

# ALL SAINTS, STRANTON CHURCH HARTLEPOOL

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2019



Rooted in God's love,  
Growing together with Jesus,  
Branching out in the power of the Spirit.

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## Vicar's Report for Stranton Church 2019 and beyond (written 23.9.20)

*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:29-33)*

We live in strange times and I am sitting down to write this report in September for the first time ever. The Church APCM has been delayed by 6 months because of the pandemic and for many 2019 is a distant memory, much has happened since. In this report I will record some key events in 2019. All of us in recent months have experienced constant uncertainty but we should also remind ourselves God is everlasting and faithful, one who can be trusted. As his people we place our hope in him and so renew our strength and look forward in faith and hope.

Some significant changes occurred in Church organisation during 2019. In March the Central Hartlepool Group Ministry came into existence and we as a parish are now committed to close collaboration with St Luke's and St Aidan's with St Columba in the long term. There is now a group council and both lay and clergy are committed to working together. In practice this means I am interim priest in charge of St Luke's alongside my role as vicar at Stranton. Mother Gemma now lives in St Luke's vicarage and shares pastoral ministry at St Luke's. In the first few months of the group ministry Rev Andrew Craig continued as a non-stipendiary minister working mainly at St Luke's. We are all deeply grateful for Andrew's long ministry amongst us over many years and in particular the support and care he gave to the people of St Luke's in the last two years of his ministry. Andrew retired from licensed ministry in the middle of August and this retirement was marked by a very special event in Stranton Church in July.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September the whole group introduced new service times to allow time for our worship to flourish and for ministers to travel between services. At Stranton our services are now at 9am and 11am. The 9am service is a said communion service using both 1662 and common worship liturgies and the 11am service remains a more informal service with Morning Worship (service of the word) alternating with Holy Communion. Later in the year a good example of collaboration was the Group Carol Service held at Stranton. The joint choir pulled together by Andy McAllister, Stephen Darkin and Julie really made the evening special. More generally I would like to thank all who enable our services to happen, each service involves a number of people who work hard behind the scenes to ensure our worship happens. Thank you.

Another significant event was the ordinations of the Michelle Delves and Clive Hall as priests. It has been encouraging to see them both grow into their respective and yet individual ministries. Our thanks go to Clive and Michelle who were a real asset over the Christmas period when they helped cover the multiple opportunities for ministry during a time when Mother Gemma was recovering from a surgical procedure. I am encouraged that as a parish and group we continue to be a training parish.

Through 2019 we continued to have 1 day time and 2 evening home groups for fellowship and study. Mother Gemma also arranged a Lent course across the group. Our ministry to those seeking asylum has also continued. A key part of this is encouraging discipleship through bible study for those professing Christian faith. Alongside this we have continued to support English practice

sessions for any who want to learn and also to provide what we can through care and support. Jean Waller deserves a particular mention for her continued support of those who need help.

The remarkable story of St Matthew's Community Centre continues and it is encouraging that it remains a community hub for a diverse range of groups including Boys Brigade, rainbows Brownies and Guides and a number of Church groups. The kitchen and accessible toilet extension was completed on time and on budget which is a tribute to the hard work of the Hall Committee, and Barbara Butcher and Carol Laud in particular. The reopening was celebrated in July with a visit from Bishop Sarah and the Mayor of Hartlepool. We also continue to be very involved with various local primary schools with a particular focus on Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School. Since September Rev Clive Hall has been working here as a volunteer chaplain and more recently we have been asked to be part of the Growing faith initiative. For more information about Clive's work please see his separate Burbank report.

The pastoral group has continued to visit and take communion to the housebound and the lonely. When Andrew retired Michelle also took on responsibility for monthly communions at Elwick Grange, an event that was very popular with the residents. The year was also tinged with significant sadness. After a struggle to find a local job Kat and the family joined Josh in Germany and Patricia Vaughan also stepped down from her various roles and in September moved to St Hilda's. There was a number of deaths but of particular note was the passing of Margaret Lumley who was a lifelong member of the fellowship.

Despite the difficult moments we entered 2020 with hope looking forward to the accessibility work being completed in the Church building and in anticipation of the Communities of Hope Project coming into being. Who would have guessed what was round the corner with the Global Covid 19 pandemic and all its ramifications. But we do continue in hope and with thanks for the generosity of all sorts of people who have continued to contribute to our Church community life, and in particular our office holders Peter, Angela, Maureen and David. We continue, trusting in the everlasting God who will renew our strength. I leave the final word to Paul from Romans 15, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

*Norman*

*September 2020*

## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

All Saints, Stranton Church is situated in Church Row, Hartlepool TS24 7QT. It is part of the Diocese of Durham within the Church of England. The correspondence address is Stranton Church Office, St Matthew's Community Centre, Arncliffe Gardens Entrance, Hartlepool TS26 9JF.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission

PCC members who have served from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 until the date this report was approved are:

*Priest in Charge:*        The Rev'd Norman Shave        Chairman

*Wardens:*                Mr Peter Anderson  
                                  Mrs Angela Craig

*Representatives on the Deanery Synod:*

Miss Pamela Harkness  
Mr Andrew Rogers  
Mrs Sylvia Shepherd

*Elected members:*

Mrs Maureen Anderson	Secretary
Mrs Ann Courtenay	
Mr David Craig	Treasurer
Mrs Azam Chaichi	
Mrs Diane Greenwood	
Mr David House	
Mrs H Jennett	
Mrs Cheryl Mills	
Mrs Lynda Parvin	
Miss Mary Robinson	
Mrs Jacqui Rogers	
Mrs Mary Tones	

*Ex-officio members:*

Rev'd Andrew Craig	<i>Retired 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019</i>
Rev'd Michelle Delves	

*Co-opted members:*

Mr Clive Hall

The full PCC met seven times during the year with an average level of attendance of 64%. Committees met between meetings and minutes of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and discussed where necessary.

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

### **ELECTORAL ROLL**

There are 104 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, parish. Six names were removed during the year.

*Ken Shepherd*  
*Electoral Roll Officer*

### **FINANCE REPORT**

Financial Report for the Year to 31 December 2019

In presenting the Financial Accounts for 2019, I am pleased to report that the Church overall returned a surplus of £4,760 in 2019 - with the St Matthews Community Centre generating all of this after offsetting a deficit of £934 on the "main" Church account caused by some unexpected late building repairs. The "Free" cash reserves of the Centre stood at £25,427 as at 1 January 2020 excluding

£31,093 premises improvement reserve: and those of the church stood at £13,524. The Centre Reserves are available for improvements and community investment, as agreed by the St Matthew's Management Committee, whose terms of reference were renewed by the committee and agreed by the PCC in 2019, and includes representatives from the Church and community including Burn Valley North Residents Association.

A main highlight in 2019 was the investment in the St Matthews Community Centre of over £100,000 (£82,568 of which was paid directly through the Community Centre Account) for extensive new kitchens, store rooms and accessible toilets: Grants from Garfield Weston foundation and indirectly from Impetus Environmental Trust for this development have enabled further renewal and a growing ambition and vision for community engagement in the Centre. I make no apology to the Hall Treasurer Barbara Butcher in recognising once again her singular contribution to fundraising and grant applications over many years, and to Carol Laud for her support on this project.

Progress was made in 2019 through the granting of the Diocesan Faculty and PCC approval of tender for new accessible toilet and various other safety and amenity improvements to the church building, but a decision to proceed has had to be deferred to 2020 pending the outcome of various applications for grant support. Previously earmarked funds for this project have been carried forward to 2020.

Giving overall fell as anticipated because of deaths, retirements and moving away of a number of our congregation, however I am pleased to report that committed regular sacrificial giving through Loyalty Scheme (mainly standing orders with some envelopes) and the new "Parish Giving Scheme" (PGS) in its first full year provided us as expected with a solid base of committed financial support, much of it index linked through people taking up the inflation uplift option in PGS.

Our main items of committed expenditure were met in full with our Parish Share paid to the diocese at £30,000 and payroll budget for parish staff at £35,000. Running costs of services rose in 2019, also repairs as we incurred some additional costs in remediation of stonework, and paid preparatory architect fees for the proposed access works. Our mission support grants fell as we incurred no local mission team costs in 2019.

At the start of 2020, Stranton Church received a substantial legacy (from the Estate of Margaret Lumley), and the PCC will in due course decide how these funds can be best used to celebrate her life and honour her memory.

As I write this delayed report we face more financial uncertainty than at any previous point in my 29 years as Treasurer of Stranton Church. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown will have an undoubted serious impact on our finances as we will have no open offering from regular and occasional services for several months, and are experiencing drastic reductions in retained fees for Weddings and Funerals. The reduction in costs of heating and lighting the building and providing materials for services do not offset these losses of offertory income and fees revenue. We are however, as a Church, less vulnerable than many as we have striven over the last several years to encourage direct payment from members by bank transfer and latterly PGS, which are currently holding up quite well, and several of those who pay by envelope have been telling me they are accumulating them for when Church opens again. We are (May 2020) planning a five-year commitment with our sister churches and the National Church in our Communities of Hope project, funded from Central funds initially.

Our cash outgoings are to a large extent supported by cash reserves and regular giving, and while we do not know what the end point will be, and despite an expectation of deficit this year, we have faith in God's provision for our needs.

On behalf of the PCC, and in thanks to God for the faithful spirit shown by our congregations, I acknowledge and celebrate the generosity of our members. As always in giving due thanks for their committed financial support, and adding my encouragement to all to participate in the fullness of Christ's Kingdom through prayer-led giving in line with Biblical principles and teaching, I am aware that people are differently affected, with some having "furloughed" reductions in income and some either by loss of employment or reduction in casual earnings may not be able to sustain their support.

I would also like to record my particular thanks to key individuals who make largely unseen but nevertheless essential contributions of their time and skills to the financial resourcing (in the widest sense) of the Church. Especially I thank Maureen Anderson, our assistant treasurer and PCC secretary, who manages the considerable daily tasks of raising payments and recording analysis and reconciliation of cash books with patience and dependable accuracy; Ken and Sylvia Shepherd as the leads for the Cash team and management of Diocesan and local fees payments; Barbara Butcher again as Honorary Treasurer of the St Matthews Community Hall; also Trish Playfor the Parish Administrator and others - counters of cash, vergers, sidespersons, and not least the faithful regular members who commit to sustained giving for the maintenance of the ministry of our Church. I also thank our Independent Examiner Clive Rathbone for his diligence and for his gracious provision of time and expertise in reviewing these accounts to ensure objectively and independently that they meet necessary legal and professional standards. These "living stones", who have supported and encouraged me to fulfil my role, have my heartfelt thanks.

*D A Craig, MA (Cantab), ACA  
Hon Treasurer, May 2020*

## **BUILDING AND FABRIC OF THE CHURCH**

Following our five-yearly fixed electrical inspection all remedial works (other than for the socket wiring in the vicar's vestry - which is to be replaced with a new ring main as part of the Accessibility works planned in 2020) were completed including the rewiring of the church clock.

Appliances and cables have been PAT tested and inspected in September.

A new lightning rod has been inserted to make the existing conductor effective.

The church alarm, fire extinguishers and boiler have been serviced. The boiler required repairs in October and December.

Daniel Cook has been working on the organ, on an occasional basis, to keep it playing and advising on an organ refurbishment proposal. The diocesan adviser has visited and discussed our outline proposals and we hope to apply for a faculty in the coming year to replace some wearing and failing components and possibly to improve the tonal quality and range of stops.

The Faculty application for improved accessibility to chancel, kitchen and Fulthorpe areas as well as forming an accessible toilet in the current vicars vestry has been agreed with the diocese and subcontractor and we are waiting for confirmation of grants to begin works.

The vicar's vestry will be moved into what is currently the choir vestry.

The kitchen and rear toilet area have been repainted and parts of the walls re-plastered. The kitchen mixer tap has been replaced, and ceiling fluorescent light replaced with LED equivalent.

Lower gutters and gulleys have been checked and cleaned. Guttering to choir vestry has been repaired and re-fixed. The guttering over the porch remained to be cleaned and painted in 2020. Two tower windows have had their internal screens replaced - two remain to be done in 2020.

A log book is kept, and all alterations and repairs to the church are entered in it. An inspection of articles belonging to the church (terrier) was satisfactorily completed in March.

On advice from our insurers, a full review of Fire risk assessment and Health and Safety policy were in progress during the year, for completion and adoption in 2020.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers who have faithfully assisted in all the areas mentioned above and looked after the Church, including Sidespersons, Vergers for Weddings/Funerals, and others who do cleaning, tidying and gardening.

Thanks go also to our assistant wardens Rohan Wanduragala and David House, as well as Ian Walker who helped with cover during holiday periods.

*Angela Craig, Peter Anderson*  
*Churchwardens*

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The church wardens attended health and safety and fire risk assessment training day organised by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

The policies concern the safety of people not the buildings. The church will (as employer of the Community of Hope project staff) employ five or more staff and is legally required to have a formally adopted Health and Safety policy. This is in addition to the health and safety risk assessments and action plans which have been and continue to be carried out annually.

A health and safety audit was carried out by Angela Craig and Rob Butler on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and again by Peter Anderson and Angela Craig on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The principal remaining issue is cables under carpets, which needs to be resolved as part of our review of Audio Visual equipment.

In particular for action (and as discussed at the January 2020 PCC) the Churchwardens noted the deterioration of the main pathway in the Churchyard as requiring essential repairs.

The carpet in church is wearing in high use areas and also we are increasingly using tape to secure joins. The carpet may need to be replaced in the next couple of years. It would be beneficial to have a wireless projection system in place before any new carpet is laid, so this project should follow any audio-visual equipment upgrade.

The kitchen vinyl needs patching by the sink.

We carried out a fire risk assessment in January in accordance with guidance and training from Ecclesiastical. A new fire action plan has been drawn up. An additional fire extinguisher has been placed in the tower in the ringing chamber. A fire service officer visited in January 2020 to review our risk assessment audit and is generally happy with our arrangements, but improvements recommended include a new "break glass" and key to be placed by the west door forming a better

second fire exit. Sidespersons, vergers and group leaders are to act as fire wardens along with the Churchwardens and we wish to carry out "emergency response" training immediately after the APCM or as soon as possible in accordance with the regulations.

We are awaiting further advice in regard to potential further safety measures in the ringing chamber, but the tower captain, who has a relevant qualification, has advised me that our current conditions match or are superior to other chambers in the town.

*Angela Craig, Peter Anderson*  
*Church Wardens*

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

The work of the Deanery continues apace, largely behind the scenes, but important non the less. As stated last year, our Deanery Plan was approved by Bishop's Council. During 2019 the major result of this was the establishment of the Central Churches Group. As ever, thanks must be given to Area Dean Janet for her tenacity, enthusiasm and support to enable this (to date successful) initiative to thrive.

Financial matters always exercised our minds as Diocesan funds were now received from 3 sources; parish share, Strategic Resource Fund (SRF) and the Low Income Community Fund (LICF). In the Hartlepool Deanery large sums have already been received from the LICF that has helped the Diocese fund our parish ministry. It was agreed that the Deanery would proceed with a bid to the SRF. As we now know, this bid was successful enabling the Community of Hope project here in the Central Group.

Jill Buttery at St Oswald's kindly offered to coordinate a children's Christmas present collection. This proved to be a great initiative under the title of Toys for Town.

It was originally planned to request the Saltmine Theatre Group to visit us again with their latest production with a provisional date for Spring 2020. However, due to concerns over potential financial losses, the proposed event was postponed (events proved this to be a very sensible decision).

The Deanery Synod continues to be a valuable resource for the Deanery, especially as it's a regular forum for parishes to discuss and comment on areas of common concerns and opportunities. I would recommend that congregation members support the Synod by agreeing to serve as a parish representative.

*Andrew Rogers*

## **SAFEGUARDING - CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION**

This year has seen a large number of eligible church members require a 'refresher' safeguarding course, with seven people renew their training with the diocese. The latest diocesan safeguarding policy is now in place. Last year saw the introduction of a new procedure for reporting accidents, as of yet I have received no reports of any specific areas of concern.



The major challenges we foresee in the coming year is how to manage the reopening of children's and youth groups in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, ensuring we comply with local and national guidelines.

There have been no major safeguarding incidents reported this year.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

*Peter Hart*

## **GATHERED WORSHIP IN STRANTON PARISH**

There is a regular pattern of worship services across the parish, both weekly and monthly. The services are held in Church, St Matthew's Hall and in Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School. Each service has its own characteristics. We hope and pray that there is something for those who have been part of a worshipping community for a long time and those attending for the first time. The pattern is summarised as follows –

### **Stranton Church**

#### **Sundays**

9:00	Holy Communion	A quiet said service using traditional liturgy
11:00	Morning Worship (provision for all ages)	Each Sunday has a different characteristic. Generally the services are relaxed and welcoming including a mix of contemporary music and hymns. 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays include communion 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday, Lighthouse is a good service to try if you are new to church, it includes welcomes for families wanting baptism.

### **Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School**

11:00	Morning Worship	Burbank Community Church is relaxed and informal, includes all ages. The services seek to include members of the Burbank Community.
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### **St Matthew's Community Centre**

4:00 third Sunday only	Messy Church	A service for families based around craft, story and sharing tea together
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## Wednesdays

10:00

Holy Communion

A said midweek communion in a more accessible venue.

## **WORSHIP TEAM**

It is a great privilege to lead our sung worship at the 11am service on Sundays. Worship songs have long been an important way for me to meet with God and our prayer is that we as a church family will give glory to God in song and in turn experience his presence and blessing.

Our worship team membership has changed again in the last twelve months. We currently have four singers plus piano and clarinet. As people's lives become very busy we no longer practise on Thursdays but take time to prepare before the service on Sunday morning. We hope to have some occasional evening practices to learn new songs. I am very grateful to each member, both past and present for their commitment and encouragement in this ministry.

**Update September 2020** With the Covid restrictions, we are pleased that online worship has taken place while we have been unable to meet in church. We are very grateful to all who have streamed services including recorded or live worship, particularly to Andy and Lucy for all their recording and to Angela and Clive for their live worship.

It's a great joy that we can now have live singing in church with a small socially distanced music group and I am grateful for those who are helping with this. We look forward to the time when we will all be able to lift our voices to God together.

*Julie Shave*

## **BURBANK COMMUNITY CHURCH and YOUTH, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **Burbank Community Church**

The numbers have remained at about 10-18 people each week, yet we still enjoy the fellowship and presence of God in our services. The people who attend have expressed their desire to continue to meet together.

I am now taking both Funerals and Baptism by myself. I was able to take Faith and Adam Barton baptism for Ronnie. The fact we held it in school and it was my first baptism in Burbank Church since my ordination made it all very special.

We have held about 6 Create sessions in school now. On average we get about 30 children and 20 adults. The sessions are going well; we are having good conversation with people during the event. We have also seen parents working alongside the children in the crafts which is one of our aims for the club.

What we have not seen is any new people attending church from the Create club.

### **Overseer for Youth, Children and Family work**

We have had a number of volunteers leave and a few more join the list of volunteers who work for the church. I would like to say a big Thank-you to all who give your time and energy to enable church to do all that it does. I am now a full time leader at Bridge Builders and YF. We do sometimes struggle to make sure we have two leaders at YF for each Sunday night. If you are interested in helping, then do please speak to me.

A reminder here that I am in charge of the Volunteer recruitment process. If anyone would like to join any of the church groups or Sunday school clubs there are a few volunteer forms that need to be signed along with DBS checks. Do please send me the names of anyone who would like to volunteer in Stranton Church.

Angela and I attended the New Wine camp at Peterborough last year. This is for all ages, it was great teaching and worship but also great fellowship with all the other church members that attended. The church would like to encourage you to attend this event this year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> August. Do speak to Norman or myself if you're interested in attending.

### **Bridge Builders**

This year there are about 8-14 children attending. We no longer receive support volunteers from YFC team. A mum from the estate and two church members are now volunteer helpers which enables us to keep going. I am using a new book called Heart Shaper which is very helpful. The book may have helped to shape the heart of one girl who wrote us a letter this week it said: -

'Bridge Builders is the one place that makes you happy relaxed and excited. All the adults try their hardest and make you happy. Everyone is so lovely and kind these people I could trust with my children. I hope this club goes on until I die so I can take my children here.'

In a year where we have had a few discipline problems this was an encouragement to the leaders.

### **Ward Jackson School**

Angela continues to work at Ward Jackson School she is a Thrive practitioner.

The school has started to take on two year olds and it thinking about using the Annex building as the nursery. We were thinking of moving church into Annex but this won't be possible if it is turned into a nursery.

I am now the Chaplain of the school and this has seen me become busier in the school. I meet with parents at the school gates and talk to people in the playground while they wait for children to come out of school. One day I have dinner with the children and chat to teachers. I have taken some RE lesson as well. At the moment I am working towards running communion classes in the school.

### **Personal News**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019 I was ordained a Priest at Durham Cathedral. A very special service for me, I was told I never stopped smiling all day again!! The next day I was presiding at my first Eucharist service with my Stranton family and a few of my friends. This was such a memorial service for me. Since then I have taken Eucharist services quite a few times and in a few different churches. Each service seems to have its own special way of doing communion and I really do feel privileged to be taking these services.

I have started my training towards taking weddings and will hope to be taking these services by myself before the end of the year.

### **Foodbank**

There have been a lot of changes at foodbank. Our Coordinator is taking a year maternity leave. Our Deputy has taken over her role and we have employed a new deputy. Our stocks are still high from our Christmas collections. We had been informed to try to increase stock levels in case of a hard Brexit!!

I have also taken the decision to leave foodbank and step down as Chair. My days are becoming full and I need to put something down. This means there is a vacancy for a new Trustee on the board. Also another trustee who was the secretary has also given notice. So there is a real need for more trustees. Do talk to me if you feel you are interested in the role of a trustee.

I would like to thank-you all for your support in the roles I have in the church and especially in my journey towards becoming a Priest. I really do appreciate your prayers and encouragements.

*Reverend Clive Hall*

## **STRANTON TODDLER GROUP**

The Toddler group continues to thrive in St Matthews Hall. I run the group on Tuesdays and Clare and Lynn run it on Fridays both from 9-11 am. Our numbers on Tuesdays are booming at the moment with 45-50 children and 30+ adults every week. We draw in many families from the local community. The children enjoy small toys, puzzles and crafts in the small hall and we have a baby area for mums with tiny ones. The children love the space in the large hall where they have fun on bikes, scooters, slides and see-saws etc.

The group is a good place for those caring for small children to meet and support one another, play with their children and encourage them to share and to learn new skills. There is also plenty of opportunity for Christian adults to share God's love and care.

I am very grateful to those who come to help on a Tuesday, both in setting up the two halls and in preparing and serving our snacks. A number of our asylum seekers have served in the kitchen over the last year which has been wonderful and we now have a new team of ladies, some from church, one with a Messy Church connection and two others from the community.

We look forward to working with the new Community of Hope team to see if there are developments in the future.

**Update September 2020** Due to the Covid pandemic, Toddlers stopped meeting in mid-March. I decided to keep in touch with our families delivering a 15 minute song and story time on-line every Tuesday morning through until July. This was well received but numbers were very low by the end of term. With the ongoing situation, we are still unable to meet due to all the requirements for cleaning equipment and keeping everyone safe and have not resumed the Facebook sessions. We look forward to meeting again as soon as it is safe to do so.

*Julie Shave*

## **MESSY CHURCH**

Messy Church continues meets monthly on the third Sunday from 4-5.30 pm in St Matthew's Hall involving around 50 to 60 participants each time. Baptism families are invited and others are drawn in through personal invitation, Toddlers, and several through our Facebook page (Stranton Messy Church).

Mary and I meet together each month to plan our activities. We begin our sessions with table top games and colouring, and once everyone has arrived, we have a bible story, song and prayer. Then the children choose from the 6 crafts/games linked with the theme. It's good to have an adult to oversee each activity and to chat with the children and adults as they cut out / stick / paint. After this we enjoy tea together where there is more time to chat with each other. It's great to see whole families learning, worshipping, playing and eating together. Our friendships with the families

who come regularly is growing and giving us more opportunities to get alongside them and share our faith.

We are so thankful for everyone in the team, both those who make our tea and serve in the kitchen and those who work with the families. It's been good to welcome extra church members to help when some of our regular team have not been available. New helpers are always welcome. It is a privilege to share the love of God and our prayer is that many, both adults and children, will come to faith.

We look forward to working with the new Community of Hope team to develop this ministry further.

**Update September 2020** Due to the Covid pandemic, Messy Church has not met since February. I delivered a Messy Church session live on Facebook every Sunday afternoon until the end of the summer term with a bible story, song, prayer and craft ideas. With falling numbers taking part, I have not resumed the sessions this term. We very much look forward to meeting again as soon as it is safe to do so.

*Julie Shave*

## **SUNDAY CLUB**

Stranton Sunday Club takes place during the 11am service on a weekly basis except for the fourth Sunday which is an all age Lighthouse service. At the beginning of 2019 our numbers were quite high, and we had 10 to 14+ attendees of ages ranging from 3-14. However, during September our numbers decreased due to families moving away and we had 5-10 attendees on a weekly basis. The Sunday Club rota is organised well in advance through email and our leaders and helpers usually volunteer once a month. Sadly, Kat (one of our leaders) moved away in September and stepped down from her role therefore increasing the regularity some of our leaders and helpers volunteered during the Autumn term.

Starting in September we trialled a new way of planning the Sunday club and instead of following the lectionary readings I created a bespoke curriculum on a termly basis. The curriculum is a monthly theme with permission from Norman so that the bible readings were more suitable for the children. The bible readings throughout that month are directly related to that theme therefore creating more consistency and continuity for the children. The first theme in September was the Fruits of the Spirit and every week the children looked at a small number of the fruits allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the different fruits and providing them the opportunity to look at each fruit in more detail. These themes have also linked the Sunday club with the Lighthouse services following the bible reading that stay in the theme of the Sunday Club. This helps the children to bring previous knowledge to the Lighthouse session. It also helps to make the Sunday Club and Lighthouse service link.

So far this seems to be successful and the children appear to be enjoying the chosen themes which have included Fruits of the Spirit, Genesis, Walk with God and the Nativity story. Leaders have used these themes and bible readings to plan their own sessions and the children appear to have enjoyed some fantastic activities that have been linked to the bible stories. The activities have included making fruit skewers, decorating gingerbread men/women and creating Christmas decorations themed on Love.

Our Sunday Club have also been involved with the main church service during all age services when they read an acrostic poem together during the Harvest service. The children also worked very hard

together at Christmas to perform a Nativity play. The children really enjoyed dressing up and performing in front of the congregation as well as singing some carols. The congregation seemed to really enjoy the Nativity and it was a great success. The children also enjoyed their cracker Christmas presents which were handed out from the Stranton Sunday Club during the service. In March 2020 when lockdown started and churches were closed I created a virtual Sunday Club which involved emails being sent out which included a bible reading and some activities for children that could be completed independently, as well as an additional activity that needed adult support. The emails covered various themes including Creation, Jesus' Parables, Psalms as well as special calendar days such as Earth day and VE day. In total almost 60 emails were sent out to ten different families between March and July in the absence of Sunday Club. The emails seemed to be well received and some of the children even contributed to a Signpost article about which activities they had enjoyed completing during lockdown.

A huge thanks needs to go to everyone who has helped as leaders and helpers with Sunday Club including Mary, Pam, Gill, Helen, Kat, Steph and Maureen. We are continuing to look for an additional leader for Sunday club to volunteer once a month. Hopefully, the Sunday club will continue to grow and develop.

*Kate Lawson*  
*Sunday Club Leader*



YF is a space for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, fun, and silly games. Each term we have had a main theme or focus interspersed with other one-off themes. We have a good core group who attend weekly and are enthusiastic.

The youth have been to trips to the Diocese Youth Events in the Cathedral and we have had movie and discussion nights at YF. We are planning to hang out with a youth group in Norton and build relationships there. This term we have asked the youth what they were interested in studying so we featured a lot of different things from the bible such as good and evil, unusual deaths, it has been great to get a "God's-eye view" on these topics through the Bible. We also covered Lent what the Bible says about it and made pancakes.

It has been good that the members are settled and attend weekly.

We are grateful for the support of the wider church community in prayer, and other ways. It has been good to have an enthusiastic team and we are thankful for the leaders who have been helping. We give thanks for those who decided it was time to move on, Kat.

We are happy to have a great team but we could still use some help, on a rota basis to continue YF. Please continue to pray for wisdom and good fellowship that builds up our youth into the people God is calling them to be!

*YF Leadership Team*



We continue to thrive with an over full unit and a very big waiting list. Maureen and I have been joined by some fantastic young women volunteering their time and energy but sadly they do not want to take over as leaders so we plod along.

The new very structured, timed and themed programme has proved to be a challenge but nothing we could not rise to and master - apart from electronic recording of the booming thing but that is not yet compulsory.

We have welcomed our Clergy and the American visitors, we toured the world - well China, Canada and the Falkland Islands. We have grown our own food, enjoyed exploring the Stickman book and celebrated Christmas by following the Nativity story.

Rainbows went out and about and enjoyed a session as bee keepers and a wonderful evening with our friends from Seaton Rainbows at Rossmere Forest School. This evening and more like it are possible because of the generosity of Hazel Roberts family. Thank you. We played in our secure car park when the weather permitted. We looked at the food we harvest and how we could turn it into tins and packets for the food bank. We visited Stranton Church for a treasure trail and to study the stained glass windows.

We enter 2020 learning basic first aid skills and look forward to exploring the history and worldwide spread of Girlguiding, turning the clock back 75 years to VE Day along with all sorts of fun adventures.

*The Rainbow Team*  
*Christine Robinson*



In September 2018, Girlguiding launched a new programme for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers covering levels 1-7, with one level being able to be covered by the joining age groups. It was totally new and after Leaders attending trainings we dabbled in it during the Spring and Summer terms and launched into it properly in September 2019. As it was so new, the resources for the programme needed to be bought, so with Fundraising and the PCC providing a donation, we have been able to resource the whole programme. It has been a steep learning and administrative curve for the Leaders but we are slowly coming to grips with how to organise the meetings.

Every Monday the Brownies and Guides meet separately following their own programme of activities but sometimes due to Leader shortage we may overlap the times. In the Summer months, when we go outdoors they will meet at the same time doing similar activities, we went to Cowpen Bewley Family Forest, joined in with Division for campfire, Traditional Sports evening and picnic and to Seaton

to build sandcastles followed by chips. Brownies had a County event at Preston Park and the Guides was a Water Activity Weekend at Yarm

We attended the production of Wizard of Oz on ice at Billingham Forum and at for the last meeting of the year, had a fun PJ evening playing Christmas Beetle with hot chocolate/marshmallows.

We have had visits from Clive, Norman and Michelle which the girls and Leaders really appreciate happening. It gives the girls to meet and chat with members of the ministry team and we have attended Harvest and Palm Sunday (although the numbers that have attended have been low). The Brownies also attended the excellent 'Eggheads'.

Any young lady from the age of 5 is welcome to join us, to become a member of Girlguiding. Either go online, using Girlguiding.uk as the search or contact me.

*Cheryl Mills*

*(Leader with Brownies & Guides)*



**4<sup>th</sup> Hartlepool Boys Brigade**  
**Founded 1930**

### **Anchor Boys**

We now have 15 regular attendees with 17 Boys on the books.

Leadership wise we would benefit by having an adult female leader - any volunteers for 1 hour?

### **Juniors**

We have 16 regular members and 17 on the books

Leadership wise we have a team of 5 hopefully to go to 6 very shortly

### **Company**

We have 15 regular attenders and 16 on the books

Leadership wise we have 4 leaders plus three NCO's

In General our numbers have picked up since the Christmas holidays and we are hopeful of recruiting more Boys from Easter Eggheads

**Highlights** - have included Camp at Melton Scout Centre near Hull. Visits from the Clergy, Police and Army.

Trips to Blue Lagoon, Castle Eden Dene, Crimdon, Seaton Carew, tea@hart and McDonald's

We are battalion Champions in Junior Football and Hockey

### **90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Our Company was founded in 1930 and we are celebrating throughout the year plans include

- Photograph and Quiz & Supper Night
- A new metal badge
- New Uniform T Shirts



- Smartie tube Competition
- Thanksgiving/ Presentation night
- Camp at Asworth Scout Centre near Rochdale

If you would like to know more or can offer a specific skill please let me know

*George Bainbridge*

*Leader in Charge, 4<sup>th</sup> Hartlepool Boys Brigade*

## **PASTORAL GROUP**

The group has continued to meet regularly, to discuss and pray for the work undertaken, to share any news or concerns and to consider new referrals.

We are a small group, consisting of Ian Walker, Rohan Wanduragala and myself, with Diana as an associate member, led by Norman. Steph Boyd is currently undergoing pastoral training and has also recently joined the team. Other new members would be welcome.

We provide an essential service to members of the congregation who can no longer get to church and for whom this link with church is much appreciated. For those who do the visiting, it is a very rewarding and privileged role.

The main focus of our work is visiting, and in some cases taking communion to, long-term housebound members of the congregation, but we also try to support those with shorter term ill health when appropriate. Inevitably some of those we have been visiting have passed away, which is always a sad event.

We are currently exploring the extension of our work to provide bereavement support. I would like to thank Pat Vaughan, who was a founding member of the group, but is no longer involved, for her commitment to the pastoral work of the church and her help in taking it forward since its inception 7 years ago.

*Pam Stockton*

## **MOTHERS` UNION REPORT**

As I am writing this report I am realising how different from previous years this past one has been. Normally our Mother's Union branch has done the usual things we do i.e. Christmas Lunch at the Marine Hotel, Soup Lunches and Strawberry Teas to raise funds for the work of the M.U. throughout the world. We have had our 'Wave of Prayer' focusing on our Link Dioceses from around Africa and our own Diocese of Durham. Normally we would have had a few speakers. We sometimes plant bulbs or have a handicraft task to take home to complete. Then the COVID-19 virus struck and we were in lockdown. All Saints, Stranton Mother's Union hasn't been able to meet since March 2020 when Jill Barrett was our last speaker. A good number of Stranton M.U. members had to go into isolation to avoid catching COVID-19 (myself included) due to pre-existing conditions.

Unable to meet together we still continue to pray for the work of the Mother's Union, for our group, our clergy, church wardens, PCC, all who help behind the scenes and for our congregations All Saints Stranton and Burbank Community Church, St Luke's and St Aidan and St Columba.

We thank you for your prayers for us and we look forward to being able to restart our meetings together, hopefully in the New Year

*God Bless*

*Ann Courtenay*

*Branch Leader*

## **BELLRINGING REPORT**

We saw another successful year of Bellringing in 2019. We have been delighted to be joined by a number of mature learners and we have seen the progression of novices and more experienced ringers.

We have managed to ring on nearly every Sunday together with ringing for a total of 10 weddings. This year we have also rung for a number of funerals with tolling before the funeral service and celebratory ringing following on from the service.

A number of ringers have children and/or grandchildren living overseas, which has meant that on occasions, we have fewer ringers than normal on a Sunday. Progress with learners has meant that some of them are now capable of ringing for Sunday service and hopefully we will continue to ring regularly.

The local band, at full strength, has been able to ring Cambridge Surprise Minor on Sundays. That is quite a progression. Brian Telfer has made good progress in this regard and both he and Joseph Wilson (deputy Tower Captain) deserve thanks for their continued support as the team gains experience.

Rohan Wanduragala has assisted with improving the striking of the 2<sup>nd</sup> bell by adjusting the alignment of the clapper within the bell. Further work is required to ensure that the improvement is maximised.

Thanks are also due to Barbara and Stephen Busby for their efforts in bell handling lessons for learners and to Elspeth Craig who is now teaching.

*Andrew Kaye*

*Tower Captain*

## **ST MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT**

The main focus at the beginning of 2019 was the successful implementation and completion of the plan for the building of a new kitchen extension, new storage facility and the addition of another accessible toilet. The work was scheduled to start during the first week in March and forecast to take between 12 and 16 weeks. The work began on time and all major works outside the building were undertaken whilst hall users could continue to use the halls. Major breakthrough work into the shell of the building took place during school holidays thus minimising inconvenience to hall users and maintaining the income stream from rental. Despite one or two unexpected incidents, the

bulk of the work, both externally and internally together with kitchen and toilet fittings was completed by the end of May. Well within the forecast schedule.

The major problem encountered was the poor state of the drains (over 100 years old) which required remote inspection and clearing. These extra costs were covered by a contingency from revenue. The building work was funded by a grant from The Garfield Weston 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund and the internal fittings were funded by a grant from Impetus. The work was completed on budget. On the recommendation of the local building inspector, we were also obliged to implement another scheme of work to update all electrical installation, lighting and fire alarm systems to bring the whole building up to current standards. Whilst this work was ongoing, we also undertook an extensive fire risk assessment of the entire building and we have now completed all the recommendations of this report, making the building a safer place for all users.

Drains featured throughout 2019 and in June, after several significant floods in the car park we undertook a project to pump out and clear both the car park drain as well as the adjacent drain in Elwick Road.

After all this “groundwork”, in July it was a pleasure to welcome The Right Reverend Sarah Clark, the Suffragan Bishop of Jarrow to officially open the new extension in the company of The Mayor of Hartlepool Councillor Brenda Loynes. The event was very well attended and was an opportunity for hall users to inspect the new facilities and plan how they would use them!

It is important to remember however, that the successful completion of this project itself created a number of other projects and improvements required to the building which themselves needed careful planning and coordination. Without the full support of all committee members the final result could not have been achieved. Equally well, we thank all our users for their patience and support during this period.

We have welcomed new groups to St Matthew’s throughout the year and we are achieving one of our objectives for the new extension by being able to offer comprehensive facilities to more than one group simultaneously. In recent months the use of both halls at weekends has increased significantly, and if you are thinking of booking a weekend event please book early. The building continues to be used by a large group regular long term groups and new groups this year have also become regular users. This stability allows the committee to plan ahead and realise the full potential of the excellent facilities we can offer.

During the last year we have maintained contacts and relationships with many local groups and indeed as a result of the building project have made many new relationships. During the coming year these will also be essential in helping us to reach out into the community to generate increased awareness of what we can offer to local residents.

*Carol Laud*

*St Matthew’s Community Centre Management*