

Operation Christmas Child!

This year MCC Newcastle started its Operation Christmas Child appeal early. We managed to collect over five large bags of toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, facecloths, crayons and colouring pads. We even beat our number of boxes, going from 15 to 17, thanks to Claire and Claire's mam, Hazel.

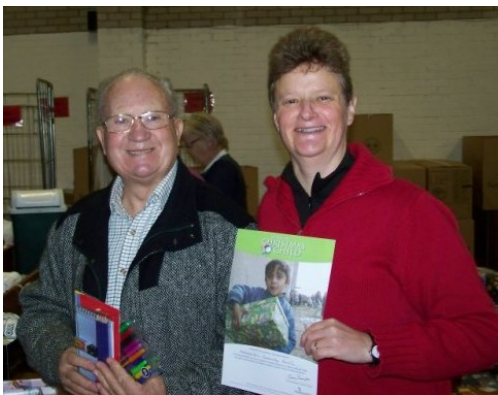


Boxes waiting to be checked

Abby, Lesley, Ernie and Cecilia spent the morning at the Shepherds Purse warehouse in Byker, checking each box and getting them

ready to be shipped out.

The warehouse had already received over 13,000 boxes by the time we got there and 10,000 had been checked and sent out.



Ernie and Cecilia pausing (posing?) for the camera

Ernie says "As someone who is long in the tooth, I've had quite a youthful experience. I've learned a great deal today! I didn't realise how much I'd forgotten about small children. I'm amazed at all the efforts that have gone into the shoeboxes.

The variety left me speechless—magic gloves that grow to fit any size hands, a pink fluffy scarf that I would wear myself, musical instruments, dominoes, juggling balls. It's just fantastic!"

Every box is checked to make sure that it has no unsuitable content, such as liquids or chocolate (might melt). Each box is intended to be unique, but if there is space to add extras, then items such as the ones we collected in church, get added to make sure that the basics are covered.

It was a joy and an inspiration to see how much thought and care was put into each box by the person who prepared it. We were reminded too, that the child who received the box might also have the joy of giving by sharing sweets and toys that they were given.

The warehouse!



The boxes from MCC Newcastle were being shipped off to Romania on the Monday after we helped in the warehouse. It's amazing to think that our ministry reaches out to people so far away. A huge Thank you to everyone who contributed towards this year's efforts!



Lesley's got it taped!



A very Happy Christmas to all our readers!!

All Your Diary Dates, Events for December

PLUS

Pastor's report

Beer and Carols Fab photos!

Bible feature Should Christians Celebrate Christmas?

Financial Report

Harvest for Our Future Next Steps



Pastor's Report – November 2009

Someone asked me recently if church growth was all about numbers. Well, the answer is “Yes” and “No”. Church growth is about **quantity**, and it is also about **quality**.

What do I mean? One of the aspects of MCC Newcastle that people most value is the warm welcome that they received when they first came to worship with us. We pride ourselves on being a friendly, sociable church. Helping people to settle in easily and make new friends is important. It is the quality of our welcome that makes people want to come back. If people come back to church and get involved, then we grow in number. However, it is the quality of our welcome that can make the difference on that first visit!

The other BIG response to what do we value was our worship and music. Again, we work hard in many different ways to ensure that we are offering God the best worship that we can. The quality of our worship and the attention to detail that so many people put in each week, makes it easier to centre ourselves and go deeper with God. Our relationship with God grows, helped by the quality of our worship.

We now offer more opportunities for worship, as well as the regular Sunday service. On the second Wednesday of every month, we have our **Taizé** service. This is a quiet, reflective service with a period of silence. Taizé chants are often sung in Latin. They are simple to sing, and are repeated, so it is easy to pick up the tune if it is new to you.

Our next **Kairos** service will be on Wednesday 27th January. This service develops in a less structured way than worship on Sunday. We use singing and times of shared prayer to help us go deeper into God's presence.

We offer more ways of encountering God through “Creating a Life that Matters”, our Advent groups and other small groups over the year. Through these experiences, we hope that people will grow in God.

MCC Newcastle, like all MCCs, believes in the “priesthood of all believers”. That is, we believe that every single person is called to ministry, it's not just a path for a chosen few. The art is to find the right place for each person, not just making a list of jobs that need doing and getting people to do them!

It is one of the greatest joys in my ministry to help people to find out what their gifts and skills are and then helping them to find the right ministry for them.



When we are in the right place for us, when we are using our spiritual gifts and other skills in a way that feeds us and gives us a real feeling of joy and peaceful fulfilment, then we are growing in God, through our service to others. MCC Newcastle offers so many different ways to get involved in serving God and serving God's people. This is another way of growing the church!

Church growth is also about giving in other ways. We are a generous congregation. This calendar year, we have supported Parents Enquiry NE, People's Kitchen, the West End Refugee Service and most recently Operation Christmas Child. A number of people have started standing orders to donate on a regular basis to the ministry of MCC Newcastle. Thanks to those who have signed Gift Aid forms, we have been able to claim back over £5000 from the UK Government.

Growing in generosity is about quantity and quality. The quality of our giving—with a generous spirit and with prayer, is more important than the quantity. A five pound note buys the same whether it was given lovingly or resentfully. The impact on the giver is what makes the difference!

Now we are approaching Christmas—“Jesus is the reason for the reason”. We celebrate the wonderful gift of Emmanuel, God with us. The primary purpose of MCC Newcastle is to help us to deepen our relationship with God and be able to live our lives in the way that Jesus taught us. This is the most important aspect of church growth - to grow in God.

At this special time, I wish you peace and joy. May the Christ Child bring light, blessing and hope to you this Christmas and may 2010 be a most wonderful year.

God bless

Penina



Bible Feature



Should Christians Celebrate Christmas ?

With Christmas approaching I wondered why we called it 'Christmas', what does the 'mas' mean. I did a little research and found the its maybe from the Roman Catholic 'Mass' or it could mean 'Christ + mass as in a large number or quantity. Makes sense. I started to think about all the commercialism and materialistic of the season and if the reason for the season had been lost. Historically, the festival sank into pure revelry to such an extent that an Act of Parliament in 1555 forbid it and the Christian emphasis was restored.

Some say that the Bible doesn't permit us to celebrate the birth of Christ. The argument goes that it does tell us to recall the death, Last Supper and resurrection, but not the birth. To me that is like saying the Bible doesn't command believers to meet on a Sunday, but the early church did so and thus set a example for us to follow.

Still some would argue that the Bible actually tells us not to celebrate special months, seasons ,days or religious festivals. See *Colossians Chapter 2, Verses 16-17*. Ah.. but what this passage is forbidding is the celebration of religious duty when it is necessary for holiness or spirituality. The 'if you don't do this at this time you're not fit in God's eyes' syndrome. For me the answer is in the spirit of why it is done.

Then there is the argument that Christmas traditions are from paganism. To me this is a non-starter argument as the pagan associations were forgotten a very long time ago. For example the days of our week derived originally from pagan beliefs. Friday actually comes from the word Fria who was the goddess of love. You can't tell me that when Friday comes along you think of the goddess of love, when Saturday comes of Saturn, rather you think it is my day off work ! As with the early church setting us an example of worshipping on a Sunday, so too have other things taken on a Christian meaning.

- The evergreen tree is a symbol of eternal life which Christ made available to humankind by way of another tree
(Rev. 2:7, 22:2, 14).

- Presents under that tree are a reminder to us of the need to give to ourselves and others as we have indeed been given God's gift of eternal life through Christ.

Who could criticise you for using this time to celebrate the birth of Lord and Saviour? It is all about the way we do it and why we do. If **Jesus is the reason for your season** then surely God would want you to celebrate his Son's birthday !

Oh yes, that old chestnut that Christ wasn't born on 25th December or even in winter time. Well, apparently an archaeologist named James Kelso has lived in Palestine doing extensive research on this very issue. He reckons that the best season for the shepherds of Bethlehem would be winter when the heavy rains produce luscious crops of new grass. Makes sense to me! Anyway, we could pick any date, what does it matter? It is a chance to really thank God for the demonstration of love for us she must have had by sending Her only Son to earth.

If you have any doubts about celebrating Christ's birth at Christmas time then don't do it. Simple as. However, you could usefully spend the time concentrating on Christ, reading your Bible. Or you could maybe keep the Christmas traditions and focus them on the truth of Christ. Remember the following and you can't go wrong.

- The tree tells us of the Lord and the eternal life it gives.
- The presents tell us of God's love and the gift to us all of Her Son and also our love for one another.
- You could make more emphasis on giving rather than receiving.
- The mistletoe tells us of the gift of God's virtuous branch.
- And finally the hugs and kisses are an example of your faith as it is a means of salvation and bringing and sharing together.

May God be with all this Christmas

Amen

Claire Liebig-Denham

Harvest for Our Future—Next Steps

It has been very interesting to collate all the feedback from the post-its boards and the Vision parties. It is clear that we love our church and that we have big dreams for our future.

A total of 26 people attended the three different Vision parties and more gave their comments and ideas by writing on the post it boards at church.

Many people value our worship, our welcome and the inclusive, non judgemental way that people are able to “just be”. There is no pressure to get more involved, but the opportunities are there, should you want to do more.

Ideas for what we will be like in 10 years time include:

- the same but bigger (don't want to lose the family feel)
- having our own worship space
- raising up a new generation of leaders
- variety of paid staff
- being diverse and flexible
- children and youth ministry
- major force for social justice in the area
- managing our geographic area better, to have more presence in areas beyond Newcastle

There was general consensus that we are called to reach out to the LGBT community and also to those who are marginalised by mainstream churches in other ways.

At the end of January, the members of the Board and ministry leaders will spend a day looking at all the feedback. We will start to draft out a new vision statement for the next ten years and set ministry priorities for the next year, three years and five years.

All of this will come back to the congregation for further discussion. The final version of this work will be presented to the Annual Congregational Meeting in April 2010

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey!

MCC Newcastle Financial Report

Every week, people give generously to the ministry of MCC Newcastle through the offering plate at Sunday worship, or through the bank by Standing Order.

We also receive donations from time to time.

Thank you to the person who regularly sends anonymous donations to the church office.

We know that you read our newsletter!

Thank you for your most recent donation.

Sunday service	Attendance Oct	Attendance Nov
Week 1	28	18
Week 2	31	35
Week 3	33	29
Week 4	28	23
Week 5		28
Average Sunday attendance	30	27
No. of different individuals attending over month	49	43
Offering in plate	£175.66	£135.84
Offering through standing order	£1950	£2060
Total monthly offering	£2125.66	2305.84
Budget for 2009/2010	£35,520.00	
Total income to end of Nov 09	£24,651.51	
Total expenditure to end of Nov 09	£17,868.44	

Thank you to everyone who completed a Gift Aid form, which allowed MCC Newcastle to claim back the tax that you paid on your offerings to the church. We were able to claim back **£5011.74** in Gift Aid for 08/09.

If you would like to start a Standing Order or want to sign a Gift Aid form, they are available every Sunday, by the kitchen hatch!



Christmas Services

at

Metropolitan Community Church Newcastle

Wednesday 16th Dec - 7pm

Blue Christmas service

Christmas is not a happy time for everyone
This service just gives you space to be sad

Sunday 20th Dec - 6.30pm

Our annual service of Lessons and Carols

Come along and have a good sing!!!
Bring a friend and a Santa hat

Thursday 24th Dec - 6.30pm

Christmas Eve Crib Service

A quiet reflective service,
welcoming in the Christ Child
in the winter darkness

All our Christmas services are in the main church

St. James U R Church, Northumberland Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

www.mccnewcastle.org.uk 07770 543407

Here we come a wassailing...



Great excitement ensued as we heralded in the festive season with our “Beer and Carols” at Claire and Annette’s house in Thornaby. Beer and carols is a jolly evening inspired by Greenbelt’s “Beer and Hymns.” It is an informal gathering to eat Christmas cake, have a drink and raucously sing along to festive favourites.

Claire and Annette were brilliant hosts and kept the beer flowing and the mince pies coming, while Mikee accompanied such Christmas classics as “Silent Night”, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” and, of course, Band Aid’s “Do they know it’s Christmas?” on piano.

It can be difficult to relax at Christmas because of the shopping and stress, and so easy to forget that the joy of life is in just relaxing with friends and having fun (when you have to buy a turkey big enough to feed fifteen, it’s difficult to think of anything else!). This is what makes “Beer and Carols” so brilliant, as it is just an opportunity to chill out and enjoy Christmas.

Unfortunately, most of the pictures we took aren’t the most flattering (this is because everyone had their mouth open to sing!), but here are some of the better ones. Merry Christmas!



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 would like to extend a very warm welcome to all readers. We hope you enjoyed our newsletter which is published on a monthly basis and can be found in colour on our website

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.

Events and Activities

What's New?? Advent groups

The North East is rich with Christian history. This Advent we are reflecting on the lives of Aidan, Cuthbert, Hilda and Bede. Each session “stands alone”, so don't worry if you can't make all of them. We have groups in Newcastle, Co. Durham and Teesside too.

Christmas Services

Saturday 5th Dec 10.30am - a chance for children from all the congregations who worship at St James to help decorate the St James Christmas tree in the main church.

Wednesday 16th Dec - 7pm Blue Christmas service. Christmas is not a happy time for everyone. A time for reflection and remembering, a time when it is ok not to be merry. Main church

Sunday 20th Dec - 6.30pm Our Annual service of Lessons and Carols. Come along and bring a friend! Main church

Thursday 24th Dec - 6.30pm Christmas Eve Crib Service. A quiet reflective service, welcoming in the Christ Child in the winter darkness. Main church

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.

The monthly **Taizé service** is a quiet reflective style of worship involving singing of simple chants, often in Latin, and periods of silence. It is a perfect way to take some quiet time out from a busy week. Jonny is leading this worship, so see him for more details. The next Taizé service is on **Wednesday 13th January**

Socials

YAM (Young Adults Ministry) is having a Christmas social - contact Charlotte N via the Facebook group to let her know what you would like to do.

Squash! – How many people can you fit into Mikee and Jonny's for a church social? Come along and squash into their home for our Christmas social

Spiritual Growth

Creating A Life that Matters (CLM) – this is a year long course that looks at three aspects of our faith journey: Rediscovering Relationship with the Sacred, Rediscovering Relationship with Myself, Rediscovering Relationship with My Passion. The course has started for this year, but let Cecilia know if you are interested for next time.

For more information, phone/text the church phone (Cecilia or one of the church leaders)
07770 543407

or visit www.mccnewcastle.org.uk

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

MCC Newcastle December 2009

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2 Advent groups The NE Saints 7pm Mikee and Jonny's, Heaton 7pm George's, Thornaby	3 Creating a Life that Matters (CLM) 7pm room 1	4 Advent group The NE Saints 7pm Charlotte and Hannelie's, Witton Gilbert	5 Christmas tree Decorating 10.30am main church Tea with Dorothy Heaton 2 – 4pm Beer and Carols 7pm, Claire and Annette's, Thornaby	6 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall WAD service 2 nd Advent
7	8	9 Advent groups The NE Saints 7pm Mikee and Jonny's 7pm George's, Thornaby	10 Creating a Life that Matters (CLM) 7pm room 1	11 Advent group The NE Saints 7pm Charlotte and Hannelie's, Witton Gilbert	12 YAM social Let Charlotte know what you want to do!!	13 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall 3 rd Advent Christmas Squash After service - Mikee and Jonny's, Heaton
14	15 Advent group The NE Saints 7pm Mikee and Jonny's	16 Blue Christmas Service 7pm, main church Advent group 7pm George's, Thornaby	17	18 Advent group The NE Saints 7pm Charlotte and Hannelie's, Witton Gilbert	19	20 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall Carol Service 4 th Advent
21 Advent group The NE Saints 7pm Charlotte and Hannelie's, Witton Gilbert	22	23 Advent groups The NE Saints 7pm Mikee and Jonny's 7pm George's, Thornaby	24 Christmas Eve service 6.30pm main church	25	26	27 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall
28	29	30	31			