

Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



**Rooted in God's love
Growing together with Jesus
Branching out in the
Power of the Holy Spirit**

November 2023

Be prepared to change... (The musings of a priest)

Be prepared to change!! That's one of the messages I took away from the recent Diocesan Clergy Study Day where Bishop Graham Tomlin was the key speaker. There were plenty of takeaways, from what +Graham had to say, as well as the homily from +Sarah, and the moving, rousing speech from +Paul at what will be his last Clergy Study Day before he retires. Some of these other messages might come out in future magazines or be woven into sermons yet to come. But "Be prepared to change" is the thought that speaks to me now.

Bishop Graham shared the story of a parish when he was Bishop of Kensington. The conversation he had with them went something like this: "Dear Bishop, we would really love our new priest to be someone who is going to help bring in lots of children and young people, lots of new families... but we also don't want them to change anything."

If we want our churches to grow, however we want them to grow, then we need to be prepared for change, and we need to be prepared to change.

If we want to see more and more families and children in our churches, then we have to be prepared to accept that what we might see as noise and disruption, needs to become an accepted and welcomed part of our everyday worship. We can't expect families to join our congregations, if we want their children to be seen and not heard. In Matthew 19, when the disciples tried rebuke the people who were bringing their children to Jesus, Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."

If we want to engage with our communities and see them joining us in worship, then we might need to change what we do, the liturgy we use, the songs and hymns we sing, in order to be more welcoming and accessible to those for whom church buildings are such a strange and sometimes difficult place to come to – and they might think the people inside them are even stranger!

The challenge for us is to look around our congregations, and see which groups within our community aren't represented. Who's not there on a Sunday morning? What do we need to work on to be fully representative of all God's people? Who do we need to be praying for? If they aren't there, then there must be a reason for it. If we want to draw them in, then we need to be prepared to change. We have to be willing to accept that what we are doing isn't working as well as it could be. We need to look at the small changes, the little things we can do to make our churches more welcoming, more accessible, warmer, and more inviting spaces. A body of people that others want to spend time with. Churches (both people and places) where the very presence of the Spirit flows out of every aspect of what we do. In whatever we do, if we want to see change, then be prepared to change!

Grace and Peace,

John

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.

From the Home Front



John 12:24

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

This year I planted about 12 individual sunflower seeds in pots. They were harvested from my sunflower plants last year. The remainder of the gathered seeds I had given to the birds which visit my garden. All my seeds germinated and I potted out the growing plants around the garden. Some went into terracotta pots - they grew to under a metre in height and had a single flower, which was quite small in diameter. A couple went at the very bottom of the garden under the trees. These grew very tall quite quickly, but their stems were slim and they needed canes to support them or they bent over. They also had single small flower heads. Three were planted next to the conservatory where the soil is quite dry and compacted, but I did remember to water them regularly in this sunny spot and to give them plant food occasionally. They grew over a metre tall (one to gutter height!) with sturdy stems which just needed a cane to give added strength as the weight of six or more flower heads caused them to lean in breezy weather. But mainly they leaned against the window, fence or the buddleia bush for more support. However 3 plants were in 'optimum spots. Two in a newly dug over and composted bed and one next to my bird feeders in the most sheltered and warmest spot

of the garden. These plants were watered and fed regularly, avoided the worst of the wind and basked in the maximum amount of sunshine. They have flourished with stems the size of broom handles and numerous flower stalks with the largest of the flower heads and with between 10 and 15 flower heads per plant. They have been flowering constantly since August.

As I have watched these seeds from planting until now at harvest. I have been reminded of the words of John 12 and recently of the parable of the Sower in Mark 4. My last years seeds needed planting, nourishment and on going care in order to grow and bear fruit themselves. Depending on the amount of care and their conditions they have all flourished, but with varying degrees of success, just as the seeds sown by the Sower. We need to remember to give encouragement, support, compassion and love to each member of our worldwide family that we meet, in order to help them grow in the love and knowledge of God and of our Saviour Jesus. Then they will be ready to start the task of spreading the word themselves.

J.A.R.

*St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road*



Please come and join us

Saturday 4th November 2023

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

*A time to spend together,
meet new people, make new friends*

Lamps and Life

I awoke at 4 am with a clear picture of a pile of clay lamps! The shape of the lamp was like Aladdin's lamp but plain looking! The lamps looked discarded or abandoned. On top of the pile was one lamp that still had a flame burning bright.

I asked Jesus what the picture meant!

Immediately the words of the old song came to mind. Give me oil in my lamp keep me burning! Then the thought came, the lamps could represent those who have followed Jesus in the past and because of heartache or the church hurting them they walked away and let the oil run dry.

I went on my day and the picture kept coming back to mind. I tried to draw it.

I then asked Jesus what did he want me to get from this picture. We are the Holy Spirit's vessels (the lamp), we are called to be a light to the world. So often we walk in our own strength then wonder why we become exhausted and burn out. The oil in the lamp is the Holy Spirit, we need to ask him to continually fill us so we never run dry. We are to burn bright so others can see the light of Christ in us and follow Jesus.

"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light." Luke 11:33 NIV

Those of you who are reading this, maybe you are run down and feel empty. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and refresh you. No one else can do that for you.

Those who have been hurt by the church and have walked away. I am so sorry the church gets it so wrong sometimes. Jesus has not hurt you, Jesus never abandons his children. He promised to never leave you or forsake you.

Come to him today and ask him to take the hurt and ask him to help you forgive these who have hurt you and ask him to fill you afresh with the Holy Spirit.

Ang Hall

Ward Jackson C of E Primary Update

We had a lovely enrichment time at Ward Jackson Park. This week we looked for conker shells under horse chestnut trees then cracked them open. 🌰



Nursery had a brilliant time at [Rossmere Forest School](#). They loved getting wet and muddy exploring the forest and going on a superhero hunt! 🦹‍♂️ They listened to the story of Supertato in the yurt and created their own superhero wands. Such an action packed morning for our little Superheroes. 😁



Wingfield class had an amazing day learning what life was like during World War 2. We learnt about Adolf Hitler, the blitz, the home front (Dad's army), the U-boat menace, torpedos, tanks, WW2 homes and Anderson shelters. We also had time for a WW2 themed game of tag.



The children had a great time examining leaves and identifying different types of tree. We have had such a beautiful autumn walk! 🍂



Harvest Celebration in Stranton 10th October

Ward Jackson Primary supported by families and carers attended a special harvest celebration in church. Rev John greeted everyone and the children sang and performed songs about nature, growth, autumn leaves, beans and riding tractors with some lovely dance rhythms too. Rev John led the prayers. It was wonderful to see the children enjoying themselves in church.



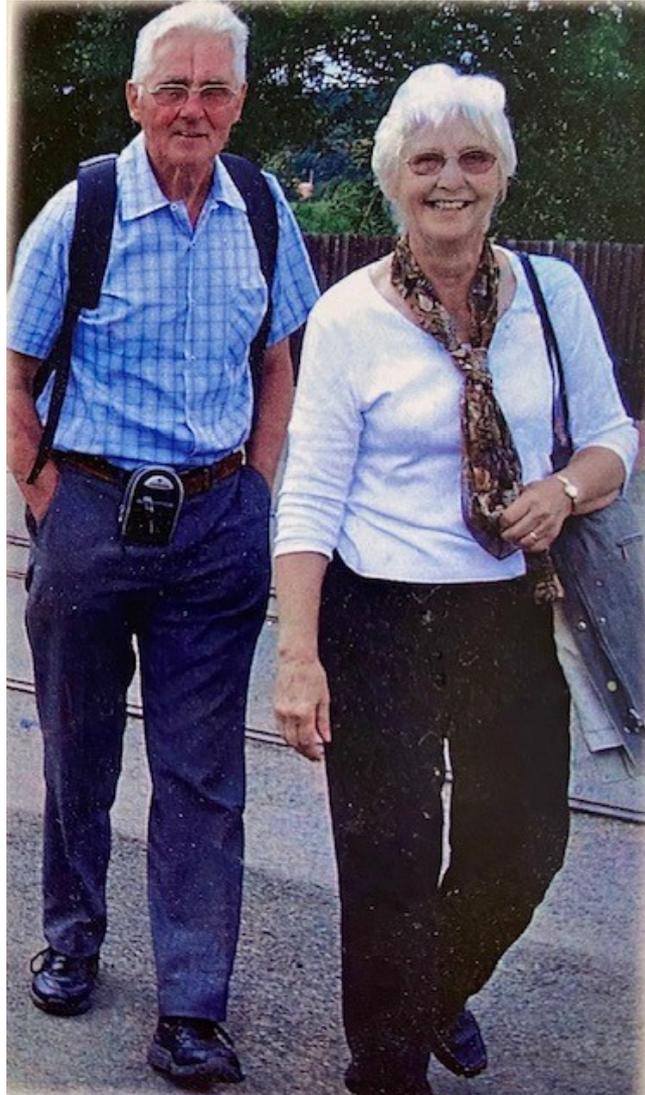
All Saints Day Quiz

- A** Which A, a city was attacked by Joshua?
- L** Gummarus is the patron saint of whom?
- L** Crispin is the patron saint of whom?

- S** Which S carried off the gates of Gaza?
- A** Which A is the patron saint of Scotland?
- I** Maurice is the patron saint of whom?
- N** Brendan is the patron saint of whom?
- T** Saint Christopher is the patron saint of whom?
- S** Complete the hymn title For all the _____

- D** Martha is the patron saint of whom?
- A** St Matthew is the patron saint of whom?
- Y** Benjamin was the Y _____ son of Jacob

Alan and Kath Harkness



We were greatly saddened to hear of the deaths of Kath (in July) and Alan (in September). They were long standing and active members of Stranton church. They were involved in the choir, PCC and Alan was a former Church Warden. Alan was a teacher at the old Hartlepool Grammar School for Boys - fondly referred to as 'Sid' by his pupils (the origins of this nickname are lost in the mists of time!). They were true servants of the Lord and they are missed in our church family. Our sincere condolences to their daughters Janet, Ann and Barbara and all their family.

How should we respond to the situation in Gaza and Israel?

Please pray for all involved and ask God to bring his peace

Please sign our letter calling for a humanitarian response

Sanctuary Foundation

Lord God, Protector of widows and orphans, may you bring your comfort to every family and child that is grieving, frightened or homeless because of the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

Jesus, Wonderful Counsellor, may you give wisdom and grace to all who are working to find a peaceful resolution.

Spirit of Peace, may you change people's hearts and minds so this conflict can end quickly for your names sake.

Triune and Almighty God, help us to trust you at this time and serve you by showing compassion to all those around us.



Please sign our letter to the Prime Minister calling him to initiate a humanitarian response to the conflict in Israel and Gaza.



sanctuaryfoundation.org.uk/israel-gaza-pledge/

Sanctuary Foundation

A Cross in an Old Battlefield

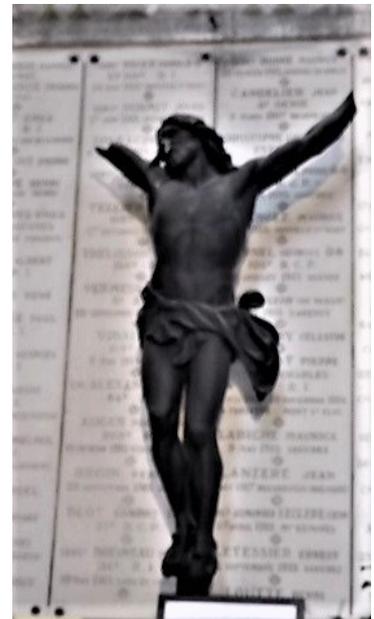


A cross in an old battlefield
Placed in its own calvary
On land scarred by war.
A pond created by hate
A landscape stripped of trees.

A cross on a 2023 battlefield
Youths knifed to death,
Drugs on sale everywhere
Poverty is sadly so easily viewed.
Cavalry's pain is always increasing

Christ's body broken in two in 1915,
Mirrors breaking of the real one.
A young man God's only son
Died on His own Calvary
With soldier, victims and everyone.

Like some soldiers, He was found in a garden
After dying to offer us all a heavenly pardon.
Remember those who sacrificed their lives
For the freedom we can all enjoy today
And recall the agony at the first Calvary
For it's mission was done for you and me.



Lucas Tarran Anchor Boy and Junior member



Lucas joined our Anchor Boys just over two years ago and took part in all our activities.

He loved being the extra man when we had odd numbers so that he could have extra goes at whatever game we were playing.

Lucas was due to transfer up to the Juniors in September but unfortunately he became very ill and passed away in early October. The picture shows Lucas when we were visited by PC Mark Say last March.

Our thoughts and prayers are now with his family in this really sad time and hope in some small way this tribute brings some comfort.

**From all the Boys, Lads and Leaders of the 4th Hartlepool Boys
Brigade Company
George Bainbridge
Leader in Charge**

**Are you planning a special celebration or party
and looking for a venue?**

**Have you thought about
St Matthew's Community Centre?**

**We have 2 large halls which can accommodate up to 140 persons
as well as 1 large and 2 small kitchens for your catering needs.**

**One hall is even big enough to house a bouncy castle –
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al fresco fun for your guests.**

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or Carol Laud (01429 290290)
and we will be happy to help.**

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during term-time
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.*

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**A great place to relax and have fun with
your children**

Answers to All Saints Day Quiz

A Which A, a city was attacked by Joshua?
L Gummarus is the patron saint of whom?
L Crispin is the patron saint of whom?

Ai
Lumberjacks
Leatherworkers

S Which S carried off the gates of Gaza?
A Which A is the patron saint of Scotland?
I Maurice is the patron saint of whom?
N Brendan is the patron saint of whom?
T Saint Christopher is the patron saint of whom?
S Complete the hymn title For all the _____

Samson
Andrew
Infantry men
Navigators
Travellers
Saints

D Martha is the patron saint of whom?
A St Matthew is the patron saint of whom?
Y Benjamin was the Y _____ son of Jacob.

Dietitians
Accountants
Youngest

Andy and Kati Walsh CMS partners Update

Dear friends,

Kati, Eva and I are all doing really well. We are becoming increasingly adapted and settled as a family into our new life here in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. Eva is really enjoying school and is popular among the children at the church, even though they are slightly older there. We are also learning, as the Lord guides and prepares the way, where to focus our missional activity. Over the course of the last quarter, working ever more closely with our friends at Vineyard Floripa, we've continued to engage people through street evangelism in the local community. Andy has particularly learned a lot in terms of the cultural differences around how people on the street prefer to be approached. People generally welcome an opportunity to receive prayer into personal situations, before moving into a short conversation about faith and then hearing about the location/time of the church service. Although some people are open, there's also a high incidence of other religions including Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Spiritism, Candomblé, local pagan gods and syncretism, i.e. Christianity mixed with other beliefs. It's challenging but as a team we're committed to prayer and intercession combined with street evangelism, fortnightly on Thursday afternoons. Next month as church we are moving to a new building in the area, so more change and transition is afoot! We have enjoyed the opportunity to lead church services at a drug rehab centre called Guerreiros de Deus in collaboration with Pastor Paulo and Pastora Ana Fernandes. We continue to learn much from them in terms of how to contextualise the gospel message.

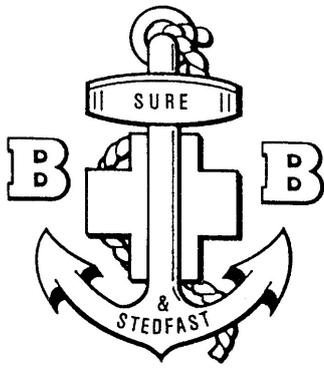
Andy preached recently on The Work of the Holy Spirit and Freedom in Christ. On both occasions many of the residents took a step forward during the ministry time and received prayer, which was really encouraging. In the upcoming period we will be exploring other possibilities to lead informal church services in similar settings more locally. In this regard we will be able to forge stronger relationships with people and put ongoing work into discipling new believers. Our main priority and focus has been our ministry in the prison system, which has been progressing well. Kati is a regular member of the team that visits the women's prison. She has enjoyed the opportunity to share the gospel among the inmates and also enjoyed it when four women got baptised at the beginning of August. In May we arranged for FBAC (the Brazilian Fraternity for Assistance to Convicts), the local partner working in collaboration with Prison Fellowship International (PFI), to provide us with training to deliver the PFI Bible geared towards discipling new believers in the Brazilian prison system, which explores the fundamental questions around the Christian faith. We (Andy and Kati) were joined by three other members of the Vineyard church and all five of us are now accredited training facilitators of Viagem do Prisioneiro, an eight-part discipleship training course delivered over 16 hours. One of the highlights over this last period was finally receiving

the approval from the prison director of the male prison in Florianópolis to initiate the course. It is very challenging to initiate new activities in the prison system here due to the set way in which religious organisations are permitted to access the prison population. Rehabilitation of the prisoner is a significantly lower priority relative to punishment in Brazil compared to in the UK and many other countries. The prison chaplain function does not exist in the prison workforce structure. Another thing that restricts the spiritual welfare of the prisoner and the capacity for someone to be reformed through faith in Christ, is that selected church volunteers are only permitted to access the prison for a 90-minute period each week. At the discretion of the duty prison guard we are directed to a different prison wing each week, drastically reducing our ability to follow up with specific people. The focus of this ministry over the many years my team members have been involved can really only be evangelism. So we feel very fortunate to have the favour of the prison director and his authority to deliver this course.

Pastor Antônio who leads our team is very pleased we have taken strides in this direction and is very supportive. As we prepare this update, Andy is halfway through delivering the second cycle of the course. On each occasion he received the maximum number of referrals (12). Each person receives a Bible, the language of which is adapted to prisoners' needs and he makes the sessions as friendly and interactive as possible. He includes extracts from other materials he's familiar with such as testimonies from those that have found Christ while in prison. On course completion each person receives a certificate. The men really welcome the ongoing support in their newfound faith and Andy has received a good deal of positive feedback. One man called "Anderson" said, "I now know the reason I came to prison. I realise God brought me here and it was to find faith in him and for me to complete this course." Two men who completed the course are due for release in four–six weeks and are from the same suburb where our church is located. They expressed their desire to meet on a regular basis and potentially become Vineyard Floripa members. Looking forward we aim to replicate this model in the women's prison and in Case Regional de São José, for young offenders. We've already hit the expected roadblocks to mobilise the course into these settings, having recently been refused in both instances. We therefore would appreciate if you could join us in prayer for breakthrough in these areas in the upcoming few months.

Thank you for all your prayers and support,
Andy and Kati





Boys Brigade



Harvest Festival

The whole company made pictures and crafts for a fine colourful display at church, and on the day of the service a tasty bacon butty was available for Strantonians from either service.

Devotions

At the moment the whole Company is looking at the 'I am' sayings of Jesus which has been backed up with word searches, code breakers and spot the difference. After this course has finished we will be looking into the Christmas story.

Christmas Carol Service

Further ahead we are looking forward to our Christmas Carol service at Stranton Church on Friday 15th December where each section will play their part to remember the Christmas story.

Fund Raising Christmas fayre (The one with bargains galore!!!)

We are holding our Christmas Fayre on Saturday 2nd December from 9:30 - 12noon at St Matthew's Community Centre.

Admission is £1.00 and children are free.

Anchor Boys - Loved playing games, skipping, colouring in and would like to welcome more members to this section - we meet every Friday 6:00-7:00pm.

Juniors - This section has recruited well and we now have over 20 names on our membership list and as such we have re-jigged our Monday Night programme which is challenging for the Leaders and the Boys and has the effect of keeping everyone's enthusiasm high.

Company - We have kept and added to our membership and have now a two-tiered NCO System (Lance Corporals & Sergeants). Activities include Drill, games, badgework, Cooking , quizzes and much more.

Remembrance Day

All our members are working towards a BB Remembrance badge by making two displays for Stranton Church and for Pools surplus shop window in Catcote Rd and the Juniors are being visited by Captain Wells of the TA to talk about Remembrance Day.

George Bainbridge



A great few action packed weeks back at company section. ⚓

We still have room for lads from Y7 upwards. We meet on Friday nights at St Matthew's Community Centre on Elwick Road, from 7:15pm till 9pm.

Check out our page or send us a message for more info 😊

A great night at our Junior Section tonight where we introduced the game of benchball! 🏀



The great debate - does pineapple belong on pizza? 🤔 🍕 🍍

Some of our lads certainly think so!

A great night at company section which involved making pizzas - there were definitely some interesting combinations 😄



Stranton Harvest Ceilidh October 21st

A great night of dancing, fun and delicious food was enjoyed by members of the Central Group of Churches and Burn Valley North residents.



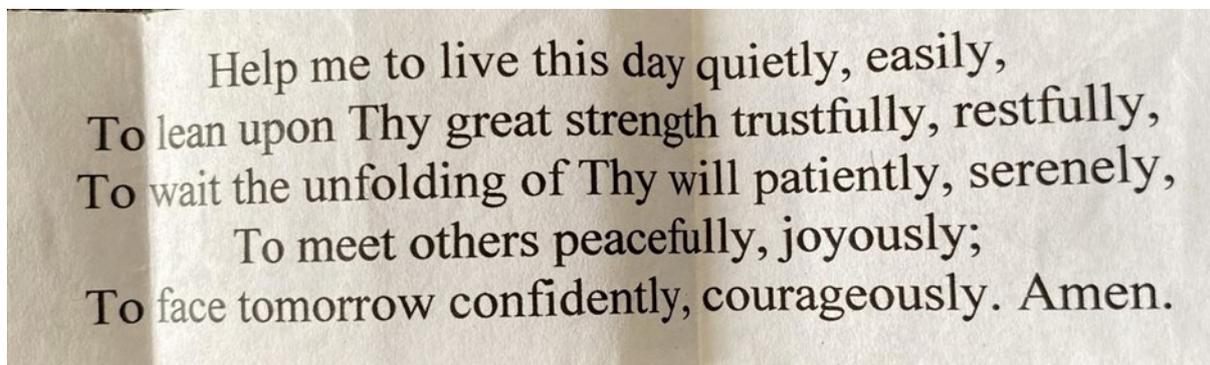
Communities of Hope Christmas Appeal

Communities of Hope are once again looking to make up Christmas Hampers for many of the people we have links with throughout our community.

If this is something you would be able to support us with then you can make a financial donation via Stranton Church - Stranton PCC, 20-82-18, Acc No 10146501—marking your donation 'Communities of Hope', or by placing your gift in an envelope (marked 'Communities of Hope') within the collection plate in church.

We would also love to hear from you if you are able to help the team with buying items for the hampers, or helping with making or distributing the hampers themselves.

With Thanks,
Emma, Hayley, and John



God,

Keep my anger from becoming
meanness.

Keep my sorrow from collapsing
into self-pity.

Keep my heart soft enough to
keep breaking. Keep my anger
turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind me that all of this, every
bit of it, is for love.

Keep me fiercely kind.

Amen.

Calling all Carol Singers.

Yes, it's getting round to that time of year again. However, this year we're hoping to celebrate Christmas with a Group-wide joint "Carols by Candlelight", in Stranton on Sunday 17th December.

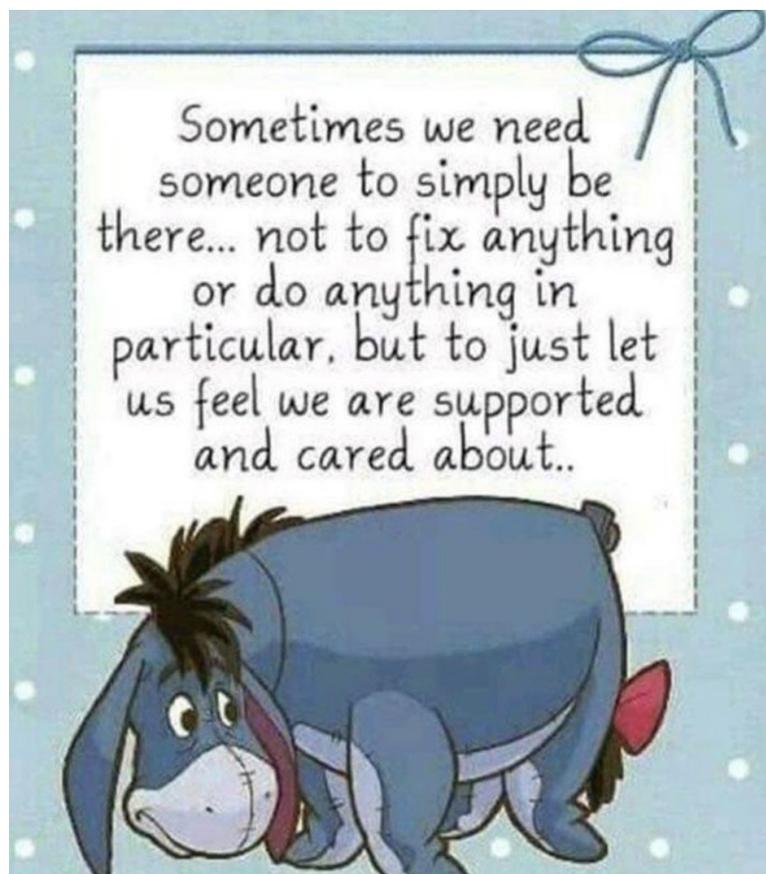
So, anyone and everyone who enjoys singing or playing an instrument would be very welcome to join the ensemble. We hope to have a couple of rehearsals in the weeks before the service. If you've any suggestions of new songs or carols to try, let's hear them.

If you've any previous experience or just fancy singing or playing with others and you'd like to participate in what will be a joyous event, then please let me know.

Andrew Rogers

07831 314375

energy.education@btconnect.com





**“Be imitators of God in everything
you do, for then you will represent
your Father as his beloved sons
and daughters.”
Ephesians 5:1 TPT**



**“I WILL REFRESH
THE WEARY AND
SATISFY THE FAINT.”
JEREMIAH 31:25 NIV**

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

November

Jenna Bruce
Daniel Busby
Ray Clark
Sally Clarke
Linda Cartwright
Debbie Coxon
Ann Cuthbert
Anna Jennett
Jasmine Padgett
Sylvia Shepherd
Mike Weimer



If you have something to celebrate we would love to share it - email
admin@stranton-church.org.uk
or phone 894006.

All entries to be in by the 16th of the month.

Dates for the Diary

Dates for November

- Sat 4th Nov Coffee and Cake St Matthew's CC 2:00pm-4:00pm
- Sat 4th Nov St Luke's Sewing Party Christmas Fayre
St Luke's Rooms
- Sun 5th Nov All Souls Remembrance Service 4:00pm
- Sun 12th Nov Joint Remembrance Service at Stranton **10:45am start**
- Sat 25th Nov Living with Grief & Bereavement Group with cuppa
St Matthew's Community Centre 10:30am- 11:30am
- Thurs 30th Nov Advent Course in St Columba's based on
It's A Wonderful Life from 30th November to 21st
December at 6:30pm

Communities of Hope

(Help needed – speak to one of the team to find out how you can support us)

- Play and Praise toddler sessions (FREE) - Monday 10:00am-11:15am
at St Matthew's
- Sid's Kitchen - Monday 10:00am-12:00pm
at St Matthew's
- Mine and Yours at the Well Women's group - Monday 1:00pm-3:00pm
at St Matthew's.
- Stranton Toddlers - Tuesday 9:00am-11:00am
at St Matthew's
- A Bit of God Time - Tuesday 10:00pm to 2:30 pm
at St Aidan's
- Friday Drop In - Friday 10:00am – 12:00 noon
at St Aidan's

Who's Who

Church Office	St Matthew's Community Centre Arncliffe Gardens TS26 9JF
Administrator	Trish Playfor "Tues- Fri, 9:00 to 11:00am" 01429 894006 or 07305 550009 E-Mail: admin@stranton-church.org.uk Web Site: www.stranton-church.org.uk
To contact clergy by E-mail	E-Mail: clergy@stranton-church.org.uk

Priest in Charge 34A Westbourne Road 07512 481115
 Revd. John Bell
Email: revdjohnbell@stranton-church.org.uk

Reader
 Mary Tones 40a Blakelock Road 07972 342890

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 Rohan Wanduragala 62 Clifton Avenue 223751

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