

Growing Our Relationships

Community Christingle at Burnopfield

Burnopfield have been running a successful Brick Church since Easter 2023. This Advent they hosted a Christingle to build on the connections with these families. Several of the families who attend Brick Church joined regular members at the service, where Christingles were assembled and carols sung.

Building on new relationships is key, and Burnopfield took the opportunity of showing a slideshow on their projector advertising their other groups and events while the Christingles were coming together.

It was encouraging to hear attendees interested in attending the regular Thursday coffee morning. It gave us pause to consider how to ensure the local community are aware of our regular groups and consider new and different ways to advertise this. We want to ensure we reach those who could benefit from joining us, that we are not only serving our regular members, but everyone.



The Return of Noah's Pudding to Whitehall Road

Whitehall Road has, for the past few years, maintained a contact with the local Turkish Muslim community. Once a year (and included in last years Winter Newsletter), this community comes to take part in our morning service and to distribute 'Noah's Pudding' (or Ashure, made from fresh and dried fruit, nuts, grains and beans) to our congregation.

For our Turkish friends, it is a traditional act of offering friendship to family and strangers alike. According to tradition, Noah gathered all of the remaining foodstuffs to make this sweet pudding when he and his family left the Ark on Mount Ararat, Turkey.

On Sunday 19 November, Rev Brigitta Steele led a service which was attended by about thirty of our Turkish guests. At the end of the service, children from our Sunday School helped to distribute the puddings. One of our Turkish guests gave a short talk about the meaning of the celebration and their other activities. Members of the church are in turn invited to community events organised by our Turkish friends.

Spoor's Special Visitor at Community Christmas Tree Festival

Spoor held their annual Christmas Tree Festival in December, with 19 trees decorated by community groups, schools as well as church groups. The church was open to the community for 3 days with many visitors coming along and admiring the trees, voting for their favourite tree as well as sharing cakes and hot drinks. The Mayor of Gateshead (photographed with stewards, Margaret Sharp (left) and Angela Marshall (right) below) even

popped along to cast her vote! The winning tree was decorated by the Prayer Shawl Ministry and Ladies Fellowship. Donations of £425.71 were kindly given by the visitors. These were added to the donations from the Christmas party giving a total of £721.71. The funds were donated to the People's Kitchen for their appeal to feed the homeless a Christmas Lunch on Christmas Day which have long been supported by Spoor.





SPRING NEWSLETTER

2024

Letter from the Superintendent

Back in the Autumn I got into conversation with a keen gardener at The Bank in Chopwell. I had harvested a reasonable crop of potatoes earlier in the summer but the vegetable bed had remained empty ever since. I thought it would be good to plant something to over winter but wasn't sure what. Down in Devon the winters were much milder as a rule so I felt I needed to get some local advice.



My gardener friend suggested I try some Durham Early Cabbage and onions or garlic. He even suggested a place where I might be able to get the plants and the sets. I watched as the cabbage plants grew a little over the next six weeks or so. Some were pecked at by the pigeons with a few disappearing altogether. Would I have anything to harvest when the spring comes? This morning I noticed new leaves on the remaining cabbages and, to my great delight, some green shoots where I planted the onion sets. There are still no guarantees but the prospect of some fresh cabbage, onion and garlic later in the year looks more likely.

There is a parable in this - my own version of the parable of the sower, which can be found in Mark 4. That story starts with "A farmer went out to sow". I realised that unless I planted something only weeds would grow, and that would make gardening much more difficult. I'm delighted to write for this edition of the newsletter which contains stories of churches engaging with their community in different ways. Each conversation, each hand of support, each warm welcome has sown a seed in the hearts of those who come. Some of those seeds will be like those that fell on the path in Jesus' parable but others will grow and produce fruit, if we tend them carefully.

Rev Ann Varker

Pickle Palace Celebrates 3 years working with Strathmore Road MC



Monday's are very busy at Strathmore Road, with the warm space, pay as you feel café, Citizens advice, soup lunch and Pickle Palace. Pickle Palace is a food market, it provides fresh food for the local community that would otherwise go to waste. The market regularly attracts over 50 attendees each week and is open to everyone. The start of February marks the 3rd anniversary of the collaboration and we look forward to continuing to work with them for years to come!

Getting the Word Out



So you have planned an event, everything is in place, but how do you get the word out to the wider community?

- Often people find things to do online:
- Website Page
- Social Media
- Consider Events
- Posts with Info
- Giveaways

But let's not forget digital poverty is a real problem, so we can't only rely on digital advertising.

- Also utilise:
- Banners
- Posters in shops
- Flyers/Postcards in targeted areas
- Local Newsletters
- Community Radio

Also, it is always useful to encourage members to spread the word, using their social media or by word of mouth

Reaching those In Need

Spreading Christmas Joy with Hampers in Blaydon

For the last few years, Churches Together in Blaydon (who run the Community Larder) have organised Christmas hampers for those facing financial hardship. The hampers include everything for a Christmas dinner, supported by local businesses, like the greengrocer who sells the vegetables for the hampers at cost. They make a real difference to the recipients and ease the financial burden at Christmas.

This year the hampers were sent out to more than 100 families in the local area, with many of the referrals coming from local schools.

If you would like to get involved with the community work at Trinity, Blaydon please email admin@swtyneside.org.uk.



The Return of Holiday Fun at Strathmore Road

Over the school Christmas Holidays, Strathmore Road hosted two days of Holiday Fun (part of GMBC's Brighten the Day Scheme). Over 40 children attended overall and thoroughly enjoyed the magician and circus skills entertainers.

This time there were smaller number of volunteers available from the church so it was decided to use a Communities Gateshead group for the lunches, Corina was wonderful and brought the hot meal and helped with the serving.

Each child in attendance was given the gift of a book to take away with them, and it is hoped that, with additional volunteers, Strathmore Road can continue to provide these Holiday Fun Days. If you are interested in volunteering please email admin@swtynesdie.org.uk for more information.

"Soup is cuisine's kindest course" (Virginia Woolfe)

Soup is a wonderful meal when you want to warm up in the winter. Several of our churches have embraced this and are hosting not just warm spaces (providing hot drinks) but community soup lunches too.

Sharing a meal with our communities has many benefits for hosts and diners. It can build bridges and understanding, providing the opportunity for dialogue and appreciation. It can help combat loneliness and isolation with social interaction boosting mental health, as well as supporting those in need in a practical way by providing a nutritious and hot meal.

Fellside (photographed) started their soup lunch in January and their first event had 14 gathered together for the meal (as well as two dogs!). There were some wonderful comments passed on to the volunteers including: "Fantastic lunch. Well done everyone. So very enjoyable" and "Was lovely getting together with everyone. Thanks for a tasty lunch". With such enthusiasm Fellside will continue to host their lunch on a monthly basis.



The Churches hosting soup and community lunches are:

Mondays 11:30-1, Strathmore Road Methodist Church, Rowlands Gill

Mondays 12noon, Trinity Methodist Church, Blaydon

Tuesdays 12noon, Ryton Methodist Church

Monthly Wednesdays, following 10am Warm Space, Fellside Methodist Church, Whickham

Alternate Thursdays(from 1st Feb) 1pm, Unity Methodist Church at Dunston Hill, Dunston

Creating New Community Links

Community Christmas Tree Festival Success at Centenary

Centenary opened their doors in December for their first ever Christmas Tree Festival!

With over 30 trees decorated by local schools, businesses and church groups Centenary was open for three days for all to come inside and enjoy the decorations. There were carol singing events with Emmaville & St Agnes schools, and a local dance troupe performed on the Saturday.

The trees remained in place for the duration of Advent, with the ingenious and interesting designs enjoyed at Christmas services.

The event produced a real buzz in the community and it is hoped that these initial links can be built on during the year. And as many of the contributors are keen to be involved next year we hope the festival will become an annual tradition for Centenary!



Love Came Down to the Metro Centre, this Christmas

The Circuit came together on 2nd December at our community outreach event in the Metro Centre, which was a huge success. Thank you to those who gave their time beforehand in planning, set up and knitting, those who manned The Hub, as well as those who helped dismantle everything afterwards.

Volunteers gave out over 700 knitted Christmas tree decorations as a blessing to passers by. The shoppers were entertained with carol singing, refreshments, decorated Christmas trees, craft activities and Lego.

There was a steady flow of people coming into The Hub with many trying to give donations. People stopped and admired the window displays and children came to see baby Jesus in the manger.

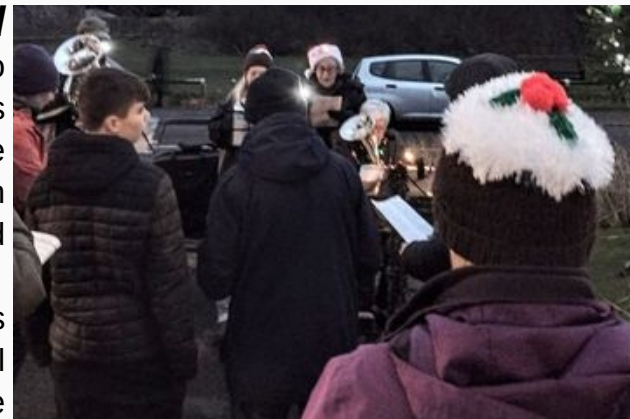
While leaping straight into this project, which required a lot of work behind the scenes and was ambitious, we came together as a Circuit and everything went according to plan. We will look into how we can build on this outreach project in the future, to share the love of Jesus in this time and in this place.



Carols around the Tree & Family, Fun and Food

Greenside Café Church hosted a few events in the run up to Christmas. As well as a festive afternoon tea there were Carols around the Tree in December. This was open to the whole community. With regular attendees from worship, those who join the Friday coffee morning and entirely new faces, the group totalled 35 singers in number!

Joining together in song with popular and traditional carols accompanied by a brass band, the event was a wonderful opportunity for the community to gather together and celebrate Christmas as one. We hope by hosting community events we can build new links with people who may want to join us again in the future.



In early January Greenside also hosted a Family Fun and Food Day, as part of GMBC's Brighten the Day scheme. This free event provided hot food (the jacket potatoes were a big hit!). Also included were traditional party games, parachute games and craft activities, where everyone could go home with something they had made. Each family also left with recipe cards and ingredients for another hot meal. This time the recipe was for soup - a classic winter warmer and a welcome break from leftover turkey sandwiches!