

MORPETH PATHWAYS

A FORUM FOR CHURCH & COMMUNITY

FREE ISSUE



Harvest edition 2025

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Issue No 11

From the editor

Welcome to the harvest edition of Pathways.

Harvest is a time of celebration of crops safely gathered and stored ready for the winter. Farmers have had a tough time this year, with a wet spring and then a series of heatwaves in the summer. At times they must have felt, where is God in all this?

It's a question pondered by Rev Professor David Wilkinson, a renowned astrophysicist who talked to me about science and faith – do they challenge each other? His answers, and his new book "How does God act in the world?" make fascinating reads. If you are interested in his thinking it is well worth exploring his work further. You can also hear his regular contributions to BBC Radio 4's Thought For the Day during the early morning Today programme.

If science and faith sound a bit daunting, Rev Jeremy Cooper has risen to a challenge laid down to the ministry team and prepared a list of tools and resources to help us read the Bible and deepen our spiritual journey. This is the first in the series of three, so thank you to Jeremy for his thoughtful endeavours.

Two of our contributors to this issue celebrate the natural world. Rebecca Wooton describes how her small plot behind St Mary's church spoke to her and the impressive progress she has made in just four years. On a grander scale, Jane Wallis wonders at the splendour of Wallington's Garden of Eden.

It's not just nature that we marvel at – this issue looks at the man made world, too. This year's Heritage Open Days are from 19th to 21st of September and two of our Morpeth Parish churches, St Mary's and St James will be open to the public, as well as the Boys' Brigade Hall in Manchester Street which will be open on Saturday 20th. Liz Scott-Tatum, a member of the Fabric Committee who look after our



buildings, writes about the joy – and the challenges of looking after listed buildings and monuments.

Meanwhile Christopher Teasdale follows on the theme of 200 years of railways with a look at Morpeth Railway station, which went through an ambitious multimillion pound restoration programme in 2020. The results can be seen in the splendid building on the front cover of this issue.

At times the changes around us can seem overwhelming and the diet of daily news stories is challenging, to say the least. We are often left wondering what we can do. Liz Scott-Tatum and Janet Hedley have some suggestions on ways to make our voices heard, even when we feel the problems are insurmountable. And one way to be heard locally is to take part in the consultation about the future of the Chantry, one of the iconic buildings in Morpeth.

And finally, September heralds the start of the new school year. David Sunderland looks back to his time as head teacher at Wansbeck St Aidan CE (Aided) First School, formerly St James's and now All Saints. We are grateful for all teachers and headteachers like David who are dedicated to the teaching and wellbeing of all the pupils in Morpeth and beyond. I hope you all have a happy and successful first term of the year.

Sally Keith



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Morpeth Railway Station

In 2025, we mark the bicentenary of passenger rail travel in the UK with the opening of the Darlington and Stockton railway on 27th September 1825. Morpeth would not have a rail link for another 22 years when its railway station began operation on 1st March 1847. While not quite 200 years old, Morpethians have enjoyed a rail link for 178 years at the time of writing. The history of the railways is complicated. The construction of specific lines were sanctioned by Acts of Parliament. The Newcastle and Berwick Railway was formed by Act of Parliament on 31st July 1845. Today, following numerous mergers of companies, we know it as part of the East Coast Main Line (ECML), which is currently operated by London North Eastern Railway (LNER), a publicly owned rail company formed in 2018.

When Morpeth station opened on 1st March 1847, the line north of Morpeth to Berwick was not completed and nor was the handsome station house by architects John and Benjamin Green of Newcastle upon Tyne. A thrice-daily service to Newcastle was soon established after opening. Designed in an elegant Jacobethan-style architecture, the station house is Grade II Listed by Historic England. The Greens' most famous work outside the railways is the Theatre Royal in Grey Street, Newcastle, along with the column of Grey's Monument. They also designed a handful of Northumbrian churches. Their best examples are St Alban's, Earsdon, and Holy Trinity, Cambo, designed for the Trevelyan family of Wallington.

In 2020, the station house underwent an ambitious £2.3 million restoration project. Many of the disused spaces were brought back into active use providing a modern 21st century commuting hub and offices. Through the efforts of the Greater Morpeth Development Trust, the refurbishment money was secured through grants from The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Homes and Communities Agency, CORE, Northumberland County Council and the Architectural Heritage Fund. Notable external changes were undertaken by contractors Napper Architects and STP Construction Ltd to restore the Greens' original vision. This included the reinstatement of the entrance portico, that had previously been blocked up, while replica chimney stacks were added to the roof.

In total, Green designed 20 station houses between Newcastle and Berwick, all in the Jacobethan style, but each one unique in aspect, plan and scale. Today, only Netherton (renamed Stannington from 1892), Longhirst, Widdrington, Acklington, Warkworth, Lesbury, Christon Bank, Chathill, Belford and Scremeston, along with Morpeth, still exist. Of these, only Morpeth is served by national services LNER, Lumo and CrossCounty; Widdrington, Acklington and Chathill have irregular Northern services; while the remaining station buildings have been converted into private dwellings. Widdrington Station house is also a private property and no longer part of the station facilities. Notably, Stannington, Warkworth and Longhirst station houses were ambitious in scale for their rural locations. How much would it cost to own a piece of railway history? Longhirst Station house, comprising 180 m², last sold for £330,000 in June 2021.

Christopher Teasdale

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Chantry Consultation

The Chantry is an iconic building in Morpeth, being one of the oldest buildings in the town. Originally constructed in around 1296 as a chapel where masses were said for the souls of the departed.

However, over its long history it has had many uses. As a toll house for the old medieval bridge, the original location of Morpeth Grammar School and even at one stage a pop and fizzy drinks factory.

Currently the Chantry is owned by Northumberland County Council and houses the Tourist Information Centre, the Bagpipe Museum and the Northumbrian Craft Centre selling Northumberland based products.

The Council has embarked upon a consultation process to engage with residents and local stakeholder groups to discuss a sustainable future for the Chantry in conjunction with other Council owned buildings in the Town.

The Council is looking at options regarding the future use of the building to maximise appropriate community use and to utilise to its best effect as one of the town's most iconic buildings. This is an exciting opportunity to have your say regarding what could be a transformational future for the building.

The details to send your thoughts to on the future of the Chantry are <https://nland.uk/ChantrySurvey>



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Fourth year Sweet Spot

Four years ago, my husband bought me a garden with a house attached!

The garden is a little over a 10th of an acre, around 620 sq. metres. It is situated due South, behind St Mary's the Virgin Church in Morpeth.

The plot instantly spoke to me. We built raised beds for veggies and set about researching ways to fill them cost-effectively. In doing so, I stumbled across Permaculture, and I was hooked.

Rebecca Wooton opens the garden gate to a hidden gem behind St Mary's church



Permaculture is a way of nurturing your plot to mimic natural ecosystems, creating harmony and self-sufficiency. Think of an accident woodland that supports large trees, provides berries and mushrooms for food and shelter for wildlife.

By implementing Permaculture, including composting, companion planting and introducing livestock in the form of four rescue chickens, we have created a lush oasis that, by and large, takes care of itself.

Four years on, we have reached a lovely, balanced 'sweet spot' in our garden. Pest pressure is very minimal as the beneficial buddies have taken up residence!



The experience of working with and taking my cues from Mother Nature has transformed the way I think about a lot of things in my life.



A sign hanging by our garden entrance says, "*To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow*", A. Hepburn. I'm not sure if the breakout superstar of Breakfast at Tiffany's practised Permaculture! But the sentiment of hope which comes from this quote is wonderful.

Just as Permaculture relies on connections to nature, increasingly, I allow the connections I have made in my life to nurture me. I try not to fight against the odd hypothetical 'weed'. I welcome volunteer seedlings that grow the same way I welcome opportunities that arise.

One such opportunity was a pop-up event held in my garden recently. One of the National Gardening Scheme organisers floated the idea past me, and I just went for it! We sold out of tickets and raised nearly £400 for charity in six very hectic and exciting hours.

Four years on from humble beginnings, my plot has transformed and with it, so have I.



Memories of Wansbeck St Aidan

I was fortunate enough to be appointed Headteacher at WSA from January 1982, having previously been Head of a small, three teacher school in Cumbria and before that serving nearly ten years in British Forces schools in W. Germany.

As pupils start their new school years, a former head teacher looks back to his first days in Morpeth

On visiting the school prior to being interviewed, I can remember walking down what seemed to be a maze of corridors and classrooms. After the small village school, this felt endless.

St. Aidan's had opened only six years beforehand, and in addition to being a very modern building, is situated in a beautiful location, with extensive grounds. However, there were a couple of surprises, one being that five of the classrooms did not have doors, but were open to the corridor. I was concerned about the number of times in every day that the children's attention would be distracted by people walking past. I also discovered that every time the external corridor doors were opened for playtimes or lunch times, the resulting draught immediately sucked all the warm air out of the building. Two pairs of the classrooms also had no connecting doors, just gaps through which the other class could be seen and heard.

A further surprise was that, in spite of the 1974 Health and Safety Act, the children's front path into the school grounds was lined on one side with small yew trees, the seeds and foliage of which are highly toxic. These findings made my initial agenda list easy to prioritise.

The reason for building a new school was that the previous church school, St. James, was next to St. James' Church, now the car park, and the school hall is now the Community Centre. Unfortunately, in the 1960's and early 70's, the school was badly flooded a number of times, up to seven or eight feet deep, by a culvert that still runs and can be seen behind the Methodist Church. There are a number of photographs in the school that show the extent of the flood damage. It was decided to close Mitford village school at this time, and to

amalgamate it with St. James, presumably because of falling rolls. So the new school was named Wansbeck St. Aidan C.E. Aided First School, showing its wider catchment. As it so happened, there was also a Wansbeck First School and a St. Aidan R.C. First School, both in nearby Ashington. For some years this caused confusion in delivery of post and parcels. I trust that All Saints does not suffer in the same way. One unexpected result of the address was a letter addressed to

D. Sunderland, Headteacher
The Wansbeck Saint
Aidan's First School
Lancaster Park

Alas, it wasn't a Papal decree.

So in January, 1982, I arrived and went up to the school before term started. We had a house in Cumbria to sell, so Barbara and the family stayed there and Rev. Can. G. Bateson had asked the parishioners if anyone could kindly have the new head to stay during the week. You will not be surprised that Janet and Brian Hedley promptly offered me a home, which made my early months in Morpeth such a pleasant start.

On entering the cold, deserted school building, I was greeted by the sight of wet ceiling tiles on the floor and desks in Mrs. Stevenson's room, the Deputy Head. Another item for the priority list. However, the school was made ready for the first day of term, which I had been a little taken aback to discover was on a Thursday. I had never begun a term on a Thursday before, and it seemed rather odd to have two days followed by the weekend. But that's how it was.

On Friday after school, I drove down to Sedbergh to be with the family, returning to Morpeth on Sunday evening. At about 8am. on Monday morning I had an unexpected phone call from the school Caretaker, Mr. Laidler, informing me that I would have to close the school immediately because the boilers were not working, and it was a very cold January. I hardly knew the staff, and certainly not the 232 children and their families, some of whom walked, but many came by car and others on the school buses. How to contact them all in time? Fortunately, Grahame Williams, my predecessor, had appointed excellent staff members, especially Mrs. June Stevenson, who took upon herself the whole process in her calm, highly capable manner that I soon came to appreciate on many occasions, and sorted it all out amazingly quickly, much to my relief as I felt completely at a loss.

This wasn't the start that I had envisaged. I mentioned that my previous school was in Cumbria, although it was still in the Yorkshire Dales boundary, [and for some reason had a Lancaster postcode]. Being a Yorkshireman myself, I had no difficulty understanding the broad dialect used by the families, but was somewhat thrown when young John arrived in Reception counting not 'one, two three', but 'yan,tan,tethera', an old Yorkshire way of counting sheep still used by his father. At St. Aidan's, I received a phone call after two days which I could not understand at all. I gathered it was from Ashington police station, but I had to ask 3 or 4 times for it to be repeated. Finally I managed to translate a very heavy local accent, simply asking, "Can I speak to Mrs.B in the kitchen?" I was happy not to be charged with impeding police business.



One event which changed school life nationally occurred just after our Ofsted inspection. Schools had been encouraged to engage with and welcome parents into aspects of school life, and we had many parents who were able to assist with swimming sessions, running the library, helping with reading, backing new books, cooking, computing, etc We tried to be an open school. One inspector criticised me for having "a

too-open school". When he visited his wife at her school, he was met by a locked door and had to identify himself by intercom. My response was that I did not wish to live in his world. I had spent all my years trying to develop a welcoming school. Then one man altered the world of education by the horrific shooting at Dunblane. Following this, we had to install door locks, cameras at the main entrance and an intercom system, none of which I would have considered remotely likely previously. A tragic event which still has national repercussions.

I was exceedingly fortunate to have been appointed to St. Aidan's. The staff worked as a close team, aiming at high standards of academic achievement and behaviour. The pupils were a delight to know and teach, the parents were keenly interested in their child's education, and the whole governing body was fully supportive. At the end of the Ofsted inspection, we were asked which descriptor of behaviour we would prefer -excellent or exemplary. For me, either would apply to all who contributed to our school.

D R Sunderland
Headteacher [retired]
1982-1997

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Hiroshima Day

Wednesday, 6th of August. It was 8 am on a fair morning, just as it had been on that fateful day at Hiroshima. A group of about two dozen Morpeth folk gathered to remember the devastation of an atomic bomb dropped first on Hiroshima, and then on Nagasaki, three days later.

I believe it was Councillor Nic Best who first inaugurated our Morpeth remembrance, and Morpeth Justice and Peace group have carried on this annual tradition.

As we gathered in the Peace Garden beside the Chantry, Pat Fuller played traditional Japanese music, then a Tibetan prayer bowl was sounded to start our remembrance.

After hearing short extracts from Jewish, Christian, Moslem and Buddhist texts, we listened again to the bald facts of the suffering – 300,000 people who died so horribly and many thousands more enduring radiation sickness, many dying of this, later.

We joined in a litany of remembrance, with everyone responding to each section with, “This is our cry: peace in the world.”

We prayed for those who had died....for those who died helping others in the aftermath....for more peacemakers, right now.....for those who can forgive, as well as those who cannot.

At 8.15, the time the first bomb was dropped, we kept silence. Though swifts were calling overhead and lorries were rumbling over the bridge, each person there held silence inside themselves.

Pat then spoke to us about our calling: to work for change....build up a community of peace and justice....recognise the way we may be complicit in the failings of our society and government.

Pat told us again the story of Sadako Sasaki, who was two when the bomb dropped. She lived till she was 12, and whilst in hospital, she folded over 1,000 origami cranes. She knew the story that if you make 1,000 cranes, you can make a wish. This is what she did.

In Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park there is a statue of Sasaki, holding a golden crane. The plaque below reads, “This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace in the world.”

Under the patient (and free) tutelage of Stephen, proprietor of “Lateral Art”, the group had made origami cranes from the origami paper Stephen donated, and each of us took one, either to leave in the Peace Garden as a remembrance, or to take home.

Pat reminded us of the nuclear bomb situation at this present time with ever-increasing numbers of nuclear warheads of ever-increasing deadliness.

She quoted Shane Claiborne, who asked, in 2020: “One has to ask, how many times do we need to blow up the world?”

Eileen Harber had brought white flowers for us all, and we each took some and walked silently to the bridge. We dropped our flowers into the water and watched as they drifted away.

We remembered.....and we say, “This is our cry, this is our prayer, peace in the world.”

We have committed ourselves to keep remembering and to work for peace.



God and Astrophysics

For those people who were unable to come along to the Friday night FEAST event, please could you tell me what you talked about over the supper?

In essence I talked about my own experience as a scientist and a Christian. My background is in theoretical astrophysics, which is the study of stars and galaxies and the universe itself.

Over the summer I was fortunate to catch up with Rev. Professor David Wilkinson and talk to him about FEAST, faith and his latest book.

I became a Christian at 17, so just before I started to study physics and astrophysics and for me the two have become intertwined. I've found that these different aspects of my life question each other, so sometimes my science has asked difficult questions for my faith and sometimes my faith has asked difficult questions for my science. But ultimately these have not been destructive. Rather enriching both my excitement in science and my excitement in faith.

I talked about some of the things about the universe which I studied, which I find fascinating both for science and for faith. So one of them was just how big the universe is now. That might seem obvious but just how vast it is is not trivial. It's 100 billion stars each as large as our own sun. It's 100 billion galaxies and so there is something there about the extravagance of God in creation. And then I talked about the beauty and simplicity of those physical laws and the sense of awe at the universe and what that means.

The final part of the talk was a little about how I don't think that God can be worked out through science or the universe. I think sometimes science points to a deeper story to the universe. But ultimately as a Christian I encountered God not through a telescope, but in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth,

What is your new book about?

It's called "How does God act in the world" and the subtitle is "Science, Miracle and Mission". The book is of a series of lectures given at Manchester University called the Didsbury Lectures. It's a

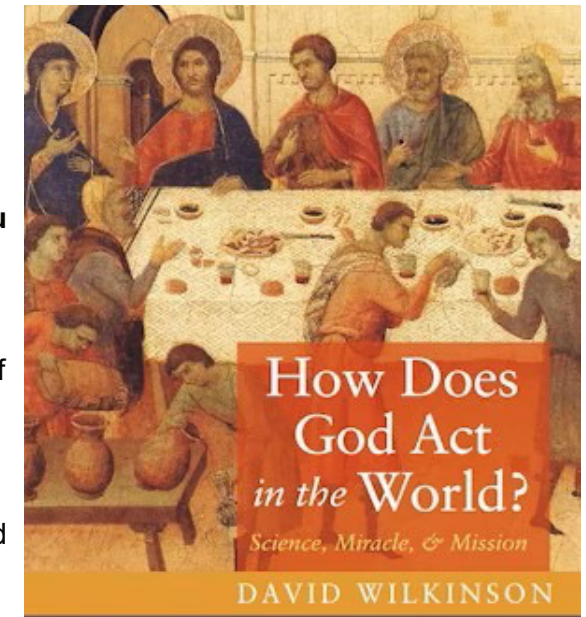
fairly short book with four chapters, four lectures, which deal with the question of whether science rules out miracles. It looks at miracles, particularly in the global church and the big issue around them. For me the issue with miracles is not science, it's the problem of evil and that if God can do the unusual in the universe, why does he not do it more? Why doesn't he solve all of the really serious issues?

The final chapter is really about what does this mean for a local church? What does this mean for the way that we worship, the way that we talk about discipleship? It discusses what it means to be a church that's open to the spirit, to do new things, but at the same time is a church which recognises that our pattern for living is the death and resurrection of Jesus. So it doesn't take us away from the suffering in this world.

Your final chapter is about local churches. Have you always been an academic or have you served in local churches?

No I haven't always been an academic. I was first of all an astrophysicist and then I felt a call to full time Christian Ministry. At that point I left astrophysics, went to study theology and became a Methodist minister. I looked after various churches before spending a decade looking after a church in inner city Liverpool.

As more and more people became interested in the relationship of science and faith, the pressures upon me in terms of speaking, writing and broadcasting increased. Then out of the blue, Durham University came calling! They said they would like me to come back to Durham University, where I had done my astrophysics, only this time would I teach theology? So at that point the Methodist Church gave me permission to leave local church and go back in to academia. That was some 25 years ago. I'm still an ordained methodist minister and



on Sundays I will either worship at my local church or fill in for people who may not be able to take services or I will be invited to preach in different places.

What are you focusing on now?

I'm project director of ECLAS – equipping Christian leadership in an age of science.

This came out of a conversation I had with Tom McLeish some ten years ago. Tom was a world leading scientist based at Durham University and also a lay reader in the Anglican church. We had a moan about bishops and senior church leaders. It was our impression as scientists that when senior church leaders were asked about science they reacted with either fear or negativity or silence. And if the church was negative about science than it played into what has become a standard popular understanding that science and faith are in conflict.

So we started a project where we invited senior church leaders, bishops and their equivalents to come to Durham and talk with the world's leading scientists. And what we found was that as people talked together those barriers between science and faith just naturally dissolved away.

Since then we have built up a body of research around how Christian leaders view science. We've worked with theological colleges to help them embed science into the training of church leaders and we have worked with the Church of England's Faith and Public Life department. We've also run over 70 projects called Scientists in Congregations. We thought we would get proposals for talks on science and faith but what actually happened was we brought together local church leaders with scientists in their congregations and saw a flourishing of imagination. We've had dinosaur skeletons in cathedrals, 'Take your vicar into the lab' and Messy Church does Science.

The next stage of the project is to work with international partners to research how church leaders in different parts of the world see science.

Celebrating Difference

When we first published Pathways in the autumn of 2023, part of our vision was to provide a forum where everyone in Morpeth would be able to write about their interests, stories, beliefs and values. We recognized that Pathways could, effectively, tell the story of Morpeth. A town like ours, rich in history and culture, has developed the way it has through the expression of its inhabitants, and the magazine could be the place where we could share our similarities and celebrate our differences.

Accordingly, the editorial team would like to encourage anyone reading this article to write something about their interests, their family history and/or connection with Morpeth, or perhaps you have some special knowledge of some historic building or custom.



Many people underestimate the value of their local knowledge, or the extent to which their life and/or work has helped shape the present town. As a newcomer to Morpeth, I am constantly struck at how interesting are these local narratives. I am also surprised at the depth of the knowledge that people hold, and yet do not have the opportunity to express their knowledge where it will

be valued and upheld. There will be families which go back centuries whose ancestors helped to shape and develop the town and district and have the most amazing stories to tell, which would surprise and delight our readers.

Please do consider putting pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard! We need a variety of contributors from all ages to express the diversity of contemporary Morpethian culture, as well as the interpretation of the historical culture. Your interests and hobbies may well reflect the surrounding culture, so please do consider writing an article so that

others may benefit from your knowledge and interests. Or, if you are a little nervous about writing, someone from the editorial team would be happy to interview you!

Please send any contributions to Sally Keith, Acting Editor, at Sally.borderkeith@gmail.com. If there is anything you would like to discuss or are not sure of, then anyone on the editorial team would be happy to talk to you.

Lyndsey Phillips



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A shared heritage:

the joys and challenges caring for listed buildings and monuments.

Within the Morpeth area there are a wide range of listed buildings, monuments, and parks and a surprising number of mile posts. In total there are around 166 of them and the Heritage Open days give people a chance to explore some of them in closer detail. The listings recognise their historic or social importance and that people recognise that they are part of our identity and culture as a town and community.

The Historic England website <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/> advised that

“Listing’ describes the different types of protection for heritage featured on the National Heritage List for England (also referred to as ‘the List’, or NHLE), which includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, protected wreck sites and registered battlefields.

The grade of a listed building, registered park or garden is intended to indicate its special interest in a national context.

“Grade I buildings are of exceptional special interest
Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
Grade II buildings are of special interest
Scheduled monuments, registered battlefields and protected wrecks are not graded”.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>”

The listed buildings and properties in Morpeth range widely from:

- a number of our churches – St Roberts RC, St James the Great and St Mary the Virgin
- public monuments and buildings – the clock tower, the bollard at the back of the Joiners Arms, The Hollon Fountain, the Chantry, Morpeth Castle, and the recently restored Morpeth Railway station
- a number of the residential properties or businesses on Newgate Street, Bridge Street and Oldgate
- and monuments of significance – the Cenotaph, the Grave of

Emily Davidson, the arcade to St James church on Newgate Street

- a drainage tunnel exit on the north bank of the river Wansbeck.

Within the Parish of Morpeth we are guardians of two listed churches (St Mary's is grade 1, and St James the Great is grade II*), the Boys Brigade Hall (grade II), the arcade leading into the grounds of St James Church (grade II*) and the railings and lychgate leading to St Mary's church (both grade II) as well as a number of listed graves and monuments in the older part of the church yard, and the Watchhouse (grade II listed). The Watchhouse was used in days gone by as a shelter for the men who kept watch to prevent grave robbers from stealing the bodies of the recently buried.

The members of Morpeth's Parochial Church council (PCC) know we are privileged to be the guardians of such buildings and monuments which have been and continue to be so important to us as a church family, but also to the people of Morpeth and Northumberland.

Contrary to what many think, parish churches are not rich and each year we carefully manage the income we receive from the planned giving from members of the congregation and from any donations we receive, or the income from use of our buildings by community groups. Each year a proportion of the income raised is gifted to Newcastle Diocese (known as our parish share) to support ministry, but we also need to cover the costs of heating and lighting our buildings, and to maintain and repair them as we are able. Guidance on priority of repair and maintenance is highlighted by the parish architect on a five yearly report known as a Quinquennial. The juggling needed to keep our buildings open and safe for use can be challenging, but we want to ensure we can be there for your baptisms, weddings and funerals and civic celebrations, for general worship and just for times of quiet and reflection.

Over the years the buildings have also been vulnerable to episodes of theft and vandalism, which not only place an increased financial burden on the parish, but potentially impact on the longevity of the buildings.

This year we are dealing at St Mary's with vandalism to the lychgate and a medieval door, and need to identify the associated costs for repair.



We are also experiencing repeated littering and vandalism to the watchhouse and the wall surrounding the older part of the graveyard. We have shared our concerns about the current issues with Northumbria police and Morpeth Town council.

There has also been damage to the stained glass over the west door at St James church. Repair or restoration work on our listed buildings or monuments

requires us to gain permission from our Archdeacon or what is called the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and also to use crafts people with specialist conservation skills. This can influence the time it takes to start repair works, and also the associated costs.



There are also hidden expenses we may not think about, for example, the broken stained glass at St James cannot be repaired in situ, so the costs will include the hire of scaffolding or cherry picker to remove and then replace the damaged section.

We hope that this article helps to explain the difficulties involved in maintaining our buildings, and why repairs sometimes may not happen as quickly as you'd expect.

To learn more about our buildings and their histories please visit our website: <https://parishofmorpeth.org.uk/st-james-church/>



Fabric committee, Parish of Morpeth

Aids to Reading your Bible: Part 1

Tools and Resources for Deepening Your Spiritual Journey

Introduction

In a recent sermon I challenged people to engage more with their Bibles to deepen their understanding of scripture. It was requested that I provide some help with that. So, I asked members of the Ministry Team and one or two others for suggestions of digital and paper resources that they would recommend.

Rev Jeremy Cooper rises to the challenge to help us all read the bible

This is part one of a series of three articles and focuses on using Bible Meditation apps. Part two will look at Bible Reading apps and the third part will look at more traditional printed resources.

The convenience of mobile technology has revolutionised scripture study, making the Bible accessible wherever you are and whenever you want.

Bible Meditation Apps

These are ideal for those with busy lifestyles who only have a few minutes to spend with scripture. They are easy to use and most provide easy access to a bible passage and a time for reflection based on the passage. The following are our favourites. A search in your app store will get you started.

1. Lectio 365

The free app on my phone works very well. I found the P.R.A.Y. structure, P (pause to be still); R (rejoice with a Psalm and reflect on the Bible); A (ask God to help us and others); and Y (yield to God's will in our lives), useful. It provides opportunities to listen to, and pray, using the Bible, with a guided meditation on the scriptures and asking God to speak through them. There is a choice of Morning, Midday or Evening prayer all of which are quite short (about 10 minutes). They also explore a special focus to remember well known people of faith and during seasons such as Lent and Advent. You can set up notifications to remind you to P.R.A.Y. An excellent resource.



2. Daily Prayer App

I use the free app on my phone. It enables me to join in with the prayer life of the church whenever is convenient for me. You can choose Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer and additionally there is, on-line, a short service of prayer during the day (Midday Prayer). You can go at your own pace making space for silence and reflection as you feel led. You could listen to the daily Morning Prayer service which includes a sung psalm or canticle. All the services include scripture readings taken from the CofE Lectionary. This is the service that the Parish uses at Morning Prayer either in person or on zoom.



3. Everyday Faith

I use the free app, from The CofE, on my phone. It is designed to inspire, equip and encourage you in your faith every day. You can read and/or listen to the session which takes about 5 minutes. There is a bible passage followed by a reflection, a chance to respond to God and a closing prayer. It aims to enable you to explore where and how we encounter God as we go about our lives. I found this very accessible, very easy to use, down to earth and encouraged me to reflect on how the reading related to the everyday situations going on in my life.



4. Abide.com

I set up an account but decided not to sign up for the paid version. Instead, I registered on the website, and get a free daily meditation delivered to my email inbox. Each meditation is short (about 3 minutes) and stand-alone so it doesn't matter if you miss one or two. It's very easy to use, simply click on the link in the daily email. I found the meditations helpful, not too theological, but relevant.



Conclusion

Whether you are new to the Bible or a lifelong reader, modern apps offer a wealth of opportunities to engage with scripture. There is a resource suited to every preference. Whether you have 5 minutes or 20 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

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Wallington and its Garden of Eden

Writing this piece on Wallington Hall gardens required some weighty thought. Should I call it "The Secret Garden" or "The Garden of Eden"? Balancing the scales, the latter name has tipped the balance for me.

You would never know that there was a glorious garden without its ornate gates; gates to close off the area around the hall, a road to cross and then gates into the area of beauty. Pleasures for all to reap.

A canopy awaits you. On this midsummer's day, flowing leaves of greens and amber, sparkling with light from above. The path, an



incline, leads to a pond – a large pond on our walk, where coots and their young dip and dive between a canopy of water lilies, fronds with petite yellow flowers, while ducks waddle at the far bank

followed by their almost indistinguishable young, pecking at insects in the grass margins.

They are the same coots and ducks I saw last year and I like to think they are the same mating pairs. No arguments now for a mate as in early Spring. Everyone well matched! How the coots love to cross the lily pads, like young children playing hopscotch. It's quiet except for this feathered movement. Occasionally I see or hear a finch or robin or blackbird. The stillness and shadows of this pond calm me from daily anxieties and thoughts of world events. A perfect world in its creation.



Open a gate to the secret garden. What lies beyond has to be old, planned out centuries ago and walked over by countless dedicated workers, initially employed by the estate and now the National Trust, as well as thousands of visitors. There the walls between the top and lower levels are

covered with wisteria, now in its green dress, along with other climbing plants. The perfume of roses fills my nostrils. It's here the magic of colour also fills my senses. The outside area of the conservatory maintains its palette of reds and yellows; first red tulips, large and small, bold and breathtaking in their artistry; then the second year with daffodils and narcissi, yellow, creamy and orange centres. It's planned to perfection in this area. When the bulbs sleep they are replaced by perennials, likewise in shades of red and gold.

Walking along the path suddenly a heavenly scent fills my being – small white irises shouting out “look at me. I may be small but my scent is to die for”. They demand us to stop and take note.

Down we go to the small kiosk and point out the icehouse. Next appears a lawned area with fruit trees and borders of rhubarb, one of the Trust's prized collections. Then comes a large garden of perennials grown especially for birds.



They are allowed to seed and weather, looking like abandoned sticks with heads of sweet goodies ready to pop like fizzy drinks.



There are several seats. Here we sit every visit with our two dogs and I pray aloud to God for His creation, nothing more or less, and thank Him for the beauty and variety of His abundance.

And “He saw that it was good”. There it is, my Garden of Eden. For a few minutes of near solitude and peace in this beautiful earth. I'm refreshed and refilled. My soul is joyful.

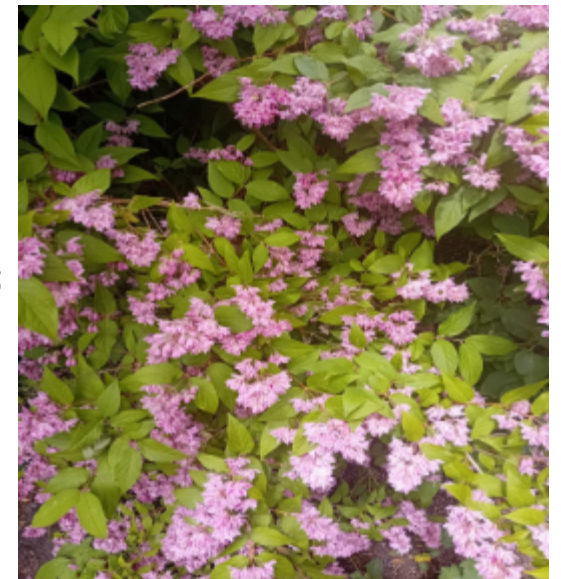
Up now some stone steps to link the lower level, with its running stream, to the higher level of rose bushes. On through the elaborate iron gates and into the woodland area once again.

Wallington is a special place and well cared for. It has given us something to look forward to in this rushed world; a place to ponder on life and creation.

If you had to choose a description, what would it be; The Secret Garden or The Garden of Eden?

I hope you visit and capture its magic as we do.

Jane Wallis



But what can I do to change things ...

let your voice be heard even when it trembles?

Sitting in front of the TV watching the news one evening, I just became so angry and frustrated that nothing seemed to be changing for the people trapped in Gaza - literally starving to death in front of the eyes of the world, or for the Israeli hostages who are held in there. Asking myself how it can be that no one seems to be responding to the warnings from the World Health Organization and United Nations? At times we really need to speak out and to act, so that's what I did. I emailed David Smith, our Member of Parliament, I signed online petitions at Parliament, Christian Aid, Oxfam and Amnesty International. All different means by which one voice can be amplified to create a collective roar that says "enough, this must stop".

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the news, Liz Scott-Tatum has some suggestions for how you can make a difference

But the situation in Gaza is not a one off, we see the horrific toll of the ongoing war in Ukraine with glimmers of hope, which then quickly seem to be dulled by the reports of further drone and missile attacks. We are occasionally prodded by a media story about the ongoing conflict in Sudan, which has left one million people displaced, six million people without enough to eat and 1.4 million people also affected by extreme flooding; this is a situation which has been ongoing since 2011.

Christian Aid continues to work with people in war torn countries and communities and those affected by natural disasters such as the earthquakes in Myanmar this March 2025. They work through their partner organisations on the ground and with other DEC members to help provide the immediate basics of food, water, shelter and sanitation. But after the media coverage has gone as a conscious reminder, how quickly we can forget.

As a charity it has been there for so many people in need for 80 years and in addition to emergency responses, continues to work to try to address injustice in our world, empowering more vulnerable members in communities, and recognising the inequalities and damage faced by poorer countries caused by the extreme consumption and pollution of what we call the developed world. We attempt to raise awareness, and to facilitate action through our different campaigns, the current campaign is called the Restore campaign.



"The climate and debt crises are colliding to trap millions of people in poverty. These crises are a symptom of the broken systems and broken relationships of our times. The Restore Campaign invites you to join in God's work to restore creation.

Join us to call on the UK

Government to stand up to reckless polluters and greedy lenders.

The UK Government is uniquely placed, and morally obliged, to act. It can tax the profits of polluters like Shell and BP. It can introduce 'debt justice' laws that force private lenders to cancel or negotiate the debt of low-income countries. This could pull millions of people out of poverty. (Christian Aid website 21.08.2025)

To find out more and to sign our petition to the Government caid.org.uk/Restore

To contact David Smith, our MP: <https://davidsmithnorth.co.uk/>

Other ways you can help to make a difference:

- Give – either by online donations to Christian Aid, DEC or other partner organisations, to pop some money in our collecting tins or envelopes when we do our annual collections or join us for our Ceilidh at St Georges United Reform Church 11th October.
- Act – be bold and make your voice heard, even if it makes you tremble. Contact our MP, sign petitions which reflect your views, contact your local Christian Aid group to volunteer, or if you are able, think about direct actions such as #FastForGaza. Fast for Gaza is a simple but powerful global campaign where activists are going hungry in solidarity with the thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza at risk of dying from starvation. This is a weekly 24-hour fast (See Christian Aid's website for more details)
- Pray – express your concerns to God in prayer, again there are a range of prayers you can access on the website <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray>



"It is not too late to save lives. Please help if you can. Every prayer, every gift, every action brings hope to people in need" (Christian Aid) and as Helen Keller said "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much".

Don't leave others in the world to face things on their own.

Liz Scott-Tatum Co-chair, Morpeth Christian Aid Group.

The Rector's Ramblings Being disappointed

So last week, I spent all week clearing the garden and cutting the edges of the borders to perfection. All the plants were overflowing with colour; the garden was in top form. I had been out to buy an array of drinks for the annual parish BBQ, the fridge was stocked, and the BBQ gas bottle was replenished. The bar was filled, and all was ready for the perfect afternoon. Then, without warning, the heavens opened, and a mad dash to put all the furniture and cushions away before they became soaked through was initiated. The rain then decided to continue and showed no signs of easing and my weather app suddenly changed and informed me that the rain was here to stay, so the disappointing WhatsApp message had to be sent out: the BBQ was to be abandoned. I was super disappointed, as were those who had prepared to come. The numerous sad face emojis started to ping onto my WhatsApp, and the process of putting everything away started. So much time and effort, and all for nothing!

Disappointment can feel final and depressing. Okay, it was only a BBQ and not a life-threatening situation, but disappointment feels the same whether it's that awful feeling when you miss your bus, or a friend lets you down. You still feel the same feeling, which can drag you into a dark place like a small storm cloud that can gather with other storm clouds until eventually, they become a full-blown storm in your head and heart. What started as disappointment can often feel like an existential crisis within a matter of time.



When I read of the disciples gathered in an upper room after their teacher and friend Jesus was executed in the most brutal way by the Roman authorities, I wonder how they felt? They must have felt such disappointment. Not only had this gentle and Godly man been executed by the Roman authorities but he had been jeered and cheered to his execution by his own kin, God's chosen people. There must have been real fear as well as disappointment and even after the miraculous appearance of Jesus to them in the upper room, they appear to have even more disappointment, they are told "Don't hang on to me but wait and pray" How much more disappointment could they take?

And maybe that's the advice we need to take "wait and pray".

The disciples had to wait and pray for the Holy Spirit of God to come and transform and change their hearts and minds, and maybe that's sage advice. Maybe you're not the praying type but waiting can, in itself, help us to clear our minds. I find that prayer is a way of me clearing away the detritus of the world that always tries to crowd out my heart and mind, which often likes to gather the storm clouds of disappointment, until they break into a full-blown storm and consume me. So, if you're disappointed and struggling, try to stop and wait, and if you're inclined, stop and pray, seek the light eternal that I find chases away the clouds of disappointment, revealing the sun which can warm your hearts and minds and transform and change us.

God Bless Simon

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