



M O R P E T H
PATHWAYS

A FORUM FOR CHURCH & COMMUNITY



FREE ISSUE

Whitsun edition 2026

Issue No 15

From the editor

Welcome to the Whitsun edition of Pathways.

Whitsun or Whit Sunday falls on the seventh Sunday after Easter and marks the birthday of the Christian Church. This is because it also marks the feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and gave them the courage and language to spread the Gospel story. The Bank Holiday at the end of May used to be called Whit Monday, but today it is more prosaically called Spring Bank Holiday.

As I write this the sun is shining through the window and making me feel that whatever we call the Bank Holiday it will be a good time to be outside in nature and reflecting on the benefits we have.

Spare a thought for Liz Tatum-Scott who will be outside walking 70K for Christian Aid during May! Better still you can sponsor her or give a donation during Christian Aid Week in May.

Also in May the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are holding two tours of the war graves in St Mary's Churchyard during War Graves Month. There are full details on their website and some interesting tales too.

If the weather turns, we have news of a book just published by one of our congregation at St James's. Professor Sinéad Morrissey has written a memoir about her early years called, "Among Communists". She describes growing up as a Communist in Northern Ireland in the Troubles; the book ends when Sinéad is 21 at the Brandenburg Gate. It is three years since the Wall came down and she had been brought there by the family she was living with. She was, she felt, at the geopolitical heart of the world. When she is not writing her memoir Sinéad is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University and an award-winning poet. What talented people we have living in Morpeth!

If you prefer to be more creative on a wet day you can try journaling. Joanna Murgatroyd explains how she uses journaling to help her, as she put it, get creative with God. She gives a fascinating explanation of how she builds up the paper, paint and images on a page. If you

would like to know more, come along to the September meeting of FEAST – more information from the parish office.

Another creative person in Morpeth is Dave Pope, who has been the longstanding organist at St James's. In this month's edition he talks about his long career as a church organist in 50 Carol Services. We are blessed to have enjoyed Dave's devotion and playing for around 30 years and we wish him well as he takes a step back.

Our MP, David Smith, tells us about his role as UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), a role that is no longer a side issue, but an important part of British Foreign Policy, with a formal commitment from the Government. It is a coincidence that in his formative years his parents were ardent workers in Christian mission to the Communist world. The other side of the coin to Sinéad Morrissey's experience! You can hear David talk about his work as UK Special Envoy at the June meeting of FEAST.

Elsewhere in the magazine Bob Young outlines the exciting new plans for St James's Church, while we take the long view of the Mothers' Union, the first female Archbishop of Canterbury and the life of St Aidan who will be celebrated at Lifepath this year. And Chris Teasdale goes nearly as far back in a vivid history of change ringing.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Pathways. If you would like to contribute or have any suggestions for articles, please do let me know. My email address is sally.borderkeith@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sally Keith

Editor



MORPETH PARISH
Three Churches
One Family

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.parityofmorpeth.org.uk to make a donation directly. Thank you so much for your support



From Morpeth to Rome

MP David Smith talks about his role as UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief

For a moment I shook his hand and brought greetings from Northumbrians and Parliamentarians alike. I had just met His Holiness Pope Leo.

It was an immense honour, underpinned by a grave purpose.

Around 18 months ago I was appointed as UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), a role that is no longer a side issue, but an important part of British Foreign Policy, with a formal commitment from the Government.

Nobody can doubt that we live in fractured times. The number of countries with high or very high levels of Government restrictions on FoRB is at its highest level since 2007. And FoRB is central to all our freedoms: for example, if you have no freedom to share your faith, you have no freedom of speech.

In a fracturing international picture, my job is to carry our values as a country out into the world, share the hard lessons from our own history, commiserate with the persecuted and build relationships of practical hope and change.

That is no small order for an ordinary lad who grew up in rural Scotland, but perhaps not totally surprising given my early years.

As long as I can remember, I have understood the way



faith can bring us together. And drive us apart.

My parents were practicing and enthusiastic supporters of Christian mission, especially to the Communist world. We often shared our evening meals with guests who had been imprisoned, tortured and persecuted for their beliefs.

As a young man I worked through the Presbyterian Church of Ireland to set up its first ever youth peace and reconciliation project, and went on to study Peace and Reconciliation at Trinity College, Dublin. But this was no purely academic pursuit: when my wife was in labour with our first child, I had to drive us through a sectarian riot in order to reach the Belfast maternity hospital. Never have the sides of a small red Corsa felt so flimsy.

More recently, I led a homelessness charity, where a team of Christians, Agnostics and Atheists supported an eclectic population of believers, doubters and everything in between. It's impossible to sum up the intensity that marked those years, but I had many moments with God and our team where we celebrated the good and grieved the losses, often on the same day.

All of which is to say, I never expected to be given the role of Special Envoy, but looking back I can clearly trace the path that led me here.

What does any of this have to do with North Northumberland? The answer is – a lot. For one, my constituents and I are standing on ground where freedom of religion or belief was hard won. Our beloved Holy Island, birthplace of the Lindisfarne Gospels, was once home to a monastery attacked by Viking invasions. Yet Christianity has persevered. It turns out that violence and destruction are remarkably ineffective at changing people's beliefs, instead driving them to the shelter of their God, whatever the price on earth.

And while today we are free to walk into the church of our choice on any given Sunday - unlike so many others around the world - we cannot be complacent. While the Rule of Law is undermined at a global level, and a 'might is right' approach continues to wreak havoc, we have to be incredibly conscious of the growing threat of division within our communities.

I'm a constituency MP through and through. I live here, and I spend as much time as I can out and about talking to landlords, farmers,

entrepreneurs, teachers, charities, families and individuals. Broadly speaking we are all looking for the same thing; funding for valuable services, decent roads and hospitals, dental appointments, education that works for all our children – you know the list, because it's your list too.

The threat to that is the huge amount of division, blame and bad behaviour playing out in the news and on social media. It is exhausting, unhelpful and washes away the respect that binds our communities together.

When we can longer speak to each other in a civil way, how long is it before our beliefs make us a target? When we're fighting, we're not building and that's when we all lose. Which is why I am all about a relentlessly optimistic approach. Because there is nothing like an approaching storm to bring people together and remember what really matters.



For the first time this country now has a Freedom of Religion or Belief strategy, with ten countries spotlighted: Afghanistan, Algeria, China, India, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Vietnam and Ukraine. On each international trip I stand in solidarity with survivors and support fellow campaigners. This is something important that the UK can stand for, something to be proud of. Instead of either joining the Might is Right Club or looking the other way, we are speaking up for faith and freedom.

We can all play our part in this. We all have agency. So, if like me you stand for freedom of religion or belief, make time for your God on your Holy day, and welcome the right of others to do the same.

Morpeth Bridge for all

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

THE SOLICITORS IN THE VERY HEART OF NORTHUMBERLAND

DAVID AULD & CO
SOLICITORS

MORPETH · EST 1978

PROVIDING EXPERT LEGAL ADVICE IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND FOR OVER 40 YEARS

CONTACT US - 01670 505844

ENQUIRY@DAVID-AULD.CO.UK

Among Communists

Sinéad Morrissey had a unique childhood.

She grew up in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, but was neither a Protestant nor a Roman Catholic. Her family were Communists; she felt she lived in a bubble. And this is the subject of her Memoir which has just been published.

"I wanted to write the book for a while because I have an interesting and unique family history," explained Sinéad. "Alexi Sayle and David Aaronovitch have both written about communist families but not about being in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and the Berlin Wall."

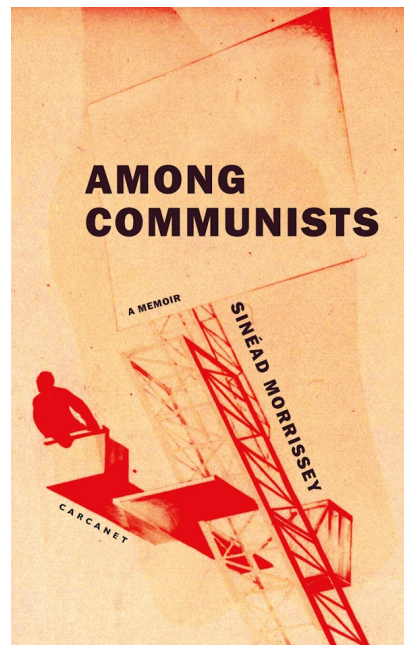
Sinéad had been busy, too busy to write a book of her own. She lives in Morpeth with two teenage children and is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University. She is a multi-award winning poet and was Poet Laureate for Belfast in 2013.

But then she applied to the Leverhulme Trust and was awarded a sabbatical for 18 months in 2021-22.

This was her opportunity. "I'm grateful to the Leverhulme Trust", said Sinéad, who finished the book within the two years.

The book covers her life up to 21 and is in two parts: Together and Apart. The first part covers up to her mid teens before the Wall came down and explores Belfast, the Troubles and the world view that engendered. It was a very rich and intellectually stimulating home environment. But all that was about to change.

Part Two covers her older teens and moves towards the landslide collapse of communism in the East.



Her mother, who became a Communist in 1968, had been on a three week course in East Germany. Nine year old Sinéad was transfixed by her account of the visit and was inspired to learn German. Germany and the German language are important themes in the book.

The memoir ends when Sinéad is 21 at the Brandenburg gate in Berlin. "It's all vanished history now," she reflects.

Among Communists sold out at its launches in Belfast and Newcastle and is available in paperback and a limited edition hardback with treasured family photographs on the inside cover pages.

<https://www.carcanet.co.uk/9781800174061/among-communists/>

At Legacy Film you have the opportunity to record your memoir in the comfort of your home. Creating a unique recording to capture your social history, and pass on your living legacy!

If you find the idea 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)



Lest We Forget – Morpeth's War Graves

This year the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has chosen the third week in May as their annual “War Graves Week”, encouraging people to find out about, and visit, war graves in their localities.

The churchyard here at St Mary's Church contains over 100 war graves and there are two opportunities in May to join free tours of the churchyard and to discover some of the stories that lie behind these graves.

There are a huge variety of graves and of stories. About a dozen graves from the First World War are scattered amongst the other graves in different areas of the churchyard, and at the back there is a dedicated war grave plot containing about 80 graves from the Second World War. Many of the WW2 graves are of Polish airmen who served with the Royal Air Force at RAF Morpeth in Tranwell, or who were patients at the wartime military hospital near Bolam.

The global scale of the Second World War is reflected in Morpeth Churchyard. Alongside the local Morpeth casualties and the Polish graves, there are Dutch War Graves and the graves of airmen from as far away as New Zealand and the USA. One of the most intriguing stories concerns Eugene Napoleon Charles Duhem, a Belgian soldier who fought with Russian forces on the Eastern Front in the First World War, but who is also buried here in Morpeth.

The tours at Morpeth in May are on Wednesday 20th (morning) and Saturday 23rd (afternoon). They are free to join but must be booked in advance through the CWGC website where further details are also available

<https://www.cwgc.org/war-graves-week/>

The CWGC website also has a section “For Evermore” which tells the stories of some of the casualties of WW1 and WW2. If you are interested in the graves, but not able to join the tours, you can type

Mike Booth encourages us all to find out more about the war graves here in Morpeth during War Graves Week.

“Morpeth churchyard” into the search function on that page to read a dozen or so stories. Groups can also book private tours or illustrated talks on the work of the CWGC – in Morpeth and around the world – via the website.

War grave plot at Morpeth



© CWGC



© unknown

Pilot Officer William Appleby, killed on operations with the RAF in Scotland in 1940 and buried in Morpeth churchyard. (pictured with his sister)

Run your ideas past us

Together, let's turn your ideas into a funeral plan that's uniquely you.

FREE PLANNING HELP

01670 515 521

williampurves.co.uk/morpeth

EST. 1888
WILLIAM PURVES
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
INCORPORATING JACOB CONROY & SON

Stepping out in faith,
with a little trepidation for Kenya

Yes, we're getting closer to May, and you can sense that spring is just around the corner, bringing with it the sights and sounds of re-birth, renewal and filling our thoughts with hope, which we really need in the world at this time.



For me and the Christian Aid team here in Morpeth, it means time to plan for Christian Aid week (May 10th- May 17th) for our first fundraising event ... the Easter Egg-stravaganza, but more on these later.

News from the Changemaker Conference

You may remember from the last edition of Pathways that we were hosting a regional watch party of the national conference, where we learnt that this May we are supporting Kenya, and the work of our partner organisation, Beacon of Hope. Why not take time to watch the inspirational presentations by Janet Ngombalu, Christian Aid Kenya, and Jane Wathome from Christian Aid Partner Beacon of Hope, sharing how communities in Kenya are driving change through partnership, resilience and hope. <https://christianaid.resourcespace.com/pages/view.php?ref=20065&k=2b98dd6940>



We learn through the life stories of Fridah and Berlinda who live in Nairobi, how urban farming helps them to protect their families from hunger and to build a more secure future - literally growing hope in a small city space. Watch Belinda's story: <https://caw.christianaid.org.uk/uk/about/what-christian-aid-week/from-worry-to-independence>

Such projects empower people, helping them to become more resilient. It's not about handouts, but a hand up.

Kenya still experiences a significantly high number of cases of HIV, with everyday life difficulties being compounded by the effects of climate change, the cancellation of US AID support and national debt

to private lenders from richer nations. Kenya pays more to repay debts than they jointly spend on healthcare and education.

You can influence a change to this practice by lobbying for our government to limit the power of private lenders, by implementing new debt justice laws. Will you sign the petition – and support Kenya?

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/stand-with-kenya>

Update on Christian Aid's Humanitarian work

Michael Mosselmous told us at the Changemaker conference that last year Christian Aid:

- were involved in 96 projects
 - spent £33 million
 - worked with 83 different partner organisations
 - effectively reached 6 million people
 - that you, our supporters, directly donated 65% of the funds used
- Christian aid funds the equipment needed and stands alongside local organisations who understand how best to support people in different countries. Often being able to get aid to where it is needed more effectively than larger organisations, because we are working with local partners. Here are three examples of the difference we have made together:

In Gaza – the appeal to date raised £4.5 million which has been sent to local partners, who themselves have often been displaced, live in cramped conditions and live with grief due to the death of family and friends. They have managed to reach 0.5 million people in Gaza.

With their health partner, they have been able to support 80 health teams on the ground – now often needing to use bicycles to access those in need.

Monies are given to support community farms – where people can access fresh food, water, blankets, and items such as nappies. They have also been able to set up accessible tents and bathrooms for people with disabilities.

Their gender partner has been able to provide psychological support to 10,000 new widows, and provide training, small cash grants and the establishment of community led groups providing education and play spaces.

Faith based programmes are supported to look after 350 displaced children.

In Ukraine - £26 million has been raised since 2022. With partners on the ground emergency packages were provided to 1 million people, with support to 1,000 people to get through the winter. For the people who remained in their homes, partners were able to provide thousands of medical consultations, thousands of food parcels and 90 lightweight battery-operated portable incubators – needed due to the increase in premature births. Christian Aid partners provide local grants to their community.

In Sudan – where there are one million refugees and 12 billion displaced people, funds have been distributed via peer agencies Act Alliance and CAFOD to support provision of clean water, shelters and the establishment of emergency response rooms where local groups can distribute cash, medical care, trauma counselling and protection against sexual based violence.

Currently three of Christian Aid's partners in Lebanon are helping to provide showers and laundry facilities, the distribution of hygiene kits, cash and food and have set up community kitchens for those in displaced shelters.

So what can we do...?

First of all, thank you to everyone who supported the Easter Egg-stravaganza, where together we raised £ 347.10.

In Christian Aid week, you can support us by: joining us for our commissioning service on 10th May at 4pm at St James Church, making a donation at one of the church services, by returning an envelope delivered to your door (sorry we can't deliver to all the houses in Morpeth), sponsoring one of the team during Christian Aid week who are undertaking a challenge event – for me that's a commitment to walk 70K in May, something I am a tad apprehensive about – but that's nothing compared to what many displaced people are having to walk. If you want to get involved please contact us at: Morpethchristianaidgroup@gmail.com or to donate online go to: <https://caw.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2026/morpeths-christian-aid-group>

Thank You from Morpeth's Christian Aid Group.

First female Archbishop of Canterbury

The former Bishop of London, the Right Reverend Dame Sarah Mullally was recently enthroned as the 106th and first ever female Archbishop of Canterbury. It only took 1,400 years for a woman to be elected to lead the Church of England, but better late than never, as they say.

She became Bishop of London in December 2017, placing her in the church's third most senior position behind the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. She used her first day in the role to call for more diversity of leaders across Britain's churches.

"If our churches are going to be more relevant to our communities, that means increasing churches that are led by priests who are women and who come from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups".

It was courageous stuff, but not surprising, from a woman who was the Department of Health's chief nursing officer from 1999 to 2004; the youngest person to ever to hold the role.

As the government's senior nurse, she advised senior civil servants as well as the then prime minister Tony Blair, on NHS policy and introduced Europe's first patient survey to understand the experiences of those who used the health service, which she said was her proudest achievement.

She left the NHS in 2004, after she was ordained as a priest; and later became Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter. She received her damehood in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing and midwifery.

Dame Sarah condemned the "shocking abuse" within the CofE after an independent review reported its cover-up of crimes by barrister John Smyth QC, who abused as many as 130 boys and young men at Christian summer camps. It was the same report that eventually led

Val Pope takes a look at what we might expect from the Right Reverend Dame Sarah Mullally

her predecessor Justin Welby to step down as archbishop of Canterbury.

In a recent radio interview, Dame Sarah said that there would be some very clear proposals in future, around safeguarding, conduct and governance in the church of England *"Over the last three or four months, it has become apparent to people the shocking abuse within the church. And my heart goes out to the victims and to the survivors. I'm very conscious of, one, the bravery of them coming forward, but also the shocking abuse that occurred to them and the way in which the church failed to address it properly. And it means that we all have to, in terms of apologising to them, we all have to do something."*

Since she became a bishop, Dame Sarah has been outspoken on several contentious topics surrounding the church. She brought forward a motion to offer blessings to same sex-couples in civil partnerships and marriages, which the CofE voted in favour of in 2023. Approval of the motion allowed same-sex couples to attend Anglican churches after a legal marriage ceremony, for services that included prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and a blessing. But it stopped short of seeking to change the position on gay marriage, meaning same-sex couples are still unable to marry in church.

After the vote, Dame Sarah said: *"This is a moment of hope for the church. I know that what we have proposed as a way forward does not go nearly far enough for many but too far for others. It is my prayer that what has been agreed today will represent a step forward for all of us within the church - including LGBTQI+ people - as we remain committed to walking together."*

She has also been critical of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which proposes the legalisation of assisted dying, under specific



circumstances. She has spoken in the House of Lords of her "deep concerns" and "grave fears" regarding the bill's "potential to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in our society".

Asked in an interview how she reacted to becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury, she told the interviewer that on her first visit as archbishop-designate, she visited a local church and helped pack food parcels. That's the kind of woman she is. In Canterbury Cathedral, at her enthronement, she said this: *"Today as I respond to the call of Christ in this new ministry, I remain rooted in my first calling, to follow Christ, to know him and to make him known in the world... We do this to the best of our ability, in small ways and big, according to our own very particular gifts. That too is the service which I offer the church today."*

In this troubled world, a world that seems to grow more greedy; more violent; more intolerant and more uncaring every day, we need courage and we need faith. Archbishop Sarah has both in abundance. Pray for her ministry and pray for peace in the world.

St James the Great - Refurbishment

In the last Christmas edition of our Pathways magazine, there was an update about the St Mary's church Lamplight project, which explained progress with the tasks of renewing the wiring, lighting, plasterwork and decoration in the oldest church (1296) in our Parish. Our Parish Church Council (PCC) has taken advice from its Fabric Committee, that we should now consider the many issues affecting the fabric of the largest church in the centre of the town, St James the Great on Copper Chare.

Although St James is much more recent in its construction (1846, see *images*), many aspects of the building fabric are in urgent need of repair, and the layout and function of the church is in equal need of reconsideration and refurbishment. Several small-scale projects have been undertaken in recent years to remedy the ravages of time and weather, for example: changing failing lighting from halogen to energy saving LED bulbs, repairing leaks to the roofs, repairing damage to windows. However, the scale of refurbishment now requires a different strategy to prepare us for the future.

The Parish has appointed a new architect and the Fabric Committee has judged this the best time to consider the way forward. It has therefore made a survey of the various types of work, that: require urgent repair, necessary maintenance, the internal refurbishment in relation to the changing needs of worship, civic and social events in the church (e.g.: concerts and performances).

Urgent repair work includes:

- Replace slate roofs to each aisle and replace interior plaster ceiling panels with insulated panelling
- Renew external rendering to window level with lime mortar
- Renew nave plasterwork
- Repaint interior
- Renew protective polycarbonate window screens

Necessary maintenance and repairs:

- Refurbishing toilets and store cupboards

Converting the old choir vestry into a room that can function effectively for meetings and as a green room for concerts and performances
Refurbishing the old long priest's vestry
Renew external notice boards on Wellway and at the north porch entrance

Pre-existing work for Diocesan approval:

New west doors
New north porch inner doors
New kitchen facility at the north transept area
New internal notice board facility at west end

New project - internal considerations:

Repositioning the rood screen in the chancel
New projection facility and screens
Repair existing pews and/or replace with pews that are easy to move and store,
Replace existing occasional seating for large congregations and audiences with a common system of chairs that are easy to move and store
New storage system for seating - pews and occasional chairs
Repurpose the dead area of the balcony in the south transept
Reconsider the original organ space in the north transept
Repurpose the choir stalls in the lower chancel to accommodate both larger and small-scale worship requirements, orchestras, performers and choirs

New project – external considerations:

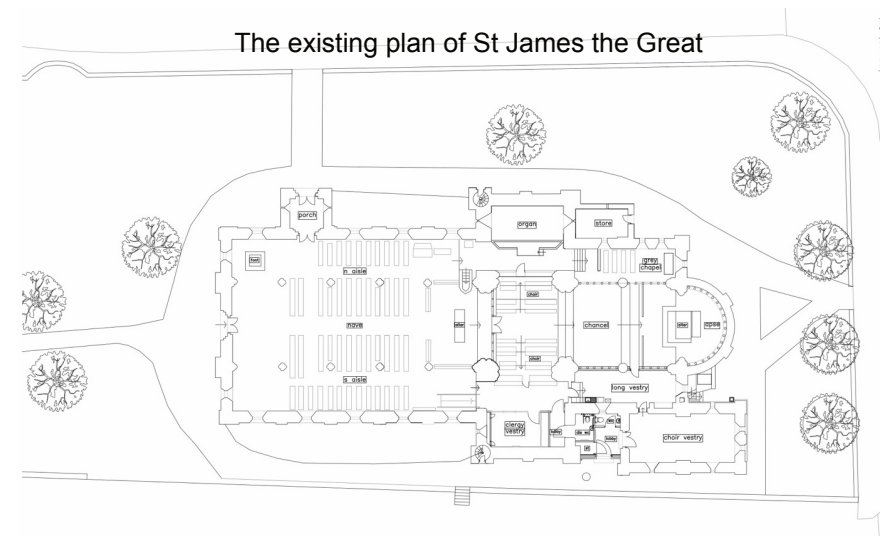
Repurpose the old organ blower house for the storage of gardening equipment
Repair the stone wall around the church
Refurbish the western arcade
Consider making the western avenue as a memorial garden
Consider making the eastern garden area an improved, sympathetic waiting area/collection point for KEVI students
Repurpose the boiler house in accordance with a revised eco-heating system for the church
Replace the gas boilers with an appropriate eco-friendly heating system in line with the Diocesan carbon zero recommendations
Replace the north wall adjacent to the choir vestry path with an open barrier

All new project considerations need to take account of the ongoing use of the church as a place of worship for existing congregations. Also, and importantly, the increasing use of the church as a secular venue by virtue of its size and acoustic character, this includes:

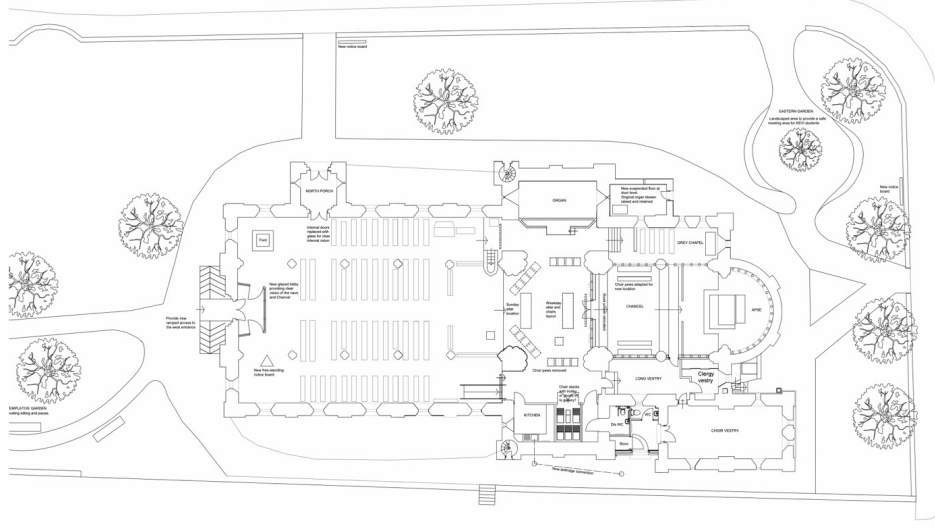
- concerts and choral events of various sizes of 40-400 attendees
- classical and contemporary musical experiences of 100-400 attendees.

The scale of the overall project is considerable and ambitious. It would prepare St James church for the foreseeable future as a place of worship, for civic and social activities. It would improve its role and function within the town and the broader region. The Parish architect has already created schematics to represent the various types of work outlined above (see *plans*) together with ball-park costs for each type. The total estimated cost of all the work would be in the region of £625K.

Funding to carry out the work is obviously a big challenge. The PCC is currently considering the best way forward, including the formation of a project team dedicated to the challenge. It is expected that the Parish will continue with its ongoing programme of fund-raising events to secure some funding, however, a project of this scale requires donations and funding applications to a range of bodies. Pathways will continue to update its readers on the progress of the project. In the meantime, any enquiries, suggestions and contributions should be directed to the Church Warden for St James.
Dr Robert Young, Church Warden (St James the Great) Parish of Morpeth



The schematic plan integrating all refurbishments under consideration to St James the Great



Lifepath

Since 2011 the last week of June has been a bit different down at Brinkburn Priory. It is our Lifepath event! At Brinkburn, a team of volunteers from around the county, host about 600 children from local schools to a very special school trip.

The children arrive and are met by our Pilgrim Guides, create a chant and then shout it all the way down the lane to the Priory. In the Priory we start with an act of Opening Worship, singing songs and introducing our theme and local saint, whose Lifepath we are going to be looking at.

This is followed by four workshops, including prayer, stories, singing, gardening and the infamous Lifepath Drama. The day is concluded by a special session in the Priory where we build a cairn and reflect on our day.

This year the event is from 22nd – 25th June and we are already gearing up. We are using St Aidan's lifepath with our theme of "Caring and Sharing". St Aidan illustrates how we can share God's story and show others God's love by caring for them in various different ways.

St Aidan was an immigrant, from Iona, who didn't know the language and needed the King, Oswald, to interpret for him as he spoke the Good news about Jesus. He was very active in his faith too, building a hospital, a school and a church. He also created small communities, with people who needed extra support for a time, who in turn helped others. As you can see, he has a lot to teach us.

If you would like to know more, get involved or pray for us, please look at our website: lifepathbrinkburn.com or email us at lifepathbrinkburn@gmail.com.



**We're right
by you, when
you need us**



Morpeth Funeralcare believes the best goodbye is the most personal one. Whatever type of funeral you have in mind, we'll be with you every step of the way. Whether it's a simple service or a personalised ceremony, we'll listen to you and together we'll arrange something that feels right.

Morpeth Funeralcare

16 Manchester St, Morpeth

Pop in and meet Paula, Julie and Barry
or call us on 01670 512277.
coop.co.uk/funeralcare



**Not a Member?
Join today**

visit coop.co.uk/membership



Co-op Funeralcare is a trading name for Funeral Services Limited (FSL) and Co-op Funeral Plans Limited (CFPL).
Co-op funerals are provided and sold by FSL and Co-op funeral plans are provided and sold by CFPL.
CFPL is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Firm Reference Number 962119.



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

Fifty Carol Services Later:

A few days before Christmas 1975, I got a phone call which was to change my life.

"It's the Vicar," said the voice, "and I have some bad news I'm afraid. Ted (the parish organist) has had a heart attack, and he's in hospital."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I replied. The Vicar continued, "Well, I expect you to take on his duties, at least until his return, and there's the Carol Service and Christmas coming up."

The vicar never was one to drop such bombshells gently, thus the assistant musician who used to play the two or three hymns during Communion, was suddenly catapulted to the dizzy heights of "Organist".

Christchurch, Walker was a busy parish with a large congregation, so I was on an exceedingly steep learning curve. Sung Eucharist (Marbeck) and evensong each Sunday, choir practice each Thursday; at least one, and sometimes three weddings on a Saturday. My day-job meant I couldn't do many funerals as they are mostly on weekdays.

After a couple of months, Ted did return to his duties, but he was never the same man and delegated increasingly to me, until he eventually retired. After agreement from the PCC, the post of Organist was officially given to me. At least I now got paid!

After about five years in post, I decided to resign. I was now married, holding down an increasingly busy career, and living more than ten miles from the parish. The expense of so much travel was consuming more than my modest stipend.

Having resigned at Christchurch, I spent a year or so answering desperate calls from various vicars who found themselves short of an

Dave Pope, long serving organist at St James's, looks back at his career. And we are indeed fortunate to have enjoyed his talent and service for so long.

organist. “Just for a week or two, you understand.” My wife and I then decided to change our place of worship from Christchurch to St Bartholomew’s, Longbenton, which was just across the road from our new house.

Quite soon, the Vicar of St Bartholomew’s grabbed me after church one Sunday. “I have been told you were organist at Christchurch, and I wondered if you would like to help out here? Go and introduce yourself to our organist – he’s still up there in the Chancel.”

So it was that I became sub-organist to Kitson Spencer, a large and imposing bearded man, probably ten years my senior. I will never forget Kitson’s opening words to me – “Organist eh? Are you a Fellow, or merely an Associate?” (of the Royal College of Organists.) Despite this unlikely start, Kitson and I became firm friends, even though being his assistant meant getting up early to play at the 8am communion. Kitson ran an excellent choir, and often got me to accompany, while he conducted. Sometimes it was musically challenging for someone who was neither a Fellow nor “Merely an Associate”.

When, in 1982, my wife and I divorced, I felt I had no choice but to leave St Bartholomew’s as, apart from dear Kitson, neither the parish clergy nor fellow congregation members were very understanding. Having moved in with my new partner, I soon found myself Village Organist at New Hartley, a job which presented few challenges. One service each Sunday and no choir practice.

On moving to our present home in Morpeth, we toured round the three churches in the parish, deciding finally that we would like to worship regularly at St James’s. Needless to say, my past as a church musician soon caught up with me again, and I found myself playing Sunday services on alternate weeks, sharing the responsibility with the late and much-loved Audrey Stimpson. Following Audrey’s death, the job was mine alone, and so it remained until recently. So much for offering to: “fill in for six months only.”

At this point I must digress for a while and talk about the instruments at St James’s over the last forty years. When I first met the extensive, late nineteenth century Harrison & Harrison three-manual organ, I was much impressed. First impression, I’m afraid, soon turned to dismay. Judging by the stiffness of many of the stops, a lot of the more

“adventurous” stops had not been used in years. I resolved to rectify that situation and bring them back into use. Furthermore, it could not be guaranteed that pressing any key would produce a sound. It was quite a challenge to choose combinations of stops to overcome this situation and finally, one morning, when I switched on the organ blower, there was a loud bang from the bowels of the machine, then no sound at all. The mighty instrument had finally died.

An inspection of the workings of the organ revealed that one of my predecessors had been affecting repairs using Elastoplast and sealing wax. A full restoration job would certainly exceed the million-pound mark, so if any reader happens to have that kind of sum going spare, do let us know!

Soon after the demise of the Mighty Harrison, the parish bought, second-hand, an electric (not electronic) Hammond B3 organ as a “stop-gap” until restoration money was found. Now a Hammond Organ is a versatile beast, which can be configured for cinema organ, for dance music, or for jazz and it is much favoured by rock bands. However, to get it to sound like a church organ was a delicate art. Nevertheless, it did its job until one morning, mid-service, it caught fire. The fire was successfully extinguished, but the organ could not be saved.

The situation called for drastic action, and, as a PCC member, I recommended the purchase of a modern, electronic, church organ. This proved something of a battle against the traditionalist members of the PCC, but the price tag of £25,000 was a lot less than the cost of a restoration job on the pipe organ. The instrument was purchased and expertly installed, so that it sounds excellent in the building. This was over thirty years ago, and the parish was warned at the time that the life expectancy of such an organ was about thirty years. It may still be going strong, but the parish is now on borrowed time.

When the present incumbent arrived in the parish, he made major changes to the worship at St James’s, and expressed to me a desire that most of the music should be modern “worship songs.” Luckily this change did not present any problem to me as a musician, because St James already had an excellent electronic piano, and I could draw deeply on my experience from a parallel musical career in rock bands,

and many years as a “lounge pianist”. That is someone who plays for wedding receptions, parties, corporate events, dinners and the like.

Being a church musician for fifty years has been a delight for me, and I hope a service to various parishes and to God, all of which I think constitutes an “acceptable sacrifice.”

I have enjoyed every minute and mile of my journey, and I sincerely hope that those who have been led in worship by my efforts as a musician have been as uplifted in song as I have been in the playing.

Sadly, my time has now come to an end, as in June '2025 I had to admit to my increasing macular degeneration and give up reading music; playing; driving and reading for pleasure. Many have said, in sympathy, that I must be sad and I am sad at times, but I have the joy of looking back over a full and varied life, not only as a musician, but professionally, in the years when I ran my own business. I have been exceeding blessed.

I sincerely hope that a replacement musician can be found for St James's, but it is with no sense of superiority that I say this. There are organists and there are rock musicians, but finding someone who is both, as is currently needed at St James's, may prove a significant challenge for the parish. I wish you all well, and thank you all for your years of support, encouragement and love.

Dave Pope



A Brief History of English Change Ringing

Bells have been sounding across human history for centuries.

The oldest known working bell, the Okikicho Bell in Kyoto, Japan, dates to A.D. 698. In Europe, the earliest known surviving tower bell, cast in 1069, hangs in St Benedict's Church, Rome—just three years after the Norman Conquest of England. Around a century later (c. 1150), a bell still in use today was cast for St Mary Magdalene Church, Mitford, just down the road.

Chris Teasdale gives us a fascinating look at the history of bell ringing and the place of bell ringing here in Morpeth

From early medieval times, churches were required to have at least one bell to call people to worship. These early bells were modest in size, often cast locally using temporary churchyard furnaces and hoisted into towers using simple lifting systems. They were rung with basic ropes and levers, producing a straightforward chime.

Over time, bells became central to daily life. Different bells signalled different moments: the Angelus rang at morning, noon, and evening; the Sanctus bell marked key points in the Eucharist; others tolled for weddings, funerals, curfews, or emergencies. People didn't need clocks—each bell's sound told them what was happening.

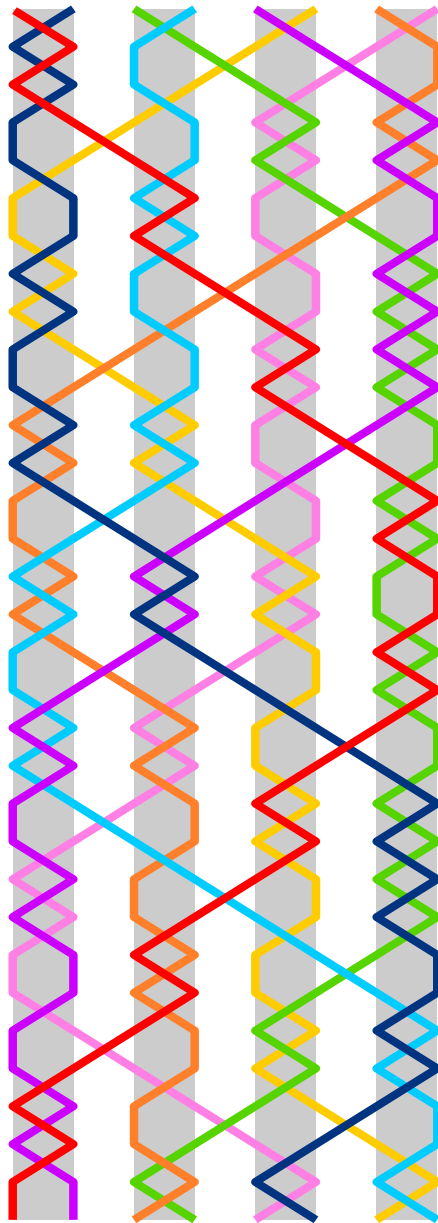
As more bells were added to towers, the technology also improved. Bells were mounted on increasingly sophisticated wheels (from quarter wheels through to full wheels), allowing ringers to control their timing more precisely. By the sixteenth century, these developments made something new possible: English change ringing.

Unlike simple chiming, change ringing is about ringing a set of bells in ever-changing sequences, known as 'changes.' Early sets often had three or four bells, but by around 1510, a ring of five bells had been cast for St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, London. The art was ready to flourish—until history intervened.

The English Reformation disrupted church life, slowing progress. Only after the 1559 Elizabethan Settlement restored stability did bell ringing revive. During this period, the famous Whitechapel Bell Foundry was established c. 1570, reflecting renewed demand for bells. It would go on to become Britain's oldest manufacturing company before closing in 2017.

By the 1600s, change ringing saw widespread adoption across the country. Towers commonly held six or eight bells, and ringing societies began to form. The oldest bell ringing society, the wonderfully oxymoronic Ancient Society of College Youths, founded in 1637 still exists today. But once again, progress was halted during the 1640s English Civil War and Commonwealth of England (1649–1660), when Puritan rule temporarily banned bells along with anything perceived to be papish.

With the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, ringing returned stronger than ever. In 1668, Richard Duckworth and Fabian Stedman published *Tintinnaloga*, the first book on change ringing. It introduced methods such as Plain Bob and Grandsire, still widely rung today. Stedman later expanded the art further in *Campanologia* (1677), earning him recognition as the 'father of change ringing.' Indeed, the method Stedman, first described in *Campanologia*, is named in his honour.



Ringling diagram of Cambridge Surprise Major.

The original six Clock Tower bells in Morpeth were cast within Stedman's lifetime in 1706. This year, 2026, will mark 320 years of bell ringing in the Clock Tower along with the 75th anniversary of the recasting of the bells in 1951 for the Festival of Britain.

The next milestone came in 1715, when the first true peal—over 5,000 unique sequences—was rung at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich. Taking around three hours, a peal represents both endurance and precision, and remains a hallmark of the tradition.

In Morpeth, a peal is rung annually in May to mark Mayor Making. In total, 144 peals have been rung on the Clock Tower bells, the first in 1892, and the most recent in 2025.

Today, change ringing continues to peal from church towers across England—a living blend of history, music, and mathematics, still practised centuries after it first began.

Interested in finding our more?

explore
life
faith
meaning

Alpha

@ Morpeth Parish
email office.morpethparish@gmail.com or call Simon on 07749866402

The Mothers' Union – 150 years on with a very significant link to the Newcastle Diocese

On Sunday 31st March, the members of the Morpeth branch of Mothers' Union took part in a joint service held in St. Aidan's Church as part of the activities to celebrate the 150th anniversary year of this international charity.



With apologies to those who attended the service, I have been asked to repeat the information I shared on that Sunday..... and if you find it interesting, you are welcome to join us at one of our branch meetings in St. Aidan's Church on the second Monday of the month at 2 o'clock, or ring the parish office for contact details or check the MU website www.mothersunion.org for further information about members uniting in prayer and fellowship around the world.

“We are a loving organisation open to everyone who supports our vision and mission and shares our passion for strengthening family and community life, whether you are female or male, a parent, grandparent, single, or married. We believe that supporting families and communities is a shared calling enriched by many different experiences and perspectives. Whoever you are, you have a valued place in our MU family.”

The organisation as it stands today, began very modestly by a lady who had a vision to encourage young mothers, across all the social classes, to support each other in the challenges of parenthood.

Mary Elizabeth Heywood was born in Lancashire in 1828. At the age of twenty, she married George Sumner, shortly after he was ordained. They lived in Old Alresford Rectory for 34 years, where they brought up three children – two daughters and a son.

In 1876, Mary Sumner, aged 48, and a grandmother, holding on to her vision, held her first **‘Mothers’ Meeting’**. However, she was very shy and her husband had to speak for her at the first meeting. After that, he persuaded her to speak herself and she found her courage

from his reassuring words: ‘Just share your heart – God will do the rest.’

She designed a simple Membership Card for her group with the words “Train up a child in the way he should go”.

Nine years after Mary's first ‘Mothers’ Meeting’, she had the first opportunity to widen her vision for a **‘Union of Mothers’**. Mary's husband George was made Archdeacon in Winchester and the Canon at that time was Ernest Wilberforce, grandson of William Wilberforce. A long-lasting friendship began between the two families.

In 1882, the Newcastle Diocese was formed and City status was granted. Ernest Wilberforce became the first Bishop of Newcastle. St Nicholas Church was consecrated as the new Diocesan Cathedral but the adjacent parish, All Saints, was the poorest community in the town. Ernest knew of Mary's vision and support of families whatever their status and the opportunity to grow her vision began.

The Lantern Tower of the Cathedral, which for generations had been a beacon to guide ships up the Tyne, and also through the new Swing Bridge, was now a symbolic beacon of light to guide the new Diocese through challenging development, and subsequently the growth of **‘Mothers’ Union’**.

Ernest Wilberforce's second wife became the first Diocesan President of the Mothers' Union in the Newcastle Diocese.

Mary Sumner died at the age of 92. Her funeral was attended by 4,000 people in Winchester Cathedral where she is buried.

From her vision, there are now over 40 thousand members worldwide, sharing six core global initiatives:

1. Literacy and Education – 250,000 people have been helped through literacy programs
2. Supporting Families – promoting healthy relationships and positive parenting skills
3. Combating violence and gender inequality – campaigns against domestic abuse, gender-based violence and human trafficking
4. Community Development and Self-Reliance – programmes of skillbuilding, small enterprise development, ensuring

- communities can sustain themselves
5. Spiritual and Global Fellowship – fostering spiritual growth among members worldwide
 6. Advocacy and Policy Influence – UK based members contribute and influence global policies such as gender equality, flexible working for parents, child protection.

The Mothers' Union has had Royal Patronage since its foundation in 1876. Queen Elizabeth II's successor was announced late last year as The Duchess of Edinburgh, Duchess Sophie, and she is known as one of the late Queen's family favourites.

The Morpeth branch of Mothers' Union has been in existence for over 60 years and currently has 32 members.

Pauline Young



Connecting with a Creative God

The question asked at our home group was “what nourishes you in your relationship with God”? My reply was “faith based mixed media journaling”.

To give a bit of background: I tend to process my life and relationships (including that with God and Jesus) through walking. A few years ago, I had to stop walking for a few months. My head spun. I was not at ease. A clergy friend suggested that I try faith based mixed media journaling and pointed me towards jennaburne.com to get started. Wow! The door to my frustration was unlocked, my relationship with God deepened as I had found a different way to converse, think and pray and I had a great sense of inner peace as well as a desire to grow spiritually.

So what is it? It is a conversation with God through things (such as pens, coloured or textured paper, material, ribbon, string, plants, coffee, paint or water) that can be used or stuck on a page. You don't need a huge range of equipment, you don't need to be able to draw or to be trained in art or consider yourself “arty”. You just need to be willing to be spirit led to use these sorts of materials to express yourself. Just as a conversation flows, so your expression flows. There are very few rules, but one is not to have a finished “picture” in mind when you start.

Sometimes I start with just me and the mundane everyday thoughts in my head, sometimes there is a Bible verse or passage that I want to explore, or someone has written a reflection or meditation that I want to delve into.

You will need a piece of paper or notebook (it doesn't need to be blank or pristine; sometimes it is easier to start if it isn't these things), at least one pen or pencil to write with (it is helpful to have more than one colour), some basic paint and a brush (if you can't borrow from a child/ young person, The Works is a value option), some scraps of coloured paper (have a look through your recycling with a new pair of eyes; things like the inside of security envelopes are great), a magazine or

something with a range of images that you can use, some water, glue (PVA or a stick are fine) and anything else that catches your eye.

You start by writing on your paper. Just whatever is on your mind. Start anywhere on the page. You just write. You don't need sentences, or punctuation, or spaces between the words, or lines. You can write on top of your own writing and use different colours. It is almost as though you are talking to a very close friend. Don't worry about what you are writing as the words will not be recognisable when the page is finished.

When you have finished writing, take some paint (whatever colours attract you in the moment) and perhaps some water, and add some colour to your writing. It can be helpful to start to play some worship music here. You are playing with the paint, rather than painting something. Water can be lightly splashed onto the page (depending on how thick your paper is) and the page turned to create different shapes and textures (depending on the paint used).

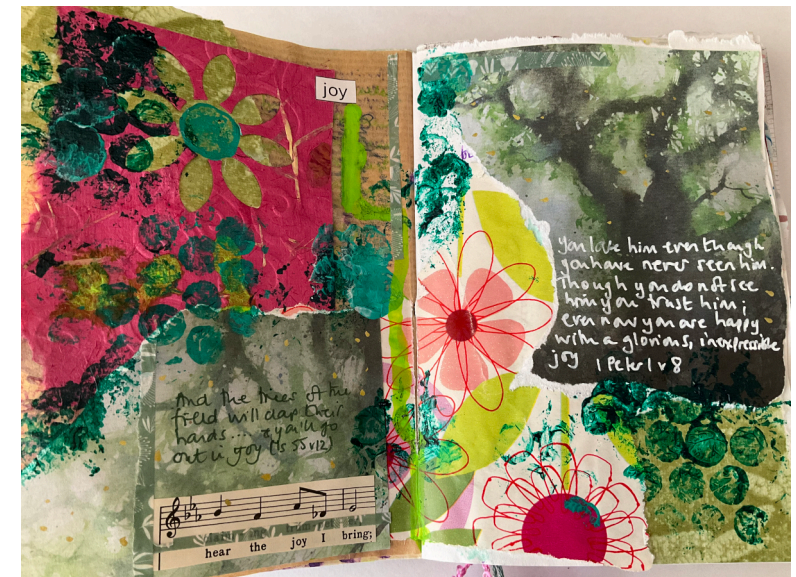
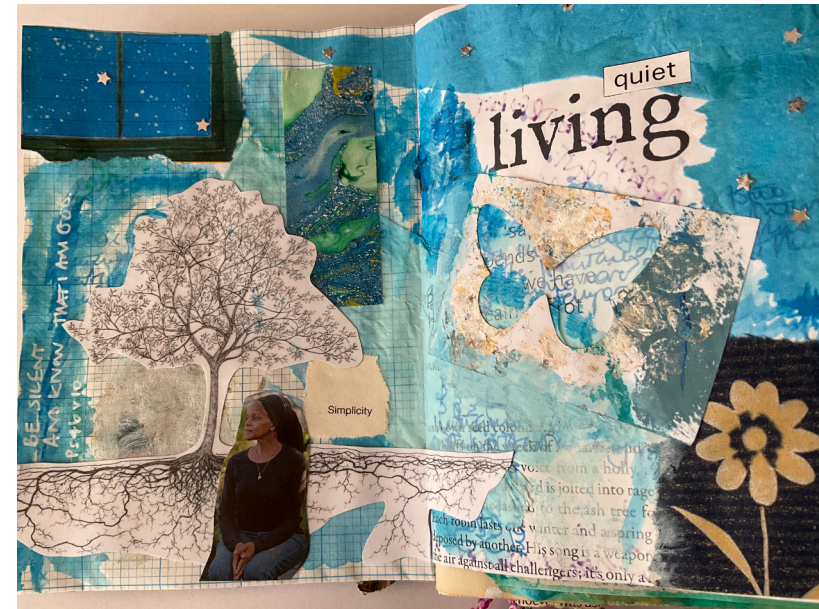
Whilst the page dries, start to choose some paper (or other materials) to tear and layer onto the page. When you like the effect, glue them down. You are likely to feel a theme start to emerge and can now refer to your Bible (Google may also help) to find verses or stories that resonate with the emerging theme. This often leads to a time of prayer. Verses can be written over the page. To help coordinate your page you may like to look for an image that fits the theme or spell a word out using letters from the magazine and add another layer of paint (try using your fingers) to blend some of the collage pieces together. Your journal page is now finished and you have spent time with God.

The two pages shown are A5 and were sparked off from a series of verses selected for Lent meditations. For me, nature is calming and grounding. In "quiet" the tree's roots are the foundation for life that God gives us. God's creation is also the feature in "joy", but is rather more vibrant.

If you would like to know more, Jenna Burne can also be found on YouTube where she has posted lots of demonstrations. If you can

wait until September I am running a short introductory session at the evening FEAST. Please contact the parish office for details of how to sign up.

Jo Murgatroyd



Rector's ramblings

I hate to wait!



I'm sitting here at my kitchen table and it's late April and spring is here. Or is it? I look out of my kitchen window, and the garden is bathed in sunlight. The warmth is penetrating the kitchen window, and I can feel the bright heat of the sun on my face. I start to search for last year's sun cream and search for my long-forgotten sunglasses. I rush to the back door in anticipation of a glorious drenching of those summer rays. Flinging the door open I find myself welcomed by a wall of ice-cold air and a sharp intake of breath. The sun is shining but the north wind has stayed a little longer than anticipated. I'm quickly reminded by that shock of cold air that spring still has a little way to go. Much like the seedlings I put out last week—convinced they would thrive in the spring sunshine—they have positively withered in the overnight frost. Another warning: "We are not there yet." "You need to wait a little longer, Simon." It's so frustrating!" I have a new gas bottle for the BBQ in the garage, and the summer furniture is itching to come out, blossom is showering the garden and even the flowers are starting to bloom, but it's just not hot enough. I'm willing and praying for that 14 degrees on my garden thermometer to become 20 degrees, but however much I urge the Lord to bring summer on quicker; it's just not happening. I need to wait—and I hate waiting. Every season has an in-between time, and I hate the in-between times, either seasons or times in life, waiting for a job offer, waiting for a house sale or confirmation, waiting for a baby to be born, but those in-between times are important. If when younger Jane just had a baby within days of conception it would not only have been a shock to the system, but we would not have had time to prepare! In-between times are there, I would suggest, for a reason. They are times of reflection and preparation—times when nothing looks very dramatic on the surface, but something is still quietly happening underneath. The time before Whit Sunday (or Pentecost) is a funny season in the Church calendar.

It's also a kind of in-between time. Over the last few years, the Church has called the season between Jesus' ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost "Thy Kingdom Come". It's when we wait patiently, like the disciples, for the eternal Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—who comes to bless His Church and live with all who believe. We are literally praying, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," and we are encouraged to pray that for our world, for friends and family, and for all whom we care for. So, this year I'm going to try to be patient: to spend a little more time reflecting and praying, and not to get too impatient when things don't change as quickly as I'd like. Seeking some wisdom for my heart and head ensuring that I use the time wisely. So I pray God's blessing over you this Whitsun and beyond.

God bless, Simon

Rector of Morpeth.

Office.morpethparish@gmail.com





14th Thursday **Ascension days Services**

Start of prayers for Thy Kingdom Come

18 th Monday	6.00 pm	Morpeth Methodist
19 th Tuesday	6.00 pm	New Life
20 th Wednesday	6.00 pm	St Georges URC
21 st Thursday	6.00 pm	St James Anglican
22 nd Friday	6.00 pm	St Roberts RC

24th Sunday @ **6.30 pm**

Pentecost Praise, St Georges URC.

Please come and join us each evening during
Thy Kingdom Come to pray together inviting the Holy Spirit
to come into his church this Pentecost time.

We will be following Thy Kingdom Come
simple and short set evening prayer. All are welcome.