

Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

April 2024

‘I will never leave you or forsake you...’

The Musings of a Priest

This morning (13th March), the Daily Eucharistic Lectionary had Isaiah 49 verses 8 to 15 as the Old Testament reading. Where Zion (Jerusalem) is complaining that they have been abandoned by God “But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.’” The Lord through Isaiah responds “Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”

The prophetic words from Isaiah suggest how inconceivable it is for a mother to forget about the baby she is feeding or the baby she has in her womb, but that even if she did, God’s commitment to us is even stronger than those bonds. He will never forget about us.

It echoes the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 31, when he tells Israel that he will not be crossing into the promised land with them, but that God himself will go before them. He then tells them ‘Be Strong and Courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave nor forsake you.’ (Deuteronomy 31:6)

This reminded me of the Footprints poem, which has been a huge help to so many over the years. The person walking along the beach, looks back and sees two sets of footprints, their own, and the Lord’s. But as they look closely, they notice that in the hardest times of their life, they see only one set of footprints. They cry out to God. Why? Why, in those times that I needed you the most, did you abandon me?

The Lord replied, ‘My child, I would never abandon you, those times where you saw only one set of footprints, are the times where I carried you.’

God doesn’t abandon us. He will never leave us or forsake us.

Even when Jesus ascended back into heaven, he didn’t leave us, He sent His Holy Spirit to come and be with us, to journey through life with us, guiding us, helping us, until Jesus himself returns.

So, in those darkest times, never forget ‘He will never leave nor forsake you’, God is with us always. Even when we turn our backs on him, He is there, waiting, with arms open wide, for us to turn back to Him. And He will do it time and time again.

The Lord will never leave you or forsake you. He loves us too much for that. A love He proved once and for all when Jesus died on the cross for us.

Grace and Peace,

Revd John

From the Home Front

While in New Zealand my sister and I decided to ‘drive down the West Coast’ of South Island. This is a very long and quite an inaccessible route – one road in at the northern end of South Island and one route along that coastline to get out at the southern end. Much of the land is covered in vast open grasslands, hills, mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes and primeval type forests with glimpses of the sea. There are a few isolated farms, one small town and a handful of tiny villages. Tourism is the main ‘industry’.

It took us three days to drive over 1000 miles, it was a real adventure. At times we didn’t see any other vehicles, dwellings or people for maybe up to 100 miles! There was often no phone signal and we had to be aware of having the petrol tank filled whenever we could and taking food and plenty of water with us. The whole journey became for me an analogy for our walk in life with God.



At the end of the farming grasslands and after the only small town we crossed this huge viaduct through a high narrow valley (you cannot see the car on the road in this photo as it a mere speck!). The previous viaduct was washed away by landslips and floods about 20 years ago so there was no through access for years.



Lakes were a common sight but routes around them were often on a dirt track, sometimes only on foot.

On a few occasions the road ran alongside the ocean. The coastline was rugged, with numerous rocky outcrops. In places the beaches were littered with trees and

branches washed down the rivers into the sea. The water looked beautiful but waves were large and riptides frequent. Water sport users had to be very aware of the dangers before entering....





Forests rose straight up from the sides of road, with trees growing out of the rock face. The undergrowth was impenetrable with thorny bushes and spikey leaves. Rock and tree falls and landslips are frequent occurrences whenever it rains or there are high winds. 'Being aware' is a constant state of mind in this region!



Roads over the many mountains were a series of steep switchbacks running along the edges of deep gorges and narrow passes. Rivers were very wide but often 'braided' (narrow channels of water running through stoney river beds) which after rain could quickly become vast rushing torrents carrying fallen trees and branches. Crossing them was usually on one lane bridges which must feel very vulnerable when the rivers are swollen.



The highest mountain in New Zealand, Mount Cook, and several glaciers are found on the east of the road, and these areas are accessible only to trained and well equipped mountaineers, or by helicopter. Over the years these high mountains have claimed many lives.

Primeval fern forests grow either side of the road, beside lakes and up the hill sides. They cover mossy rocks and boggy areas. These are home to many spiders who make their webs on the thorny bushes and plants. Strange fungi grow on the forest floor. There are many biting insects including hornets, wasps, ants, mosquitoes and vicious sandflies.



Throughout this journey I learnt valuable lessons about being prepared, being aware, being vigilant, being sensible and being alert. As along life's path we don't know what is around the next corner, things we cannot see, things we don't expect. Circumstances and events can change everything in seconds..

We trust in God, but we need to heed His warnings, listen to His guidance and He will accompany us along the pathway of life.

J.A.R.

Disturbance – “The Reverse St Francis Prayer”

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

Where there is apathy, let me provoke;

Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning;

Where there is silence, may I be a voice.

Where there is too much comfort and too little
action, grant disruption;

Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
Grant the willingness to listen.

When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...

When tradition speaks louder than need...

Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to
talk about it;

Disturb us, O Lord.

To be with, as well as for, the alienated;

To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

~ Author unknown

Bishop Paul Butler's Retirement Service



10 years ago I stood in this pulpit and preached my inaugural sermon as the 79th Bishop of Durham. I serve in this line that began with the 25 Bishops of Lindisfarne; Aidan, Cuthbert and finally Aldhun who became the first Bishop of Durham. Standing outside the Feretory reading the long list of bishops is deeply humbling. I am after all nothing more than a frail 'clay jar'. But then so too were all my predecessors. But the God they served, and whom we serve, is amazing. He is the God of mercy, and glory. The God who speaks and creates. The God who has made himself known in Jesus Christ. This God is utterly faithful.

That first sermon was rooted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. I spoke of our 'Offering Welcome, Expecting Growth and Not Underestimating the Small.' I had no idea how deeply this would resonate with people. I am still being told, 10 years on, how it shaped people's thinking and ministry. In particular it was, 'Don't underestimate the small' that struck the chord. It still does for me. I absolutely believe in growth. I want more people to follow Jesus; I want Jesus' followers to grow in their depth of discipleship; together I want us to grow in how we serve and shape the communities in which we are set. But I also know that God revels in doing things in hidden places; in and through unexpected people and that often God works through the small. So please keep offering welcome; keep expecting growth but still never underestimate the small; it might just grow into a great tree.

Together we developed the vision of being 'From the Tyne to the Tees and the Dales to the sea; Blessing our Communities in Jesus' name for the transformation of us all.' We had our three priorities, identified by the Diocese before I began, of 'Tackling Poverty, Children and Young people and Growing the Church'. We remain convinced that wonderfully and mercifully God still chooses to use people like us to make the life of Jesus visible to the world.

Being visible is a challenge as the Bishop. It is only possible to be in one place at a time; though through Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, emails and texts it is possible to engage from one place with others; sometimes many others.

But for me Prayer walking has been a key part of my visible ministry as a Bishop, since my consecration in 2004. I am deeply grateful to all who planned, walked and talked with me across all the Deanery Prayer Walks over

these years. At the outset of the 10 years here Pilgrimage was not a word I used for these. But pilgrimage has become a theme and image which has meant much to me, and to us all. We are God's pilgrim people. This Cathedral is a place for pilgrims and pilgrimage. The development of the Northern Saints Trails, led by the remarkable David Potts, has been one of the highlights for me of these past years.

So I reflect briefly on my fellow pilgrims; my 2 wonderful suffragans, Mark and Sarah; the 6 archdeacons, Stuart, Ian, Nick, Rick, Bob and Libby; the 3 Diocesan Secretaries, Andrew, Edward and James; others who have served in differing roles on the leadership team. I am indebted to them all. You have been wonderful colleagues. There have been the fellow pilgrims in this place; vergers, clergy, musicians, choristers, staff, guides. It is the finest Cathedral in the world. Then there are the Area Deans and Lay Chairs, who give so much; the members of Bishop's Council who guide clearly; and those who serve on Diocesan Advisory, Finance, Audit & Risk, Board of Education and other committees. There are all my fellow priests and deacons, stipended, self supporting, retired but very active, serving in parishes, hospitals, prisons, universities, schools and other chaplaincies. There are all the licensed lay ministers, pastoral assistants, churchwardens, musicians, volunteer chaplains and regular worshippers.

We have a wonderful Joint Education Team, brilliant Headteachers, teaching staff, support staff and pupils in our Church schools – and those who serve as Christ's followers in State and Independent schools. There are all the superb staff at Cuthbert House who make sure people get paid, houses are looked after, support is given for children, youth, vocation, training, and safeguarding. And my dear ecumenical friends who have prayed with and for me, and with whom together we have sought to show that we are 'one in Christ'.

I also want to honour all that my worldwide Anglican, and other church, friends have given to me. Whilst here the Nordkirche, the Romanian Orthodox in Alba Julia, and the Durham-Lesotho link. Rwanda and Burundi have been much longer links.

But the biggest thank you of all is to my family. Rosemary and I moved here on our own for the first time since we moved to my curacy. Everywhere in between Caroline, David, Andrew and Sarah have travelled with us. They, along with my parents, and my sisters and brothers in law, have been the most significant supporters throughout these years. Thank you all.

Rosemary you have been astonishing. You have travelled and moved with me. You have put up with the ridiculous hours I have often worked. You have opened our home to others. You have made many stained glass crosses as gifts for clergy. You have committed to supporting spouses. You have prayed with me and for me. You have kept me going. And you are still the person who is best able to remind me that I am nothing more than a frail clay jar; but one who knows he is loved deeply. Who knows what God has in store for us next; as Sarah also said it will be exciting.

Whatever that future may hold, living in Newark on Trent, it is a fresh call from God. Whatever lies ahead for this wonderful Diocese it is about responding to God's call, worshipping, witnessing and serving. Sometimes our processes are so slow and convoluted they might well give a different impression. We make wrong calls. But from the heart I have sought to make an 'open statement of the truth and I can commend myself to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God'. I know I have failed some, hurt some, angered some needlessly; for which I am sorry and ask forgiveness. But I have sought to minister as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, sisters and brothers, 'since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart'.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

So now in drawing to a close I simply want to remind you all that God is faithful. He is the rock; the one under whose wings we can take refuge. We are often faithless, but God, who can never deny himself, remains faithful. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God called me as a teenager to follow Jesus and to give my life in service. The God who calls us is faithful and will sanctify us entirely and keep us blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's faithfulness alone has enabled me to serve you as Bishop for these past 10 years. Rosemary and I step into a new adventure knowing God is good and faithful. As a Diocese know that God calls you and is good and faithful. God will not fail or forsake you.

First published on: 28th January 2024 – This version has been edited.

GROUP CHRISTMAS MORNING SERVICE

Late Christmas feedback

This year the 10.00am service was held at St Luke's. It was a joyous occasion. A big congregation attended from across the Group.

There was a real community feeling with people sharing faith and friendship. From all accounts the congregation felt nourished and there was a real feeling of togetherness. Everyone who talked about it did so with a smile!

Revd John was probably a bit upset to have to cover up his reindeer Christmas jumper!

Joan Nixon

Deanery Service in Stranton Church

Sunday 3rd March



We were delighted to be chosen to host the Deanery Evensong in Stranton. The choir from Durham came to celebrate the service. As you may be aware, the Director of Music at the Cathedral is Daniel Cook, who started his musical career here in Stranton being tutored by our late organist Alf Peacock. Daniel was accompanied by his wife Miriam, daughter of our former vicar Stephen Taylor. Both expressed their delight at being back in Stranton where they first met.

The service was sung in English and the choir had superb diction, so every word and syllable was clearly heard. The event was well attended by members of congregations from across the Group and the Deanery in Hartlepool. The sheer volume of the choir was spine tingling! Afterwards a buffet and cuppa were enjoyed by all as everyone mingled with the choristers and proffered thanks.

Andrew Rogers

Ward Jackson CE Primary Update

Here are our youngest learners engaging in their Talk Boost session. As you can see they are engrossed! They are developing their language, speaking and listening skills to help them explore the world around them. We have Nursery and Reception places available, plus a few sessions per week for 2 year olds too. Do get in touch if you would like to come and take a look at the superb provision Ward Jackson EYFS have to offer. [#wardjacksonway](#)



As part of our enquiry based learning here at Ward Jackson, children independently create a product or piece of project work. For their Anglo-Saxon coin purses, families came into enjoy the sewing experience in Wingfield class. Providing insight for families into our classrooms is all part of the [#wardjacksonway](#)



Today, Wingfield created their own Saxon designs to decorate their coin purses. The children have worked very hard thinking about the materials needed for their design and how they will attach the different elements. [#wardjacksonway](#)



This is the [#wardjacksonway](#). Families coming into class to celebrate their children's progress in writing. At Ward Jackson, we feel that families accessing the classroom is the best way to help foster understanding of what happens in school and to share our pupil's achievements. Well done year one, here showing off the planning, drafting and editing process in writing to their proud grown ups.



Ward Jackson children would love to thank the Sensory spot and Bonnie Pinder for her thoughtful donations for our sensory space and Thrive areas.



It's Friday's Tea with SLT! Well done to some of our certificate winners this week who enjoyed juice and biscuits with our Headteacher, Mr. Akers, as part of our recognition of their achievements. #wardjacksonway



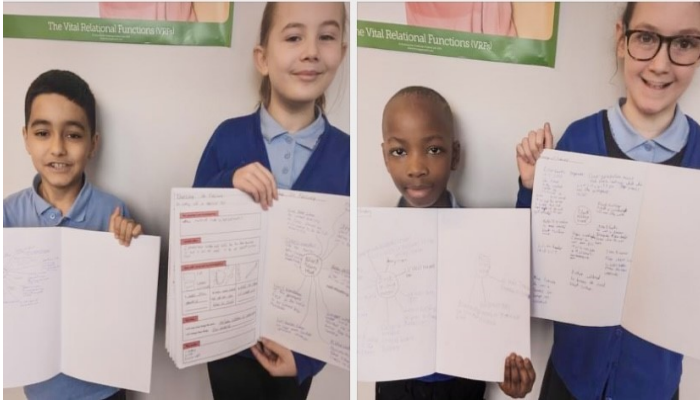
As part of our World Book Day celebration, Aurora and Wingfield Classes had an inspiring afternoon at the library meeting the author James Harris. They learned about life in the 70s and how important biscuits are as well as how to become a fantastic writer. We are looking forward to using his tips in our writing from now on. #wardjacksonway

We ❤️ World Book Day! What a fantastic day we have had in school. We started with a great worship where children shared poetry, songs and their favourite books. Hayley from Stranton Church joined us and told us about her passion for writing. Back in classes children have been writing raps, stories and dramas. 📖
#wardjacksonway #worldbookday



It's Black History Week at Ward Jackson. Wingfield here looking at what they knew about black history before their first lesson (black) and after (blue). They are going on to study Windrush next. All classes across school are conducting a week long enquiry into black history and presenting their work in Friday's worship. #wardjacksonway #blackhistorymonth

We are lucky in our school to have so many supportive parents who are willing to spend time sharing their knowledge and skills with the children. Today we welcomed one of our dads, who is an ambulance care assistant, into school. Rob delivered first aid training to some of our KS2 children. The training was informative and helped develop our knowledge on how to deal with some emergency situations. Thank you Rob! 🚑 #wardjacksonway



April Showers Quiz

- A** Which **A** had very long hair which played a part in his downfall?
- P** Which **P** denied Jesus 3 times?
- R** Which **R** supplied Elijah with food?
- I** What does **I** stand for in INRI?
- L** Which beast a **L** was killed by Samson?

- S** Who was **S** the first martyr?
- H** Which **H** was the son of Beerli?
- O** Jesus/God was known as the Alpha and **O**?
- W** What **W** x2 are associated with the first Miracle of Jesus?
- E** Which **E** is St John named?
- R** Which **R** was Joseph's eldest brother?
- S** Which **S** saints day is on 26th December?

**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 –
ideal for children's parties.**

**We also have our own private car park and some outdoor space if you fancy
al fresco fun for your guests.**

**If you would like further information please call:
Trish Playfor (01429 894006) during office hours,
or Carol Laud (01429 290290)
and we will be happy to help.**

**Steven McConnell
Roofing Contractor**

37 Greta Avenue
Hartlepool
TS25 5LE

Tel: 01429 221784

Fax: 01429 281609

Mobile 07850 925183

*Member of the National
Federation of Roofing
Contractors*



THE CARPET DOCTOR

COMMERCIAL & DOMESTIC
CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING

www.thecarpetdoctor.co.uk



TELEPHONE

01642 566551

Mobile 07770 451111



Victoria House
FUNERAL SERVICE

Under the personal guidance of



Carl Mean
Dip FD, MBIE



Apolena Wilson
Dip FD, MBIFD



Andrew Evans
MBIE



Andrew Gardner
Dip FD

TELEPHONE: (01429) 234777 • 26 VICTORIA ROAD, HARTLEPOOL TS26 8DD
WWW.VICTORIAHOUSEFUNERALSERVICE.CO.UK

**BRABINER
CARPETS**

**249 – 251 YORK ROAD
HARTLEPOOL
TS26 9AD**

TEL: (01429) 272298

Established for over 75 years



Proud to support Stranton Church News

Please get in touch with your Print requirements

- DISC TO PRESS - PC & MAC • COMPUTER TO PLATE • FULL COLOUR PRINTING
- LAMINATING • PRINT MANAGEMENT • DIGITAL COPYING & PRINTING
- FULL FINISHING SERVICE • PUBLISHING & RETAIL

10/11 LOWER CHURCH STREET HARTLEPOOL TS24 7DJ

Tel: (01429) 267849

www.atkinsonprint.co.uk • enquiries@atkinsonprint.co.uk

LET US HELP YOU GET THROUGH YOUR LOSS

We'll guide and assist you through all the funeral arrangements.

Call us 24 hours a day.

**MEYNELL & MASON'S
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
01429 862021**

**129 Park Road, Hartlepool.
TS26 9HT**



**Do you need a
Helping Hand?**

Our Stranton care team has been providing award winning quality home care since 1989.

We offer you a one to one live in care service which enables you or your loved one to remain at home with compassion and dignity.

**To find out more, call:
0808 180 1033 or visit:
www.helpinghands.co.uk**

**Keith Walker
Ophthalmic Opticians**

**28 Victoria Road, Hartlepool
Tel: 01429 275551**

Hartlepool & District Hospice

Provides free palliative care for patients.
Offers of voluntary help are always welcome ,
as are donations.

Please contact us at:

**Alice House Wells Avenue
Hartlepool. TS24 9DA
Tel: 01429 855555**



Stranton Business Centre

Accountancy, Taxation and Payroll

49 Stockton Road
Hartlepool
TS25 1TX

Telephone: 01429 280444
Email: office.admin@strantonbusiness.co.uk
www.strantonbusiness.co.uk

Joanna's Poochies Paradise

147 Elwick Road
Hartlepool
TS26 9BW

**Pet Shop
&
Dog Grooming**

01429 270056



Lessons in lent.

Lent is a time when we remember Jesus being in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights.

We remember He was tempted by the devil.

We remember that Jesus was fully human as well as fully God in his humanity.

He was truly tempted.

I don't know if any of you have fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, I have not. I think I've only done a 48 hour fast, and I was really hungry. I started to think what did Jesus truly feel in those forty days? Hot, thirsty, hungry, alone in his thoughts, weak, vulnerable!

Those are the feelings as a human I would feel, and I think He would too.

So when the devil tempted Him with 'change the stones into bread', He could've easily done that. Or 'throw yourself off this cliff and let the angels catch you'! Or 'bow down to me and I will give you all the eye can see'. He didn't fall for the devils deceitful ways

Instead he used scriptures to combat the devils, accusations and temptations.

That's a challenge to me. When the enemy whispers lies, shout scripture back!!!

We are in about the third week of lent as I write, and for half of that time I have been flat out with a chest infection. For those who know me, I am a doer! If I am ill, I will myself to be better and force myself to do things. This time I gave up as I was unable to do anything. Then my mind went all over the place. I struggled with guilt. I struggled with frustration. I struggled with discouragement. Then I started to think about Jesus in the desert, alone with His feelings and the devil coming to tempt him. It's encouraged me to think that Jesus was fully human and He fully grasps our humanity, our emotions our failings. Even the way we beat ourselves up in our minds. He totally gets us. He understands us, and more importantly, something that I know I need to keep going back to and grasp, is He loves us.

In our frailty in our humanness in our feelings, He loves us. He is with us and he is for us.

Thank you Jesus

You meet in our humanness.

You meet us where we are at.

You look us in the eye and say

"I've got you, I love you,

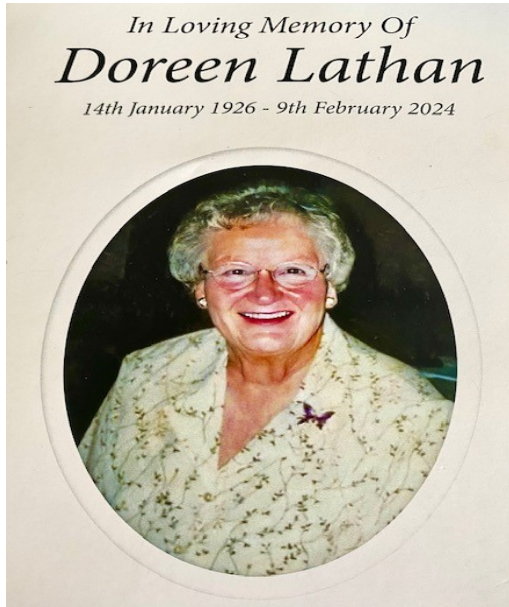
I am for you".

Thank you that after lent there is the hope of Easter.

Amen

Ang Hall

Doreen Lathan



It was very sad to hear about the passing of Doreen. As her gardener I spent many hours at her home working in the garden and even more hearing tales and stories about St Matthew's Hall and Stranton Church. Doreen was great company (I used to phone her every Sunday to give a report on the 9.00am service) and she always had words of wisdom and encouragement.

George Bainbridge

I too was greatly saddened to hear of Doreen's death when I was in New Zealand. I had known of Doreen all my life, as she and Fred lived live at the end of Wansbeck Gardens and I was born and raised at the other end. Doreen and Fred were great bowls players and so was my Dad, so passing conversations were frequent.

God used Doreen in my life when we returned to Hartlepool, unbeknown to Doreen, and my Christian life developed hugely from God's intervention at that time. She and I enjoyed many conversations over the years. When I was struggling to walk before, and while recovering from, knee surgery, it was she who advised me how to centre and balance myself when standing up before starting to walk.

Her love for God and of Stranton folk was obvious. She will be sadly missed by many who recognised her love for others in her faith. A true and faithful servant of the Lord.

J.A.R.

Gardening News – Spring 2024



As I write, there has been so much rain since my last piece about the garden that I have hardly been able to set foot on the lawn, never mind do any gardening. It has been the same in the farmers' fields, as everywhere you go there are random lakes and ponds. The farmers are obviously having the same problem but on a much bigger and more costly scale, with crops being drowned under the constant barrage of water and no opportunity to plant new ones.

There is cause for rejoicing, however, as the trees are in bud and some are even blossoming, whilst the spring flowers have still managed to pop their heads through the soil and put on a show. The snowdrops and crocuses have now made way for the daffodils and hyacinths, as can be seen in the church borders. Most of the bulbs in the borders were planted many years ago by Chris Applegarth, a church warden and, along with his wife Nancy, a stalwart member of Stranton church, whom some will still remember. The hyacinths at the bottom of the borders, near the gates, were gifted to us by an anonymous donor who left a note saying that he enjoyed looking at the flowers as he walked past the church.

The great thing about spring flowers is that, once you've planted them, they come back year after year and are almost maintenance free. The only drawback is that, after they have flowered, they become bedraggled and unsightly, but, whilst you can cut off the flower heads, you need to resist cutting the leaves off for at least 6 weeks (as recommended by the RHS), as they continue to absorb sunlight and nutrients vital for producing good flowers the next year. I have learnt from experience that, if you cut them off too early, you can end up with lots of leaves and no flowers. Here endeth the first lesson!

The next plant milestones for me are the forget-me-nots, followed in May by the bluebells, which are the gateway to summer (hopefully we'll have one). In fact I can't resist any bell-shaped flowers – from snowdrops to fuchsias and everything in between.

As I write, in the final weeks of Lent, the spring season seems like another form of waiting. As we look forward to the joy and spiritual renewal of Easter we also await the awakening of all our garden favourites – like greeting old friends and maybe mourning those that do not make it through winter. Of course, this also means that the work starts again – weeding, mowing, planting, feeding etc. But better that than spring cleaning!*

Pam Stockton

*Note: That was supposed to be the end, but, whilst checking my sparse knowledge of farming (see paragraph 1), I have discovered that children grow faster in spring, "possibly because exposure to longer hours of sunlight may stimulate bone growth and hormone regulation, along with increased access to fresh foods and healthy activities". Who knew? (Maybe everybody except me!)

Communities of Hope: Children & Families Work



It's a busy time of year coming up for the Communities of Hope children and families work.

There is the HAF Easter Holiday Club for 5-11 year olds living in Hartlepool to be held at St Luke's Church from 8th-11th April 10am-2pm. Bookings are being taken via the Hartlepool Council website as I write this article. Children will explore Holy Week and have a

choice of crafts, games and free play each session. They will also be given a full lunch and a healthy snack.

In addition there are the Easter visits to different churches. Stranton Primary School is coming, 'en masse' to All Saints Stranton for their Easter Celebration.

Jesmond Garden Primary School are all coming for an Easter Celebration to St Luke's.

Rift House Primary is having a special Easter assembly in school and the Yr 1 children are visiting St Columba's to study Holy Week.

In addition I will be helping with the talks and organizing the crafts at Egg Heads Holiday Club at St Matthew's Community Centre.

The ministry continues to grow and prosper. It has been wonderful to form strong links with Rift House Primary School. Assemblies and RE lessons are taken there. Also there have been class visits to All Saints Stranton and St Aidan's.

Over half term it was great to build relationships with the local community by running Café Craft where families came into St Matthew's for light refreshments and to do craft activities. It proved to be popular.

It has also been wonderful to be at St Aidan's Kitchen on Thursday mornings chatting to the families that go there and serving hot drinks. It is also good to see some of those families in church at Stranton and St Aidan's on Sunday mornings.

The rest of the work goes on as normal. Toddlers once a week, assemblies in five local primary schools and the two weekly RE lunch clubs at Stanton Primary School and Jesmond Gardens School.

As usual we would really like more volunteers to help with this important ministry. So please consider if God might be calling you to help. Please speak to Rev John Bell if you would like to become a volunteer.

My grateful thanks to all those who work hard to see that the children's and families work thrives. Without them it couldn't happen.

Blessings

Hayley Community Children & Families Worker

Pilgrim Course

The Pilgrim course was offered to adults in or known to our three parishes. It was for those seeking baptism and those wishing to refresh and reflect on their Christian journey. It was held on a Thursday evening at St Luke's.

The majority attending were already baptised and confirmed and it was heartening to see adult baptism being sought.

Eight Books on the Pilgrim course are available - this course was based on Book 1, 'Turning to Christ'.

The course lasted 6 weeks with each week looking at the promises made at baptism:

Do you turn to Christ?

Do you believe in God the Father?

Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ?

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

Do you repent of your sins?

Do you reject evil?

Each weekly session had the same format which I found helpful. Prayer, opening question, Bible reading and discussion of phrases or words which stood out, reflection written by a bishop or similar, questions to discuss, another reflection and discussion, final prayer. There were also helpful passages on which to reflect before the next week. After week 1, Rev John, who led the course, always asked if we needed clarity or questions to do with the previous week.

I found reflecting on my beliefs and my Christian journey a positive experience.

Over the 6 weeks I would say the group bonded through laughter, discussions and sharing some quite personal views. I am quite sad the course has ended and hope, and pray, Pilgrim Course Book 2 (or any of the remaining seven books) soon follows.

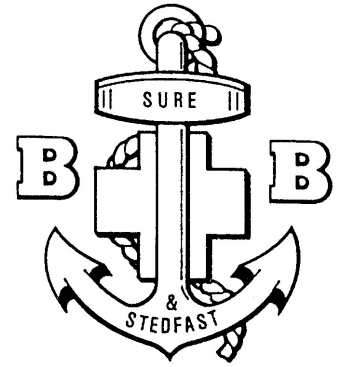
Even though I, personally, find daytime and online courses preferable to evening ones, I would certainly go to any others planned and would encourage those of you wondering about attending any future Pilgrim course to sign up.

Love and blessings to all,

Patricia Watson



Boys Brigade



Police Grant & Music

Background information - when we held our Christmas Carol Service I kept my keyboard out and noticed several of the older Lads playing tunes on it so it was decided to try to plan some music into our programme.

We applied and have received a grant from Cleveland Police for two keyboards and associated equipment, this will allow the Lads to develop their musical skills and assist in worship, camp activities, plus add to the programme of different Sections, and leadership skills for years to come.

Trying Out our new keyboard



Drumming on the march



We have also found a drum master/keyboard instructor who is passing his knowledge on to the Lads on a weekly basis and again this will in future years allow our NCO's to instruct in music.

Camp

This year we are staying at Hesley Woods Scout Centre, South Yorkshire, it's worth googling as it offers oodles of activities.

At this moment in time we have 12 Lads who hope to be attending camp.

Activities in Various Sections

All the Sections have learnt the Boys Brigade Hymn - 'We have An Anchor.' The Company devotions on each Section have been based on 'We Have an Anchor' and Luke 2 v52, 'And Jesus grew in Wisdom, Stature and was in Favour with God and Man'. The devotions have been backed up by various activities in all sections with crafts/challenges/quizzes and word searches.

Other Activities have included Badge making, cooking, marching, drill, games and not forgetting heaps of fun!

The Anchors and Juniors are also looking forward to Easter Eggheads from March 25th - 28th.

Future Dates

Friday 17th May Open Night

Saturday June 16th Summer Fayre - the one with bargains galore!!!

July 23rd - 27th Camp at Helsey Woods

We do need more members especially in the Anchors for 5 - 8yr olds
If you would like to see what we are up to visit our Facebook page

George Bainbridge

Company Section made banoffee pie tonight, seems like the old-school caramel condensed milk was a hit 😊



We had a great time when our friend PC Mark says visited our Juniors and displayed the latest technology in Drones



Malchus Tale



Part of me wanted to go down in history
Although to most of you I'm still a mystery.
I was just a hard working temple guard
When an arrest order was commanded.
There was a miscreant to be apprehended,
Quite a trouble maker to the authorities.
The arrest was to be made at Gethsemane,
We got there aided by a tormented Guide
Who greeted the intended target with a kiss.
Words were spoken, then it all kicked off
Blades were drawn, then I felt a mighty pain
But this is my claim to everlasting fame.
Stop! said the arrested man with authority.
Then he saw my ear lying on the ground,
He picked it up and carried out spiritual surgery
So good that I still hear every sound.
I know the authorities carried out their plan
The got Pilate to crucify The Man.
I've heard he was not dead for too long,
Strange I know, but if He could heal my ear
I've no doubt He'll end death's fear.
Apparently books have been written,
His deeds and actions are all mentioned,
Including my small but memorable part,
Which you can play a lifetime role too
Just let Him enter you, fully into your heart.

George Bainbridge

Deanery Confirmation

Have you been baptised but not confirmed? Hartlepool Deanery Confirmations are taking place on April 13th at Hart Church. If you would like to know more, please speak to Revd John.

Do you fancy helping?

If you would like to help with our Children's and Youth work, or with our Music Group, please have a chat with Revd John as we look to grow these areas of our church.

Communities of Hope

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

- Stranton Toddlers (Term time only). Tuesday 9.00am-11.00am at St Matthew's CC
- A Bit of God Time Tuesday 1pm to 2:30 pm at St Aidan's
- Friday Drop-In Friday 10.00am – 12.00pm at St Aidan's

Electoral Roll

We are in the process of updating our Electoral Roll ahead of our APCM (28th April). This year is just a revision, so if you are on the Electoral Roll and wish to remain on it, then you do not need to do anything. If you want to be added to the Electoral Roll, or removed from the Electoral Roll then please see the notice at the back of church (or contact Ken Shepherd, our Electoral Roll Officer) for details of how to do this.

Closing date for is 7th April

All Saints Stranton APCC Meeting Sunday 28th April

All are invited to attend after the 11am Service in Stranton Church

Sometimes in life we
just need a hug... no words,
no advice, just a hug to make
you feel you matter.



Answers to April Showers Quiz

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| A | Which A had very long hair which played a part in his downfall? | Absolom |
| P | Which P denied Jesus 3 times? | Peter |
| R | Which R supplied Elijah with food? | Raven |
| I | What does I stand for in INRI? | IESVS |
| L | Which beast a L was killed by Samson? | Lion |
| S | Who was S the first martyr? | Stephen |
| H | Which H was the son of Beerli? | Hosea |
| O | Jesus/God was known as the Alpha and O? | Omega |
| W | What W x2 are associated with the first Miracle of Jesus? | Water Wine |
| E | Which E is St John named? | Evangelist |
| R | Which R was Joseph's eldest brother? | Reuben |
| S | Which S saints day is on 26 th December? | Stephen |

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

April

Rachel Cartwright

Paul Cartwright

Abigail Craig

Andrew Craig

Allison Grosvenor

Angela Hall

Rebekah Hart

Kate Lawson

Linda Parvin

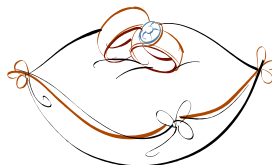
Alan Robertson



**Wedding Anniversary
May**

Ruth Craig & Gavin Smith

Chloe & Jordan Thornhill



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.

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road

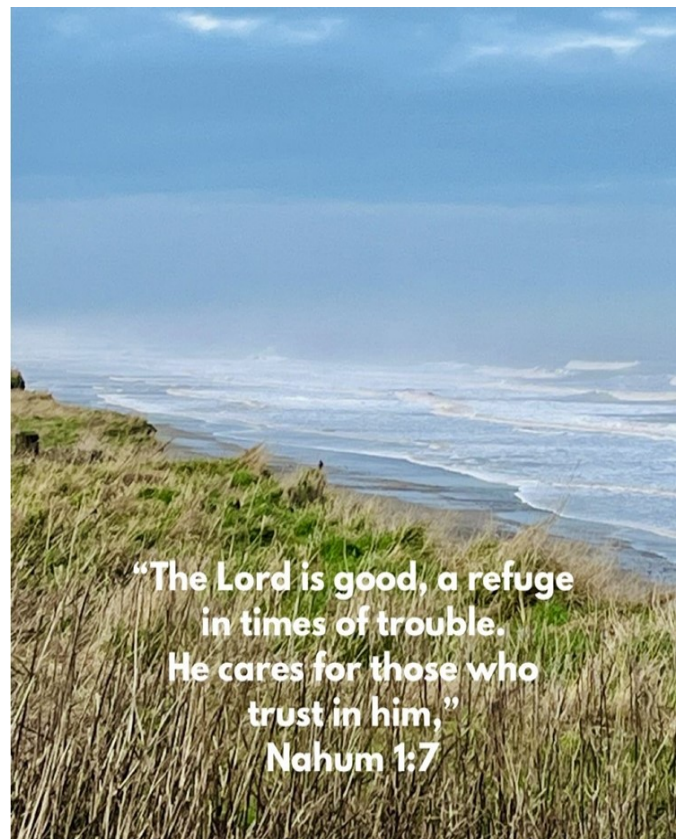
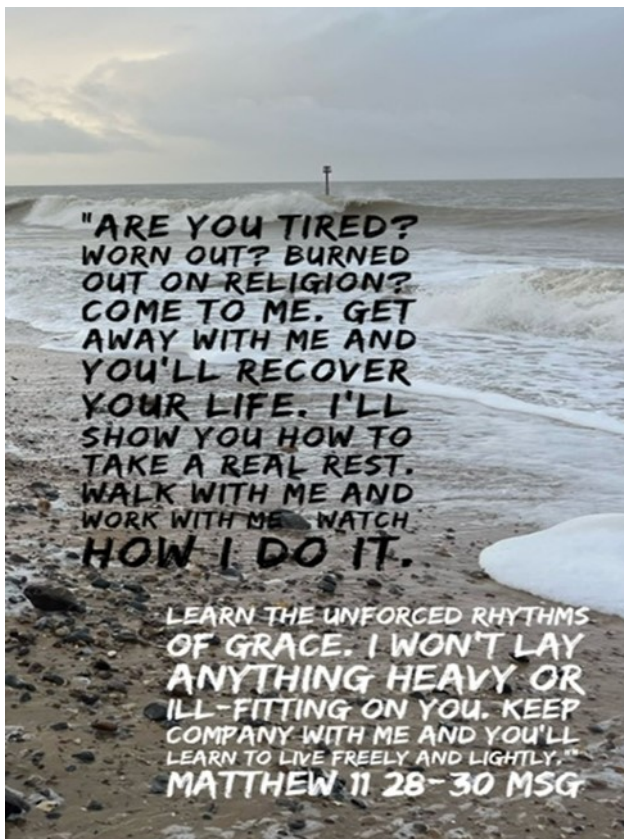


Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

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

Saturday 13th April 2024

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



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
Signpost Subscription 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.

