



**Beer and Carols was a Hoot !**

**So first I'll set the scene; a lovely warm, Christmassy room, a keyboard set up in the corner (on an ironing board for some reason!) food and drinks making the room smell great and candle to add that extra Christmassy glow.**

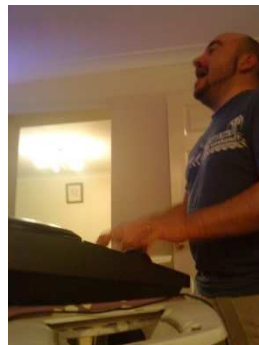


Charlotte, Claire & Cecilia having a ball

Next if we take the crazy folk from MCC Newcastle Teesside group (Me, Claire, Annette, John, Morgan, Patrick, Ann, Lorraine and Charlotte) and add my little brother Will, and the

people who ventured down from “up-norr” (Cecilia, Mikee and Charlotte N). The place is now ready for the greatest experience of the Christmas season - BEER AND CAROLS!

We started with a few songs and a few drinks, singing those common favourites: “O come all ye faithful”, “Ding dong merrily on high”, “Hark the herald angels etc... with thanks to Will for his fantastic playing in that part of the evening. Things started to go downhill when Charlotte and I grabbed our guitars and played the “12 Days of Christmas”! I don't know if it was our playing or the alcohol, but things were getting silly with actions being made up on the spot!



Mikee Playing on the organ

Mikee took over on the keyboard with some old favourites (Jingle bells, Rudolph and Band Aid!) the room was in uproar and a lot of fun was had by everybody!

To anyone who thought about going to the Beer and Carols night and didn't - YOU MISSED OUT it was a fantastic night that everybody enjoyed and everybody had fun praising God and singing about the birth of Jesus! It was great fun and my highlight of the run up to Christmas. Roll on next year! I certainly can't wait!



Patrick, Morgan & John chose the next carol

George Gardner

**All Your Diary Dates for February**  
See our new format on the back page

**Pastor's Report for the month – Find out how Cecilia has found her first year As Pastor**

**Bible Feature; The 12 days of Christmas revisited**

**A reflection on our 'Blue Christmas' service**

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## *Giving for Growth*

I've said it before and I'll say it again – MCC Newcastle is an amazing place! And this past year I have been proud to watch the amazing growth in numbers, giving and service among our congregation. In just this year, we have published our own book, moved into our own church office and walked the streets of Middlesbrough and Newcastle being out and proud! The Office Angels sent out nearly 300 cards to us this year. Somehow, those magnificent Angels always seem to know just when we need to hear “Thank you”, “Get well soon” or “Hello, how are you?” This year, we supported Abby in her mission to the Dominican Republic and sent her with suitcases full of gifts and school supplies for the children there. We have had not one, but two membership services, and an overwhelming number of Members and Friends have continued to become involved with different parts of church life – from worship and outreach, to joining the Good Book Club or the Creating a Life that Matters course. We have taken several crucial steps towards becoming those Angels of the North we challenged ourselves to be.

What has been especially amazing has been the generosity and commitment in giving to the church and our ministry here. In the past twelve months, many new people have pledged to give a specific amount each week or each month. Most people give through Standing Order, although some choose to give through our numbered envelope scheme. To each and every one of you, and on behalf of all of us at MCCN, I say a heart-felt **thank you!** Out of the new pledges, the majority started their pledge in these past twelve months. Other people who have come to be part of our community give regularly give through the Gift Aid envelopes that are on the Welcome table. *Do you know that if you are a UK taxpayer, we can claim 28p back from the Government for every pound you donate?*

The Board is now starting to plan for the new financial year. We all want to continue to do amazing things, but we are realistic about tough this financial year may be. If you are already giving as much as you can, that is really wonderful. If you are worried about not being able to continue giving at the level that you have, then please come and talk to me about it. If you need to alter your pledge to a smaller amount, then let me know.

Some people, especially if they are new to committed giving, might have been a bit cautious in what they pledged. Some of us may have been lucky enough to get a better job or a good pay rise and perhaps haven't looked at our committed giving for a while. If you are able to increase your giving by a little, it could really add up. These are just a few examples:

If **10** people *increase* their giving by **£5** a month (£1.25 a week), that will be **£600** per year.

If 8 out of these 10 people are UK tax payers and sign a Gift Aid form, we will be able to claim £134 back from the Tax Office. So, if you are able to increase your giving by £5 per month, then potentially that could be **£734** of additional income. How many people will be able to find out about MCC Newcastle through our outreach, if we were able to spend this additional money on advertising and more publicity material? (I wonder whether we could get a picture of our Pride service on the side of a bus...?)

If **10** people are able to *increase* their giving by **£10** a month (£2.50 a week – a Starbucks coffee for some of us!), that could be **£1468** total. This amount would mean we are halfway to paying rent for our worship space for the whole year!

Cecilia, our Pastor, is paid for 22.5 hours a week, which is essentially three days a week. (It doesn't sound like very much put that way!) The Board knows from her monthly reports that she usually does more hours than this. We want to make sure that we are able to do all things that we plan to do in the new financial year and we don't want to overstretch ourselves or make promises that we can't keep. Wouldn't it be great though to be able to increase the number of hours that we are able to pay our pastor?

I want to end by saying ‘**Thank you!**’ again for all the time, talents and finances that each of you have pledged and given to enable us all to see God at work through our ministry together. I hope that you will really pray about what you are able to pledge for the year ahead. Please speak to me if you have any questions, or would like to talk about this further. I look forward with excitement to all the possibilities of the year ahead, and look forward to serving alongside you.

**Katie Marsh - Treasurer**

MCC Newcastle would like to extend a very warm welcome to all readers. We hope you enjoy our newsletter which is published on a monthly basis and can be found in colour on our website at [www.mccnewcastle.org.uk](http://www.mccnewcastle.org.uk) However, we are obliged to state that nothing in this newsletter either; written, said or otherwise, purports to represent the Metropolitan Community Church in general. If you have any comments about either content or presentation please contact the Editor who welcomes any contributions, but reserves the right to edit as deemed appropriate.



# Bible Feature

## The Twelve Days of Christmas Revisited

My readers may recall in the December issue of 'Good News Monthly' I talked about the carol The Twelve Days of Christmas, the period in history it was written and what the secret significance each verse had. I hope you found the information fascinating.

I was full of the Christmas spirit when I wrote that bible feature, little did I know the 'twelve days of Christmas' the Lord had planned for me;

It all started with an article published in the Daily Mail on Friday 12th December about a church in Walsall that had rewritten the carol to reinforce the message that the church is there for all sections of society. Rev. George Fisher then displayed it outside St. Matthew's church in Walsall. I thought this was an innovative idea.

The verse went:-

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love  
sent to me.....

Twelve soldiers serving  
Eleven lottery losers  
Ten hoodies hollering  
Nine single mothers  
Eight Aids victims  
Seven shoppers struggling  
Six carers caring  
Five repossessions  
Four calling conmen  
Three starving children  
Two addicts shaking

And a poor homeless refugee.

A thought provoking message indeed ! But for me, this was just the start of things to come. My Auntie found her cancer had returned and she had to go through chemotherapy all over again. The dreaded flu had decimated her own family so I was appointed to take her. Safely returned home with a loving prayer, the task was accomplished.

Next, my mother had a skin cancer removed. I sat and comforted her whilst she went through

the surgery. I insisted on staying over to care for. The following day, my auntie and Godmother arrived to go to the cemetery with my Mam to place a wreath on their parents grave. They had brought pork pies to eat for lunch and they were yummy. I realised my auntie had disappeared and when I went to look for her, I discovered she was choking in the bathroom. After various unsuccessful attempts to dislodge the offending piece of pie, I phoned 999 for an ambulance. The operator talked me through the abdominal thrust procedure and to my amazement it worked ! The pie came flying out of her mouth just as the ambulance arrived. That was when my legs finally turned to jelly and were shaking uncontrollably.

Oh yes, then my elderly mother contracted bronchitis and I had to visit her daily to shop, cook, clean up and look after my father with Alzheimer's. Finally, on Christmas Eve I caught a chest infection and couldn't enjoy my dearly looked forward to Christmas dinner. It lasted over the New Year and I was forced to go to the doctors for antibiotics. All in all, a dreadful twelve days of Christmas !

However, throughout this period, I was determined to celebrate Jesus' Birthday and have a good time. You know, during such times I feel that God is even closer to me, watching over me.

We took Annette's five year old granddaughter to our carol service. She was a breath of sunshine, wanted to know when she was next to get up to do something, sang 'Away in a Manger' with Mikee playing the piano, and enjoyed the wafer dipped in wine during communion so much, she asked if she could have another one ! Afterwards. I asked her what she enjoyed most about the service. She thought long and hard, then eventually said "the chocolate cake".

Life has its ups and downs. In 2009 turn to the Lord during your downs, praise Him for the ups.

Amen.

Claire Liebig-Denham



## Pastor's Report January 2009

**A belated Happy New Year to you all! 2009 promises to be a year of real growth and development. For much of last year, it felt as though I was finding my feet, getting to grips with the significant change that coming to Newcastle has been for me and for my family.**

Now I have been through one complete year in the life of MCC Newcastle, it enabled me to understand the rhythms of our life together a little more. We are very diverse congregation, with different interests, varying needs and a huge range of different life experiences. We all have one thing in common though – we are all on a faith journey. At different times, this journey is wonderful and we feel close to God. At other times, it seems really hard and we may be tempted to give up altogether. Part of being a faith community means that there are always people with whom we can share our good times and who will be there to help us through the tough times.

So what are your hopes for our faith journey together in 2009? People have already been sharing their ideas and dreams at the Pastor Tea parties and elsewhere. Some of the suggestions so far have been:

*developing a more visible prayer ministry using art more to make our worship space more beautiful* *having a monthly worship experience for those who would identify more as "spiritual" rather than Christian* *having a book club* *moving into the main church for regular worship.*

If you have not been able to get to a Tea Party with your ideas, talk to me or send me an email. We may not be able to do all these things this year or maybe some of them will not happen at all. However, between us all, I know that God will be able to guide us towards the ministries and activities that will make a difference in 2009.

In order to make ideas and dreams into reality, we need to be realistic and faith filled. We need to pray about what we want to do and listen to God. When we think we are on

the right track, we need to find the people who want to make the idea a reality. So many people are active in ministry at MCC Newcastle, it is wonderful to see. One of the greatest joys I have in my ministry is when a person finds a ministry that just the right place for them. It is the right SHAPE (remember that? Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Aptitude, Personality, Experience). This week, I met with someone who had been willing to serve in one ministry: however she noticed an aspect of this ministry that was a better fit for her than the rest. When people find where they fit, they grow in God. This is part of our faith journey.

As well as people power, we need other resources too. Many people have very generous in their financial giving. We all know that 2009 is going to be a tough time financially. Some people may lose their jobs, others may struggle to pay bills. Some of us though, will continue to be financially stable. The Board is currently praying about and working on the budget for the new financial year. Your ideas for ministry will feed into that process and will help us to sort out budget priorities. If we are going to do more in the new year, then we will need more resources.

There are two new areas of ministry that are going to challenge me this year beyond the local church. As you may know, I sit on the South Tyneside College Multifaith Chaplaincy Forum. At our last meeting, I was elected to be the Chair of this Forum. This is a huge honour and also gives a great opportunity for outreach. Those of you that receive emails from the denomination of Metropolitan Community Church may also know that I have been asked to serve on the denomination's Structure Review Team. We are charged with looking at which parts of our current world wide structure work, which bits are missing or need improving and which aspects do not work well. We will be consulting widely over the next 12 months to find out what MCCers all over the world think. This is a voluntary position and is not part of my ministry with MCC Newcastle, however it is a very exciting task to be part of and I ask for your prayers for the Structure Review Team.

I look forward to seeing you at a Tea Party or to hearing from you directly.

God bless

*Perkia*

## Creating a Life that Matters (CLM)

If you come past the church on a Thursday night, you might be taken back to the 1970's and wonder what the music has to do with the CLM course. There is logic in hearing "Staying Alive" or music from Fame I can assure you!! (If this is before your era, don't worry – do the course and you will find out more).

If you want to grow deeper relationships with people you don't know very well, have fun, be challenged and remember what it is like to be back at school with homework, but mainly if you want to grow deeper in your relationship with the Sacred, learning in a safe place, then this is the course for you.

As we near the end of the first of the three modules, I can't speak for the others on the course but I know for myself this has been a time to reassess my views of God, my relationship with God and different ways to improve this. It has been challenging and thought provoking, but well worth the time commitment. I know I will not be the same person at the end of these 6 weeks as I was at the beginning, some of what I have heard and learnt has been new; some has re-affirmed my faith and some has brought me closer to God. All of it has been well worth doing. I'm very glad I signed up to CLM and although the commitment to 19 weeks over about 9 months might seem hard I am already sure it has been well worth it.

If you want to learn more for the next course, I am sure Cecilia and John will run another one, so talk to them or one of us on the course.

Charlotte W.

## *Hello Sailor!*

A brand new exhibition opens at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle at the end of January and runs until 19<sup>th</sup> April. "Hello Sailor" explores gay life in the Merchant Navy between the 1950s and 1980s. Through photographs and memories, you can explore what it was like to be "out at sea"

## Teesside Lent Group

**We in the Teesside group always think it's a shame that we don't get many visitors from the Newcastle area coming down. We obviously understand that it is quite a trek but you don't realise how amazing the folk are in these parts!**

This was demonstrated with the recent Advent group. The group consisted of Claire, Annette, Ann, Lorraine, Morgan, Patrick and myself. It was a well planned and focussed bible study and discussion, and, with a large variety of backgrounds, it was always ended in a good debate. One of the things I love about the Metropolitan Community Church Newcastle is that everyone is so accepting of each other, that even when we had differing opinions and thoughts people listened. That is what I loved, no one was ignored and everyone's opinion was taken into account. This led to some great discussions and I know personally I learnt a lot from the experience. The hospitality of Claire and Annette are unrivalled and there is always a warm welcome and a warm kettle waiting! So those of you who think its too far to come, try it! We are lovely! And to those Teessiders out there—thanks for the group - it was great, just like you all are! Roll on Lent group.

George G.

### News from Emily

"As I write, I have been worshipping at MCC Newcastle for 15 years to the week. On that first Sunday evening, as a nervous 18 year old student, I came in through the yellow door to be welcomed by John's great smile. I was ushered up some stairs (which no longer exist) to a small smoky room, where I found an odd assortment of men. Within a few minutes, I had admitted I played the piano, and found myself seated with a hymnbook choosing the songs for the following week! I was hooked straight away by the passion, the love, the inclusivity, the sheer presence of God in this place.

Well, much has changed within MCCN since that day. We have taken risks – moving downstairs, changing our service time, going digital, hiring a pastor. And I have watched the church grow from 8 men and me, to the thriving and vibrant community it is today. During this time I have taken on many different roles of leadership within the church – musician, worship leader, board member, treasurer, chair of the Board, small group leader – to name but a few! It has sometimes felt as if my own personal development has been so closely related to that of the church community that our paths are forever entwined.

However, over the last few months, it has become clear to me that God is now calling me on. My path is no longer to be intertwined with MCCN. I am now being led towards a different path. I do not yet know where this may lead me, but I know that it is only by leaving the church I have called my spiritual home for the last 15 years, that I will be able to grow into the next stage of my ministry.

It is with some sadness that I tell you this, as I will miss some very dear people, some amazing worship, and especially that MCC *thing* which is so hard to define but so compelling. But I know this to be the right decision. I am sure that MCCN will continue to thrive, reaching out to those on the margins of society, letting the unloved know they have a home, bringing the best out of each individual. I will continue to pray for you all, and would ask for your prayers and blessings as I move onto my new path. May we all be granted wisdom, courage and joy in our journeys."

Emily Watson

### **Blue Christmas Service 2008**

Many things cause people to cry out "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" "Out of the deep I have called unto thee O Lord; Lord hear my voice." People have their own reasons for doing so. These quotes are from Psalm 22 and 130 which reflect the sort of Christmas they would have been facing. MCC Newcastle recognises this and for the past few years has held a Blue Christmas Service at St. James' United Reformed Church where we worship every Sunday.

On the night of the service the church Christmas tree looked lovely with lights and decorations. MCCN's tree was hung with blue tinsel and baubles. Cards for writing prayers on and a pack of tissues were placed on the pews. Words from Psalm 22 called us to worship. We sang the carols 'In the Bleak Midwinter, Away in a Manger and Silent Night'. We had readings from Ecclesiastes and Matthew's gospel. The church had an air of quiet about it - mixed with anticipation for our time of prayer and reflection.

We were asked if we wanted to place our written prayers cards in a bowl which was placed on the altar and take a bauble from our Christmas tree. This was reminder to us that it was alright to feel blue at Christmas time! In doing so, no one was on their own. We also lit candles of remembrance for those who had been loved and lost and we gave thanks for our memories of them which bound us and them together, especially at this Christmas time.

However, in the midst of facing pain and grief we are to hold onto Christmas - Christ is born and Emanuel is with us. Christ defeats darkness and goes with us into the future of the New Year and beyond. John's gospel tells us "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it". Gloria in Excelsis Deo ! AMEN

Margaret Bell

## MCC Newcastle Events and Activities

### **Sunday Worship**

MCC Newcastle meets **every Sunday** for worship at 6.30pm. We meet at St. James United Reformed Church, Northumberland Road, Newcastle NE1 8JF in the church hall. Our worship services are open to all.

The **Scarborough Group** meets on the **second Sunday** of every month at 4.30pm at the Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough. Join us for worship and a fellowship meal.

### **Socials**

The Monthly **Squash!** – How many people can you squash into Mikee and Jonny’s home? Once a month after the worship service, we have a social in Heaton, and enjoy great hospitality from M and J. Don’t be shy! – come and join us for a drink and a little something to eat. See Mikee or Jonny for directions.

**Tea with Dorothy (TWD)** is a group for the more mature amongst us. We have two TWD groups.

**Tea with Dorothy in Newcastle** meets on the **first Saturday** of every month, from 2 – 4pm at Martha and Mary’s Cafe, Chillingham Road, Heaton. Pop in for a cuppa and a chat.

**Tea with Dorothy in Sunderland** meets on the **second and third Wednesday** of every month from 5pm -7pm at the Activage cafe, Stockton Road, Sunderland. For more information, contact Age Concern on 0191 5141131.

**Pancake Parties** – last year there was huge rivalry as to who could eat most pancakes! Claire and Annette host the Teesside Chompers, **we are still looking for a Tyneside venue**, so if you love having people round for food, contact Abby [social@mccnewcastle.org.uk](mailto:social@mccnewcastle.org.uk)

### **Study and Discussion Groups**

**The Good Book Club** is for those of us who perhaps used to do bible study, but haven’t done it for a long time, or for those of us who would like to know our bible a bit better. Come, read and discuss scripture in a relaxed way. We decide together as a group what we would like to study. Some of us even offer to lead the group from time to time! GBC happens once a month, usually (but not always) on the **second Wednesday** and meets in the church office – entrance through the church car park to right of main building.

**Movies with Mikee** is an opportunity to watch a (secular) film together and then discuss the theological themes that emerge – even if the movie makers didn’t have God in mind! This event is a “moveable feast” so check the calendar each month to see if the popcorn maker is on.

**Art and God** – come and express your creative side! Join John for an evening of creativity and discussion on how we could involve art more in our worship. Hopefully, we’ll even make a few welcome cards!

### **Pastor’s Tea Parties**

What do you think God is calling MCC Newcastle to do and to be in the year ahead? Come along and share your ideas for ministry for 2009/2010. No idea is too big or too small for discussion! It will take all of us to change the world!

For more information, phone/text the church phone (Cecilia or one of the church leaders)

07770 543407 or visit [www.mccnewcastle.org.uk](http://www.mccnewcastle.org.uk)

MCC Newcastle, c/o St James Church, Northumberland Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JF

### **Our Mission**

The Metropolitan Community Church in Newcastle upon Tyne

is a Christ-centred and inclusive community, with a commitment to spiritual and personal growth through worship, prayer and action. We seek to provide a welcoming and accepting atmosphere, and aim to proclaim Christ’s message of liberation for all. We work towards a transformation in the understanding of Christianity and its relevance to contemporary society.

**Registered charity number 1093009**

# MCC Newcastle - February 2009

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1 <b>Sunday Worship</b> 6.30pm, church hall
2	3 Korean Student Choir St James Church 7pm	4	5 <b>Pastor's Tea Party</b> 7.30pm, Mikee and Jonny's, Heaton- share your ideas for 2009	6 <b>Movies with Mikee</b> 7.30pm, Mikee and Jonny's, Heaton Movie is " <b>Matrix</b> "	7 <b>Tea with Dorothy, Heaton</b> 2 – 4pm A social for the more mature among us! <b>Leadership Day</b>	8 <b>Sunday Worship</b> 6.30pm, church hall 4.30pm <b>Scarborough Group</b> meets
9	10	11 <b>Tea with Dorothy, Sunderland</b> 5 – 7pm. <b>Good Book Club</b> 7.30pm, church office – refresh your bible reading	12	13	14	15 <b>Sunday Worship</b> 6.30pm, church hall
16	17	18 <b>Art and God</b> 7pm room 12, by church office <b>Tea with Dorothy, Sunderland</b> 5 – 7pm.	19  Cecilia time off 18 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	20	21	22 <b>Sunday Worship</b> 6.30pm, church hall <b>Squash</b> – after worship Mikee and Jonny's, Heaton
23	24 <b>Shrove Tuesday</b> 7.30pm Pancake Parties in Tyneside and Tees- side see Abby for details.	25 <b>Ash Wednesday</b> 7.30pm A Service to prepare for Lent Main church	26 <b>CLM course – Starting second module</b> 7pm main church	27	28	

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