

Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

February / March 2024

Living in Love and Faith: What does it really mean...

At the end of last year, I wrote a short piece on Living in Love and Faith (LLF), the process that the Church of England has been working through over the last few years as it looked “to inspire people to think more deeply about what it means to be human and to live in love and faith with one another. It tackles the tough questions and the divisions among Christians about what it means to be holy in a society in which understandings and practices of gender, sexuality, and marriage continue to change.”

What has become clear since then is that there are many within our Group who haven't really heard about LLF, the changes in the church, the subsequent Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF), and how they might affect both us and the wider church.

Part of the reasoning behind this article is to try and make people aware of this process and partly to be transparent about my own views on this. As a result, during Lent, I want to offer the opportunity across the group for people to come together and have a conversation about the Prayers of Love and Faith, and how we might use them across the Group. But it is important that we all have some understanding of what these prayers are and how they can be used. I have drawn from a number of sources in writing this, including the prayers themselves, the pastoral guidance which accompanies them, an Ad Clerum issued from Bishop Paul and Bishop Sarah, and an FAQ document produced by the Diocese of Leicester.

Our Bishops have acknowledged ‘that many are finding, whatever their views on the Prayers, that the position that the Church of England has currently reached is not an easy or comfortable one and has strained relationships, for some very deeply.’ [1] And they have made ‘it clear that no individual clergy person, or lay minister, is required to use the Prayers. Equally anyone who does want to do so may do so, so long as this has been agreed by the incumbent of the relevant Parish.’ [1]

So, what are these Prayers of Love and Faith? ‘The Prayers of Love and Faith are a series of prayers that are intended to be used for same-sex couples by ministers. They are intended to be used to pray with and for a same-sex couple who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God. The House of Bishops have commended a suite of prayers which include prayers of dedication and thanksgiving; prayers for guidance, for companionship, for God's blessing, and for the couple's home and families. Some of these prayers have been specially authored and others are older and have been identified as suitable for this use. The Prayers of Love and Faith are **not** a form of marriage service. They are offered as a form of pastoral provision because there is currently uncertainty about the outcome of the Church's discernment in relation to same-sex relationships.’ [2]

Who decides whether to use them??

‘The Prayers are commended by the House of Bishops. This means that it is the decision of the Incumbent / Priest-in-Charge whether or not they may be used in a particular parish. It will be important for those making decisions to

consult with the PCC about this. The final decision lies with the priest. The Parish Priest may then allow other clergy, and lay ministers, operating under their authority to use the Prayers. They may not require anyone to do so who does not wish to use them' [1]. This means that no Parish Priest can insist on any other clergy person or lay minister using the Prayers, but the decision on whether to use them in a particular parish rests with the Parish Priest.

How can the prayers be used?

'The Prayers may only be used in the context of the regular scheduled worship of the Parish... This would be within a Eucharist, Morning or Evening Prayer, or Service of the Word [i.e. only where a service would be scheduled to take place irrespective of whether the Prayers are to be used or not]. They must not be the core focus of the service. They cannot be used to create a specific service for a couple' [1]. The Prayers of Love and Faith may also be used in private prayer [2]. When the Prayers are offered informally in private pastoral situations, outside of acts of public worship, this is left to the discretion of the minister, as part of sensitive, discerning pastoral ministry [3].

Who can the Prayers be offered to?

'The decision to offer the Prayers of Love and Faith is a primarily pastoral decision to be taken by the minister in conversation with a couple. There is no legal entitlement to these Prayers, unlike the entitlement of opposite-sex couples to get married in a parish church where they live or have a qualifying connection. Conversely, because there is no legal requirement for residence or a qualifying connection, couples are free to ask for the Prayers within any church in their area. Ministers should be satisfied that the couple's relationship is permanent, faithful, stable and exclusive.' [2]

A Note on Parishes in Vacancy

'The legal position is clear that in this matter the Diocesan Bishop is 'the ordinary' so far as parishes in vacancy are concerned. In order to avoid any confusion at present parishes in vacancy should not use these prayers. This situation will be kept under review.' [1]

This means that regardless of the views of myself or the PCC or Congregation at St Aidan's and St Columba's, we are not currently able to offer these prayers within services until the second Parish Priest has been appointed to the Group, to be Priest in Charge of St Aidan's and St Columba's. I will happily signpost any couple seeking these Prayers at St Aidan's or St Columba's to another parish (hopefully within the Group) where these prayers could be offered, until the second priest is appointed.

The Future

'The House of Bishops is continuing work on LLF, particularly on whether the Prayers could be used within a standalone service though authorisation would need to be made within General Synod' [1]. The current understanding is that the use of standalone services in church would need to be agreed between

the incumbent/priest in charge and the PCC. This will be a discussion to have if and when such a service ever becomes possible.

I don't believe Christ withholds his love from anyone and in writing this article, I hope it shows that, from my own perspective, I am open to using these prayers, but that it is important to me, to understand the views within the PCCs, within the congregations, and to a certain extent across the Group as a whole, before coming to any decision on whether (and where) to offer them. If the right decision is to offer these Prayers, then it would always be done in conjunction with a pastoral conversation with the couple coming forward and requesting them, in the same way we have conversations with people coming forward for marriage or baptism.

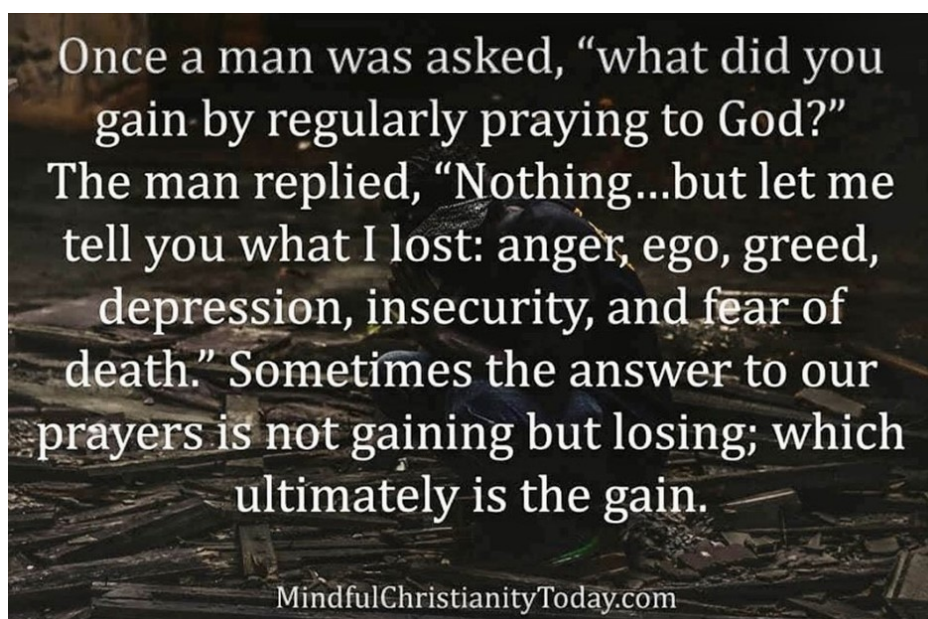
I am also aware the views across the Church of England differ widely, and I'm sure we will all hold different views to some of the other members of our own churches and across our group, deanery and diocese.

Please also know that my own views are not something I have reached lightly. I have wrestled with all the various views and opinions, in coming to my own. I am aware that some of you won't hold the same views as me, but I hope you will feel able to share your concerns with me, that we can have open, and honest discussions around the Prayers and what the future might hold for the church.

In grace and peace,
John

References:

- [1] Ad Clerum – Prayers of Love and Faith – Bishop Paul and Bishop Sarah
- [2] Prayers of Love and Faith (FAQs) – from the Diocese of Leicester
- [3] Pastoral Guidance from the C of E on using PLF



From the Home Front



As Signpost is printed in black and white this photograph will lose much of its impact – so take a trip onto All Saints Stranton website if you can and look at it in colour.

A week or so before Christmas during the spell of stormy and cold weather this amazing weather phenomena was witnessed. The Nacreous cloud forms in very cold conditions over polar region and within the stratosphere, about 12 to 19 miles high, far above normal clouds. Although this is common in Scandinavian and Arctic countries, so rare is this sight in our country that my neighbour in her eighties had

never witnessed it (or even heard of it!). These rainbow skies are the result of ice particles high in the atmosphere. The display of shifting colours lasted for several hours at dawn in some places and at sunset over Hartlepool witnessed on two consecutive days, the first evening being particularly spectacular.

As, that day, I had already witnessed a succession of brilliant rainbows on a journey from Darlington to Hartlepool and then to see this spectacular show, filled me with awe. As it was during high winds, cold temperatures and heavy downpours, I felt my spirits soar. I felt like we were seeing God's artistry in action, a promise of better things even though the weather had been



(and continues to be) extreme. Faith is all about trusting in God, believing in His word and watching for His signs and wonders. What a day of affirmation.

J.A.R.

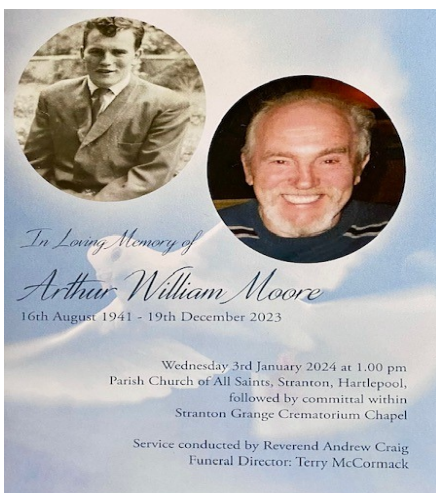


Catriona Robertson 1956-2023

Catriona, with her husband Alan and their children, were members of Stranton Church Family for well over 20 years until they moved back to Scotland when they retired a few years ago.

Catriona was a member of the Music Group, PCC member, Church Warden, member of the Ministry Development Team, member of SMACC (Stranton Mothers and Children Club), hosted a House Group and various Seekers courses. She was a friend to many and offered compassion, advice and prayer to many more. Catriona was loved and respected wherever she went. A true Christian who loved her God and lived her life following Him.

After illness and treatment in 2023 she died suddenly on 21st November. Her funeral in Edinburgh was attended by people from all aspects of her life – a testimony to the impact she had on so many lives. Friends from Stranton and Hartlepool were amongst those who attended. A great deal of the service centred around Psalm 23. Catriona received a Bible text on her phone daily and fittingly the text which arrived the day she died was from Psalm 23 – “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” God’s promise to us through the death and resurrection of His son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.



Arthur Moore 1941-2023

Arthur who was a stalwart member of Stranton and Burbank Churches for most of his married life died on the 19th December. His memorial service was led by Rev Andrew Craig who had know Arthur since arriving in Hartlepool over 35 years ago. Tributes and poems were led by his sons and one of his granddaughters. Arthur was a loving parent and doting grandfather who put into practise daily his faith in the Lord. After a varied and hardworking

career Arthur channelled his energy into looking after the gardens of others. He cared for his wife Carol and supported her singing career. A servant of the Lord who now deserves his eternal rest. Arthur will be sadly missed by all those who knew him and by his beloved extended family.

Thora Deacon

It is with sadness that we bring you news that Thora died in her sleep on Monday night (15th January). Thora was a member of our congregation for many years and was also keenly involved in Mother's Union. As she was a private individual, the family have made us aware that there will not be a funeral service for Thora. Instead, the family will remember her privately. We hold them all in our prayers.

Bishop Paul Retires



Bishop Paul Butler with his official retirement portrait

Postmasters Quiz

- P** Which **P** army did Goliath represent?
- O** Which **O** was Ruth's sister in law?
- S** Which **S** was a devout man lived to see the Messiah?
- T** What crown of **T** was placed onto Jesus head?
- M** Which **M** has his ear restored at the time of Jesus arrest?
- A** Which **A** was the daughter of Penuel?
- S** What **S** was the first martyr?
- T** Which **T** doubted Jesus?
- E** Which **E** was a village about seven miles from Jerusalem?
- R** What **R** describes Jesus? (Clue A famous statue)
- S** Which **S** killed a lion and created a riddle?

Central Group 'Post Christmas Meal'



Many thanks to Helen Rochester who kindly organised a meal for the members of St Aidan's and St Columba's, St Luke's and Stranton at the Golden Lion on 19th January.

Over 40 people braved the freezing weather and had recovered from the winter infections to enjoy a delicious meal. The room was filled with chatter and a pleasant evening was had by all. A challenging 2023 Quiz was attempted by all the tables – lots of head scratching!
Thanks also to Julie and her staff for their efficient service.

J.A.R.



Baptism Enquirers Course

Revd John is running a course for adults interested in baptism (even if you are already baptised), starting 7.00pm (for a 7.15pm start) on Thursday Evenings until 15th February 2024 in St Luke's Parish Centre. We will be looking at the promises we make during baptism, and there will then be an opportunity for adult baptism after that at our Sunday services for any adults who wish to be baptised.

The God who sees

I have recently read the story of Hagar! I will give you a brief overview.

Abraham was married to Sarah, they were both old in years. Sarah was barren and thought she would never have children, after all she was 99! God had already promised Abraham that he would have a child but like a lot of us, Sarah thought she would try and help God, hurry Him up a bit! and so she gave Abraham her servant girl, Hagar. Abraham took her as his wife and she conceived. That's when things got tricky.

Hagar despised Sarah and Sarah started to mistreat Hagar. Hagar ran away to the desert. Whilst feeling alone and desolate and most probably afraid and all the other emotions that come with pregnancy.

God met her where she was. He sent an angel to minister to her. He asked her the question "Where have you come from and where are you going? "

You see Hagar had run away from her situation, but she had no clue as to where she was going. She just wanted to get away from it all. The angel told her that she needed to go back to her mistress and that God was going to bless her with even more children. We read in Genesis 16:13

She gave this name to the lord who spoke to her there "You are the God who sees me" for she said "I have now seen the one who sees me"

I love her response, she knew that in her desert experience God saw her and loved her.

Wherever you are at this moment God sees you. He cares for you. He loves you.

This last week I was feeling flat and thinking that God wasn't really speaking. When I reread the story of Hagar it reminded me that God loves us when we are at our best and at our worst.

He sees you when you are on your sick bed and loves you.

He sees you when your heart is breaking and loves you.

He sees you when you are feeling anxious and loves you.

He sees you when you are feeling lonely and loves you.

He sees you when you are feeling stressed and loves you.

He sees you when you are feeling depressed and loves you.

He sees you when you are feeling overwhelmed and loves you.

Hagar was told to go back and face what she had run away from. Sometimes we need to face what we are feeling and bring it before God.

A truth telling friend told me recently "Let Jesus love you" that got me. I know He loves me, but do I know that in my heart, do I know He loves me at my worst and my best?

Why not take time today and sit with Jesus and let Him love you, bring all what is on your heart - the good and the bad and ask Him what He loves about you. I know you will be surprised at what He will say.

He sees you and He loves you.

Ang Hall

Communities of Hope Report January 2024

It has been a busy and fruitful time for the Communities of Hope work. All the usual work has continued such as:

1. Regular assemblies at St Aidan's, Ward Jackson, Jesmond Gardens and Stranton Primary Schools.
2. Two weekly RE Children's Clubs at Stranton and Jesmond Gardens Primary School
3. Toddlers at St Matthew's Community Centre
4. Sid's Kitchen
5. St Aidan's Kitchen
6. Time For God

Over Christmas there were additional activities all of which went very well. These included School Christmas Celebrations. It was a pleasure to welcome Stranton Primary School to All Saint's Stranton for their service (about 350 children plus staff.) Equally it was excellent to welcome the whole of Jesmond Gardens Primary School to St Luke's for their Christmas Service (about 250 children plus staff). All, who came, had the chance to hear the Christmas Story and look at it from a slightly different angle. From the comments made these services were very well received.

For the first time a Christmas Tree Festival was held at St Columba's and opened up for the public to look round. Local organisations were invited to put up a Christmas tree. St Columba's looked very celebratory with all the Christmas trees. It was good to have an opportunity to chat to some of the local people who wouldn't normally go to church. Rift House Primary School was one of the organisations contacted which put up a tree. As a result the head has asked for us to become more closely involved with the school. I am about to arrange a date to meet and discuss how we could work together.



There was a Christmas Hamper Appeal, 60 hampers were handed out to needy families and 50 hampers were handed out to marginalized adults in need. These were gratefully received. So overall 110 Christmas food parcels were delivered.

So a very busy and successful time. Our grateful thanks to all the volunteers who share in this ministry. Without them it wouldn't be able to happen. Our main challenge is having sufficient workers to help with this important ministry. If anyone is able to offer some time to the project please contact Rev John Bell.

Thank you for your continued support.
Hayley Liversidge

Ward Jackson C of E School Round up

Christmas Carol Concert

Beautiful Carol Service at Stranton All Saints Church this afternoon. Well done to all the readers and performers and Merry Christmas everyone!



Wingfield had a great time at the Jorvik Viking centre today. We learnt how the Vikings lived by taking a tour of a real Viking village. We also learnt how we know about the Vikings. We became archeologists ourselves and uncovered real artefacts. We made hypothesis about our findings. What a day! #wardjacksonway



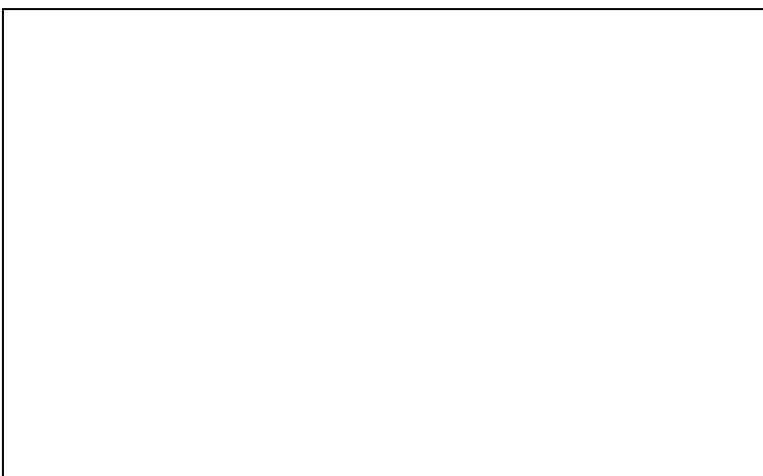
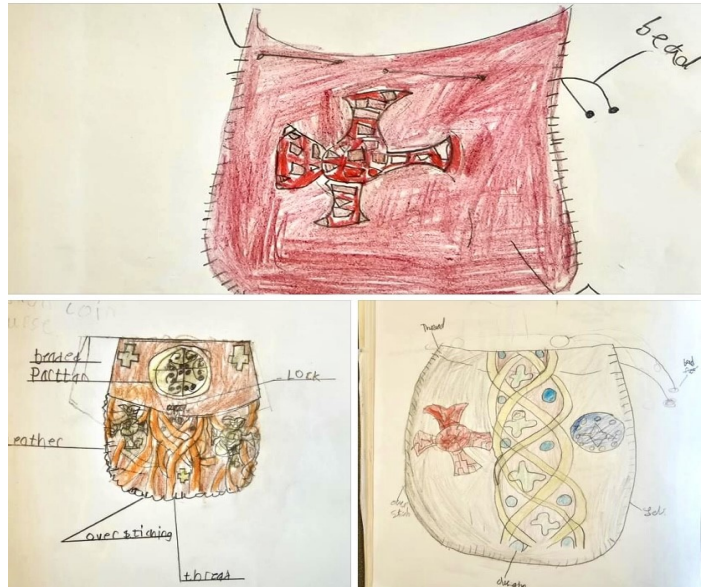
Ward Jackson Primary School is at **JORVIK Viking Centre.**
1 d · York · 📍

Ethan was so inspired by his school trip to Jorvik Viking Centre, he went straight home and crafted this wonderful holder for his Viking coin. At Ward Jackson, we are committed to providing rich and inspiring experiences that inspire autonomous learning. Well done, Ethan, that's The Ward Jackson Way.



Our Year 1 children applying their writing skills to non chronological reports on Christmas. Some great peer support, helping to build relationships too. #wardjacksonway

Some fabulous designs for Saxon coin purses. Well done Ava, Ibrahim and Nasar for applying the skills learned in a previous textiles lesson to make ambitious designs. #wardjacksonway



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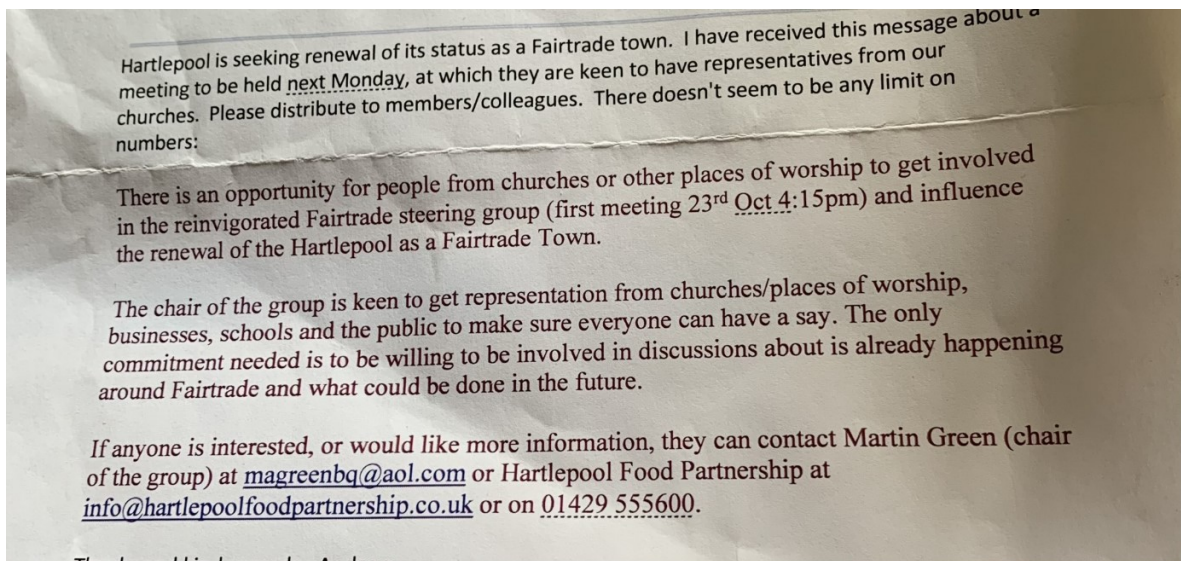
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Fair Trade

Months ago, churches were contacted to be involved with Fair Trade. I think I saw it in St Luke's notices. A church warden read out the following at our (St Aidan's) Sunday morning service.



It was the opportunity for as many churches or places of worship, businesses, schools, public to be involved with Fair Trade and influence the renewal of Hartlepool as a Fair Trade Town.

The only commitment is to be willing to be involved in discussions. (That's my sort of commitment!) I am able to be involved in discussions particularly when the meetings are daytime! Ready to be involved, I emailed and didn't receive a reply until after the first meeting because my email had gone into spam. (Technology is so clever!) After many apologies I was invited to the second meeting. I arrived at the Civic Centre and was taken to the room for the meeting. The long standing steering group members were there.... And I was ready to join other representatives from industry, education and other churches ... only there wasn't any - there was me! (So no hiding behind others)

Firstly, I didn't even know we were a Fair Trade Town! How awful is that? I know a couple of churches use Fair Trade products. St Luke's was (and presumably still is) a Fair Trade church and I think Stranton is. I know St Columba's has Fair Trade tea/coffee. The Fair Trade town status was due for renewal at the end of last year and the steering group were completing the form to (hopefully) ensure this continued.

I gained the impression the steering group are wanting to remind everyone about the importance of Fair Trade this year.

I admit, personally, to using some Fair Trade instant coffee (Cafe Direct) some Fair Trade tea (Clipper, Chefs Larder and Burchell) although I think that's my limit to Fair Trade products! Oh no - bananas and some chocolate as I bought Fair Trade selection boxes. I also buy Rainforest Alliance products, local products etc. I'm sure if you open your cupboards you will find Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Recycle logos.

It is so difficult buying any products nowadays - is it ethical? What about Sustainability? Carbon footprint? Climate change or Save the Planet? Is it recyclable? Origin? (are we supposed to be reducing buying things from China?) Will the workers/farmers get a fair price? Let alone is it too expensive, can I really afford to pay that?

Getting back to the meeting - its focus is promoting and encouraging the sale of Fair Trade products. I'll explain what that's about in another magazine! I'll also explain about Rainforest Alliance. The steering group were informed quite quickly that Hartlepool has retained its Fair Trade Town Status.

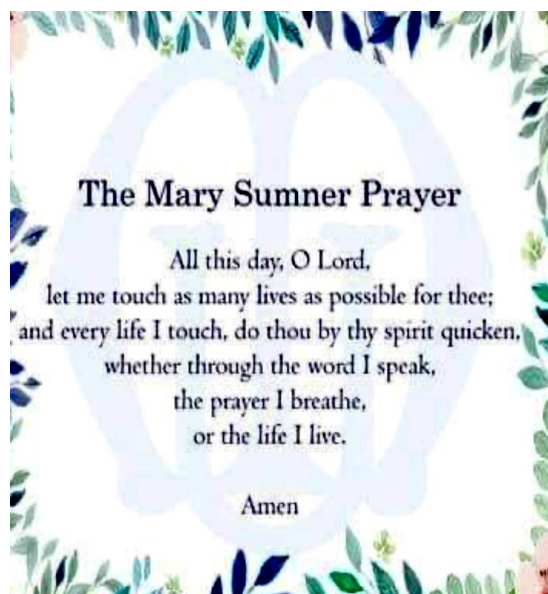
The next meeting is on 22nd January at 3:00pm in the Hartlepower Greenbank & Hub near Stranton Church. If anyone would like to join me at this and /or future meetings please (pretty please!) let me know.

Love and Blessings to you all

Patricia Watson

Mothers' Union

Would anyone interested come to St Luke's meeting (Tunstall Avenue) on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, the next one on February 19th at 2.00pm in the Parish Centre - Pamela Harding (Deanery Leader) is keen to include Stranton MU and any others who may be interested.



Communities of Hope

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

- Stranton Toddlers Tuesday 9.00am-11.00am at St Matthew's CC
- A Bit of God Time Tuesday 1.00pm to 2.30 pm at St Aidan's
- Friday Drop-In Friday 10.00am – 12.00pm at St Aidan's

Could you volunteer to help?

We are looking for people to lead and help with our children's ministries on a Sunday Morning, Tuesday Morning, and at Messy Church. We also need people to help lead our Youth work too. If this is you, then please contact Revd John to discuss further. All volunteers will be subject to the usual Safer Recruitment process, but please don't let this put you off.

Immanuel

I have two beautiful boys who are now grown men and both have birthdays in December. On their birthdays I celebrate them as they are now, not as they were when they were babies. I remember what it was like when they came into the world, but I celebrate them as adults. At Christmas it's a time to celebrate Jesus as He is now, not as a baby!

He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. His job as saviour has been accomplished. He now intercedes for us. He is the victor over death. He's not some helpless babe in a manger!!

Jesus is the gift that keeps on giving!

His present to us is his presence

He's not just for Christmas He's for always.

He is Immanuel, God with us

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Listen carefully, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will call his name Immanuel (God with us)."

Isaiah 7:14 AMP

Jesus is with us all year round. He wants us to welcome Him in and give Him full access to every area of our lives.

Jesus is with us in the messiness of family life.

Jesus is with us in the Doctor's waiting room.

Jesus is with us when we feel alone.

Jesus is with us when we feel people are against us.

Jesus is with us when we are celebrating,

Jesus is with us when in the black hole of grief.

Jesus is with us on our sick beds.

Jesus is with us when we don't feel close to Him.

Jesus is with us in all things.

Through this new year, let's practise the presence of God.

As you wake up, thank Jesus for being with you, invite Him to walk closely with you throughout your day. As you go through your day and your week. Keep reminding yourself of His presence. Ask Him to show you where He is in every given situation.

As you go to bed go back over your day and remind yourself that He was with you and that He will watch over you as you sleep.

Jesus promised in Hebrews ch 13:5 "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you".

Ang Hall





Boys Brigade



Christmas Carol Service

We held a Christmas Carol service on 15th December, the Anchor Boys sang Little Donkey accompanied on the keyboard by Tyler Anderson, the Juniors played handbells conducted by Sgt Jake McCarroll, and the Company Lads played boom whackers instructed by Jack. The service was taken by Mary Tones and was well supported by parents and friends of the Company. Afterwards drinks and mince pies were supplied by Maureen Anderson, many thanks to her. To round off a great night all the Lads received their Christmas treats and any remaining were donated to the Food Bank.

2024

Whilst the past was good the future will be even better!!

Plans include police visits, a Summer camp at Hesley Wood Scout Centre, South Yorkshire, the formation of a band, Easter Eggheads and much more.

A Cold Start - One of our Company Lads, Billy Ratcliffe, braved the North Sea and took part in the Boxing Day Dip at Seaton - he raised a fantastic £330.00. Well Done Billy!

New Starters

We need to attract more members especially in the 6-8year old age group who meet on a Friday Night between 6.00-7.00pm

If you know any boys in this age group why not bring them along.

if you want to see regular updates on of our various activities check us out on Facebook

George Bainbridge

07816445829

Dodgeball for our Junior Sections first night of 2024. Still room in all age sections for new members.



Easter Eggheads

This year we will be running Easter Eggheads - a week of games, quizzes, crafts, drawing, music and lots of FUN as we learn about the first Easter and what it means in Hartlepool 2024, at St Mathew's CC.

It is targeted at 5 - 11 year olds.

More information will be available nearer Easter time, on Notice Sheets, and on leaflets.

Building Tower

Our Company lads had a towering time on Friday night - the architects and builders of the future



Postmasters Quiz - Answers

P	Which P army did Goliath represent?	Philistines
O	Which O was Ruth's sister in law?	Orpah
S	Which S was a devout man lived to see the Messiah?	Simeon
T	What crown of T was placed onto Jesus head?	Thorns
M	Which M has his ear restored at the time of Jesus arrest?	Malchus
A	Which A was the daughter of Penuel?	Anna
S	What S was the first martyr?	Stephen
T	Which T doubted Jesus?	Thomas
E	Which E was a village about seven miles from Jerusalem?	Emmaus
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S	Which S killed a lion and created a riddle?	Samson

Update from Andy and Kati

Dear friends,

Before we get further into our letter, we have some news to share. As we look towards the end of 2023, we want to thank you wholeheartedly for supporting us – your prayers and gifts are incredibly important in helping us to serve here. With a heavy heart, we need to share that at the moment, due to increased living costs both for us and our supporters, there is a significant shortfall in our funding, which puts our work at risk. And so, we come to you for further help. If you are not currently giving, would you be able to start a regular gift? And if you are giving, would you consider increasing your gift? If everyone reading this letter gave an extra £15 per month, that would make a huge difference. If you can help us close our funding gap, please go to churchmissionsociety.org/walsh, call 01865 787489 or complete the enclosed form if you have received this letter through the post. (For our supporting churches, if you are able to give a further gift please contact churchrelations@churchmissionsociety.org.)

We understand this might not be possible – please know that we greatly value your support, and thank you for letting us share our challenge with you. As we conclude our second year and reflect on all that has taken place we continue to pray, discern and follow God's lead for the year ahead. During the past few months we have concentrated our efforts on work within the prisons as we continue to sense from the Lord this is the area of focus. We recognise a real hunger for the true gospel and for genuine repentance. I believe this is why we are seeing so many people making the decision to put their faith in Jesus Christ and be baptised. On each occasion that we have contact with the prisoners, as we minister the Word or share the gospel, pray and baptise people, we feel so encouraged by what we're seeing the Lord do in people's lives. We really feel privileged as mission partners to be involved in such a fruitful ministry.

Through the collective efforts of our team, Pastor Antônio advised us that 105 people have been baptised this year so far across the prisons in Florianópolis. As you can imagine, this inspires us to take further strides and make further inroads into the prison system to establish a ministry that has greater and longer-lasting impact. It's for this reason we have established the eight-part discipleship course which has been fully attended and engaged with (12 men on each occasion) in prison wings B and C of the adult male prison. I understand that as many as 20 of the 36 men in wing B meet together regularly to study the Word, pray and worship the Lord, which we personally think is a testament to the work the Lord is doing in their lives. Clearly, we want to do much more. We'd love to help lead informal church services in the prisons in future. However, we feel we're a long way off from this due to the various restrictions imposed on us in terms of access and what we're permitted to do once inside.

For now, we await further instruction from the prison's social department to get going again with the discipleship course while the other prison wings

undergo building maintenance. In the meantime, there's lots of other work going such as outreach and evangelism in the male prison, the adjacent male penitentiary and women's prison. The other small step we recently took was to apply for remission (a small reduction) of sentence for those that complete the discipleship course. Hopefully once approved, we sense that this will ensure our course is on an equal footing relative to other training courses delivered in the prisons such as maths, Portuguese, etc. In turn, once this recognition is legally approved, we hope this leads to take-up of our course in other prisons. To date, we find other prisons are not receptive to us at all and in some cases, the offer to provide the course in the women's prison has been refused. We struggle to understand this because the focus is rehabilitation of people's lives. As a result we return to prayer for the Lord to cut the red tape and open the doors. I've just picked up news that the director of the women's prison has moved on, so we will try again imminently!

Recognising that our mission objective is to disciple new believers, we have withdrawn from the work in the some of the drug rehabs that are further afield. We simply are unable to walk alongside these folk as regularly as we'd like due to the long journeys involved. So Kati and I, at least for the foreseeable future, will be attached to a drug rehab centre which is more local to us called Familia do Cristo which is in fact run in partnership with Vineyard Floripa, the church where we are based. Again we sense this will mean we can forge stronger relationships with residents and engage in some more sustainable ministry. In the upcoming period we really want to be making headway with securing access to the Case Regional, (prison) for young offenders, secure approval from the women's prison and the penitentiary to start the discipleship course where there is huge demand with over 1100 people serving longer term sentences. We'd therefore appreciate if you could join us in prayer for breakthrough into these areas in this upcoming period.

Finally, to keep you advised, we're making our first return to the UK since becoming mission partners next year. We're very much looking forward to reconnecting with our supporters and meeting up with our family from May to July 2024. So Andy will be in contact soon to share our availability during this period and when we will be in your area. Once again thank you for all of your support and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

Every blessing
Andy and Kati

Your well is deep but mine is deeper.

*Before you start a new year prepare your well
(your soul)*

Ask me first what needs repairing.

*Are you holding on to wounds that need
healing?*

Come to me and hand them over.

I am the restorer and healer.

Do not take old wounds into a new year.

They will hinder you and slow you down.

*I need my people to be healed and whole so
that they can bring others into soul healing.*

*The woman at the well had to go back and
face her past before she could move forward
and follow Jesus.*

*"All at once, the woman left her water jar and
ran off to her village and told everyone, "Come
and meet a man at the well who told me
everything I've ever done! He could be the One
we've been waiting for.""*

John 4:28-29

*The Lord says when your well is ready, I will
pour my refreshing living water in. Your well
will be deep for others to drink from."*

*In 2024 keep checking your well and keep
asking for my living water.*

You will not run on empty.

*"but if anyone drinks the living water I give
them, they will never be thirsty again. For
when you drink the water I give you, it
becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit,
flooding you with endless life!"*

John 4:14 TPT

*Take some time sitting with Jesus in the quiet
ask him to bring to mind old wounds that you
are holding on to.*

A prayer of healing

*Holy Spirit show me the wounds that I am
hanging on to.*

*Jesus I hand over to you this soul wound
(speak it out to God)*

I accept your gift of healing.

I will no longer carry my wounds.

*I will walk in the freedom of being made
whole.*

Amen

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road



Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

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

Saturday 3rd February

Saturday 2nd March

Saturday 13th April

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

Messy Church

St Matthew's Community Centre at 4-5.30pm

Crafts

Games

Sunday January 14th

Sunday February 11th

Sunday March 10th

Bible story

Food

For more information contact
Mary Tones on 07972 342890
See our Facebook page: Stranton Messy Church

Lots of Fun for the whole Family

A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and
To turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Sunday Club Nativity 2023



CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

February

Caitlin Bruce
Angela Craig
Alex Craig
Jeni Hart
Peter Hart
Duncan Playfor
Jess Playfor
Jacqui Rogers
Sue Rumney
Zac Spoor
Luke Tones
Gill Siddons
Chris Robinson

March

Rebecca Bell
Teagan Bruce
Kayleigh Bruce
Andrew Busby
Azam Chaichi
Stella Clarke
Emily Sanders

**Congratulations to
Gill and Paul Siddons
on the arrival in December of their
first grandchild
Penelope Emelia Dean
a daughter for
Rebecca and Chris Dean**

**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 February & March

(please check notice sheets for any changes)

Sat 10 th Feb	Cake & Coffee St Matthew's CC	2.00-4.00pm.
Sun 11 th Feb	Messy Church St Matthew's CC	4.00-5.30pm
Wed 14 th Feb	Ash Wednesday Services at St Luke's and St Aidan's	7.00pm

Lent Course - 4 weeks starting

Thurs 29 th Feb (ends Thurs 21 st March)	venue TBC	7.00pm for a 7:15pm start,
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We will be thinking about Same Sex Marriage: What it means for the Church of England and what it means for us, as we explore some of the issues around Living in Love and Faith and Prayers of Love and Faith.

Sun 3 rd Mar	Deanery Evensong at Stranton, followed by refreshments. We welcome Daniel Cook and the Cathedral Choir and members from churches across the deanery to this service.	3:30pm
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Sat 9 th Mar	Cake & Coffee St Matthew's CC	2.00-4.00pm
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Sun 10 th Mar	Mothering Sunday Service, Stranton	11.00am
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Sun 10 th Mar	Messy Church St Matthew's CC	4.00-5.30pm
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Sun 24 th Mar	Palm Sunday , Parade Service with Bacon Butties at St Matthew's CC beforehand for all	11.00am
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Holy Week (see below)

Easter Eggheads

Mon 25 th Mar	St Matthew's CC - Mon/Tues/Wed/Thur	6:00 to 7:15pm
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Mon 25th - Wed 27th	Compline/Easter Reflections	online at 7.00pm
Thurs 28 th :		

Maundy Thursday	Chrism Service at the Cathedral	(11.00am TBC)
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Maundy Thursday Supper	with Communion at St Luke's	7.00pm
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Mass of the Last Supper St Aidan's 7.00pm,

Good Friday:	Stations of the Cross (a family service), at St Luke's	10.00am
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Messy Easter at St Matthew's CC 10.00am

Private Prayer, at Stranton 12.00pm

followed by - An hour at the Cross, at Stranton 2.00pm

An hour at the Cross, at St Luke's 2.00pm

Celebration of the Lord's Passion, at St Aidan's 2.00pm

Easter Saturday:	The Easter Vigil, at St Aidan's	7.00pm
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Easter Sunday:	Holy Communion, at Stranton	9.00am
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Holy Communion, at St Luke's, 9:15am

followed by baptisms at 11.00am

Easter Mass, at St Aidan's 10:45am

Holy Communion, at Stranton 11.00am

There will be no midweek services in the week following Easter Sunday (i.e. 3rd and 4th April)

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

Churches Together in Hartlepool

Secretary Susan Atkinson,
St Mary's RC

Church Wardens Angela Craig 57 Claremont Drive 234279
Rohan Wanduragala 62 Clifton Avenue 223751

PCC Secretary Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
Treasurer David Craig 57 Claremont Drive 234279
Asst. Treasurer Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
Loyalty Treasurer Ken Shepherd 251 Park Road 268007

Notice Sheet The Office (Notices by the preceding Wednesday)
Signpost Editorial Jacqui Rogers 19 Trentbrooke Avenue 265527
Signpost Advertising Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266

St Matthew's Booking Trish Playfor Church Office 894006

Magazine articles to the parish office by 16th of every month.

