keen to help children as he had been helped so the first Molly and Paul School for orphans was set up in 1983. It was based upon assurances in a dream/vision about all the poverty stricken children that God would provide people to help; and upon the scripture James 1 verse 27 -" Religion that is pure and

undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained in the world.”

There are now three primary schools and two high schools. Kamuzinda Primary School and Nazarene Vocational High School are in Kamuzinda Children’s Village near Masaka in south west Uganda. The children’s village is actually quite large with ten children’s homes and a clinic. Wheeling Primary, New Kabale Busega Primary School and New Kabale Busega High are in Kampala. Some families can afford to pay towards the fees of these non-government schools but a needy child is never turned away. Children who have no home to go to in the school holidays remain at school/in the homes.

The choir was first invited to Morpeth in 2008 after my daughter, having just returned from helping with a building project in Uganda, saw them give a brief performance on The Paul O’ Grady Show of all places! At the end of the show folk were invited to ring a given number if they would like the choir to visit their area. “Wouldn’t it be good if they came to Morpeth? I could raise a bit of money for them in schools and churches,” she said. “Yes,” I replied, thinking ‘that will never happen’. But it did and a small group at Morpeth Methodist Church organised the visit that year. The twenty eight choir members were greeted with great enthusiasm by hosts, schools, church and the Mayor. Much to our astonishment we raised over £9,500 in just five days, just one month after the Morpeth flood. Since then there have been twelve further visits to our area and some local folk have visited The Molly and Paul Schools for the purposes of further cultural exchange and offering practical assistance with tasks such as making bricks, building projects, painting and erecting fences.

Although not now a Church group, the organisers are supported by Morpeth Methodist Church by allowing us to use the premises for



the duration of the choir’s visit as a place of rendezvous, rehearsals, unpacking upon arrival, worship and of course for a concert. The choir’s tours are organised by the charity Pearl of Africa Child Care Ltd, a very small charity registered in England and Wales and made up of a small group of Trustees and volunteers. One trustee lives in Morpeth and for the past two years has co-ordinated both the national and local tour. New volunteers are most welcome and the opportunities to help are many and varied both in terms of activity and time commitment.

We look forward to further vibrant, energetic and uplifting performances of singing, dancing and drumming by the joyous choir in years to come when, hopefully, all members will be granted their visitor visas.

If you would like to know more about the Pearl of Africa choir or would like to support their visits, please get in touch with me, Marilyn Smith on marilynsmith35@hotmail.com or leonie@pearlofafrica.org.uk

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OUR MAN IN HAVANA

Graham Greene (1958)

I'll start with the blurb on the back of my copy. "Wormold is a vacuum cleaner salesman in a city of power cuts. His adolescent daughter spends his money with a skill that amazes him, so when a mysterious Englishman offers him an extra income he is tempted. In return all he has to do is to carry out a little espionage and file a few reports. But when his fake reports start coming true things suddenly get more complicated and Havana becomes a threatening place."

Marian Martin reports on the latest meeting of the Parish Book Group

Nine of the Book Club members gathered in the library to discuss the novel. It was easy to dismiss Wormold as weak - his name does not suggest hero. He spends a lot of his time drinking daiquiri with an acquaintance, Hasselbacher, but there is no description of meaningful work. There was no description of Cuba either. "Our Man" had been sent by Whitehall and later another man was sent to ask him to write reports. Wormold becomes Agent 59200/5. What could he do but invent interesting lies and recruit believable agents who had to be paid.

Whitehall requests photographs of suspect sites and diagrams of equipment. Some of us found it funny when Wormold drew the inside of a vacuum cleaner with a tiny sketch of a man beside it to indicate scale (the first hydrogen bomb had been produced just a year before Greene wrote his novel).

Whitehall commented "I believe we may be onto something so big that the H bomb will become a conventional weapon ... A huge gaping mouth at the top and this pipeline ..." They send him a secretary, Beatrice, and pay him well.

There is a poisoning which goes wrong, there are acts of violence, reality blurs, tension mounts and subsides. In the end some of us lost interest but others enjoyed the book. Certainly Graham Greene had received a lot of respect in the 20th century, but we felt it was dated, very old boy network and lacking believable characters.

The Loard's my Hird

Da Loard's my hird, I sanna want
The Lord's my shepherd, I shall not want

He fins me buls athin green muddoo girse
He finds me resting places within green meadow grass

And linns me whaar da burns sae saftly rin.
And leads me where the burns so softly run.

He leuks my wilt an wanless sowl, stravaigin far fae hame
He tends my weak and hopeless soul, wandering far from home

Back tae da nairroo wind an gaets fir sake O His ain name.
Back to the narrow winding paths for sake of His own name.

Tho I sood geng doon death's dark gyl, nae ill sal come my wye
Though I should go down death's dark vale, no ill shall come my way,

Fur He will gaird me wi His staff and comfort me forbye.
For He will guard me with His staff and comfort me as well.

My table He has coosed wi maet, whin fantin guid tae fremd
My table He has heaped with meat when hungry went the strangers,

My cup wi hansels lippers ower, my head wi oil is sained.
My cup with gifts it o'erflows, my head with oil is blessed.

Noo surely aa my livin days God's love sall hap me ower
Now surely all my livin' days God's love shall cover me o'er,

Until I win tae His ain hoose ta bide fur ivver more.
Until I get to His own house to dwell forever more.

Amen.

For the Scots among us, a version of the 23rd Psalm in Shetlandic sent in from John in Silvas Court

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Morpeth & Stannington Christmas Services 2025

Date	Event	Held	Time
Sunday 07 December	Advent Evensong	St Mary's Stannington	6.00pm
Saturday 13 th December	Community Carols	Market Place	4.00pm
Sunday 21 st December	Holy Communion	St James'	8.00am
Sunday 21 st December	Holy Communion	St Mary's Morpeth	9.30pm
Sunday 21 st December	Simply Worship	St Aidan's	9.30pm
Sunday 21 st December	Christingle/Communion	St James'	11.15pm
Sunday 21 st December	Holy Communion	St Marys - Stannington	10.00am
Sunday 21 st December	Children's Crib Service	St Aidan's	4.00pm
Sunday 21 st December	Quiet Christmas (Healing)	St James	6.00pm
Wed 24 th December	Carol Service	St Aidan's	6.00pm
Wed 24 th December	Carol Service	St Mary's Morpeth	6.00pm
Wed 24 th December	Carol Service	St James'	6.00pm
Wed 24 th December	Midnight Mass	St Mary's Morpeth	11.30pm
Wed 24 th December	Midnight Mass	St Marys - Stannington	11.30pm
Thurs 25 th December	Holy Communion	St James'	8.00am
Thurs 25 th December	Holy Communion	St James'	10.00am
Thurs 25 th December	Holy Communion	St Marys - Stannington	10.00am
Sunday 28 th December	Joint Service	St Aidan's	10.00am

The Rector's Ramblings A New Archbishop of Canterbury

On Friday 3rd October it was announced that the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury would be Dame Sarah Mullally, the current Bishop of London, and former Chief Nurse—appointed to that role when she was just 37, the youngest ever appointment. I have heard lots of comments about the appointment, and among them are those that wonder why on earth did she get the role?



Helpfully Dr Ian Paul, a member of the Archbishops' council, wrote in his blog:

“Well, who else could have been appointed? One of Justin’s [Welby] legacies to the Church has been much greater division and polarisation on contentious issues; this means that, for a process that looks for a consensus candidate, anyone who has spoken out, for example, on sexuality - either asking for radical change, or calling for faithfulness to the doctrine of the Church and the teaching of Jesus - is going to find it hard to command wide enough support. Tragically, this means that a good number of evangelical and orthodox bishops were ruled out from the start. But it also means that any of those who signed the letter of 44 bishops, calling for clergy to be able to enter same-sex marriage, was also not going to be appointed.

Although the Crown Nominations Commission process is supposed to be strictly confidential, there was media speculation that the candidates were Pete Wilcox, Bishop of Sheffield; Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford and always the bookmakers' favourite; Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells; and Sarah.

It was unlikely that Pete Wilcox, an evangelical, would gain consensus following a previous evangelical appointment. Guli signed the letter of the 44, and so would have been a divisive choice. That left Michael - aged 56 with less than three years as a diocesan - or Sarah, with eight years' experience of leading the most complex and divided diocese in the Church - both in the 'moderate liberal' branch of the Church of England. Given that, I don't think the decision was a surprise - and I cannot think of an obvious workable alternative.”

Archbishop designate Sarah has a tough road ahead. Some members of the Anglican communion have decided to throw their toys out of the pram and leave the Anglican communion. However, based on the fact that the Anglican communion is just an informal gathering of likeminded folk, I'm not sure that will change things very much. The media inaccurately refers to the Archbishop of Canterbury as Head of the Anglican communion, but this has never been the case. In 1867, the Archbishop of Canterbury was Charles Longley, who invited like-minded bishops to a Conference in Lambeth. Other archbishops in 1867 included Henry Edward Manning in Westminster (Catholic Church) and Michael Kieran as the Archbishop of Armagh. Subsequent Archbishops have hosted a Lambeth conference ever since and I suspect Sarah will do the same. Those that want to come will, and those who don't, won't!

So, if you're the praying type please do pray for the Church of England in these challenging times and especially our new Archbishop designate Sarah, because I suspect she needs all the prayer we can give.

G Bless Simon.

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